

# IP-ellipsis in Dutch dialects\*

## X + *that*-clause

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### 1. Introduction

Belgian dialects of Dutch feature sentences of the type “X + *that*-clause”, where X seems to be an adverbial or adjectival phrase:<sup>1</sup>

- (1) {Misschien/Goed} da Kris komt.  
perhaps/ good that Kris comes  
'It is {perhaps the case/good} that Kris comes.'

I claim that this construction involves IP-ellipsis and that the underlying structure of the sentence in (1) is the one in (2). The ellipsis operation deletes the semantically weak elements *het* ‘it’, *is* ‘is’ and *zo* ‘the case’ (lit. ‘so’).

- (2) Het is {misschien zo/goed} da Kris komt.  
it is perhaps so good that Kris comes  
'It is {perhaps the case/good} that Kris comes.'

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 takes a look at some basic data and determines the possible choices for X. In Section 3 the syntactic structure is considered, and a general conclusion is formulated in Section 4.

## 2. The basic data: What is X?

### 2.1. Introduction

Dutch does not distinguish morphologically between adverbs and adjectives. In order to classify the X's in “X + *that*-clause” I make use of the following criteria:

1. Can the word be used as an attributive adjective, as in (3)a, or as a predicative adjective, as in (3)b? If so, it is considered an adjective.

- (3) a. een vreemde zaak  
a strange case  
b. Dat hij niet wil komen, is jammer.  
that he not want to.come is unfortunate  
'That he doesn't want to come, is unfortunate.'

2. Can the element be used as a sentential adverb, as in (4)? If so, it belongs to the class of adverbs.

- (4) Kim slaapt misschien.  
Kim sleeps perhaps

3. Some words satisfy both criteria, for example *waarschijnlijk* 'probable/probably'. These elements are ambiguous between adverbs and adjectives. I shall refer to them as adjective-adverbs, without thereby wanting to imply that such a hybrid category exists.<sup>2</sup>

- (5) a. de waarschijnlijke winnaar  
the probable winner  
b. Dat hij niet wil komen, is waarschijnlijk.  
that he not wants to.come is probable  
c. Kim slaapt waarschijnlijk.  
Kim sleeps probably

This categorization is reflected in the construction *het is X (zo) + dat*-clause 'it is X (the case) + that-clause' (lit. 'it is X (so) + that-clause'). The adverbs require the presence of *zo* 'the case' (lit. 'so'), while the adjectives cannot co-occur with *zo*. The adjective-adverbs are grammatical in both constructions, i.e. with and without *zo*.

(6) **Het is ADV zo da(t) IP**

- a. Het is misschien \*(zo) da Kris komt.  
it is perhaps so that Kris comes  
'It is perhaps the case that Kris comes.'

**Het is ADJ da(t) IP**

- b. Het is logisch (\*zo) da Kris komt.  
it is logical so that Kris comes  
'It is logical that Kris comes.'

**Het is ADJ-ADV (zo) da(t) IP**

- c. Het is waarschijnlijk (zo) da Kris komt.  
it is probably so that Kris comes.



- (11) Mod<sub>necessity</sub>: *uiteraard* ‘indeed’, *(na)tuurlijk* ‘naturally’, *zeker en vast* ‘definitely’, *alleszins* ‘absolutely’ and *ongetwijfeld* ‘undoubtedly’

### 2.3 Adjectives

Adjectives which are possible in “X + *that*-clause” include the following: *logisch* ‘logical’, *evident* ‘evident’, *nogal wieses* ‘goes without saying’, *ondenkbaar* ‘unthinkable’, *spijtig* ‘regrettable’, *vreemd* ‘strange’, *jammer* ‘unfortunate’, *grappig* ‘funny’, *dom* ‘stupid’ and *goed* ‘good’. Cinque’s hierarchy does not mention adjectives, yet if his classification is extended to include adjectives it is clear that all purely adjectival X’s belong to the Mood<sub>evaluative</sub>-node.<sup>5</sup> They all express the speaker’s opinion about the proposition that follows.

- (12) Logisch/Jammer da Kris komt.  
 logical/ regrettable that Kris comes  
 ‘It is logical/regrettable that Kris comes.’

### 2.4 Adjective-adverbs

The third category of elements suitable as X in “X + *that*-clause” are the adjective-adverbs.

- (13) Waarschijnlijk da Kris komt.  
 probably that Kris comes  
 ‘It is {probably the case/probable} that Kris comes.’

Like the adverbs they can be situated in the Mod-nodes of Cinque’s hierarchy.

- (14) Mod<sub>epistemic</sub>: *waarschijnlijk* ‘probably’ and *klaarblijkelijk* ‘obviously’  
 (15) Mod<sub>necessity</sub>: *zeker* ‘certainly’  
 (16) Mod<sub>possibility</sub>: *mogelijk* ‘possibly’

### 2.5 Summary

There are three groups of words occurring in “X + *that*-clause”: adverbs, adjectives and adjective-adverbs. This categorization is reflected in the construction *het is X (zo) + dat*-clause: the adverbs only occur with *zo* ‘the-case’, while the adjectives and *zo* cannot co-occur. The third class is grammatical in both constructions, i.e. both with and without *zo*.

- (17) a. Het is ADV \*(zo) dat-clause  
 b. Het is ADJ (\*zo) dat-clause

- c. Het is ADJ-ADV (zo) dat-clause

Semantically the adverbs and adjective-adverbs belong to the speaker-oriented Mod-nodes in Cinque's (1999) hierarchy, and the adjectives are expressions of evaluative Mood.

### 3. The syntactic structure

#### 3.1 The non-elliptical 'base sentence'

I argue that the proper analysis of "X + *that*-clause" is ellipsis-based. The underlying sentence is *Het is X (zo) + dat*-clause, with ellipsis of the semantically (virtually) empty elements *het is (zo)* 'it is (the-case)'.

- (18) a. Het is waarschijnlijk zo da Sofie Jella heeft gebeld.  
           it is probably so that Sofie Jella has called  
       b. Waarschijnlijk da Sofie Jella heeft gebeld.  
           probably that Sofie Jella has called  
           'It is probably the case that Sofie has called Jella.'
- (19) a. Het is logisch da Reiner ook komt!  
           it is logical that Reiner also comes  
       b. Logisch da Reiner ook komt!  
           logical that Reiner also comes  
           'It is logical that Reiner also comes.'

The a-examples show that we are dealing with two CPs instead of only one: the matrix clause *het is X (zo)* 'it is X (so)' and a subclause introduced by *dat* 'that'.

Before I turn to what is deleted and how this happens, I take a look at the non-elliptical sentence ((18)a/(19)a). As shown in (20), the part between *het is* and the *dat*-clause can be quite complex:

- (20) a. Het is misschien wel niet slecht da Jes het haar verteld heeft.  
           it is perhaps PRT not bad that Jes it her told has  
       b. Het is \* wel niet slecht da Jes het haar verteld heeft.  
           it is PRT not bad that Jes it her told has  
       c. Het is \* \* niet slecht da Jes het haar verteld heeft.  
           it is not bad that Jes it her told has  
       d. Het is \* \* \* slecht da Jes het haar verteld heeft.  
           it is bad that Jes it her told has  
           'It is (perhaps) (not) bad that Jes told her.'
- e. \*Het is misschien wel niet \* da Jes het haar verteld heeft.  
           it is perhaps PRT not that Jes it her told has

- f. \*Het is misschien  $\times \times \times$  da Jes het haar verteld heeft.  
 it is perhaps that Jes it her told has

These examples reveal positions for an adverbial part, the particle *wel*, negation or affirmation and an adjective, in that order. The adjective position is the only one that is obligatorily filled, whereas all the others are optional. The adjective is the predicate of the matrix clause, which explains its obligatoriness. When no adjective is available, the semantically weak *zo* ‘the-case’ is inserted. I argue that *zo* is also a predicate, albeit a semantically poor one.

- (21) a. Het is misschien goed da Jessica het haar verteld heeft.  
 it is perhaps good that Jessica it her told has  
 ‘It is perhaps good that Jessica told her.’  
 b. \*Het is misschien da Jessica het haar verteld heeft.  
 it is perhaps that Jessica it her told has  
 c. Het is misschien zo da Jessica het haar verteld heeft.  
 it is perhaps so that Jessica it her told has  
 ‘It is perhaps the case that Jessica told her.’

Another argument for the status of *zo* as a predicate is the fact that adjectives and *zo* cannot co-occur: they occupy the same position.

- (22) \*Het is jammer zo da Jessica het haar verteld heeft.  
 it is unfortunate so that Jessica it her told has

There is a sharp contrast between *zo* and the adjectival predicate, however: *zo* is prohibited in “X + *that*-clause”. It is elided together with *het* ‘it’ and *is* ‘is’.

- (23) Misschien (\*zo) da Kris komt.  
 perhaps so that Kris comes

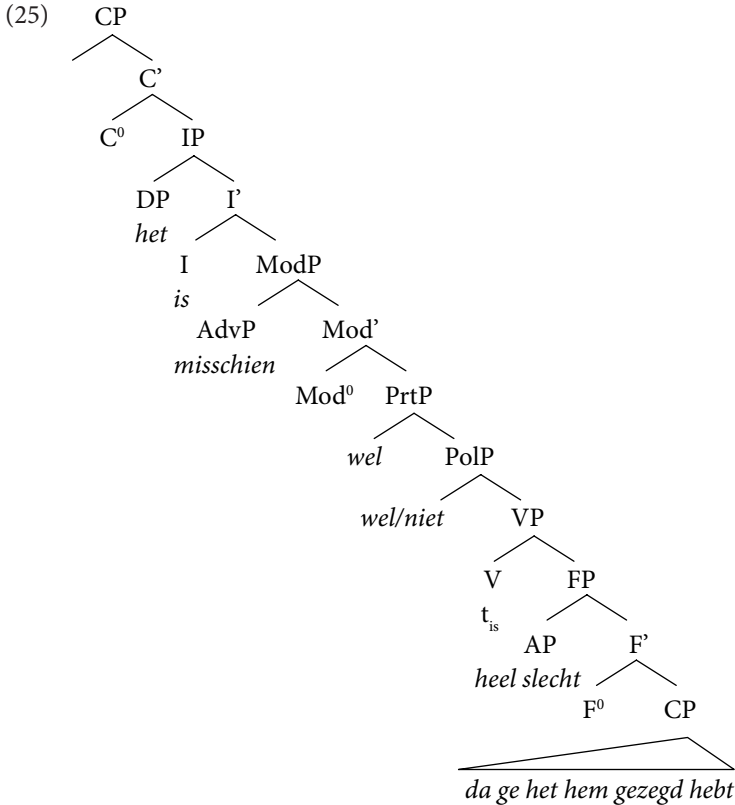
A final remark on the structure of the non-elliptical variant of “X + *that*-clause” concerns the position of the *dat*-clause. Consider the following:

- (24) a. Heel slecht da ge het hem gezegd hebt is het misschien wel niet  
 very bad that you it him said have is it perhaps PRT not  
 ‘It is perhaps not very bad that you told him.’  
 b. Heel slecht is het misschien wel niet da ge het hem gezegd hebt  
 very bad is it perhaps PRT not that you it him said have  
 ‘It is perhaps not very bad that you told him.’

The first sentence seems to suggest that the CP is the internal argument of the adjectival predicate. In order to implement these observations in the structure I adapt the cleft analysis of Merchant (1998) and references cited there. Merchant claims that the pivot of a cleft sits in the specifier of a functional node

inside the VP and that the subclause is the complement of that functional head. In my analysis this functional head  $F^0$  takes the AP as its specifier and the CP as its complement. Assuming the underlying structure is like the tree in (25), the examples in (24) can be derived as follows: in (24)a the FP as a whole is fronted, while (24)b involves movement of the AP alone.

Irrespective of the *zo*-problem, the facts give evidence for the structure in (25).<sup>6</sup>



### 3.2 Ellipsis of the IP

So far I have only discussed the non-elliptic variant of “X + *that*-clause”. This section takes a look at the elliptic sentence. What is elided and what survives?

- (26) a. Goed da Wim erbij was.  
 good that Wim there.with was  
 ‘It’s good that Wim was there.’

- b. Misschien (wel) goed da Wim erbij was.  
 perhaps PRT good that Wim there.with was  
 ‘Perhaps it’s good that Wim was there.’
- c. (Wel) nie slecht da Wim erbij was.  
 PRT not bad that Wim there was  
 ‘It’s not bad that Wim was there.’

Apparently, the whole ModP can survive the ellipsis when the predicate is an adjective and the *dat*-clause is not elided either.<sup>7,8</sup> When *zo* takes the role of predicate, however, it is elided along with *het is*.

- (27) a. Het is misschien zo dat Yves komt.  
 it is perhaps so that Yves comes  
 ‘It is perhaps the case that Yves comes.’
- b. Misschien (\*zo) dat Yves komt.  
 perhaps so that Yves comes  
 ‘It is perhaps the case that Yves comes.’

The analysis has to explain why *zo* cannot survive the ellipsis while an adjective and the rest of ModP can. Before I go into the analysis of “X + *that*-clause”, however, I turn to Van Craenenbroeck (2004) and his approach to Dutch sluicing.

### 3.2.1 Dutch dialect sluicing

There are several approaches to sluicing, and one of them is argued for by Merchant (2001). He considers sluicing to involve ellipsis of the IP, while the *wh*-phrase, which has moved out of the IP to [Spec,CP], remains untouched.

- (28) Someone has stolen my bike, but I don’t know who [<sub>IP</sub> ~~has stolen my bike~~]

Van Craenenbroeck (2004, 2005) follows Merchant’s lead in his discussion of the Dutch dialect construction he calls spading (which is short for ‘Sluicing Plus A Demonstrative In Non-insular Germanic’).

- (29) A: Roos heeft iemand gezien. – B: Wie da?  
 Roos has someone seen – who that  
 ‘Roos has seen someone.’ – ‘Who?’

The Standard Dutch sluicing cases do not have *da* ‘that’ following *wie* ‘who’, just as in English. Van Craenenbroeck gives conclusive evidence that this *da* is a demonstrative pronoun and that the underlying sentence of the sluice is a cleft:

- (30) da is wie dat Roos gezien heeft  
 that<sub>dem</sub> is who that<sub>C</sub> Roos seen has



He claims that from this underlying structure we can derive the spading construction in (29), as is shown in (31). *Wie* first moves to SpecFocP, checking an Op-feature there and then goes on to [Spec,ForceP] to check its Q-feature.<sup>9</sup> *Da*, which sits in [Spec,IP], moves to a second specifier position in FocP to check a focus feature. After ellipsis of the IP only *wie da* remains, as required.

- (31) [<sub>ForceP</sub> Wie [<sub>FocP</sub> da [<sub>IP</sub> ~~t<sub>da</sub> is t<sub>wie</sub> t<sub>CP</sub> dat — Roos gezien heeft?~~]]]]  
 who that<sub>dem</sub> is that<sub>C</sub> Roos seen has

Van Craenenbroeck (2004:60) argues that “the overt movement of the demonstrative pronoun to Spec[FocP] [...] is only allowed if the lower part of the movement chain is elided. [...] [S]luicing is crucially needed to rescue what would otherwise be an illegitimate derivation”, as is illustrated in (32). This phenomenon is called the ‘ellipsis repair effect’ (Merchant 2001; Van Craenenbroeck 2004; cf. also Richards 2001).

- (32) \*Wie da is (da) dat Roos gezien heeft?  
 who that<sub>dem</sub> is (that<sub>dem</sub>) that<sub>C</sub> Roos seen has

When we go back to ‘regular’ sluicing without a demonstrative, we see that other elements can also follow the *wh*-word (Van Craenenbroeck 2005:79). These constructions do not involve gapping, as gapping is not allowed in embedded clauses (Neijt 1979; cf. also Johnson 2003).

- (33) Ik weet wie met Marsha gedanst heeft, maar ik weet niet wie  
 I know who with Marsha danced has but I know not who  
 met Kaat.  
 with Kaat  
 ‘I know who danced with Marsha, but I don’t know who danced with  
 Kaat.’

What is important for the discussion of “X + *that*-clause” is that elements of ModP, PrtP and PolP are also allowed as a ‘survivor’ of the ellipsis in sluicing. In other words, the same elements that show up as X in “X + *that*-clause” can also be found to the right of sluiced *wh*-phrases.

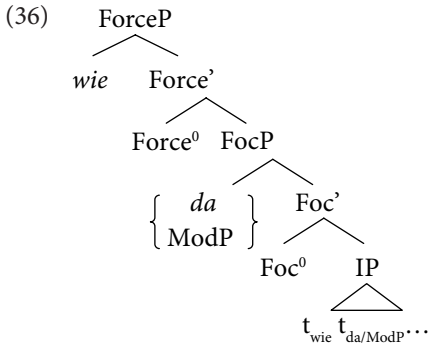
- (34) Babs heeft waarschijnlijk een dossier ingediend, en ik weet wie  
 Babs has probably a file submitted and I know who  
 zéker.  
 certainly.EMPH  
 ‘Babs probably submitted a file and I know who CERTAINLY did.’

The ModP-elements in (34) cannot co-occur with the demonstrative *da* (cf. (35)). I argue that the demonstrative and ModP occupy the same position,

namely the [Spec,FocP], for *da* is always stressed in spading constructions (Van Craenenbroeck 2004), as are the ModP-elements.

- (35) a. \*Ik weet wie met Marsha gedanst heeft, maar ik weet niet wie  
 I know who with Marsha danced has but I know not who  
 da met Kaat.  
 that<sub>dem</sub> with Kaat
- b. \*Babs heeft waarschijnlijk een dossier ingediend, maar ik weet niet  
 Babs has probably a file submitted but I know not  
 wie da zéker.  
 who that<sub>dem</sub> certainly.EMPH

I suggest the following: in these sluices ModP moves out of the IP, just like the demonstrative. The *wh*-phrase has moved to the Spec of ForceP, the highest node in the tree structure given in (36), and ModP sits in [Spec,FocP].



Just like the demonstrative (cf. (32)), ModP can only move in sluicing:

- (37) a. Ik weet dat Babs zeker geen dossier heeft ingediend, maar ik  
 I know that Babs certainly no file has submitted but I  
 weet niet wie het zeker wél is dat een dossier indiene.  
 know not who it certainly AFF is that a file submitted  
 'I know that Babs certainly didn't submit a file, but I don't know  
 who certainly DID submit a file.'
- b. \*...ik weet niet wie zeker wél dat een dossier indiene het is.  
 I know not who certainly AFF that a file submitted it is

The same pattern is found in "X + *that*-clause": ModP can only be fronted as a whole if the IP, consisting of *het is* (*zo*), is deleted.

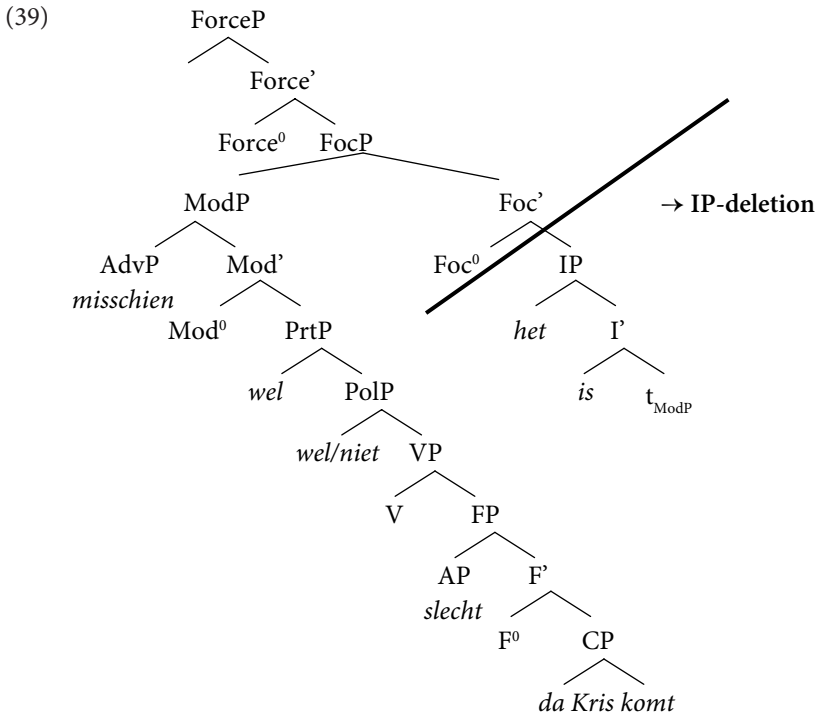
- (38) a. Waarschijnlijk nie slecht da ge het hem gezegd hebt.  
 probably not bad that you it him said have  
 'It is probably not bad that you said it to him.'

- b. \**Waarschijnlijk nie slecht da ge het hem gezegd hebt is het.*  
 probably not bad that you it him said have is it

Given this parallel, the sluices with ModP remnants and “X + *that*-clause” should have parallel analyses. The main difference between these constructions is what happens to the *dat*-subclause. This CP elides in sluicing and remains in “X + *that*-clause”.

### 3.2.2 IP Ellipsis in “X + *that*-clause”

Just like in the sluices, the ModP in “X + *that*-clause” moves out of the IP, to [Spec,FocP]. This movement only occurs when the IP is elided. The *dat*-clause is the complement of FP and, unlike in sluicing, the CP is not E-GIVEN (unless there is an antecedent, see footnote 7).<sup>10</sup> Deletion of the CP would violate the recoverability requirement operative in ellipsis. The only elements allowed to stay in the IP are the semantically empty *het* ‘it’, *is* ‘is’ and the *zo*-predicate.



Comparing sluices and “X + *that*-clause” has helped determine the syntactic structure of the sentences with a real adjectival predicate, but the ones with the

semantically empty *zo* ‘the case’ still need some attention. Recall that *zo* is not allowed in “X + *that*-clause”:

- (40) Misschien (\**zo*) da Maarten ook gaat.  
perhaps so that Maarten also goes  
‘It is perhaps the case that Maarten also goes.’

I suggest that *zo* moves out of the ModP before the latter goes to [Spec,FocP]. The landing site of this dummy predicate is a issue I will investigate later, as are the trigger of this movement and why it is dependent on the movement of ModP.

#### 4. Conclusion

The main claim of this paper is that the Belgian Dutch construction “X + *that*-clause” involves IP-ellipsis. First, I discussed the basic data, which showed that X can be an adverb, an adjective or an element belonging to both these categories. After considering more complex constructions, I discovered that X is in fact a ModP, containing a position for an adverbial phrase, a particle *wel*, a negation marker or affirmative element and an adjectival predicate. When the adjective is absent, the dummy predicate *zo* ‘the case’ (lit. ‘so’) takes its place. I have drawn a parallel between spading constructions, in which the IP is elided, and “X + *that*-clause”. In spading contexts a ModP can follow the *wh*-word, and I claim that ModP can only be fronted as a whole in “X + *that*-clause” when the IP is elided, as well.

#### Notes

\* I would like to thank Guido Vanden Wyngaerd, Johan Rooryck and Jeroen van Craenenbroeck for their support and helpful discussions, as well as the audience at the 2006 TIN-dag and two anonymous reviewers for their useful comments and questions. All errors are my own.

1. Although this construction is much more frequent in Belgian Dutch, some Northern Dutch speakers find it acceptable, as well (Hans den Besten and Helen de Hoop p.c. via Guido vanden Wyngaerd). Apparently, languages and language varieties vary in the range of possible X’s: in Northern dialects “X + *that*-clause” is only acceptable with adjectives, while in Belgian Dutch both adjectives and adverbs appear. “X + *that*-clause” is found in French as well, but there only adverbs are allowed:

- (i) {Probablement/\*Probable} qu’ il viendra.

probably            probable    that he will.come  
 ‘It is probable that he will come.’

This contrast might have a semantic explanation involving modality versus evaluation. How this would work I defer to future research, however.

2. An anonymous reviewer points out that *waarschijnlijk* in (5c) can be considered an adverbially used adjective. I follow Cinque (1999) and Nilsen (2003), however, in analyzing it as an adverb syntactically.

3. In contrast to manner adverbs, aspectual adverbs can be used in the non-elliptical sentence: *Het is vaak zo da Kris komt* (it is often the case that Kris comes). These lower adverbs are not exactly prohibited in “X + *that*-clause”, but they cannot occur without a Mod- or Mood-expression: *Altijd beter dat hij erbij is* (lit. always better that he there-by is); *Vaak niet slecht dat hij erbij is* (lit. often not bad that he there.with is). Apparently, either Mod or Mood should always be expressed. At first sight, the example in (i) contradicts this claim.

- (i) *Altijd da ze moet zagen!*  
 always that she has.to nag  
 ‘She always has to nag!’

However, this is not the same construction as the one discussed here. Unlike (7)a, the sentence in (i) has to be an exclamative and has more in common with the construction in (ii), which is also exclamative and involves topicalization of *gelopen* ‘run’.

- (ii) *Gelopen dat we hebben!*  
 run.PASTPART that we have  
 ‘Boy, did we run!’

4. The Mod<sub>volitional</sub> adverbs are not present in “X + *that*-clause”. In Cinque’s hierarchy, they are also special in that they are situated amongst the Asp-nodes. They are subject-oriented “root-modals” and contrast with the speaker-oriented epistemic and alethic modals in the higher Mod-nodes.

5. Cinque (1994) and Laenzlinger (2000) claim that there is a similar hierarchy for (attributive) adjectives, which would put the adjectives occurring in “X + *that*-clause” into the highest nodes of the hierarchy, like the adverbs.

6. The copular verb *is* ‘is’ moves from the V-position to the head of IP to check its inflection feature.

7. The *dat*-clause can also be elided, but only when it is given in the linguistic context.

- (i) A: *Wim is er ook bij.* – B: *Misschien wel nie slecht*  
 Wim is there also with – B: perhaps PRT not bad  
 ‘Wim is there, as well.’ – ‘Perhaps that’s not bad.’

8. The copula *is* is no longer part of the ModP at the stage the ellipsis occurs (presumable PF), see also footnote 6.

9. ForceP and FocP are the labels I have given to these functional nodes. Van Craenenbroeck refers to them as CP<sub>1</sub> and CP<sub>2</sub>.

10. The notion 'E-GIVENNESS' was first introduced by Merchant (2001).

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