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“The girl that promised to become something”: An exploration into diachronic subjectification in Dutch

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1. Introduction. In a modern Dutch sentence like (1), the verb *beloofde* ‘promised’ does not describe an occurrence of the speech act of promising as it does in (2). Rather, in (1) it expresses a subjective judgment on the part of the speaker of the sentence, and the use of the verb may therefore be called “epistemic”: The speaker is indicating that there is evidence for a certain expectation (here: that the debate will be exciting), and evaluating this positively.

- (1) Het debat beloofde spannend te worden.
The debate promised exciting to become
‘The debate promised to be exciting.’
- (2) Hij beloofde de grondwet te verdedigen.
He promised the basic-law to defend
‘He promised to defend the constitution.’

The notion of subjectivity thus plays an important part in characterizing the difference between the usage types exemplified in (1) and (2). In Verhagen (1995), I gave an analysis of the synchronic variation in these terms, focusing on the close relationships between semantic, syntactic, and discourse-pragmatic aspects. Specifically, I argued that the difference did not so much consist in features of subjectivity being added to the meaning of the verb, but rather in the loss of objective (descriptive) content. I also showed that a similar analysis was possible for two other verbs, viz. *dreigen* ‘threaten’ and *weigeren* ‘refuse’, in such cases as *Het debat dreigde uit de hand te lopen* ‘The debate threatened to get out of hand’ and *De motor weigerde te starten* ‘The engine refused to start’.

In this paper I wish to start an investigation of the historical development of these uses. I will only be concerned with the semantics here, and the material to be considered so far only stems from dictionaries (in particular the *WNT*). Nevertheless, it will become apparent that some interesting hypotheses can already

be formulated, partly in line with the analysis of subjectification in Verhagen (1995), and suggesting particular extensions at certain points.

I will begin by discussing a specific approach to the concept of subjectivity, essentially following Verhagen (1995) but made more explicit in a few respects, making a distinction between “character subjectivity” and “speaker-hearer subjectivity” (see also Verhagen 1997). Subsequently I will show that the historical material in the *WNT* indicates a difference in the development of *beloven* on the one hand and *dreigen* on the other which does not seem to follow from the analysis, nor from a metaphorical conception of the relation between descriptive and epistemic uses of linguistic elements. However, precisely the notion of subjectivity as developed here may provide the basis for an explanation, given an independently established difference between the words as speech act verbs. Finally, I will outline the role that metaphor might have played in the actual mechanism of the change, and some consequences of the analysis.

2. Two types of subjectivity. A fundamental prerequisite for human linguistic communication is the ability to recognize other entities as essentially like oneself, and to take another person’s perspective as one that could be one’s own. Without that, the whole idea of intentionally producing utterances to be recognized as such and to be thereby understood would not make sense. It is therefore no surprise that languages contain several means to mark subjectivity, i.e. to indicate that the information being conveyed is seen from a certain perspective. I want to claim that there is actually an important distinction between two KINDS of subjectivity. One is subjectivity as indicated in linguistic utterances, the other is subjectivity as a feature of language-in-use, whether marked or not. The two are related, but not identical.

Upon being confronted with certain sounds, marks on paper, or whatever other observable signs—when we interpret them as LANGUAGE, we are committed to understanding them as artifacts, i.e. the product of intentional activity, and therefore of another mind, another cognitive system. Furthermore, the assumed intentionality is that the producer wanted the observable artifact to be taken as evidence for a particular interpretation, i.e. intended it as a means to influence another cognitive system.¹ As a matter of principle, any instance of language use, qua language use, has a certain argumentational force and direction, orienting an interpreter, with more or less force, towards certain conclusions (Anscombe & Ducrot 1989).

Understanding a linguistic utterance does not necessarily have to take the fact of its having been produced with a certain argumentational orientation into account. One may just process the utterance on the basis of one’s knowledge of the rules of the language, and simply “get the message,” as it were. But that does not alter the fact that understanding still is engaging in coordination with another cognitive system, and because of this being inherent in linguistic communica-

¹ What I mean here is an implication of Grice’s (1957) notion “meaning_{NN}”. It occurs in slightly varying forms in different frameworks. A clear exposition can be found inter alia in Keller’s (1995: 153ff.; 1998) discussion of linguistic communication as an attempt to influence somebody else’s cognition by displaying the intention to do so.

tion, it MAY always become more important. With respect to language as it is being used it is always LEGITIMATE, so to speak, to ask in what way the conceived producer might have intended to influence a conceived addressee (even if one has no idea about the identity of the actual producers or addressees, they have already long been dead, or whatever). So in principle there is a systematic option when a language user is trying to figure out how to take a particular feature of an utterance: Even if it is not related to the level of intersubjective coordination by convention, this level may always be MADE relevant in interpreting the utterance.

The ability to conceive of other minds as like oneself is such a fundamental aspect of communication that it should come as no surprise that there are numerous linguistic means of marking explicitly that certain pieces of information are attributable to other minds in some specific way. A very important class of such items are complement-taking verbs. Verbs of communication (*say, tell, argue, promise*), of mental states and activities (*think, know, conclude*), etc., are explications that the interpreter should relate the information in the embedded clause in a particular way to the conception of another cognitive system—they are all mental space-builders (Fauconnier 1994). Understanding such a construction means that the interpreter knows s/he should “think the thought” expressed in the embedded clause in the same way as the subject of conceptualization indicated in the matrix clause (cf. Verhagen 1997). For example, the matrix clauses in both (3) and (4) indicate a subject of conceptualization, in this case as undertaking a promise.

(3) I promise to come to the party.

(4) He promised to come to the party.

In (3), there appear to be only two levels of interpretation that are relevant to understanding, viz. firstly that of the information in the embedded (infinitival) clause, and secondly that of a subject in the matrix clause, who is the producer of the entire utterance. In the same way, the matrix clause in (4) also presents a subject of conceptualization, who determines the way the embedded information is to be taken by the interpreter (again, as something being promised). However, in this case there is an additional option. A hearer or reader may have reason to take into account that the report of someone promising is intentionally being presented to him/her by the producer of the utterance, who is not identical to the referent of the subject *he*.² The interpreter could thus build into his interpretation what the conclusions are that the producer—as distinct from the explicit subject of conceptualization—is orienting him or her to with the utterance. This is the second type of subjectivity that I mentioned above. The fact that this type is always AVAILABLE for interpretation, even if it is not necessarily invoked conventionally, gives rise to certain systematic patterns of variation and change.

² And it is actually slightly more complicated than this, as the first person pronoun does not always have to refer to the physical producer of the utterance (e.g. in a quotation, or in an advertisement line such as “Can I achieve this too?”, where the intended referent of *I* is the reader). It must, however, always be taken as indicating the entity PROJECTED as responsible for the production of the utterance.

For a start, consider example (4) once more. Understanding this minimally means to entertain the thought that some person presented the idea of coming to the party as a promise. But in addition to that we may ask: What might be, in an actual instance of use, the argumentational intention of the producer of the utterance, as distinct from the promisor? In fact, there is a systematic relationship to this second level of subjectivity as well. In principle, the two levels are, in a sense, aligned. By reporting that someone promised to come, the producer is supplying an argument IN FAVOR OF the conclusion that this person will actually come. For example, consider the exchange in (5).

- (5) a. A: Is Peter coming to the party?
 B: Sure, he promised.

If A has asked whether Peter is coming to the party, B's utterance that he promised counts as an argument, at that point in the discourse, in favor of the conclusion that Peter will in fact come. It is not as STRONG, it does not have the same FORCE, as uttering 'I promise', but it still has the same argumentative direction. It is in that sense that the two types of subjectivity are aligned: Both a promisor and a reporter of a promise orient their hearers towards the conclusion that the contents of the complement may be expected to become true. The difference is one of strength, while the directions of orientation are the same.

This can also be seen from the use of certain connectives. The connective *so*, for example, indicates that the second segment in a discourse fragment can be taken as following naturally from the contents of the first. Interestingly, it combines coherently with a reported promise as a first segment and an explicit expression of expectation in the second, as in (5b).

- (5) b. He promised to come, so he could be here any minute.

On the other hand, the conjunction *but* indicates that the orientation of the second conjunct is opposed to that of the first. Now consider (5c):

- (5) c. He promised to come, but I'm not entirely confident.

The fact that *but* combines coherently with an expression of doubt in the second segment of (5c) precisely indicates that the first segment as such has the force of an argument in favor of the conclusion "He will come to the party." But as mentioned before, its force is not maximal; as (5c) itself demonstrates, the relevant conclusion is cancelable in subsequent discourse.

We are thus in a position to claim that any instance of the use of *promise* can be related to the level of intersubjective coordination between producer and interpreter in the way indicated schematically in figure 1:

Argumentational orientation of promise:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increases strength of assumption / expectation (cf. Anscombre & Ducrot 1989; Spooren 1989) • <i>evaluative orientation</i> positive: "Don't worry", "Take it easy"
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Figure 1. Argumentational orientation of promise.

As indicated in figure 1, there is an evaluative dimension to *promise* as well: the addressee should entertain the idea of not having to worry, that things will be all right, or something else of that kind: the propositional content of promising is evaluated positively.

This discussion provides the framework for understanding certain patterns of variation in the use of the verb *promise* and especially its Dutch equivalent *beloven*. Consider the difference between (1) and (2), repeated here:

- (1) Het debat beloofde spannend te worden.
The debate promised exciting to become
'The debate promised to be exciting.'
- (2) Hij beloofde de grondwet te verdedigen.
He promised the base-law to defend
'He promised to defend the constitution.'

As observed, (2) reports an actual act of promising by whomever *hij* refers to, while the epistemic use of *beloofde* in (1) indicates a subjective judgment that there is evidence for the expectation that the debate will be exciting. What the two uses have in common, however, is that both orient the hearer towards the conclusion expressed in the complement, and evaluate it positively. So while these two uses of *beloven* are different with respect to what we may call character subjectivity, they are in fact similar at the level of speaker-hearer subjectivity, and this, apparently, justifies the use of the same word. We might say that in cases like (1), the interpretation of *beloven* "skips" the level of another subject of conceptualization and is related immediately to the level of coordination with the producer of the utterance.

Another example of this subjectified use of *beloven* is given in (6), as well as English *promise* in (7).

- (6) Het belooft een mooie dag te worden.
It promises a fine day to become
'It promises to be a fine day.'
- (7) Tomorrow promises to be a fine day.

Other verbs, semantically related to *beloven* and *promise*, exhibit similar patterns, specifically *dreigen* and its English counterpart *threaten*. This verb can be used to report an act of threatening, as in (8).

- (8) De rector dreigde het onderwijs voor onbepaalde tijd te zullen staken.
The headmaster threatened the teaching for indefinite time to shall suspend
'The headmaster threatened to suspend teaching indefinitely.'

But this verb also has an epistemic use, as in (9), where it indicates an evaluation again, by the producer of the utterance, not an act by the referent of the subject *incident*:

- (9) Het incident dreigde zijn kansen teniet te doen.
The incident threatened his chances to-nil to do
'The incident threatened to ruin his chances.'

What these uses have in common and in what ways they differ can be described in the same terms as those applicable to *beloven/promise*. *Dreigen* and *threaten* orient the interpreter towards the conclusion that the proposition expressed in the complement may become true, just like *beloven* and *promise* do, but this time this conclusion is evaluated negatively, suggesting that something should be done about it; the latter is what makes these verbs different from *beloven* and *promise*. These aspects of the argumentational orientation of *dreigen* can be illustrated with connectives in the same way as before with *beloven*. Consider the exchange in (10a):

- (10) a. A: Are they really going to freeze the budget?
 B: Well, they did threaten to do so.

The coherence of this exchange, with B's reply being interpreted as a positive answer to A's question, indicates that *threaten* does indeed have this argumentational orientation. Similarly, the fact that *so* is coherent in (10b) demonstrates that the first segment does indeed have the force of an argument in favor of the conclusion that he will come, and that this is viewed negatively:

- (10) b. He threatened to come, so be prepared: he could appear any minute.

In (10c), finally, the fact that the reassuring second segment is contrasted with the first one precisely indicates that the latter as such has the force of a negatively viewed prediction:

- (10) c. He threatened to fire us, but things might not be as black as they look.

The difference between the descriptive and the epistemic senses is, just as with *beloven*, that in the latter case, the interpretation "skips" the level of another subject of conceptualization and relates immediately to the level of speaker-hearer subjectivity. Schematically:

Argumentational orientation of <i>threaten</i>:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increases strength of assumption/expectation • <i>evaluative orientation</i> negative: "Be prepared", "Do something"
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Figure 2. Argumentational orientation of *threaten*.

3. Asymmetric developments. The analysis presented so far (based on Verhagen 1995) contains a synchronic generalization over the pragmatic function of descriptive and epistemic senses of *beloven* and *dreigen*. Putting it in diachronic terms now, what appears to have happened is that the argumentational orientation, originally an inferential aspect of interpretation of these verbs in actual usage, has been generalized and conventionalized, so that the verbs may now also be used systematically as indicators of such an argumentational orientation without referring to speech acts—thus a typical case of grammaticalization and specifically subjectification (cf. Traugott 1995). The nature of the explanation is such that exactly the same mechanism is used in the analysis of both verbs and one would therefore expect a largely parallel behavior of the verbs, synchronically as well as diachronically. However, there appear to be some important differences here.

The first point is that it is clear, even impressionistically, that in actual discourse in Dutch the relative frequency of epistemic *dreigen* is much higher than that of epistemic *beloven*. Of the 21 cases of *dreigen* with an infinitival complement in the Eindhoven Corpus,³ no less than 19 (over 90%) are in fact instances of epistemic use, while of the 21 cases of *beloven* with an infinitive, only 7 instances (33%) are epistemic.⁴ Searches in other corpora, such as *de Volkskrant* on CD-ROM, give very similar results. The logic of the analysis so far gives no reason to expect such a big difference.

More interestingly, the epistemic use of *beloven* appears to be much younger than that of *dreigen*. The *WNT* gives a description of the epistemic sense of *dreigen*, and it gives examples from the sixteenth century on, as in

- (11) Het schip, twelck dreycht te sincken ... (1566)
 The ship, which threatens to sink
 ‘The ship, which threatens to sink ...’

But the *WNT* does not describe this kind of use for *beloven*. However, as of a few years ago, there is a CD-ROM version of the *WNT*, which allows us to search the quotations used throughout the work independently. Investigation of this material shows that it does contain instances of epistemic *beloven*, but almost all of these are from the nineteenth and twentieth century. The oldest example is from 1793:

- (12) Dat zelfde meisjen, ’t welk iets beloofde te worden ...
 That same girl which something promised to become
 ‘That same girl, who promised to become something ...’

One might perhaps argue that this could in itself be ambiguous between a descriptive and an epistemic reading, but the context, as cited in (12’), makes it unequivocally clear that the intended reading is epistemic.

- (12’) Dat zelfde meisjen, ’t welk ... iets beloofde te worden, onder het bestuur eener vrouw wier groot talent lag in het opvoeden van jonge lieden, is verkwanseld: waarin? in eene lastige beuzelaarster, waar van het te vreezen is dat niets deegelijks meer zal te maaken zijn. [WNT: Wolff en Deken, Wildsch. 2, 119, 1793]
 ‘That same girl, who promised to become something, under the guidance of a woman whose great talent it was to raise young people, has been wasted: into what? into an irritating trifler, of which it must be feared that nothing solid can be made from it.’

It seems we have to conclude that the epistemic use of *beloven* arose (much) later in Dutch than the same kind of use of *dreigen*. This might in fact also help to explain why it is not mentioned in the *WNT* entry for *beloven*. This work was produced in the 1880s, so if epistemic *beloven* was a relatively new develop-

³ In the version of the corpus available from the Free University at Amsterdam. It is described in Uit den Boogaart (1975) and in Renkema (1981).

⁴ The fact that the number of instances of this construction (verb + infinitive) is exactly the same (21) for both verbs is accidental.

ment there will have been only few examples in the material of those days, and it might not have been explicitly noticed by anyone else either.

So let us assume, at least as a working hypothesis on the basis of this material, that epistemic *beloven* is significantly younger than epistemic *dreigen*. How could this asymmetry be explained? I want to argue that the distinction between character subjectivity and speaker-hearer subjectivity is crucial once again. Consider the following question: To whom may we attribute “responsibility,” so to speak, for the choice of the words *beloven* and *dreigen* on a particular occasion of use? The answers are different for reported promises and reported threats. Consider a reported promise such as (13):

(13) He promised to come home early.

Here the producer *MAY* be taken to report someone else as having said “I promise to come home early.” Under that interpretation, it is in fact the reported subject who is taken to be responsible for the choice of the word *promise*, and the present speaker does little more than repeat what the original promisor said (with the appropriate shifts in pronominal reference and tense). But such an interpretation is not possible for a reported threat, such as the one in (14):

(14) He threatened to come home early.

The producer of this sentence *cannot* be taken to be reporting the person referred to as having said “I threaten to come home early”—one cannot use *threaten* performatively (Searle 1976: 6).⁵ And since one does not use *threaten* performatively, the use of that word is always, of necessity, the responsibility of the actual producer of the present utterance, i.e. of the reporting rather than the reported actor. Categorizing an event as a threat is definitely the responsibility of the producer, whereas categorizing it as a promise may be taken as simply echoing the subject of the promise. So the interpretation of *threaten* is related more systematically and more strongly to the level of the producer than that of *promise*. In diachronic terms, it must have been more speaker-hearer subjective “from the start.”

At this point, it should be noted that a purely metaphorical account of the change in Dutch cannot be correct, or at least not complete. The idea of understanding the epistemic domain, the domain of reasoning and inferring, in terms of real-world relationships (cf. Sweetser 1990) does not in itself provide grounds for distinguishing between these two verbs. It does not seem to follow from this metaphor that a particular instance (the one that is evaluated negatively) of a real-world relation could be transferred more easily and sooner than another one (the positive one), while the notion of speaker-hearer subjectivity as a necessary property of language-in-use does provide such grounds.

This does not mean that figurative language, metaphor and metonymy, have no role to play in the explanation of the change. In fact, I believe the contrary is true. But the metaphors that play a causal role in the change are not mappings from the real-world domain to the domain of reasoning, but rather more ordinary

⁵ The reason is, I think, that it is self-defeating to simultaneously evaluate an activity negatively and commit oneself to it (cf. Verhagen 1995: 121).

ones like personification. There is a type of subjectified use of *beloven*, not with an infinitival complement but with a nominal direct object, that does occur in the older *WNT* material. In the sixteenth-century sentence in (15), for example, Love is, we may say, personified and then presented as promising a cask of wine (metonymically related to a lot of pleasure, presumably), but giving only little:

- (15) Daar sy (de Min) belooft een tonne wijns, en geeft sy geen pinte ...
 [WNT: Coornhert 1, 274 d, 1586]
 ‘There she (Love) promises a cask of wine, and gives not even a pint ...’

The point is that such a metaphorical subject also has a specific effect on the interpretation of the verb applied to that subject; for *promise* in (15) this effect is that the commissive aspect in its meaning becomes less relevant, and the predicative aspect relatively more relevant. Love may be presented in certain relevant respects as a person, but since it does not have to be thought of as acting as intentionally as a real human being, the idea of Love committing itself to some action is toned down, and the aspect of the presence of evidence for some expectation becomes at least relatively more important.

Sentence (16) is another example of this type: while a beautiful body is definitely being personified, it does not make much sense to interpret *belooft* primarily as a description of a body committing itself to something. Rather, the fact that it provides evidence for a particular expectation is what is being conveyed here:

- (16) Een schoon lichaem belooft wel een schoone Ziele; maer het aenghe-
 zicht belieghet oock wel het herte. [WNT: de Brune, Bank. 1, 14, 1657]
 ‘A beautiful body surely promises a beautiful Soul; but the face may
 well deceive the heart.’

A possible case of metonymy is (17):

- (17) In de punten des verdings met Atrecht, houd jk het 7e ’t vorderlijkste
 voor den Franchojs, om dat het belooft geene schattingen te heffen, dan
 by inwillighing der Staeten ... [WNT: Hooft, Br. 3, 365, 1640].
 ‘Of the points in the treaty of Atrecht I hold the seventh for the one most
 profitable to the French, because it promises not to impose taxes but with
 the permission of the States ...’

With a text (here: a treaty) standing for the writer(s), the adverbial clause introduced by *om dat* ‘because’ in this context emphasizes the treaty’s nature as a source of profit for the French rather than the commitment on the part of the writers. Note in this regard that the treaty is a text produced by the two parties, including the French; therefore, it is strictly speaking not even the case that reference to the text only replaces reference to its writers, since in reality it is only the Dutch who are committed to abstain from imposing taxes. Therefore, an alternative way of analyzing (17) is to say that the text is personified, in which case this example is of the same type as the previous two.

What could very well have happened, judging from the evidence considered so far, is that towards the end of the eighteenth century the suggestion of a metaphorical commissive speech act was diminished to such an extent that it

became possible for the verb to be used as an epistemic modal with an infinitival complement, viz. when it was taken, in sentences of the type just mentioned, as no more than an indication of the presence of evidence for certain inferences.⁶

One piece of evidence that this might have been at least part of the mechanism of change is that in the case of *dreigen* such metaphorical uses seem to have preceded the use as a modal with an infinitival complement as well. The Middle Dutch Dictionary (*MNW*; Verdam & Verwijs 1885–1952) does mention metaphorical uses of the type described for *beloven* above, but not epistemic uses with infinitival complements, while the latter, as we have seen, have been in the language from the sixteenth century to the present.

Finally, this order of development would provide a parallel to the order that Traugott (1993, 1997) argues for in the case of the English verbs *promise* and *threaten*. However, there also seems to be a striking difference between Dutch and English. According to Traugott, the epistemic senses of BOTH *promise* and *threaten* in English developed in the eighteenth century. Strictly speaking, the prediction from my analysis is that subjectification of *promise* cannot precede that of *threaten*, and thus the development in English is not a counterexample. However, it would be more natural, if the analysis is correct, for subjectification of *threaten* to have taken place significantly earlier than that of *promise*. So minimally, further research is necessary, using data from corpora and not just from the dictionaries.

4. Conclusion. In this paper I have put forward a specific hypothesis about asymmetric diachronic subjectification and the mechanisms involved in it. This hypothesis is interesting and therefore worthy of further investigation for a number of theoretical consequences that follow from it. For one thing, if correct it would provide further confirmation for the argument in Verhagen (1995) that the process of subjectification essentially involves disappearance of descriptive aspects of meaning rather than the addition of epistemic, subjective features.

Secondly, this kind of development would imply that what are syntactic variants at present have not been so all the time. As described in Verhagen (1995:109–10, 121ff.) and the *ANS* (Haeseryn et al. 1997:1042–3), epistemic *beloven* in subordinate clauses may only occur within a verbal cluster (“V-raising”), whereas the descriptive use may be realized as a syntactic main verb taking an infinitival complement (“Extrapolation”), as well as in a verbal cluster (Extrapolation, according to the *ANS*, being the most usual option).⁷ Thus we have the asymmetry that with epistemic *beloven* only the order of (18b) is acceptable, while with the descriptive sense, both orders (19a, b) are:

⁶ One might hypothesize, in view of considerations like these, that there is a scale ranging from commissiveness to predictiveness, of which descriptive and epistemic uses are actually just endpoints. In fact, such a scale can even be observed in present-day usage as well; cf. the data presented in Stikkelorum (1998). I will return to this issue elsewhere.

⁷ In Verhagen (1995) I argue that this phenomenon is in fact closely related to the semantics and the discourse use of the construction as well as the verb. But see Klooster (1986) for a discussion within a different framework.

- (18) a. *... omdat het debat beloofde spannend te worden. [Extrapolation]
 ... because the debate promised exciting to become
- (18) b. ...omdat het debat spannend beloofde te worden. [V-raising]
 ... because the debate exciting promised to become
 ‘... because the debate promised to be exciting’
- (19) a. ... toen hij beloofde de grondwet te verdedigen. [Extrapolation]
 ... when he promised the basic-law to defend
- (19) b. ... toen hij de grondwet beloofde te verdedigen. [V-raising]
 ... when he the basic-law promised to defend
 ‘... when he promised to defend the constitution.’

The present exploration into the history of the verbs involved suggests that the use of infinitives with epistemic *beloven* is a relatively recent development, stemming from a time when the semantic development had reached a point that an infinitive could come to be used to fill a slot reserved so far for nominal complements. Then it cannot have been the case that the use of the verbs in V-raising constructions has developed directly out of that in Extrapolation constructions, with the semantic change “coming along” with the syntactic change. This would in turn require us to radically rethink the relationship between syntax and semantics in these constructions, and perhaps more generally. However, especially in this area the first thing needed is more detailed empirical research.

In any case, it seems that the notions of character subjectivity and speaker-hearer subjectivity—the latter being available for interpretation whenever language is being put to use—are very promising ones for understanding certain regular patterns of linguistic variation and change, and as guidelines for future research.

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