Niet huilen maar: negation, directives and particles

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The Dutch modal particle *maar* is found in several types of directives, usually weakening the imperative force. Here, we focus on three tenseless directives: the morphological imperative (1a), the infinitive used as an imperative (1b, 1c), and the past participle used as an imperative (1d, 1e).[1]

(1)   a.   Huil maar   d.   Maar stevig door-ge-stap-t
             cry-IMP PART   PART briskly PART-PREF-step-SUFF
             'Feel free to cry'   'Let's get on with it'
        b.   Huilen maar   e.   Stevig door-ge-stap-t maar
             cry-INF PART   briskly PART-PREF-step-SUFF but
             'Feel free to cry'   'Let's get on with it'
        c.   Maar doen
             PART do
             'Go ahead'

Maar has a number of other functions (Foolen 1993), including use as a contrasting conjunction (2a) (the most common), a scalar particle (2b), and a durative marker (2c).

(2)   a.   Het regent, maar morgen is het droog
             it rains, but tomorrow is it dry
             'It rains, but it will be dry tomorrow'
        b.   We hoeven maar vier functionele projecties aan te nemen
             we need but four functional projections on to take
             'We need only assume four functional projections'
        c.   En hij maar praten de hele dag
             and he but talk-INF the whole day
             'He never stops talking'

As the examples in (1) show, imperative *maar* can occur both before and after the verbal material in tenseless directives, except for the true imperative, where we always find the order imperative, modal particle, rest of verbal material.[2]

(3)   a.   Wees maar stil   b.   *Maar wees stil
             be-IMP PART silent   PART be-IMP silent
             'better be quiet'

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[1] Cf. also De Vries (1914). Hoeksema (1992: 127) hypothesizes that all non-finite variants of the imperative, i.e. the infinitive and the past participle, are lexicalized in Dutch.

[2] The only Dutch verb with a morphologically distinct imperative is *zijn* 'to be'. (2) is fine with coordinative *maar*.

Although *maar* is not a negative marker, its unlike position with respect to true and suppletive imperatives reminds us of the observations in Zanuttini (1997: Ch. 4) concerning negative imperatives in Romance languages. These languages are supposed to have two NegP's. In most of these languages, true imperatives cannot be combined with preverbal sentential negation, which is correlated with the highest NegP. Suppletive imperatives, however, may follow this negative marker:

(4)   a.   *Non telefona   (Italian: p. 108, 9)
           neg call-IMP
      b.   Non telefonate   (Italian: p. 108, 10a)
           neg call-IND-2PL
           'Don't call'
      c.   Non kántes   (Sardinian: p. 110, 19)
           neg sing-SUBJ
           'Don't talk'
      d.   Non parlare a nessuno   (Italian: p. 119, 43a)
           neg talk-INF to no-one
           'Don't talk to anybody'
      e.   Non cadènna   (Calabrese: p. 123: 58a)
           neg fall-GERUND
           'Don't fall'

Zanuttini (1997:117) hypothesizes: "True imperatives lack any kind of marking for tense, aspect, or mood, whereas suppletive imperatives exhibit some; this difference could be what lies behind their different behavior with respect to pre-verbal negative markers." Following a proposal by Kayne, she explains the difference in acceptability between (4a) on the one hand and (4b-4e) on the other hand along the following lines (details left aside). All clauses with the illocutionary force of an imperative must check certain features in C0. Moreover, the preverbal negative marker requires that the head of MoodP be checked. True imperative forms of main verbs cannot check mood features, due to their poor morphological specifications – hence the ungrammaticality of (4a). Indicative and subjunctive suppletive imperative forms, however, can, which explains the grammaticality of (4b-4c). The infinitive in (4d) and the gerund in (4e) are not morphologically rich enough themselves to be able to check mood features. These suppletive forms are therefore supposed to always be accompanied by auxiliary verbs which can, as they are the spell-out of mood features. These auxiliaries are covert in most Romance dialects, but overt in some:

(5)   a.   No stá me-lo dire   (Paduan: p. 122, 56a)
           neg stay me-it say-INF
           'Don't tell me that'
      b.   Non sciatə scennə   (Tarantino: p. 124, 65a)
           neg go-INF going
           'Don't go'

A comparable situation seems to exist in Dutch (and Afrikaans, according to Robbers 1992). Let us assume that Dutch likewise has two NegP's. The true imperative always precedes the

negation marker, i.e. it can only combine with negation in the lower NegP (6a), whereas suppletive imperatives invariantly follow negation, i.e. they select the highest NegP (6b-6c).

(6)   a.   Wees niet bang   c.   Niet getreurd
            be-IMP neg afraid   neg lamented
            'Don't be afraid'   'Don't lament'
        b.   Niet huilen
            neg cry-INF
            'Don't cry'

Suppose we adopt an analysis for Dutch directives parallel to Zanuttini's proposal for Romance, i.e. postulate an abstract auxiliary in the case of the suppletive forms. The existence of a (substandard) infinitival variant with an overt auxiliary seems to be an argument in favor of this approach:[3]

(7)   Doe niet huilen   (Non-standard Dutch)
            do-IMP not cry
            'Don't cry'

A very serious problem with this approach, however, is the word order contrast we find when we add imperative *maar*. With an overt auxiliary, the only order possible is Particle Negation Verb, whereas both Negation Verb Particle and Particle Negation Verb are found in the case of the supposedly covert auxiliary. According to our assumptions, however, these word order possibilities should have been the same.

(8)   a.   Doe maar niet huilen   (Non-standard Dutch)
            do-IMP PART neg cry-INF
            'Don't cry'
        b.   *Doe niet huilen maar
            do-IMP neg cry-INF PART
        c.   Niet huilen maar
            neg huilen-INF PART
            'Don't cry'
        d.   Maar niet huilen
            PART neg huilen-INF
            'Don't cry'

It goes without saying that Dutch past participles used as directives are not the same as Romance gerunds with the same function. Let us, however, take the fact that they both occur to the right of the negation as an indication that they lack the features that have to be checked for the negation operator. And let us furthermore try to adopt a comparable analysis: an auxiliary as a spell-out of these very features. Again, this type of approach is apparently supported by

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[3] There also exists a (standard language) variant with auxiliaries such as *zitten* 'sit' and *staan* 'stand': *zit niet te huilen* (lit. 'sit not to cry') 'don't cry'. These cases are incomparable as they invariantly show infinitival *te*, which is necessarily absent from the supposedly parallel example (6b).

the existence of a (marginal) variant with an overt auxiliary, in this case an impersonal construction involving *moeten* 'must'.

(9)   ?Er moet niet getreurd
         there must neg lamented
          'Don't lament'

But again, the variant with the supposedly covert auxiliary allows for unexpected word orders when the modal particle is added:

(10)   a.   ?Er moet maar niet getreurd
                  there must PART neg lamented
                   'Don't lament'
          b.   *Er moet niet getreurd maar
                  there must neg lamented PART
          c.   Niet getreurd maar
                  neg lamented PART
                   'Don't lament'
          d.   Maar niet getreurd
                  PART neg lamented
                   'Don't lament'

It is thus clear that (our interpretation of) Zanuttini's theory about suppletive imperatives makes the wrong predictions about the position of maar again. We conclude, therefore, that although we don't know how to analyze negated suppletive imperatives in Dutch, a straightforward adoption of the solution proposed by Zanuttini for Romance appears to be unfeasible in light of the relative positions of negation, verb and modal particle.

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