

## Prag-raising versus Neg-raising

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### Abstract

In this paper we introduce Prag-raising, the phenomenon of pragmatic markers being in a matrix clause where they do not belong functionally. The phenomenon has some similarities with Neg-raising, but the differences are even more striking. In our analysis we point out the different role that subjectivity plays in Prag-raising and Neg-raising.

### 1 Introduction

A well-known phenomenon in linguistics is Neg-raising. In Neg-raising the negation is positioned in the matrix sentence but it functions in the embedded sentence: (1) is about not raining, not about not thinking.

- (1) Ik denk niet [dat het gaat regenen]  
'I do not think [it will rain]'

In this paper we would like to coin a related phenomenon, *Prag-raising*, which involves pragmatic markers instead of negation markers. A Dutch example of Prag-raised *gewoon* 'just' can be found in (2)

- (2) Het waren verhaaltjes. Iemand zei dat ze gezongen werden, maar ik dacht gewoon  
[dat het verhaaltjes waren]  
'They were stories. Someone said they were sung, but I thought [they were just  
stories]'

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In this fragment, the pragmatic marker *gewoon* ‘just’ is formally located within the matrix clause and outside of the embedded clause (*dat het verhaaltjes waren* ‘that they were stories’). Functionally, however, the marker belongs within the embedded clause: the last part of (2) means the same thing as (3), where *gewoon* ‘just’ is formally located within the embedded clause.

- (3)           ... maar ik dacht [dat het gewoon verhaaltjes waren]  
                  ‘... but I thought [they were just stories]’

In this paper we will describe the characteristics of Prag-raising. In section 2 we will argue that all Dutch pragmatic markers may undergo Prag-raising. In section 3 we will relate Prag-raising to the notion of subjectivity. In section 4 we will show that Neg-raising and Prag-raising are not the same phenomenon. Section 5, finally, will be the conclusion of our paper.

## 2 Dutch markers that allow Prag-raising

*Gewoon* ‘just’ in (2) is not the only Dutch pragmatic marker that can undergo Prag-raising. Another example is *wel* ‘really’ in the conversation in (4) from the Corpus of Spoken Dutch (CGN). The *fn*-number is the index of the text within the CGN.

- (4)           fn000662  
                  A: [...] en uhm dan willen ze een database maken van tien miljoen woorden of zo  
                  [...]  
                  B: Dat snap ik niet helemaal [...] Ja nu ‘k d’rover nadenk kan ik me helemaal niks  
                  voorstellen waarom ie dit zou doen. Toch? Nee ze willen onderzoeken of mensen  
                  inderdaad een hele hoop onzin tegen elkaar lullen <gelach>.  
                  A: **Nou ik uh geloof wel [dat dit ‘t is eigenlijk]**, maar bedoel ‘t kan natuurlijk  
                  ook gewoon zijn dat dit ‘t niet is maar dat ze iets anders onderzoeken of zo.  
  
                  A: [...] well, apparently they want to make a database of ten million words or so  
                  [...]

B: I don't get it [...] Now I really think about it, I can't imagine why he would do that. Right? Perhaps they want to investigate whether people really say a lot of bullshit to each other <laughter>.

A: **Well I think [that is really it, actually]**, but it could as well not be, and that they're investigating something else.

That *wel* 'really' functionally belongs to the embedded clause can be seen in (5a-b). The boldfaced fragment in (4) is in principle ambiguous in meaning: it can mean either (5a) or (5b). In this situation, however, the boldfaced part in (4) is equivalent to (5b). We see *wel* as a marker that negates a denial in the previous context, following Hogeweg (2009). Such an analysis explains, for example, why it is strange to open a conversation with something like *Hi, I really am a linguist by profession*: there is no previous context for pragmatic marker *really* to refer to. In the situation in (4), Speaker B addresses the possibility that the CGN wants to investigate whether people really say a lot of bullshit to each other; by laughing he denies that this is the real goal. Speaker A, then, negates the denial that this is the real goal by using *wel*, making the boldfaced part in (4) equivalent in meaning to (5b). He does not use *wel* to negate a denial related to his believing something – which would make the boldfaced part in (4) equivalent in meaning to (5a) – because his believing is not an issue (whether implicitly or explicitly) in the previous context.

- (5) a Het is wel zo dat ik geloof [dat dit het eigenlijk is]  
'It is really the case that I believe [this is it, actually]'
- b Ik geloof [dat dit het eigenlijk wel is]  
'I believe [this is really it, actually]'

This shows that *wel* 'really' functionally belongs to the embedded clause in (4), although it is formally located in the matrix clause. This is a case of what we have analyzed as Prag-raising.

We have found many instances of Prag-raised markers in the CGN. The appendix contains an overview of the pragmatic markers that we have found. The markers covered in the appendix are *eigenlijk* 'actually', *even* 'kindly', *inderdaad* 'indeed', *meer* 'rather', *ook* 'really', *sowieso* 'at any rate', and *toch* 'still'. We use the term *pragmatic marker* to contrast these words

with classic adverbs of place (*here*), time (*yesterday*) and manner (*quickly*). For us, adverbs are modifying a state of affairs and pragmatic markers are modifying a proposition.

It is often hard to decide whether a pragmatic marker is functionally a part of the matrix clause (i.e. a Prag-raised marker) or of the matrix clause (i.e. an in situ marker), but we believe that the appendix contains examples where the Prag-raised meaning of the pragmatic markers is preferred. In each case the pragmatic marker – *wel* ‘really’ in (4) – does not relate to the action described in the matrix predicate – *geloven* ‘to believe’ in (4) – because the action is not a part of the previous context; a pragmatic marker like *wel* always relates to the previous context, however. This is why the pragmatic marker really relates to the content of the embedded sentence – ‘investigating whether people really say a lot of bullshit to each other is the actual goal of the CGN’ in (4) – as this content is the topic of the conversation.

Because our data contain so many different pragmatic markers we assume that any pragmatic marker in Dutch has the ability to be Prag-raised. We have constructed our own examples with the markers *bovendien* ‘furthermore’, *juist* ‘exactly’, *misschien* ‘maybe’ and *zeker* ‘certainly’ in (6a-d).

- (6) a      Hij is erg charmant; ik vind bovendien [dat hij ontzettend grappig is]  
         ‘He is very charming; I find [that, furthermore, he is really funny]’  
      b      Niet belangrijk? Ik meen juist [dat dit het essentiële punt is]  
         ‘Not important? I believe [that this is in fact the essential point]’  
      c      Ik denk misschien [dat ik er ook een voor mijn moeder ga kopen]  
         ‘I think that [I will perhaps buy one for my mother as well]’  
      d      Ze weet zeker [dat het goed komt]  
         ‘She is certain [that it will be all right]’

Example (6d) is an interesting case in itself. The combination of *weten* ‘to know’ and *zeker* ‘certainly’ may even be seen as a construction in Dutch (‘to be certain’). The certainty expressed has scope over the embedded clause – in (6d) the certainty belongs to *ze* ‘she’ – and not over the matrix clause – in which case the certainty would belong to the (first-person) speaker because it is not in the scope of *weten*. Compare (6d) to a simple sentence like (7); the certainty of *zeker*

always belongs to the (first-person) speaker, unless it is embedded under a propositional verb like *weten*.

- (7) [Ze zal dit zeker waarderen]  
'She will certainly appreciate this'

To sum up, in this section we have provided evidence that Prag-raising exists in Dutch. In the next section we will try to explain why it exists.

### 3 Subjectivity and Prag-raising

The fact that a Prag-raised marker does not remain in situ, where it belongs functionally, deserves an explanation. We think that the explanation involves the notion of *subjectivity*: the personal view of the speaker on the objective content of her utterance (cf. Pander Maat & Degand 2001). We use subjectivity in a broad sense in this paper; epistemic phrases like *I think* and intersubjective interjections like *actually* are both subjectivity markers to us. Notice, however, that most Dutch pragmatic markers that we have found are intersubjective: they reflect on the previous context shared by speaker and addressee (cf. Nuyts 2012)

We will first show that Prag-raised markers are subjective. Take the example in (8), repeated from (4) above.

- (8) Ik geloof wel [dat dit het is eigenlijk]  
'I believe [this is really it, actually]'

The matrix predicate *ik geloof* 'I believe' serves as a subjective addition to the embedded clause. It says that the predicate in the embedded clause is not an objective truth, but an assessment of the speaker. The pragmatic marker *wel* 'really' also has this function with respect to the embedded clause: it adds a subjective layer to the message. Examples (9a-b) also shows this: *ik geloof* 'I believe' is odd when combined with a sentence that is commonly seen as an objective truth, and so is pragmatic marker *wel*.

- (9) a. #Ik geloof dat cirkels rond zijn  
       ‘#I believe circles are round’  
       b. #Cirkels zijn wel rond  
       ‘#Circles really are round’

The subjective meaning of *wel* ‘really’ is why, according to us, the pragmatic marker moves to the matrix clause. The pragmatic marker is not a part of the objective part of the message so it makes sense that the speaker of (8) does not want the marker in the middle of the embedded sentence, which is the objective part of the sentence. The two options are then to move the marker to the end of the sentence as an afterthought, or to move it to the front. This optionality is independent from the presence of a subjective matrix predicate: the same optionality already applies to a simple sentence like *I do* where a pragmatic marker like *really* may be placed to the front or the end of the sentence, instead of in the middle of it. The choice between these options probably relies on the prominence of the contribution of the pragmatic marker. The only difference with an example like (8) is that in (8) there is already a matrix predicate in the front and that this predicate is also subjective itself (Traugott 2012).

If the tendency to move subjective elements out of objective embedded clauses exists, we predict that temporal, locative and manner adverbs should not undergo Prag-raising (and this should perhaps not be called Prag-raising, then) as readily as pragmatic markers. The reason that we say this is that while pragmatic markers can appear in the same syntactic position in Dutch as temporal, locative and manner adverbs, the latter are not subjective elements (cf. van der Wouden 2002). And while we have found examples of Prag-raised temporal, locative and manner adverbs in the CGN, we have noticed that Prag-raised pragmatic markers are far more common. In (10) there is such a rare example. Temporal adverb *uiteindelijk* ‘eventually’ does not relate to matrix verb *gelooven* ‘to believe’, but it is formally located in the matrix sentence.

- (10) fn00739  
       Maar ik wou absoluut even ver gooien dan m’n vriendjes. En **uiteindelijk uh**  
       **geloof ik [dat 't me lukte]** maar [...]

But I definitely wanted to throw as far as my friends. And **I believe [that I succeeded eventually] but [...]**

One final thing to note is the strength of the tendency to move subjective elements away from the objective part of a sentence. We stated above that speakers may put a subjective pragmatic marker into a subjective matrix predicate. We have observed, however, that in most cases the pragmatic marker remains in situ in the embedded clause if it functionally belongs there, even if the matrix predicate is subjective. The fragment in (11) is an example from the CGN of pragmatic marker *gewoon* ‘just’ that stays in situ.

- (11) fn000250  
dus **ik denk [dat het gewoon een kwestie is van af en toe omwisselen]**  
so **I think [it is just a case of changing them around every once in a while]**

The high frequency of examples like (11) shows that the tendency to move subjective elements out of an objective predicate is not very strong. Let us mention again, however, that Prag-raising a subjective adverb to a subjective matrix predicate is more natural than Prag-raising an objective adverb to a subjective matrix predicate (10). This suggests that, although the tendency to move subjective elements to a higher sentence is not very strong, it does exist.

#### **4 Prag-raising and Neg-raising compared**

Prag-raising shares some characteristics with Neg-raising, but the two phenomena have some fundamental differences as well. Let us first point out the similarities. In (12a) an example of Neg-raising can be found (cf. Fillmore 1963; Horn 1989). The element under discussion is the Dutch negation marker *niet* ‘not’, which is rather similar in its syntactic behavior to pragmatic markers. Furthermore, (12a) has the same meaning as (12b), where the negation is located in the embedded clause. This is also similar to Prag-raising.

- (12) a Ik denk niet [dat 't klopt]  
 'I do not think [it's right]'  
 b Ik denk [dat 't niet klopt]  
 'I think [it's not right]'

One difference, however, is that Neg-raising cannot be combined with every matrix verb. This has led to an analysis of Neg-raising where the special meaning associated with Neg-raising is a presupposition that is present in some verbs but not in others (Bartsch 1973; Gajewski 2007). Factive verbs, for example, do not allow Neg-raising. Neg-raising is, therefore, not possible with the Dutch verb *zien* 'to see' (cf. Nuyts 1990). This is shown in (13a-b): (13b), with negation downstairs, has a different meaning than (13a).

- (13) a Dan zie je niet [dat 't klopt]  
 'Then you will not see [it's right]'  
 b Dan zie je [dat 't niet klopt]  
 'Then you will see [it's not right]'

Prag-raising, however, does not have such a restriction on verbs. Prag-raised *eigenlijk* 'actually', for example, may combine with *zien* 'to see': in (14a) the pragmatic marker is located in the matrix clause, but it can mean the same thing as (14b), where the pragmatic marker is located in the embedded clause.

- (14) a dan zie je eigenlijk [dat 't steeds erger wordt]  
 'then you see [it's actually getting worse]'  
 b dan zie je [dat 't eigenlijk steeds erger wordt]  
 'then you see [it's actually getting worse]'

The example in (14a) suggests that there are the restrictions that Neg-raising imposes on its verbs do not carry over to Prag-raising.

We think that this difference between Neg-raising and Prag-raising is connected to the observation that negation markers do not involve subjectivity, while pragmatic markers do. The negation in (15b), for example, does not make the sentence in (15a) more subjective.

- (15) a      Circles are round  
      b      Circles are not round

This means that the subjectivity of the marker cannot be the reason for Neg-raising, as the negation marker itself is not subjective. Pragmatic markers, on the other hand, *are* subjective, so for Prag-raising the subjectivity of the marker *can* be the reason behind the phenomenon.

These observations suggest that Neg-raising does not have the same explanation as Prag-raising. We think that the subjectivity of the matrix predicate is the driving force behind Neg-raising. Under a default analysis of negation, negation in a subjective matrix predicate (16a) might only be used to deny that a certain subjective predicate is true. The paraphrase in (16b) shows the meaning of this use of negation: it is used to deny a certain assumption about the amount of certainty of the matrix subject. The contexts in which negation is needed in this way are very rare and involve emphasis of the matrix verb like in (17). This may have made room for subjective-predicate negation to develop a special meaning with some verbs but not others (Bartsch 1973; Nuyts 1990; Gajewski 2007). As a result *not thinking* became, for example, constricted to the meaning ‘doubting’, which is then equivalent to a matrix verb *think* with negation in the embedded clause (16c).

- (16) a      Ik denk niet [dat het gaat regenen]  
              ‘I do not think [it will rain]’  
      b      Het is niet zo dat ik denk [dat het gaat regenen]  
              ‘It is not the case that I think [it will rain]’  
      c      Ik denk [dat het niet gaat regenen]  
              ‘I think [that it will not rain]’
- (17)      Ik DENK niet [dat het gaat regenen], ik weet het ZEKER  
              ‘I do not THINK [it will rain], I’m CERTAIN of it’

Similarly, *not knowing* became constricted to ‘being uncertain’ (18a) and *not possible* to ‘ruled out’ (18b).

- (18) a      Ik weet niet [of het gaat regenen]  
              ‘I do not know [whether it will rain]
- b      Het is niet mogelijk [dat het gaat regenen]  
              ‘It’s not possible [that it will rain]

This shows that Neg-raising is a different phenomenon than Prag-raising: Prag-raising is not about the subjectivity of the matrix predicate, but about the subjectivity of the marker itself. Thus, while Neg-raising interacts with the meaning of the subjective matrix verb, Prag-raising does not.

## 5 Conclusions

Dutch has a phenomenon that involves a pragmatic marker being located in a matrix clause, while it functionally belongs to the embedded clause. We have called this phenomenon Prag-raising. We have found that many Dutch pragmatic markers allow for this phenomenon and assume that any Dutch pragmatic marker may undergo it. Future research will have to show whether Prag-raising also exists in other languages, but the internet example in (19) suggests that it exists in English.

- (19) I perhaps think [that very few people understand what agnosticism truly means]

Our analysis of why Prag-raising exists is that there is a tendency among speakers to move a subjective pragmatic marker out of an objective embedded clause. This analysis predicts that it should be harder to Prag-raise temporal, locative and manner adverbs – which are not subjective – compared to pragmatic markers. We have found evidence for this prediction.

Prag-raising resembles the well-known phenomenon of Neg-raising in some respects. One difference, however, is that Neg-raising is restricted to a number of matrix verbs, while

Prag-raising does not suffer from such a restriction. Our explanation for the difference involves the fact that while pragmatic markers are subjective elements, negation is not. In other words, pragmatic markers want to be raised because of their own subjectivity, while Neg-raised negation markers are caused by the subjectivity of the matrix predicate. We therefore conclude that Prag-raising is a phenomenon in its own right.

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**Appendix: overview of Dutch pragmatic markers that allow Prag-raising from the CGN (Corpus of Spoken Dutch)**

*eigenlijk* ‘actually’

fn007133

Nou de d’r is [...] dus een tendens om de geneeskundige kant steeds meer voorop te stellen. [...] als je naar het beleid kijkt uh wat we wat we in Nederland gezamenlijk uh willen uitvoeren naar deze kinderen **dan zie je eigenlijk [dat ‘t steeds meer naar de geneeskundige kant uh begint over te hellen].**

Well nowadays there is a tendency to focus on the medical side. [...] if you look at the policy for these children in the Netherlands, **you see [that, actually, it is all moving toward the medical side].**

*even* ‘kindly’

fn009130

Ik wil graag dat jullie dat even oefenen. En wel op bladzijde drieënzestig. **Wil ik even [dat jullie sommetje eenentwintig A B E en F maakt].**

Now I want you to practice. Go to page sixty-three. **I want [you to kindly do sum twenty-one A, B, E and F]**

*gewoon* ‘just’

fn000715

[...] deed ik vroeger wel 'ns; **zei gewoon [dat 't modern gedicht was]** en dan uh pende gewoon wat zinnen achter elkaar.

[...] I used to do that; **I said [it was just a modern poem]** and scribbled down some sentences.

*inderdaad* ‘indeed’

fn000137

A: Vindt u eigenlijk dat ‘t beroep van uh docent wel genoeg gewaardeerd wordt?

B: Ik zou natuurlijk idioot zijn als ik ja zou zeggen hè. Dat is dat w uh denk ik niet. Nee

**ik denk inderdaad [dat er een stukje maatschappelijke teloorgang achter steekt].**

Maar ik weet niet of dat alleen voor het beroep van de docent zit hè.

A: So do you think that the teaching profession is appreciated enough?

B: Well, I would be an idiot if I said yes, right? So, I don’t think so. No, **I think [that, indeed, some sort of societal decline is behind it].** But I don’t know whether this only goes for the teaching profession.

*meer* ‘rather’

fn007333

Ik ik geloof zelf niet in inspira-spiratie. Uhm dat vraagt men ook altijd, hoe kom je aan inspiratie. En **ik denk meer [dat ‘t een uh een vorm is van uh concentratie].**

I don’t believe in inspiration myself. They always ask where I get my inspiration. **I think [that it’s rather a form of concentration].**

*ook* ‘really’

fn000693

A: Wat me opviel was dat die aanvalletjes die Sargon heeft hè dat ie dat nooit thuis heeft hè?

B: Ja. Nee [...] In feite moet ie altijd langzaam lopen. Gaat ie sneller lopen dan krijgt ie ‘t.

[...] Dus **ik denk ook [dat ‘t iets uh iets uhm nou ja m iets met de snelheid van zijn lopen te maken heeft].**

A. I noticed that Sargon never has one of his attacks at home, right?

B. Yeah. No. [...] He is supposed to walk slowly. He gets them when he walks to fast. [...]

So **I think [that they are really connected to his walking speed].**

*sowieso* 'in any case'

fn000577

A: 'k Vind sowieso jongens die in gezelschap hun T-shirt uittrekken twijfelachtig.

B: Nou ja, kijk 't ligt eraan, want d'r waren nog twee andere jongens bij uit haar klas en die waren zeg maar strak in 't vel en zo [...] Nee maar ik bedoel dan vind je 't niet zo erg <gelach>.

A: Nee maar uh **ik vind sowieso [dat je gewoon niet uh je trui gaat uittrekken].**

A: I dislike boys who take off their shirts in public, in any case.

B: Well, look, it depends; there were these other boys from her class with really nice bodies [...] Surely you would not mind it then <laughter>.

A: Well **I think [that, in any case, you shouldn't just take off your shirt]**

*toch* 'still'

fn007405

We zitten al een halve minuut in extra tijd. Maar er is nog niet duidelijk wat er precies bij gaat komen. En dat lijkt me toch een aanzienlijke tijd. **Ik schat toch [dat we vier tot vijf minuten extra speeltijd erbij krijgen].**

We are already half a minute in overtime. But it's still not clear how much we will get. It ought to be a considerable amount of time. **I guess [that we will still get four or five minutes of extra time].**

*wel* 'probably'

fn008102

A: [...] is 't nog heel veel moeite om 't te doen nog dan?

B: Uhm nou 'k verwacht van niet nee.

A: Nee nou dan graag want ik vind 't een leuke CD.

B: Ja. Ja maar als 't dus weer niet lukt zeg maar dan uh is er iets mis of zo.

A: Dat is dan jammer dan.

B: Dan uh ja. Maar **de denkt wel [dat 't moet lukken zo op deze manier]**.

A: Ja.

A: [...] but is it a lot of effort to do it?

B: No, I expect not.

A: Okay, then please do; I really like that CD.

B: Yeah, but if it fails again, there is probably something wrong.

A: Well, that's too bad then.

B: Sure. But **you think [that it will probably work if I do it like this]**.