

Casting some ‘light’ on small clauses in Afrikaans

(20-minute session)

This paper deals with the structure underlying small clause constructions in Afrikaans; more specifically, the focus is on the nature of the functional category that is associated with such constructions.

Basilico (2003:1) defines a small clause as “a string of XP YP constituents that enter into a predication relation, but where the predicate, YP, rather than containing a fully inflected verb, contains an adjective phrase, noun phrase, prepositional phrase, or uninflected verb phrase”. This relationship is illustrated in (1) where the small clause subject, or XP, *the guard* enters into a predicate relationship with the adjectival phrase *intelligent* in (1a) and with the uninflected verb phrase *leave* in (1b):

- (1) a. We consider *the guard intelligent*.
b. We saw *the guard leave*.

Several analyses of small clause constructions have been put forward in the generative literature (e.g. Bennis, Corver & Den Dikken 1998; Basilico 2003; Citko 2008; Broekhuis and Hegedüs 2009; Haegeman 2010, Hong and Lasnik 2010; Backhouse 2014). The general consensus seems to be that such constructions contain some sort of functional category, a small clause head, that serves to facilitate the establishment of a predication relation between the XP and YP constituents comprising the small clause. However, it is also clear that there is no consensus regarding the exact nature of the functional category associated with small clauses. For instance, Bennis et al. (1998) and Haegeman (2010) posit a distinct functional category, which they simply refer to as “F”; Citko (2008) proposes a similar category, namely “ π ”. A problematic consequence of these proposals is that the set of functional categories would have to be expanded. Moreover, it is not clear how arbitrary categories such as F and π can account for the “clause-like” character of small clauses.

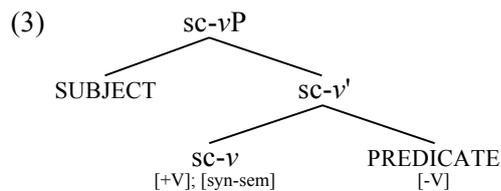
The aim of the present paper is to present an analysis of small clause constructions in Afrikaans that overcomes the objections that could be raised against approaches that employ arbitrary functional heads such as “F” or “ π ”. The analysis is based on Oosthuizen’s (2013) proposal according to which the functional category heading a small clause is a light verb. This is in line with the widely-held idea that verbal expressions, among others, are projections of a so-called “light category”, specifically, a light verb (Chomsky 2006; Folli & Harley 2007); it is also in line with the minimalist objective of simplifying and reducing the set of grammatical devices. If one were to assume that the small clause head is a light verb *v* that does not select a tense-related verbal element as its complement, but rather a non-verbal predicate, then small clauses would adhere to the traditional definition of clauses. Oosthuizen (2013:112) suggests that this light verb is “defective” in that it only has the feature [+V] and an additional feature relating to interpretation, lacking for example ϕ -features, a θ -feature, and a tense feature, making it a “highly ‘stripped down’ category”. In more concrete terms, it is claimed that small clauses are also projections of an existing light category (e.g. a light verb) instead of a novel functional category such as the arbitrarily named “X” or “ π ”. Some of the consequences of this proposal will be addressed in the paper.

As regards the interpretation-related feature carried by the small clause light verb (sc-*v*), it is argued that this “syntactic-semantic feature” (informally named [syn-sem]) correlates with the interpretation of the small clause, including features such as [init(iation)], [proc(ess)], etc. Accordingly, small clause types can be adduced to the nature of the [syn-sem] feature of the sc-*v*, which can stem from [syn-sem] features such as: [pred(icational)], [eq(uative)], [spec(ificational)], and [iden(tificational)]. This idea is by no means novel; Oosthuizen (2013:111-2) argues that obligatory reflexive small clauses have what he refers to as an “[eq] feature”. This feature ensures the grammaticality of a sentence like (2a) in which the small

clause subject *hom* (“him”) is interpreted as “equal to” the matrix clause subject *die man* (“the man”), as opposed to (2b) where *hom* refers to a masculine entity other than *die man*.

- (2) a. Die man_i skree hom_i hees.
 the man shouts him hoarse
 “The man shouts himself hoarse.”
 b. *die man_i skree hom_j hees

The general ideas underlying the proposed analysis can be expressed by adapting the structures put forward by Bennis et al. (1998) and Citko (2008) (cf. Backhouse 2014) to form the structure in (3), where *sc-v* represents the functional category in question.



In the course of the discussion attention will also be given to a number of different types of Afrikaans small clauses to establish whether, or to which extent, the Afrikaans subtypes behave in a similar manner to the Polish and West Germanic subtypes described by Bennis et al. (1998), Citko (2008) and Haegeman (2010). In this, particular attention will be given to resultative small clauses (4a), copula clauses (4b), and predicate inversion-related small clauses (4c).

- (4) a. Hy eet homself [AP dik].
 he eat himself full
 b. Die man is [AP aantreklik / *swanger].
 The man is handsome / pregnant
 c. daai idioote van 'n beheerliggaam
 those idiots of a governing-body

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