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A reflection on constructionalization and constructional borrowing, inspired by an emerging Dutch replica of the ‘time’-*away* construction

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While recent years have seen an increased interest for the potential effects of language contact on the formal and/or semantic properties of constructions, existing case studies of (potentially) contact-induced change in individual constructions (e.g. Pietsch 2010; Höder 2012, 2014; Van de Velde and Zenner 2010; Coleman and Noël 2014, etc.) have so far made little impact on the booming field of diachronic construction grammar at large, i.e. they have stayed largely under the radar of constructionist theorizing about language change. The present paper reflects on the theoretical significance of a recent innovation in Dutch, viz. the emergence of an argument structure construction that mirrors the form and semantics of the English ‘time’-*away* construction first described in Jackendoff (1997). While it is fairly uncontroversial that English influence has *something* to do with this innovation, it is by no means easy to determine exactly what has happened. Even though an alternative scenario, in which the new Dutch pattern developed out of pre-existing Dutch pattern featuring *weg* ‘away’, cannot be ruled out, I will argue that one plausible way of accounting for the observed facts is to assume that a ready-made English form-meaning unit was copied into Dutch. On this view, the observed change would count as an instance of instantaneous grammatical constructionalization.

1. Introduction¹

One of the most important recent developments in the expanding field of construction-based grammar is the rise to prominence of diachronic construction grammar – sometimes even spelled Diachronic Construction Grammar to underscore its status as an emerging subdiscipline in its own right, as in Barðdal and Gildea's (2015) introduction to the edited volume of the same name – i.e., of work in which a construction-based view of grammar is combined with a focus on language change; see Fried (2009, 2013), Noël (2007, this issue), Hilpert (2013, 1–18), Traugott and Trousdale (2013, 39–40), Barðdal and Gildea (2015), *inter alia*, for discussions of the origin and theoretical backgrounds of diachronic construction grammar (also see Boogaart, Coleman, and Rutten 2014, 6–7 for discussion of the increasing attention for issues of variation and change as one out of four new research directions in construction grammar). Existing case studies in diachronic construction grammar have focused on a diverse set of formal and/or functional changes, but a type of change that has received a particularly large amount of attention, is the emergence of “new” constructions out of existing linguistic material, i.e. *constructionalization* in terms of the theory of constructional change developed in the influential monograph by Traugott and Trousdale (2013) and various other publications by the same authors (e.g. Traugott 2008a, b, 2015; Trousdale 2014; Traugott and Trousdale 2014), a phenomenon that typically proceeds through a series of discrete micro-steps (see Section 4 for further discussion). To give an example, all of the papers included in the above-mentioned volume edited by Barðdal et al. (2015) are concerned with constructionalization, its relation to grammaticalization and/or the distinction between constructionalization and (ordinary) *constructional change* (i.e., formal or functional change *not* leading to the creation of a new node in the constructional network) in one way or another.

A different strand in diachronic construction grammar is comprised by research into the role of *language contact* in constructional change. Pietsch (2010) offers a construction-based account of three clusters of innovations in Hiberno-English tense-aspect constructions triggered by contact with Irish. Höder (2012, 2014) introduces the approach of Diasystematic Construction Grammar, which assumes that the constructicons of bilingual speakers include both interconnected language-specific constructions and so-called “diaconstructions” underspecified for language: once generalizations across interlingually identified constructions have been formed, language-specific idiosyncrasies may be levelled

1. The author is affiliated with the GLIMS research group at Ghent University. I would like to thank Graeme Trousdale and an anonymous reviewer for their helpful and thought-provoking comments on an earlier version. The usual disclaimers apply.

out, as Höder illustrates with examples from contact between Old Swedish and Latin. Doğruöz and Backus (2009) discuss the emergence of a number of “innovative” constructions in Dutch Turkish, most of which can be traced back to the copying of complex lexical units from Dutch (e.g. the use of *yapmak* ‘do’ in contexts where Turkish would normally use a more specific verb, modelled on the prolific use of the corresponding verb *doen* in Dutch). Coleman and Noël (2014) argue that the development of a deontic meaning in the Dutch nominative-and-infinitive patterns *geacht/verondersteld worden te* is a case of polysemy copying or distributional assimilation, the equivalent English pattern *be supposed to* providing the model (also see Coleman to appear on distributional assimilation in Afrikaans three-argument constructions). Van de Velde and Zenner (2010), for a final example, discuss how the MTV show *Pimp my ride* gave rise to a productive [*pimp* POSS N] pattern in Dutch, where an increasingly diverse set of nouns can fill the N slot (e.g. *pimp je grootje* ‘pimp your grandma’). Several other studies along the same lines could be mentioned and all of these document intriguing cases of (potentially) contact-induced innovation and change. However, it can also be observed that they have stayed largely under the radar of constructionist theorizing on language change: Traugott and Trousdale (2013), for instance, in spite of their aim to provide an overarching view of constructional change (p. 39), explicitly exclude *contact-induced* change from their analysis, while acknowledging that it is an important issue (p. 35, fn 24).

The present paper is an attempt at (further) demonstrating the theoretical interest of contact-induced constructional change for diachronic construction grammar at large. Its focus is on a recent innovation in Dutch, viz. the emergence of a new Dutch argument structure construction that mirrors the English ‘time’-away construction that was first described in Jackendoff (1997). This English construction will first be briefly introduced in Section 2, after which Section 3 presents Internet data which suggest that at least some speakers of present-day Dutch possess a construction that is an exact formal and semantic replica of this English construction. Section 4 outlines two possible scenarios for how this innovative construction has come to be part of these speakers’ repertoires and reflects on their implications for theories of (contact-related) constructional change, and Section 5 presents the conclusions.

2. The ‘time’-away construction in English

Jackendoff (1997) is an extensive investigation of the formal and semantic properties of the English pattern illustrated in (1), for which the author introduces the label ‘time’-away construction.

- (1) a. Bill slept the afternoon away.
- b. We're twistin' the night away.
- c. Ann read the morning away.

The 'time'-away construction qualifies as a *constructional idiom*, in Jackendoff's terms, i.e. as a "syntactic configuration whose structure contributes semantic content above and beyond that contained in the constituent lexical items" (p. 553). In Jackendoff's Parallel Architecture model of grammar, the status of the 'time'-away construction as a meaningful construction in its own right is somewhat less self-evident than in constructionist models which assume that the *whole* of grammar consists of conventionalized form-meaning pairings (a fundamental tenet of several constructionist approaches most famously captured by Goldberg's slogan *It's constructions all the way down*, see Goldberg 2003, 223; 2006, 18, *inter alia*): Jackendoff's model also allows for other kinds of abstract stored structure, i.e. for syntactic configurations that are *not* correlated with meaning (also see Jackendoff 2013). In the case of the 'time'-away construction, however, there is a clear pairing of peculiar syntax with peculiar semantics. Its semantic content is approached by the paraphrase 'to spend the said period of time V-ing', but with the additional "insinuation that the activity in question was heedless pleasure, or that the subject should have been doing something else, or both" (Jackendoff 1997, 538). Formally, what is most remarkable about the construction is that the time expression functions as a direct object NP while it is not licensed by the verb: rather, "it usurps [the direct object] position so that the verb itself cannot license an NP there" (Jackendoff 1997, 536).² The construction further consists of a subject, a verb and the particle *away*, which displays the same syntactic behaviour as particles in other Verb-Particle constructions.³

2. Dixon (2005, 316) argues that, pace Jackendoff, the time phrases in *John slept the whole afternoon away* etc. are reduced time adverbs, not objects, as they "do not have the criterial properties of objects [...] with respect to passivisation, etc." However, Jackendoff (1997, 536) does give a passive example (... *many happy evenings were drunk away by the students*) and briefly discusses several other respects in which the time phrase of the 'time'-away construction behaves relevantly differently from NP time adjuncts (tough-movement, impossibility of stranding via VP-ellipsis, positioning vis-à-vis manner adverbs). In addition, the fact that the construction does not combine with a "regular" direct object (e.g. **Frank drank scotch the night away*, **Ann read the newspaper the morning away*) also testifies to the object status of the time phrase. It is of course well possible that the passivization properties of the time phrase are subject to regional or individual variation; exploring this would go beyond the scope of the present paper.

3. An anonymous reviewer observes that this is not quite correct in that *away* cannot be put in immediately postverbal pre-NP position, unlike particles in other Verb-Particle constructions: *?*sleep away the afternoon* (asterisk and question mark added by the reviewer). However,

Jackendoff (1997, 535) notes that the ‘time’-*away* construction can be used with a wide range of verbs: if a verb has an intransitive subcategorization, it is in principle eligible for use in the construction. Obligatorily transitive verbs are ruled out: e.g. **Fred devoured the morning away*. The Internet examples in (2), which feature verbs denoting activities the sheer existence of which Jackendoff could not have foreseen in the mid-1990s, testify to the construction’s large degree of productivity.

- (2) a. When the cat’s away...the mice will facebook, online shop and twitter the day away. (twitter.com>, tweet of 15 June 2012)
- b. Miley did Lil’ Kim proud by twerking the night away in her sexy, breast-baring costume at a wild Halloween party in Los Angeles on Oct. 31. (<www.imdb.com/news/ni56378394/>, post of 1 Nov 2013)

A matter of debate is the nature of the relationship between the ‘time’-*away* construction and the resultative construction. McIntyre (2003) opposes Jackendoff’s view that the ‘time’-*away* pattern presents a construction in its own right: instead, McIntyre argues, examples such as *I slept/danced/read the afternoon away* are ordinary transitive resultatives, with *away* metaphorically denoting the resultant state of the object referent, viz. ‘used up, lost’. Jackendoff (1997, 549–551) gives a couple of reasons why the ‘time’-*away* construction *cannot* be reduced to the resultative construction. As is also observed by Cappelle (2005, 451–452), not all of these are equally convincing, but Jackendoff’s discussion of the example in (3) below does seem to support his analysis, in that the example nicely illustrates the semantic contrast between the resultative and ‘time’-*away* constructions. The example is ambiguous: on a resultative reading, it denotes a situation in which Bill has bet his life and lost (i.e., Bill’s possibly single act of gambling caused his life to be lost); on the ‘time’-*away* interpretation, the example can be paraphrased as ‘Bill spent his whole life gambling’. Note that on the former reading, a time adverbial of the type *in X time* could be added, as is typical for resultatives (e.g. *Bill gambled his life away in five minutes’ time*), while this would be impossible on the latter reading (e.g. *?* Bill gambled his life away in five decades*). Thus, the example shows that the semantics of both constructions are quite distinct.

- (3) Bill gambled his life away. (Jackendoff 1997, 550)

Jackendoff (1997, 535) observes that the particle *can* invert, especially in combination with a somewhat longer NP, providing the (construed) example *Stan fished away all of Tuesday morning*. Again, there may be sociolinguistic variation involved here (also see footnote 2).

Of course, the fact that, synchronically, ‘time’-*away* clauses cannot be reduced to run-of-the-mill resultatives does not imply that there can be no diachronic relation between them. Jackendoff (1997) does not address the history of the ‘time’-*away* construction, nor do I know of any other diachronic work on this construction, but in view of the fact that verb-particle constructions in general started out as directional/resultative constructions (see, e.g., Elenbaas 2007), it is reasonable to assume a diachronic link between the ‘time’-*away* construction and resultative constructions with *away* as a secondary predicate.

Another construction discussed in Jackendoff (1997, 539–540) is the intransitive pattern with aspectual *away*, illustrated in (4), which roughly means ‘Bill kept on V-ing’ (see, e.g., Cappelle 2005, 382–393 for a more fine-grained analysis).

- (4) Bill slept/waltzed/drank/talked/read/sneezed away. (Jackendoff 1997: 539)

The construction in (5) shares some properties with the ‘time’-*away* construction: the verb cannot license a lexical direct object (e.g. **Bill drank scotch away*) and the pattern carries some of the heedless activity sense found in the ‘time’-*away* construction. “Thus,” Jackendoff concludes, “the *away* in the ‘time’-*away* construction looks as though it might be related to aspectual *away*” (1997, 540). Again, Jackendoff makes no diachronic claim here, but it seems reasonable to suggest that the constructions are also diachronically related, with the pattern exemplified in (4) instantiating a possible source for the ‘time’-*away* construction (on multiple source constructions, see, e.g. Van de Velde, De Smet, and Ghesquière 2013; also see Section 5).

3. A Dutch replica of the construction

3.1 Verhagen (2007) on the Dutch *ver*-construction

Verhagen (2007) discusses a number of pairs of constructions from Dutch and English which are largely functionally equivalent but which display interesting contrasts in form and/or degree of productivity. One of the constructions in question is Jackendoff’s ‘time’-*away* construction, for which, Verhagen points out, there is no direct Dutch equivalent in the form of an argument structure construction with similar syntax and semantics. There is, however, a morphological process that bears some functional resemblance to the English ‘time’-*away* construction: Dutch has a productive word formation pattern in which the prefix *ver-* is attached to an (intransitive) verbal stem, resulting in a transitive verb meaning ‘to waste/use up by V-ing’. (5) shows some representative examples quoted by Verhagen, with his English glosses (see Verhagen 2007, 265, 266, and 268, respectively).

- (5) a. *Hij had de hele middag verslapen.*
 he had the whole afternoon ver-slept
 'He had slept the entire afternoon away.'
- b. *Ze hebben hun tijd verpraat.*
 they have their time ver-chattered
 'They chattered their time away.'
- c. *Hij vergokte zijn erfenis.*
 he ver-gambled his inheritance
 'He gambled his inheritance away.'

The meaning of (5a) and (5b) above approximates the meaning of clauses instantiating the 'time'-away construction in English, as shown by the English glosses. In Verhagen's terms: "By prefixing a verb with *ver-*, the idea is evoked that what the object referent refers to is spent completely (in fact wasted) through the process the subject referent chose to engage in (denoted by the verb-stem)" (2007, 266). The *ver*-construction covers a broader semantic range than the 'time'-away construction, however. As is evident from (5c), the direct object NP in transitive clauses with prefixed *ver*-verbs need not refer to a stretch of time: it can also refer to an amount of money, or, in general, to anything that is considered *valuable*.⁴

There is a further, more subtle semantic contrast between the 'time'-away construction and the Dutch *ver*-construction. In a footnote, Verhagen (2007, 269) observes that "[i]t might be ... that the concept of "wasting" is slightly more prominent in the Dutch construction than in its English counterpart." This indeed seems to be the case: the idea that the direct object referent is "spent" is a crucial component of the meaning of both constructions, but, for the English construction, "wasted" may be too negative a qualification. Jackendoff (1997, 538) points out that we can get close to the sense of the 'time'-away construction by adding the adjunct *carefree*: the meaning of *Nancy slept three hours away* is approximated by that of *Nancy slept carefree for three hours*.⁵ The Dutch *ver*-construction, by

4. In fact, Verhagen (2007) moves on to argue that the *English* construction allows for a broader range of direct objects than just time expressions, too. However, this analysis seems to conflate the 'time'-away construction with certain resultative constructions with *away*, which is at odds with Jackendoff's (1997) account.

5. Cappelle (2005, 448) quotes an instance of the English 'time'-away construction where this insinuation of heedless pleasure or lightheartedness is not present, see (i) below. I leave it to future research to investigate exactly how infrequent such uses are.

(i) It's always easy for the Haves to tell the Have-Nots that their gifts are really burdens. I'm sure Priam tells the same thing to the muddy-faced peasant he meets travelling through his City, and maybe the peasant believes him. But then both of them go home: one to his rich, warm house, and the other to his frigid fields to toil the night away.

contrast, evokes the concept of irresponsible and/or morally objectionable behaviour, rather than just conveying a sense of carefreedom or lightheartedness. Compare *He danced the night away* to the equivalent Dutch *ver*-example in (6) below, for instance, which is strongly negatively-evaluating.

- (6) *Wat is dat voor een manier van doen voor een getrouwd man, om zijn vrouw en kind in den steek te laten om den nacht te gaan verdansen op een bal?*
 ‘What kind of behaviour is that for a married man, to leave his wife and child behind in order to go dancing the night away at a ball [or rather, in order to go wasting the night dancing at a ball]?’
 (Nellie van Kol, *Nellie's groote vertelselboek. Sprookjes en vertellingen van Mevrouw van Kol*, 1931). <www.dbnl.org>

In fact, while *dance* and its hyponyms are very probably the verbs most often attested in the ‘time’-away construction – perfectly in line with the idea of heedless pleasure evoked by the construction – it was quite hard to find examples with Dutch *verdansen* ‘VER-dance’: Google queries for this verb combined with objects such as *de nacht* ‘the night’ or *de avond* ‘the evening’ only produced the somewhat older example in (6). More prototypical *ver*-verbs include *verdrinken* ‘to waste by drinking’, *vergoeken* ‘to waste by gambling’, *verlummelen* ‘to waste by idling or hanging about’, *verkletsen* ‘to waste by chatting idly’, etc. In sum, the Dutch *ver*-construction is more strongly negatively-evaluating than the English ‘time’-away construction.

3.2 A newly emerging Dutch equivalent for the ‘time’-away construction

From the above discussion, it is clear that though the Dutch transitive construction with an intransitive verb prefixed with *ver*- may serve as a translation equivalent for the ‘time’-away construction in certain contexts, it does not present a complete semantic match. Interestingly, in recent informal Dutch language use such as is found in huge quantities on the Internet, examples occur of a Dutch pattern that more closely resembles the English construction, both formally and semantically. (7) provides a sample of examples, with – whenever this could be retrieved – the date of the blogpost, tweet, etc. the example stems from. The particle used is *weg*, which is the closest Dutch equivalent for *away*.⁶ The examples were found through Google queries for exact strings consisting of (i) a time phrase immediately followed

6. In (7c) and also in (9), *weg* is attached to the verb, whereas in (7a), where *weg* is also immediately adjacent to the verb, it is written separately. This reflects the spelling variation attested with so-called *separable complex verbs* (SCVs) in Dutch. In any event, the spelling in (7c) and (9) should not be taken as indicating that *weg* is turning into some kind of prefix: it is clearly a particle, as shown by, for instance, its position in the clause in combination with a finite verb: *Tim danst de nachtweg* ‘Tim dances the night away’ rather than *Tim weg-danst de nacht* ‘Tim

by *weg* – e.g. *de nacht weg* ‘the night away’ or *de avond weg* ‘the evening away’ (which produced instances such as 7a and 7b), or (ii) a verb denoting a hedonistic activity followed by one or more random words (using the asterisk in Google) followed by *weg* – e.g. *dronken * weg* ‘drank * away’ or *luieren * weg* ‘lazy * away’ (which produced 7d), or (iii) a verb denoting a hedonistic activity immediately preceded by *weg*, either written in one word (e.g. *weggedronken* ‘away-drunk’, which produced 7c) or in two. The queries were carried out in an unsystematic way, just to collect a sample of real-language instances. Many additional observed instances could be quoted, all from informal texts which appear to have been written in the last ten years or so. Obviously, the queries also returned many hits which did *not* exemplify the relevant construction with *weg* ‘away’ – such as *Waarschijnlijk ben ik het grootste deel van de nacht weg* ‘Probably, I’ll be away for the largest part of the night’, for a random example.

- (7) a. *Funky Fabric blijft zorgen voor funky treats en laat jullie op zaterdag 29 november opnieuw gratis de nacht weg shaken op alleen maar het allerbeste op het vlak van disco, jaren ’80 en ’90 dance hits.*
(www.vooruit.be), post of 29 Nov 2014)
‘Funky Fabric keeps on providing funky treats and will again let you shake the night away for free on only the very best of disco and eighties and nineties dance hits, on Saturday November 29.’
- b. *Vanavond zappen we de avond weg. Lekker hersenloos.*
(twitter.com), tweet of 3 Feb 2014)
‘This evening, we will zap away the evening. Nicely brainless.’
- c. *Toen ik rond 12:00 naar bed wilde gaan werd ik door 3 britse jongens op mijn kamer gevraagd mee te gaan naar de kroeg aan de overkant. Daar hebben we de avond weggedronken en gedanst.*
(<http://christiaankorterink.waarbenijj.nu/reisverslag/3020175/busbowling>), post of 17 June 2009)
‘When I wanted to go to bed around midnight, I was asked by three British guys from my room to join them to the joint across the road. There we drank and danced the evening away.’
- d. *Het is weeral een hete dag en de warmte maakt ons tam, we trekken op ons dooie gemak terug naar het kampterrein en luieren de vooravond weg in de schaduw.* (<https://holbewoners.wordpress.com/>), post of 6 July 2015)
‘It is another hot day and the heat makes us lazy, we slowly retreat to the campground and laze away the early evening in the shade.’

away-dances the night’. For an extensive discussion of Dutch SCVs from a construction-based perspective, see Booij (2010, Chapter 5).

- e. *Ze ligt nu voor het eerst sinds tijden de middag weg te maffen, niet zo vreemd na al die late avonden dus!*
 (<http://www.ikkeben.nl/forum/topic.asp?topic_id=24527>,
 post of 12 Dec 2011)
 ‘For the first time in ages, she lies sleeping away the afternoon – which isn’t that weird after all those late evenings.’
- f. *... vroeger zaten we met meerdere (tegelijk) op skype, gezellig een avond weg te lullen. Maar met de telefoon kan je maar 1 iemand spreken.*
 (<http://forum.viva.nl/forum/list_message/572925>, post of 29 Sept 2007)
 ‘We used to be on skype with several people at the same time, agreeably bullshitting the evening away. But on the telephone, you can only talk to one person.’
- g. *Etiquette is fun, want je laadt een soort bankkaart op met geld en je kunt dan pakweg veertig (!) of meer wijnen per glas proeven: van een sipje over een half glas tot een vol glas. Heerlijk om hier met je ‘wijnkaart’ de avond weg te proeven, telkens voor een paar euro.*
 ‘Etiquette is a fun place, because you load a kind of credit card with money and then you can taste about forty or more wines by the glass, from a sip over a half glass to a full glass. Delicious to sit here tasting away the evening with your “wine card”, for just a couple of euros per drink.’
 (<<http://filipsalmon.be/wordpress/wine/>>, post of mid 2014)
- h. *We zonnen de middag weg op Meelup beach (waar Coert een van zijn favoriete foto’s schiet, ja die met de bomen).* (<<http://www.rondjeaustralie.nl/rondjeaustralie15.html>>, post of April 2006?)
 ‘We sunbathe the afternoon away at Meelup beach (where Coert shoots one of his favourite pictures, yes, the one with the trees).’

The sample in (7) shows that the pattern occurs with a range of different verbs, mostly denoting hedonistic activities, such as drinking, dancing, lazing, sunbathing, wine-tasting, etc. Unlike the construction with prefixed *ver*-verbs, this new Dutch equivalent of the ‘time’-away construction is not particularly negatively-evaluating: it denotes a situation in which a period of time is spent engaging in an agreeable if not (economically) productive activity, but there is no implication that this is to be seen as an actual “waste” of time, let alone as a shame. By comparison, it would be decidedly odd for an arts center to post a message on its website inviting people to come *de nacht verdansen* (‘*VER*-dance the night’) (compare 7a), for a mother to post a message to a forum saying how relieved she is that her baby girl is finally *VER*-sleeping the afternoon (compare 7e), etc.

Just like in English, the time expression in the direct object slot can occur with a variety of determiners but also quantifiers and modifiers, as illustrated in (8).

- (8) a. *Pelle flipperde met zeker twintig bier op veel nachten weg in die kelderbar. De hellraiserkast daar was beroemd in zijn vriendenkring.*
 (<<http://zozeggen.blogspot.be/2013/01/hit.html>>, post of 2 Jan 2013)
 ‘Drinking at least twenty beers, Pelle pinballed many a night away in that cellar bar. The hellraiser machine there was famous among his friends.’
- b. *Verschuif je ritme. Ga in plaats van een potje zweten overdag een potje in bed liggen maffen. Probeer zoveel mogelijk van de middag weg te snurken dan kan die zon met z’n gelul je niks maken.*
 (<<http://www.pu.nl/artikelen/feature/tips-om-de-zomer-door-te-komen/>>, post of 6 July 2013)
 ‘Change your rhythm. Rather than spending the day sweating, go lie sleeping in your bed. Try to snore away as much of the afternoon as possible, so that that sun with its bullshit can’t harm you.’
- c. *Gelukkig heeft mijn zus de ballen verstand van kinderen, dus kletsen we de halve avond weg zonder dat ik op mijn onopvoedkundige gedrag gewezen word.* (<<https://www.lalecheleague.nl/over-la-leche-league/actueel/article/26-spock-baby>>, post of 5 July 2013)
 ‘Luckily, my sister doesn’t know a f** about children, so that we can chat away half of the evening without me being reproached for my uneducational behaviour.’

Also, and again just like in English, the time expression can occur as the subject in a passive clause, as in (9), which testifies to its objecthood in the above clauses, i.e. the time expression does not function as a free adjunct (also see Jackendoff 1997, 535–536 on English).

- (9) *De nacht werd weggedanst op schitterende muziek van een nieuwe DJ uit Nederland, en pas rond 5 uur kroop ik moe maar voldaan mijn bedje in.*
 (<<http://catherinesadventuresinchina.blogspot.be/>>, post of 21 Dec 2008)
 ‘The night was danced away to great music from a new DJ from Holland, and it wasn’t until around 5 am that I retired to bed, tired but content.’

A final parallel with the English construction that is worth pointing out here is that, instead of by a time expression, the direct object slot can also be filled by a distance expression, which is to be read as ‘the amount of time it took to cover the said distance’ (see Jackendoff 1997, 538–39 on *Bob slept 350 miles/the whole state of Nebraska away*). (10) is a case in point.

- (10) *En terwijl de vogeltjes kwetteren en de spechten kloppen ... , kletsen wij de volgende kilometers weg.*

‘And while the birds are twittering and the woodpeckers are hammering ... we chatter away the next kilometres.’

(<http://depadenopdelanenin.blogspot.be/2012/03/braamt-elten-14-km.html>), post of 23 March 2012, from a blog on long-distance walking)

In sum, there is textual evidence that some speakers of present-day Dutch possess a schematic construction that is a close formal and semantic match of the English ‘time’-*away* construction, the only difference being that Dutch *weg* substitutes for *away* as the only lexically substantive element of the construction.

All of the examples in (7) to (10) are from informal texts, many of which seem to be characterized by an overall large degree of language playfulness. It is not to be ruled out that some of these observed examples involve the conscious imitation of an English model for humoristic effect and/or to deliberately sound hip or unconventional – also see the presence of English loanwords in the immediate context such as *funky treats* in (7a) and *fun* in (7g), or the use of decidedly informal degree adverbs such as *een potje* (literally ‘a little pot’) in (8b) or *de ballen* (literally ‘the balls’) in (8c), for instance. The ‘time’-*weg* construction cannot (yet) be said to be part of “Dutch grammar”: undoubtedly, when presented with isolated constructed examples such as *Hij danste de nacht weg* ‘He danced the night away’, many native speakers would without a moment’s hesitation qualify them as ungrammatical. Still, there is enough textual evidence to warrant the conclusion that the construction is part of the repertoire of at least some linguistically innovative present-day speakers, to be freely employed in informal styles of language. The next section turns to the interesting question of how exactly it has come to be part of these speakers’ repertoires.

Before we move on, however, the claim that the *weg*-pattern in (7) to (10) actually is an innovation should be further substantiated. While the fact that Verhagen (2007) explicitly states that Dutch does not have a direct formal equivalent of the ‘time’-*away* pattern is already telling, it does not, in itself, provide sufficient proof: there is of course a possibility that the *weg*-pattern had simply been overlooked. This is why I checked the Usenet and IRC components of the CONDIV corpus of written Dutch for occurrences of the pattern. This corpus includes text from both Netherlandic and Belgian discussion boards and chat rooms, all dating from the mid to late 1990s, adding up to 27.9 million words – is the largest digitally available collection of somewhat older informal written Dutch (see Grondelaers et al. 2000 for details on the corpus). I looked for occurrences of eight frequent time nouns, viz. *nacht* ‘night’, *dag* ‘day’, *avond* ‘evening’, *middag* ‘afternoon’, *ochtend* ‘morning’, *week* ‘week’, *zomer* ‘summer’ and *vakantie* ‘holiday’ followed by

the string *weg* ‘away’ within the same sentence, with maximally seven intervening words, and while this produced over 600 occurrences, none of these exemplified the *weg* pattern. While I do not at present have any information about the text frequency of the ‘time’-*weg* pattern in present-day language, it would seem that its complete absence in a 28 million word corpus of informal Internet language from the 1990s, in tandem with Verhagen’s (2007) claim that it does not exist, supports the hypothesis that it is a very recent innovation indeed.

4. Two possible scenarios

This section outlines two possible scenarios along which this innovation could have proceeded and discusses their implications for theories of constructional change.

4.1 Scenario 1: Borrowing of a ready-made schematic form-meaning pairing

One possible way of accounting for the facts in (7) to (10) would be to say that linguistically innovative speakers of Dutch with a good command of English have imported a ready-made form-meaning pairing from their L2 into their L1, by copying a configuration of mostly schematic slots with its associated semantic content from English to Dutch, simply replacing the only lexically substantive slot of the construction, the particle *away*, by its closest L1 counterpart, the particle *weg* in the process. We could even hypothesize the existence of a diaconstruction underspecified for language in the minds of bilingual speakers, along the lines of Höder (2012, 2014), i.e. a largely schematic pattern pairing the form [SUBJ V NP[‘time’] {*weg*, *away*}] with the meaning ‘to spend NP V-ing’, with the lexical filling of the open slots by English or Dutch lexical items in concrete usage events triggering the choice for either *weg* or *away* in the particle slots.

Note, however, that such a scenario, in which a new largely schematic construction is created *ex nihilo* on the basis of a foreign model, would have interesting implications for existing views on the nature of contact-induced grammatical change as well as for theories of constructionalization. Though the studies at the intersection of construction grammar and language contact research listed in Section 1 document a diverse set of potentially contact-induced constructional changes, none of the cases discussed there is of exactly the same kind as the emergence of the ‘time’-*weg* pattern in Dutch. Heine and Kuteva (2005), in the introductory chapter to their monograph on *Language Contact and Grammatical Change*, observe that

Broadly speaking, contact-induced influence manifests itself in the transfer of linguistic material from one language to another, where linguistic material can be of any of the following kinds:

(1) Kinds of linguistic transfer

- a. Form, that is, sounds or combinations of sounds
- b. Meanings (including grammatical meanings or functions) or combinations of meanings
- c. Form-meaning units or combinations of form-meaning units
- d. Syntactic relations, that is, the order of meaningful elements
- e. Any combination of (a) through (d) (Heine and Kuteva 2005:2)

Immediately after this list of possibilities, they equate (1c) with one of the three kinds of grammatical transfer distinguished in Weinreich (1964[1953], 30–31), viz. the transfer of grammatical *morphemes*. This is repeated a couple of pages further on, where the authors discuss the label *borrowing*, which they – like much other recent work on language contact – use in a restricted way as referring exclusively to the transfer of *phonetic substance*: “We will use [the term borrowing] exclusively with reference to what we defined ... as (1a) and (1c), that is, to contact-induced transfer involving phonetic substance of some kind or other” (Heine and Kuteva 2005, 6). Note that the case of potentially contact-induced innovation discussed in this paper crucially does not involve the transfer of phonetic substance: in terms of Matras and Sakel (2007), it is a case of *pattern replication* rather than *matter replication*. Still, under the present analysis, it is a case of the transfer of a ready-made form-meaning unit. Thus Heine and Kuteva’s equation of (1c) with the transfer of morphemes or other lexically substantive constructions is based on a restrictive view of the possibilities of constructional transfer: it misses out on possible cases of largely or completely *schematic* form-meaning units being transferred from one language to another. What is more, I would hazard the position that, even in the absence of a transfer of phonetic matter, the emergence of the Dutch ‘time’-*weg* construction qualifies as a case of constructional *borrowing*. While I would definitely not want to suggest that the distinction between the transfer of phonetic matter and the transfer of abstract patterns is irrelevant, there is another distinction that is at least as relevant from a diachronic construction grammar point of view, viz. the distinction between, on the one hand, new constructions that are imported from scratch, and, on the other hand, new constructions that emerge out of pre-existing constructions through a series of formal and/or semantic changes. If the analysis presented in this sub-section is correct, the emergence of the Dutch ‘time’-*weg* construction shares a crucial property with classic instances of lexical borrowing such as *computer*, *manager* or *offside*, viz. that it consists in a *ready-made* form-meaning pattern being imported from English into Dutch. One could even

take the analogy one step further and say that the substitution of Dutch *weg* for English *away* is not entirely unlike the morphophonological adaptations observed in loanwords such as the above. On this view, borrowing and matter transfer are only partially overlapping notions.

The above analysis also has implications for constructionalization as described in Traugott and Trousdale (2013) and related work. Though, as was pointed out in Section 2, the authors exclude contact-induced change from their analysis, there is one point in the text where they do briefly refer to language contact, viz. in the section on instantaneous constructionalization on pp. 29–30. While constructionalization typically proceeds via a series of small steps, there are instances of instantaneous type node creations, i.e. where new constructions are created *without* prior constructional changes. Lexical borrowings are a case in point:

[F]or instance, words like *sushi*, *table*, or *devour*, may be borrowed instantaneously as form-meaning pairs. Although they have histories among the speakers from whom they are borrowed (and may be subject to constructional changes after borrowing), they are not the outcome of small-step changes in the target language at the time they are borrowed. (Traugott and Trousdale 2013, 30)

Other instances of instantaneous constructionalization include conversions (e.g. verbs such as *calendar* or *window*), acronyms (e.g. *wag*, *scuba*), clippings (e.g. the verb *diss* < disrespect), etc. (also see Traugott and Trousdale 2013, 186–190 for additional examples and discussion). All of these are *lexical* micro-constructions, which is why Traugott and Trousdale conclude that the possibility of instantaneous rather than gradual constructionalization distinguishes lexical (micro-)constructionalization from grammatical constructionalization: “We are not aware of the instantaneous development of grammatical constructions” (2013, 189). The ‘time’-*weg* construction, it would seem, occupies an intermediate position along the lexical-grammatical gradient, relevantly similar to the English *way*-construction – i.e., the construction in *He elbowed his way to the door* – as discussed in Traugott and Trousdale (2013, 90–91). On the one hand, it has fairly specific contentful semantics ‘spend time in a carefree way by V-ing’; Gries (2008, 11–12) observes that the ‘time’-*away* construction could well be labeled a phraseologism. On the other hand, it is a clause-level argument structure construction and as such also has procedural/grammatical meaning (i.e., it is concerned with who did what to whom) – in addition it can be said to carry aspectual meaning not unlike the aspectual meaning hypothesized for the ‘accompanying activity’ sense of the *way*-construction by Traugott and Trousdale (2013): on the ‘time’-*away* reading, examples such as (3) above, *Bill gambled his life away*, are interpreted iteratively.

This means that, on the analysis developed here, the emergence of the Dutch ‘time’-*weg* construction through constructional borrowing illustrates that

instantaneous constructionalization is not limited to constructions situated at the lexical end of the lexical-grammatical gradient but can also give rise to intermediate constructions which combine lexical and grammatical properties. Whether instantaneous constructionalization can also produce constructions situated towards the grammatical end of the cline remains to be seen.

4.2 Scenario 2: More gradual change originating in pre-existing constructions

A challenge for the analysis developed in the previous sub-section is that, for (largely) schematic constructions, it is hard to assess to what extent they were indeed created “on the spot”. In the lexical domain, the distinction between entirely “new” form-meaning units on the one hand and form-meaning units that developed out of pre-existing micro-constructions is fairly straightforward: Dutch *computer* obviously belongs to the former category, as there was no Dutch word of that form before the import of the English loanword, whereas the emergence of the sense ‘small device that you move across a surface in order to move a cursor on a computer screen’ of Dutch *muis* represents a case of semantic change starting in an *existing* Dutch micro-construction, i.e. the meaning of the existing form-meaning unit *muis* ‘mouse’ is extended following a similar meaning extension of English *mouse* (i.e., the new sense is a semantic loan). In the grammatical domain, this is far less straightforward. Clearly, the Dutch version of the ‘time’-*away* construction could not have emerged if the circumstances had not been right for such an innovation. With respect to the new construction’s function, we can point towards the fact that, prior to its emergence, there was no complete semantic-pragmatic match of the English ‘time’-*away* construction in Dutch (cf. the negative pragmatic load of the transitive construction with the prefix *ver-*). With respect to the new construction’s form, more importantly, it can be observed that this is not particularly “alien” to Dutch grammar. For instance, Dutch has a resultative construction very much like the English resultative construction, i.e. consisting of a subject, a verb, a direct object and an oblique resultative phrase, the latter of which can, among many other possibilities, be filled by particles such as *weg* ‘away’. Resultatives with *weg* can denote a variety of events in which the activity denoted by the verb results in the direct object referent being literally or metaphorically ‘gone’, see (11) for some real-language examples. As shown in (11c), the direct object NP in such metaphorical resultative instances can even be filled by a time expression: *de dag* ‘the day’ refers metonymically to the events of the day, here, or more precisely to the stress built up over the working day. The intended meaning here is not that the subject referent spends the day drinking wine. Compare (13c) to, for instance, (7b) above, which has a time adjunct *vanavond* ‘this evening’ that is co-extensive with the direct object *de avond* ‘the evening’: zapping the evening away, in the

sense of ‘spending the evening zapping’ can of course only be done *in the evening*; drinking the day away in the sense of drinking something to get over the events of the day, by contrast, is done *after* the day. In this way, the resultative construction can build constructs that are partially similar in form to the ‘time’-*weg* instances in (7) etc. above

- (11) a. *Met sleutels krasten ze de labels op de flessen weg om zo aan de detectie-toes-tellen te ontsnappen.* (hln.be>, 22 Jan 2015)
 ‘Using keys they scraped the labels off of the bottles to escape the detection machines.’
- b. *Lotte gaat kijken hoe de dansers van Aya repeteren en ze leert zelf haar angsten weg te dansen.*
 (<<http://www.hetklokhuis.nl/onderwerp/dans>>, 27 Jan 2016)
 ‘Lotte attends a rehearsal of the Aya dancers and she learns how to dance away her fears herself.’
- c. *... ’s avonds het laatste nieuws op de autoradio en een telefoontje naar Brenda dat ze maar vast moest beginnen met eten want het verkeer stond weer vast, een wijntje om de dag weg te drinken, een verhaaltje op de rand van Noortjes bed en dan voor de tv in slaap vallen.*
 (Natalie Koch, *De sterren stil*, novel, 2013)
 ‘In the evening the latest news on the car radio and a phone call to Brenda telling her not to wait with dinner because the traffic was jammed again, a glass of wine to drink the day away, a bedtime story at the edge of Noor’s bed, and then falling asleep before the tv.’

In addition, in informal Dutch, the particle *weg* can be combined with intransitive verbs to add a sense of aimlessness or casualness, as in the instances in (12) with *lullen* ‘to talk bullshit’ and *tekenen* ‘to draw’, respectively.

- (12) a. *Ik begin altijd wat weg te lullen over wat er op straat gebeurt, en als [ik] in een stilte zit ga ik gek springen of wat dan ook. Haat aan stiltes.*
 (<<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1279391?mode=print>>, post of 3 May 2009)
 ‘I always start bullshitting idly about what is happening in the street, and when I find myself in a silence, I start jumping oddly or whatever. I hate silences.’
- b. *... maar het is vooral een ruimte voor inspiratie, en om zomaar wat weg te kunnen tekenen (wat wrsch makkelijker is met stift dan met krijt).*
 (<www.onemorething.nl/community/topic/yeah-ik-heb-een-nieuwe-gekocht/>, post of 6 Feb 2010)
 ‘But it is a first and foremost a room for inspiration, and for just casual drawing (which is probably easier with markers than with chalk).’

Add to this that in Dutch, as in English, time adjuncts can occur as bare NPs and we again end up with a structure similar in form to the ‘time’-*weg* construction, see (13).

- (13) *[Ik kan] geen moment de TV aan zetten of een of andere society-nicht zit een uur weg te ouwehoeren over de buitenechtelijke batspartijen van een of andere soapie.*

(<http://weblogs.nos.nl/presentatoren/2011/11/04/blurren-of-niet-blurren/>), post of 4 Nov 2011)

‘I can’t turn on the tv for a moment or I see some society-faggot sitting bullshitting away about the extramarital shenanigans of some soap star or another for an hour.’

The existence of these other structures has very probably helped in the emergence of the ‘time’-*weg* construction. But how exactly should we see this? Is it just that the occurrence of clauses such as (11c) and (13) has helped create the favourable circumstances under which the English ‘time’-*away* construction could be copied into Dutch along the lines outlined in the previous sub-section, i.e. is it just the case that, due to the occurrence of such superficially similar structures, the first ‘time’-*weg* instances built on an English model did not sound particularly “un-Dutch”? Or should we assume that the Dutch construction has somehow developed *out of* the structures exemplified in (11c) and (13), i.e. that it is not so much the case that a ready-made construction was copied from English into Dutch, but, rather, that the Dutch ‘time’-*weg* construction emerged through the reanalysis of constructs built by pre-existing Dutch constructions? Note that in (13) above, an alternative interpretation in which this example *does* instantiate the ‘time’-*weg* construction is not entirely impossible, i.e. it could be read as ‘some society-faggot is bullshitting an hour away’ instead of ‘bullshitting away for an hour’. In other words, such examples could have functioned as bridging contexts in the scenario of a more gradual emergence of the ‘time’-*weg* construction from pre-existing Dutch constructions.

In the absence of data on what actually happens in the minds of speakers at the time of linguistic innovation, there is no principled way of telling which of the two scenarios outlined here – i.e. instantaneous constructional borrowing or more gradual change – is the “correct” one. It is important to emphasize, however, that even in the scenario of a more gradual emergence of the ‘time’-*weg* construction out of pre-existing Dutch patterns, it is still likely that English influence has played an important role in the process. A well-known methodological problem in contact linguistics is that, in the absence of a transfer of phonemic substance, it is often hard to provide solid evidence for the position that a given observed change was triggered by language contact. In the case under discussion here, too, it cannot be completely ruled out that we are dealing with parallel but unrelated evolutions. Still, such a parallel evolution scenario does not seem very likely, i.e. it

would have been quite unlikely for Dutch speakers to reanalyze instances such as (13), for instance, as instantiating a structure with *een uur* ‘an hour’ functioning as the direct object of a ‘time’-away like structure with the particle *weg* if the English ‘time’-away construction would not have been around as a model for this reanalysis. Note that resultative clauses with *weg* ‘away’ in Dutch do not generally encode situations in which something is “spent” or “wasted”: on its resultative reading, the instance in (3) above, *Bill gambled his life away*, would not be rendered as (14a) in Dutch, but rather using the *ver*-construction discussed in Section 2 above, as in (14b). Similarly, as shown in (15), *He drank his fortune away* would more naturally be translated using the *ver*-construction or a construction with another particle, namely *op* (cognate with *up*). As we have seen in (11), *weg* does occur in resultative clauses, but it usually denotes situations in which something is removed or otherwise made to disappear, rather than spent or wasted.

- (14) a. ?? *Bill heeft zijn leven weggegoekt.*
 b. *Bill heeft zijn leven vergoekt.*
 ‘Bill has gambled his life away (i.e., has bet his life and lost)’
- (15) a. ?? *Hij dronk zijn fortuin weg.*
 b. *Hij verdronk zijn fortuin.*
 c. *Hij dronk zijn fortuin op.*
 ‘He drank his fortune away.’

In addition, the use of Dutch *weg* in combination with intransitive verbs as in (12) does not carry the same continuative/iterative aspectual sense as English *away* in *Bill slept/waltzed/drank/talked/read/sneezed away*. Of these six English verbs, *talk* is the only one the Dutch equivalent of which, *praten*, can naturally be combined with *weg*:⁷ construed instances such as ?? *Hij sliep (maar) weg* ‘He slept away’ or ?? *Hij niesde (maar) weg* ‘He sneezed away’, by contrast, are decidedly odd.

In other words, the patterns with *away* out of which the ‘time’-away pattern has probably emerged in English, do not seem to have direct counterparts with *weg* in Dutch out of which a ‘time’-*weg* pattern could have emerged independently, via the same (as yet obscure) language-internal constructional changes that have shaped the English pattern. The fact that it is the particle *weg* that shows up in the Dutch instances in (7) to (10) above would be hard to explain without reference to the corresponding English pattern with *away*.

7. The lemma for the particle *weg* in the historical Dictionary of the Dutch Language [WNT] includes a separable complex verb *wegpraten*, with as one of its senses ‘keep talking on’.

5. Conclusion

In the above, I have outlined two scenarios along which the Dutch ‘time’-*weg* construction could have emerged, both of which attribute a crucial role to the English ‘time’-*away* construction. On the first scenario, the English pattern was copied directly into Dutch as a case of constructional borrowing, i.e. a ready-made largely schematic form-meaning pairing was imported into Dutch, the only necessary adaptation being the replacement of the only lexically substantive element of the construction, *away*, by its closest Dutch equivalent, *weg*. On this view, the new Dutch pattern qualifies as a case of instantaneous grammatical constructionalization, or at least as a case of instantaneous constructionalization involving a largely schematic construction that occupies an intermediate position along the lexical-grammatical gradient.

The alternative scenario is that of a more gradual development, in which Dutch constructs built on the basis of other constructions were reanalyzed as instantiating a pattern already known from English. In any event, the new Dutch ‘time’-*weg* construction is a typical instance of a multiple source construction, i.e. an innovation which “derive[s] not just from one, but from different source constructions at once” (Van de Velde, De Smet, and Ghesquière 2013, 473). What is more, these sources are both L1 and L2 constructions. The English ‘time’-*away* construction is either borrowed directly into Dutch or it serves as the model for (a series of) constructional change(s) in pre-existing Dutch constructions. The pre-existing Dutch constructions either build constructs which are reanalyzed into the ‘time’-*weg* construction on the model of English, or they are involved in a somewhat more indirect way in that they help create the circumstances under which the English construction could be borrowed more easily into Dutch, in that – due to its similarity with these pre-existing constructions – the novel pattern will not strike speakers/hearers as particularly “un-Dutch”. In relation to the latter point, Trousdale’s (2012, 502–508) account of multiple inheritance and constructional change emphasizes the importance of extant constructions in linguistic innovation, too, though not in a context of contact-related change: in the early stages of change, hearers will often be able to process innovative constructs on the basis of formally and functionally similar pre-existing constructions. While the exact interplay between L1 and L2 source constructions is in need of further investigation, I hope that this case study has given an impression of the added value to be gained from a more systematic integration of contact-related changes in overarching theories of constructional change.

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