

Domain-specific intensifying constructions and/in weather-related proverbs.

A case study based on Dutch dialects in Flanders.

Vince Liégeois & Laurent Gautier

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Theoretical background

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CxG and phraseology

- Phraseology served as an important point of departure for **Fillmore's CxG-theory**, particularly since many phrasemes cause problems for more projectionist approaches to language, like Chomsky's UG-modell:
 - THE X-ER THE Y-ER CONSTRUCTION (Fillmore et al. 1988)
 - (1) Eng.: *The more, the merrier.*
 - THE WAY CONSTRUCTION (Goldberg 1995)
 - (2) Eng.: *She elbowed her way through the room.*

Consequently, within the Fillmorian CxG-paradigm, phrasemes are particularly important from **an epistemological point of view**, since they deal with **the question of what we need to know in order to use and understand language.**

CxG and phraseology

- Within Goldbergian CxG more general, non-phraseological constructions (i.e. argument structure constructions) gained more interest, such as DITRANSITIVE and RESULTATIVE-constructions like, for instance, *John sneezed the napkin of the table* (Goldberg 1995).
- Yet research into CxG and phraseology continued at many research centers across the globe. One of such projects, for instance, is the *GEPHRI/Gebrauchsbasierte Phraseologie des Italienischen*-project from Elmar Schafroth (2018-2021) at the HHU Düsseldorf, which looks into Italian phraseology from a constructionist perspective – cf. also Schafroth (2014, 2015).

Here CxG serves as a **methodological model** in order to approach and properly describe phraseology either within one or across different language systems.

Research questions

Such a methodological CxG-approach towards phraseology also appears promising for the study of **domain-specific discourse**, in which regard two questions arise:

- RQ1 To what extent does the domain impose restrictions (quantitative/qualitative) on phraseology and which type of phrasemes – or constructions(!) – appear particularly frequent within a certain domain?
- RQ2 What does this tell us about the relationship between CxG and phraseological patterns in general?

Methodology

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Overview

Object of study

In this regard, we looked at **weather-related phraseology (domain: weather)** in **Dutch dialects** (Flemish, Brabantic and Limburgian) in **Flanders**. Considering cognitive linguistic theory – i.e. frames (Fillmore 1984) or Adele Goldberg's scene-encoding hypothesis (1995: 39) – this seems particularly interesting since the weather (and weather talk) play(s) a very important role in human life(/discourse) (cf. i.e. Hallig & von Wartburg 1952).

Dataset

We departed from a **list of dialectal weather-related phrasemes** collected by **the meteorological news service of the vrt** (*Vlaamse Radio- en Televisie-omroep*), who collected these data in order to cite local weather-related phrasemes at the end of each weather report from 2018 to 2019.

Analysis

Our analysis is **corpus-based**, since we looked at the different entries both from a **quantitative** and **qualitative** perspective. In doing so, we inquired which and how many domain-sensitive weather constructions are present in the different dialects.

Dataset

Dialect	Entries	Localities
Flemish	191	43
Brabantian	108	45
Limburgian	128	20

Our dataset counts, in total, **427 phraseological entries** from **108 different localities**. Nevertheless, some important **sociolinguistic** and **statistic remarks** need to be made:

- The dataset did not register the number of tokens of a certain phraseme in a given dialect, meaning **we are dealing exclusively with types**. Yet the news service registered **all variants** of a certain phraseme (lexical, grammatical and syntactic) in case these were present or pointed out by the participants.
- We have **no information regarding the participants**, meaning these are not necessarily the prototypic “ideal speakers” (old rural man who did not travel too much during their lives, etc.) used in sociolinguistic inquiries.
- Also on the contrary of sociolinguistic methodology, the participants were asked to send in **written versions** of the dialectal phrasemes and not oral registrations.
- Finally, we have **no data on the diffusion of these phrasemes from a usage-based – and more discursive – perspective**.

Analysis

III

Overview

- Most meteorological phrasemes deal with **bad** or **unpleasant weather situations** (AF = 308; RF = 72,1%) and more in particular, **rainy weather** (AF = 144; RF = 33,7%).
- In this regard, **SEMANTIC INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTIONS** are often used to express the severity or intensity (be it either quantitative or qualitative) of a weather phenomenon (AF = 230; RF = 53,9%).
- **Hypothesis:** in answer to RQ1, it therefore seems that there exists a particular **domain-motivated need for expressivity** to talk about heavy/unpleasant weather situations. This need can be satisfied by using phrasemes underlying this human evaluation and based on **SEMANTIC INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTIONS**.
- **Three meteorological constructions** were frequently accounted for and across the three different dialect groups:

Construction I: *Het regent oude wijven*

- A. **Meaning:** It rains hard; it rains a lot;
- B. **Form:** Avalent VP (containing a weather verb) + Direct Object
- C. **Frequency:** 43 (RF = 10,07%) across 27 different localities.
- D. **Examples:**
- (3) a. *'t regent mollejoengen* (Flemish, Veurne, West Flanders)
“it rains little moles”
- b. *tregert aaw meujers* (Brabantian, Turnhout, Antwerp)
“it rains old ladies”
- c. *et regelt aa vrouli* (Limburgian, Sint-Truiden)
“it rains old ladies”
- E. **Constructional features:** coercion; SEMANTIC INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTION.

Construction I: *Het regent oude wijven*

F. Variants:

(i) With other weather phenomena:

(4) a. *'t vriest appestéerte dikke* (Flemish, Veurne, West Flanders)
“lit.: it freezes as thick as monkeytails; fig.: it is very cold”

b. *'t vriest stenen uit de grond* (Flemish, Sint-Niklaas, East Flanders)
“it freezes stones out of the ground”

(ii) Lexical variants:

(5) a. *'t regent papestelen* (Brabantic, Geel, Antwerp)
“it rains pipe shanks”

b. *het reigent klaan gaaten* (Brabantic, Herenthout, Antwerp)
“it rains small goats”

(iii) Grammatical variants:

(6) *'t go mollejoengn reegn* (Flemish, Ostend, West Flanders)
“it's going to rain little moles”

Construction II: *Het regent dat het giet*

A. **Meaning:** It rains hard; it rains a lot;

B. **Form:** Avalent VP (containing a weather verb) + COMP + Avalent VP (containing a weather verb);

C. **Frequency:** 16 (RF = 3,75%) across 13 different localities

D. **Examples:**

(7) a. *'trint da't zikt* (Flemish, Ypres, West Flanders)
"it rains that it rains-a-lot"

b. *het raengert dattet gats* (Limburgian, Munsterbilzen)
"it rains that-it rains-a-lot"

E. **Constructional features:** CONSECUTIVE CONSTRUCTION; SEMANTIC INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTION;

Construction II: *Het regent dat het giet*

F. Variants:

(i) To other weather phenomena:

(8) a. *'t vriest dat kraekt* (Flemish, Eeklo, East Flanders)
“lit.: it freezes that it cracks; fig.: it is very cold”

b. *tvries tottet krok* (Limburgian, Munsterbilzen)
“it freezes that it cracks”

(ii) Grammatical variants:

(9) a. *trint dat zikt* (Flemish, Ypres, West Flanders)
“it rains that rains-a-lot”

b. *het raengert dattet gats* (Limburgian, Munsterbilzen)
“it rains that-it rains-a-lot”

Construction III: *Het is kermis in de hel*

A. **Meaning:** It's changeable weather;

B. **Form:** Existential verb clause (proform + copula) + NP;

C. **Frequency:** 26 (RF = 5,5%) across 26 localities;

D. **Examples:**

(10) a. *'t is keiremis in d'elle* (Flemish, Dendermonde, East Flanders)
"it's carnival in hell"

b. *'t is duuveltjeskermis* (Brabantic, Antwerp, Antwerp)
"it's devils' carnival"

c. *t ès kèrmis èn de hél* (Limburgian, Bilzen)
"it's carnival in hell"

E. **Constructional features:** COMPARISON WITH A LOC-ELEMENT; SEMANTIC INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTION;

Construction III: *Het is kermis in de hel*

F. Variants:

(i) To other weather phenomena:

(11) *'t is punaisekermesse* (Flemish, locality unspecified, West Flanders)
“lit.: it’s pushpin carnival; fig.: it is very cold”

(ii) Lexical variants

(12) *t’es kërmes èn de hël en de dievele daase en staeke met de rik* (Limburgian, Munsterbilzen)
“it is carnival in hell and the devils are dancing and poacking with the pitchfork”

Discussion

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Summary

- For our study, we looked at **weather phrasemes** within **Dutch dialects** (Flemish, Brabantic, Limburgian) in **Flanders**. Combining the insights from **CxG** (from a methodological perspective) with those of **LSP-research**, we were particularly interested in the question (= RQ1) **to what extent the domain (= weather) imposed restrictions (quantitative/qualitative) on phraseology and which type of phrasemes – or constructions(!) – appeared particularly frequent within said domain.**
- In doing so, we found that most weather phrasemes dealt with **bad or unpleasant weather situations** (AF = 308; RF = 72,1%), giving rise, from a semantic perspective, to the use of **INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTIONS**, which could be merged with various other (formal) constructions/constructional features, like **coercion** (13a), the **CONSECUTIVE CONSTRUCTION** (13b) and the **COMPARISON WITH A LOC-ELEMENT CONSTRUCTION** (13c):

(13) a. Dt.: *Het regent oude wijven.*

b. Dt.: *Het regent dat het giet.*

c. Dt.: *Het is kermis in de hel.*

Notes for future research

- It remains important that such (domain-specific) phrasemes and constructions are studied more in depth from a constructionist perspective, including many (SEMANTIC INTENSIFYING) phrasemes/constructions not considered here:

(14) a. *'t duumanneken lupt over mijn lijf* (Flemish, Wetteren, East Flanders)
“lit.: the dew-man walks on my body, fig.: it is very cold”

b. *snoek gevangen emmen* (Flemish, Moerzeke, East Flanders)
“lit.: having caught pike; fig.: it rains/-ed a lot”

c. *ze zijn een schip aant laje* (Flemish, Temse, East Flanders)
“lit.: there loading a ship; fig.: a storm is coming”

- The same is true for **other phrasemes**, as well as **constructions in other domains**.
- A comparison could also be done **with other weather-related phraseological phenomena** such as proverbs and folk sayings, for which Cultural Cognitive Linguistics provides a relevant framework.

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