

Alles is fleurich, ik bin it mei

On the comitative particle *mei* in Frisian and its counterparts in the other Germanic languages

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1. Introduction

All Germanic languages, except English, possess a comitative particle homophonous with the comitative adposition. Until now the comitative particle has not received much attention in the grammatical literature. In this paper I will outline the syntactic and semantic properties of this element in the various Germanic languages, taking West Frisian *mei* as my starting point. On the basis of this description I will propose a tentative analysis of the comitative particle.

2. The comitative particle *mei* in West Frisian

In this section I will give a description of the use and the distribution of the comitative particle *mei* in West Frisian in syntax and in word formation. Note that I will refer to *mei* and its counterparts in other Germanic languages as a *comitative* particle although, as we will see, it has some other functions next to the purely comitative one.

The comitative particle *mei* in Frisian may modify the maximal projections of all lexical categories (N, A, P, V). First consider its use with NPs. As the examples in (1) show, the particle always follows the NP it modifies:

- (1) a. Hwa't trochsette en him hwat skikke koe waerd [_{NP} Fries mei]
[J.J.Kalma, *Om Gysbert Japiks hinne* 73 (1963)]
'Who didn't give up and could adapt himself somewhat became a Frisian with the Frisians'

- b. In âlder of in skoalmaster moat faek [_{NP} bern mei] wêze
 [Wurdboek fan de Fryske Taal 2, s.v. *bern* I, 1]
 ‘A parent or a schoolteacher must often be a child with the children’

In (1) *mei* can be roughly paraphrased with a full PP. Thus, instead of *Fries mei* in (1a) it would be possible to say *Fries mei de Friezen* ‘a Frisian with the Frisians’. The particle expresses identification or integration and we might speak of the *integrative* function of *mei* here. The noun heading the modified NP typically denotes a member of a category of people (nationality, age group, profession, etc.).

In the example in (2) it is less easy to give an acceptable paraphrase of *mei* with a full PP. A clumsy paraphrase of *in reden mei* would be something like *in reden mei oare reden* ‘a reason with (in addition to) other reasons’, i.e. ‘one (further) reason’. The particle has an *additive* function here. The *dat*-clause complement of *reden* ‘reason’ has probably been extraposed in (2).

- (2) Dit wier den ek al [_{N*P} in reden *t_i* mei], dat Klaes Heechflecht nea safier buwten
 ‘e poarte wêst hie as er nou komme scoe_i
 [S. K. Feitsma, *For sprekkers en lêzers* 18 (1888)]
 ‘This was then one reason why Klaes Heechflecht had never been so far outside
 the gate as he would get now’

The expression *in reden mei* is slightly lexicalised. If it occurs in sentence-initial position the indefinite article may be deleted by some kind of sentential aphaeresis (cf. *It wie suterich waar. [Reden mei], dat er in min sin hie* ‘The weather was lousy. One reason why he had a bad temper’).

The difference between (1) and (2) may be that in (1) *mei* modifies the bare NP, whereas in (2) it modifies the nominal projection headed by the indefinite article, which I have represented by N*P to show that we are dealing with a nominal (functional) projection structurally higher than NP (possibly Number Phrase). A clear example of the additive use of *mei* is also found in the partitive construction (here the *fan*-PP has presumably been extraposed):

- (3) a. Dat is [_{N*P} ien *t_i* mei] fan ‘e bêste fersen fan Obe Postma;
 ‘That is one of the best poems by Obe Postma’
 b. Dat binne [_{N*P} guon *t_i* mei] fan ‘e bêste fersen fan Obe Postma;
 c. Dat binne [_{N*P} *pro t_i* mei] fan ‘e bêste fersen fan Obe Postma;
 ‘Those are some of the best poems by Obe Postma’

In (3) the comitative particle modifies an NP headed by an indefinite pronoun. The occurrence of *mei* is dependent on the presence of a superlative in the *fan*-phrase (cf. *ien (*mei) fan ‘e fersen* ‘one of the poems’). The use of the particle seems to be somewhat pleonastic here (‘one, among others, of the best poems’).

In combination with APs the comitative particle also follows the AP it modifies. Compare the examples in (4):

- (4) a. Heit en mem kipen ek ris efkes yn en waerden [_{AP} jong mei] en songen ek, det it davere [S. Kloosterman, *Ut 'e gielgoerde II* 62 (1944)]
 'Dad and Mom dropped in as well and got young with the young people and also sang at the top of their voice'
- b. Mar it binne ek sokke fleurige skutters en den wirdt men ommers sels [_{AP} fleurich mei] [R. Brolsma, *Pension "Nij Frisia"* 38 (1936)]
 'But they are such merry people and then one gets merry with them, doesn't one?'

As in the case of NP modification *mei* has an integrative function here: *jong mei* means something like 'young with the young ones'.

The comitative particle can further combine with PPs. In this case, however, it precedes the PP it modifies. The PP can be a normal preposition phrase (5a), a pronominal adverb (with possible movement of the R-pronoun) (5b) or an intransitive preposition (directional adverb) (5c):

- (5) a. Ik ha [_{PP} mei op begraffenis] west
 'I came along to the funeral'
- b. Hja siet der_i [_{PP} mei t_i yn]
 'She was in it along with some other person(s)'
- c. Hy is [_{PP} mei werom] kommen
 'He has come back along with some other person(s)'

In combination with the directional (predicative) PPs in (5), *mei* has a purely comitative function. It can, however, appear with adjunct PPs as well, in which case it has an additive function:

- (6) [_{PP} Mei fanwegen in útskuorde ferkearing] hie se in oare baan socht
 'Partly because of a broken-off relationship she had looked for another job'

Finally, the comitative particle may occur with VPs. As with PPs, it precedes the VP it modifies. In combination with a VP *mei* may have a purely comitative function, as in (7):

- (7) a. Hja hat [_{VP} mei dit bedriuw grut makke]
 b. Hja hat dit bedriuw_i [_{VP} mei t_i grut makke]
 'She has made this company big with some other person(s)'

The particle may either precede the direct object or the verb (or complex predicate). Since in both cases the particle takes scope over the whole VP, I assume that the word order difference results from scrambling of the direct object.

The comitative function may fade into an additive one. Compare the examples in (8), where it is hard to decide whether the particle is comitative or additive:

- (8) a. Dat leau ik mei
 'I believe that too'
- b. Ik sil der mei om tinke
 'I will also keep an eye on it'

In its additive function *mei* may also precede either the direct object or the verb:

- (9) a. Hy hat [_{V*P} mei it stek ferve]
 b. Hy hat it stek_i [_{V*P} mei t_i ferve]
 i. 'He has also painted the fence (in addition to some other person(s))'
 ii. 'He has also painted the fence (in addition to, e.g., mowing the lawn)'
 iii. 'He has also painted the fence (in addition to, e.g., painting the shed)'
 vi. 'He has also painted the fence (in addition to, e.g., repairing it)'

Additive *mei* in (9) may have four different scopal interpretations, partly dependent on the stress (on *hy* in reading (i), on *it stek* in reading (ii) and (iii), on *ferve* in reading (iv)). Additive *mei* clearly occupies another, higher structural position (represented here by V*P) than purely comitative *mei*, since it obligatorily precedes the latter (which, as we will see below, is strictly bound to the edge of VP):

- (10) Hy hat [_{V*P} mei (juster) [_{VP} mei it stek ferve]
 'He has also painted the fence with some other person(s) (yesterday)'

Summarizing, we have seen that in syntax the comitative particle *mei* in Frisian may modify NP (N*P), AP, PP and VP (V*P). It can have an integrative function (with NP and AP), a purely comitative function (with predicative PP and VP) and an additive function (with N*P, adjunct PP and V*P). In Frisian the particle *mei* follows NP (N*P) and AP (the [+N] categories), whereas it precedes PP and VP (V*P) (the [-N] categories).

The comitative particle also appears as the first part of a compound. As such it may precede nouns (11a), adjectives (11b) and verbs (11c), in the latter case as a separable verb particle:

- (11) a. meieigner 'co-owner', meipassasjier 'co-passenger'
 b. meiskuldich 'also guilty, accessory to', meiferantwurdlik 'jointly responsible'
 c. meiride 'to travel with some other person(s)', meisjonge 'to join in singing'

The 'bound' use of the particle clearly contrasts with its 'free' use. Compare, for example:

- (12) a. Hy is meidirekteur 'He is the co-director'
 b. Hy is [_{NP} direkteur mei] 'He is director with the director (e.g. the janitor)'
 c. Hy is [_{VP} mei direkteur] 'He is the director with some other person(s)'
 d. Hy is [_{V*P} mei direkteur] 'He is also the director (he has some other function(s) as well)'

Let us now have a look at the other Germanic languages and see how the comitative particle behaves there.

3. The comitative particle in other Germanic languages

The only Germanic language that does not seem to have developed a comitative particle from the comitative adposition is English. English has only full comitative *with*-PPs (cf. *I come with *(you) to the cinema*) and it does not form compounds with *with* (verbs like *withdraw* and *withstand* preserve the old meaning of *with*, ‘against, back’). One might want to relate this to the fact that Modern English has lost the etymological counterpart of Frisian *mei*, Dutch *me(d)e*, German *mit*, Danish *med* etc. (also Old English *mid!*). Note, however, that Icelandic has the preposition *með*, but no ‘free’ comitative particle, although it has the verb particle in *Hann kemur/fer með* ‘he comes/goes along’ etc. (Halldór Sigurðsson, p.c.). On the other hand, Faroese has the preposition *við*, like English, but developed at least the additive variant of the particle (cf. *Eg hugsi so við* ‘I think so too’).

We turn to the remaining Germanic languages. First consider German. The German comitative particle *mit* has been discussed in some detail by Zifonun (1996/1997, 1999). As in Frisian (cf. (2)), the comitative particle may occur with an indefinite noun phrase (N*P), but other than in Frisian, it precedes this noun phrase:

- (13) Das war [_{N*P} mit ein Grund, weshalb sie gekündigt hatte]
 ‘That was one reason why she quit the job’

This is also the case in the partitive construction in (14), which compares to the Frisian example in (3a):

- (14) Das ist [_{N*P} mit eins der schönsten Gedichte von Rilke]
 ‘That is one of the most beautiful poems by Rilke’

As I noted in connection with the Frisian example, the comitative particle in the partitive construction is dependent on the presence of a superlative. A superlative is also obligatorily present in the partitive constructions in (15), where *mit* modifies a following DP (15a) or DegP (15b):

- (15) a. Das ist [_{DP} mit das schönste Gedicht von Rilke]
 ‘That is one of the most beautiful poems by Rilke’
 b. Dieses Gedicht von Rilke ist [_{DegP} mit am schönsten]
 ‘This poem by Rilke is one of the most beautiful’

Whereas *mit* in (14) (like *mei* in (3)) seems to be more or less pleonastic, *mit* in (15) clearly triggers the partitive interpretation of the DP and the DegP (cf. also Zifonun 1996/1997-II: 24).

The comitative particle may stand before predicative PPs (cf. (16)), i.e. in its purely comitative function, but not before adjunct PPs, i.e. in its additive function (compare Frisian *mei út namme fan myn frou* ‘also on behalf of my wife’ with German *auch im Namen meiner Frau*).

- (16) Antje ist [_{pp} mit in die Stadt] gefahren
 'Antje came along to town'

The comitative particle can also modify VP (cf. (17)) and V*P (cf. (18)). As with Frisian *mei*, an object may either follow or precede *mit* in these cases:

- (17) a. Hans hat [_{vp} mit die Veranstaltung vorbereitet]
 b. Hans hat die Veranstaltung_i [_{vp} mit _{t_i} vorbereitet]
 'Hans organised the event with some other person(s)'
- (18) a. Sie haben [V*P mit das Klavier hinaufgetragen]
 b. Sie haben das Klavier_i [V*P mit _{t_i} hinaufgetragen]
 'They also carried the piano upstairs'

Finally *mit*- may compound with nouns, adjectives and (as a separable particle) with verbs, e.g. *Mitdirektor* 'co-director', *mitverantwortlich* 'jointly responsible', *mitfahren* 'to travel with some other person(s)'.

In Dutch the comitative particle is not as productive as in Frisian and German, but Dutch is interesting because it formally distinguishes a preposition *met* and a postposition/particle *mee* (cf. *Hij ging met zijn vader mee* 'He went with his father'). Only the latter form occurs as a comitative particle. In addition *mee* has a by-form *mede*. In Dutch the comitative particle can only modify PPs and VPs. In its purely comitative function before directional (predicative) PP and VP it appears as *mee* (cf. (19a,c)), in its additive function before adjunct PP and V*P as *mede* (cf. (19b,d)). In word formation *mee*- combines with verbs, *mede*- with nouns and adjectives (cf. (19e)). Compare:

- (19) a. Kees ging [_{pp} mee/*mede naar de kerk]
 'Kees came along to the church'
- b. Ik feliciteer je [_{pp} mede/*mee namens de kollega's]
 'I congratulate you also on behalf of the colleagues'
- c. Ze heeft het projekt_i [_{vp} mee/*mede _{t_i} opgezet]
 'She organised the project with some other person(s)'
- d. Hij heeft [_{v*P} mede/*mee de telefoon uitgevonden]
 'He has also invented the telephone'
- e. meerijden/*mederijden 'to drive with some other person(s)'
mededirecteur/*meedirecteur 'co-director'
verantwoordelijk/*meeverantwoordelijk 'jointly responsible'

The use of the comitative particle with VP seems to be somewhat more restricted in Dutch than in Frisian and German: comitative *mee* can only stand immediately before the verb (or complex predicate), i.e. the object is obligatorily scrambled.

Finally, let us have a quick look at the mainland Scandinavian languages, taking Danish as an example. The sentences in (20) (from the ODS), show that the comitative particle *med* follows N*P (20a,b), precedes (predicative) PP (20c)

and follows VP (20d) and V*P (20e). The verb particle *med* follows the verb, whereas *med-* is prefixed to nouns and adjectives (20f):

- (20) a. Da jeg nu formodede, at Skiørbug var [_{N*P} en Aarsag med], gav jeg ham ...
Skiørbugs-Kløver [ODS 13 s.v. med, 1154]
'Since I suspected that scurvy was one of the causes, I gave him scurvy-clover'
- b. En stor Deel af disse Folk, endog [_{N*P} nogle *t_i* med] af de ... tapreste iblant dem, leve paa denne Maade [ibid. 1150]
'A large part of these people, even some of the bravest among them, live like that'
- c. Manden ... skulle have Paalægsmad [_{PP} med paa Arbejdspladsen] [ibid. 1153]
'The man should take sandwiches with him to work'
- d. Vill du [_{VP} drikke The med]? [ibid. 1150]
'Will you have tea with us?'
- e. Saadann har man [_{V*P} klaget i England med] [ibid. 1154]
'So did they complain in England too'
- f. køre med 'to travel with some other person(s)'
meddirektør 'co-director'
medansvarlig 'jointly responsible'

4. Towards an analysis of the comitative particle

After this survey of the use of the comitative particle in Frisian and the other Germanic languages, I will present the basic ingredients for an analysis. I will depart from the hypothesis that there is only one particle *mei* etc. that has different functions according to the phrase type with which it is combined (although some language-specific provisos may be necessary). The basic distinction seems to be between the comitative function (comprising the purely comitative as well as the integrative function) and the additive function (compare the formal reflex of this dichotomy in Dutch *mee/mede!*). In its comitative function the particle modifies the bare lexical projections NP, AP, PP and VP used as predicates, in its additive function it modifies functional projections (N*P, V*P and, in German, DP and DegP) and non-predicative PP. (An anonymous reviewer claims that N*P and D*P have to be predicates when combined with the comitative particle, but even though they are normally used in predicative position, they can be arguments too, cf. German *Mit ihm haben wir [mit einen der besten Forscher auf diesem Gebiet] gewonnen* 'With him we managed to win one of the best researchers in the field?') In the following I will focus on the comitative use of the particle, but at the end I will make a few remarks on its additive use.

Until now I tacitly assumed that the comitative particle and the XP it

modifies form one constituent. A topicalisation test suffices to show that they actually do:

- (21) a. [_{NP} Fries mei] is er nea rjucht wurden
 'He never really became a Frisian with the Frisians'
 b. [_{AP} Jong mei] wurdt men yn 'e boarterstún
 'On the playground one gets young with the young ones'
 c. [_{PP} Mei nei Grins ta] gie allinnich myn broer
 'Only my brother came along to Groningen'
 d. [_{VP} Mei it stek fervje] docht er mar komselden
 'He seldom paints the fence with some other person(s)'

In her study of comitative *mit* in German, Zifonun does not seem to distinguish PP-modifying from VP-modifying *mit*. It is clear, however, that the particle may form one constituent with a PP. Even a full comitative PP may, as (22) shows:

- (22) [_{PP} Mei ús heit nei Grins ta] gie allinnich myn broer
 'Only my brother came along to Groningen with my father'

I assume that the comitative particle heads a PP that is right- or left-adjoined to the XP constituent it modifies. Note that the separable verb particle can also be a maximal projection; as (23) shows, it may be topicalised:

- (23) [_{PP} Mei] gie er suver nea
 'He practically never came along'

I will have nothing to say here on the possible internal structure of the PP containing *mei* (for some arguments against ellipsis of a prepositional object or the presence of an empty pronoun, see Zifonun (1996/1997-II: 20–23)).

Observe further that comitative *mei* is frozen at the edge of the XP it modifies and that it may not be stranded; it nor XP can be extracted. In (24) this is illustrated for PP-modifying *mei* (note that (24a) is marginally acceptable in a not-intended reading in which *nei Grins ta* is an adjunct and *meinimme* a particle verb):

- (24) a. *Nei Grins ta_i hat er syn broer [_{PP} mei t_i] nommen
 b. *Mei_i hat er syn broer [_{PP} t_i nei Grins ta] nommen
 'He took his brother with him to Groningen'

The example in (25) shows that a VP-modifying comitative particle, unlike a full comitative phrase, may not be scrambled over adverbs; it is strictly bound to the edge of VP:

- (25) a. Bouke hat {juster mei / *mei juster} it stek ferve
 'Bouke painted the fence yesterday with some other person(s)'
 b. Bouke hat {juster mei Sjoukje / mei Sjoukje juster} it stek ferve
 'Bouke painted the fence yesterday with Sjoukje'

Note by the way that the frozenness and unstrandability of the comitative

particle implies that in the last line of Waling Dykstra's popular song 'Simmermoarn' (Summer Morning) in the title of this paper the particle can only be VP- or V*P-modifying *mei* (cf. (26b,b')). The alternative interpretation as AP-modifying integrative *mei* could only be derived by illicitly stranding *mei* (cf. (26a,a')).

- (26) a. Alles is fleurich, ik bin_i [_{AP} fleurich mei] t_i
 a'. *Alles is fleurich, ik bin_i it_j [_{AP} t_j mei] t_i
 b. Alles is fleurich, ik bin_i [_{V*P/VP} mei [fleurich t_i]]
 b'. Alles is fleurich, ik bin_i it_j [_{V*P/VP} mei [t_j t_i]]
 'Everything (in nature) is happy, I am happy with it/too'

This considered, let us assume that comitative *mei* is a syntactic affix that is used to comitative-mark a predicate, i.e. to indicate that the action, process or state expressed by the predicate is jointly performed/undergone/possessed by the agent/theme and some other person(s). Like a morphological affix, the comitative particle may not be separated from its base.

The comitative particle can in principle appear adjoined to VP or incorporated in the verb. In the case of complex predicates, i.e. a copula verb and a secondary predicate, the particle may be adjoined to the secondary predicate, to NP, AP or PP, and in this way comitative-mark the whole complex predicate.

Something fascinating occurs in the case of complex predicates consisting of a motion or transport verb and a directional PP. Here the comitative particle is either adjoined to the PP (27a) or attached to the verb (27b,c). In the latter case the directional PP must be extraposed, probably because the verb particle *mei* fills the structural position otherwise occupied by this PP. Strikingly, however, extraposition does not force the normal adjunct interpretation of PPs in extraposition in Frisian. In fact, (27a) and (27c) are more or less synonymous; in both cases the particle seems to comitative-mark the whole complex predicate.

- (27) a. Hy is mei nei Grins ta riden
 'He traveled with some other person(s) to Groningen'
 b. *Hy is nei Grins ta meiriden
 c. Hy is meiriden nei Grins ta

Another interesting phenomenon occurs with the verb *nimme* 'to take'. If this verb forms a complex predicate with a directional PP, this PP is obligatorily comitative-marked. Here as well, the comitative marker can appear either on the PP or on the verb, again comitative-marking the whole complex predicate:

- (28) a. Hja hie de kat *(mei) op bêd nommen
 'She took the cat to bed with her'
 b. *Hja hie de kat op bêd meinommen
 c. Hja hie de kat meinommen op bêd

With *nimme* comitative-marking is probably obligatory, because *nimme* is goal-

oriented, i.e. the inherent goal of *nimme* is the agent. If it is combined with a secondary predicate, denoting the goal of the theme, speakers may feel urged to explicitly express that agent and theme land at the same place. This is done by adding the comitative particle *mei* (which has a reflexive interpretation here) or some other comitative PP like *by har* ‘with her’. Note that also in this case English is different: in English the comitative PP is not obligatory with the verb *take* (cf. *She took the cat to bed (with her)*).

The order of the comitative particle with respect to the predicate seems to reflect the canonical position of (PP-)adjuncts. In the continental West Germanic OV-languages adjuncts normally follow nominal and adjectival projections, whereas they precede prepositional and verbal projections. For Frisian this is shown in (29):

- (29) a. it hûs [op 'e pôle] ‘the house on the island’
 b. lokkich [sûnder dy] ‘happy without you’
 c. [mei de boat] nei Amearika ‘by boat to America’
 d. [by 't hjerst] de hage knippe ‘to trim the hedge in autumn’

The VP-final position of the comitative particle in the VO-language Danish (cf. (20d)) tallies with the general position of adjuncts in languages with a right-branching VP (Danish *vente på toget i en time* ‘to wait for the train for one hour’).

Note further that in Danish and in North Frisian, which have a right-branching particle phrase with the directional particle preceding the PP (e.g. Danish *ud i køkkenet* ‘out to the kitchen’, North Frisian (Fering-Öömrang) *iin uun dörrnsk* ‘into the livingroom’), there has been a tendency to adjoin the comitative particle to the right of prepositional secondary predicates (cf. Hoekstra 2000):

- (30) a. De unge Damer (*kan maaske*) drages [_{pp} ind med] (nowadays: med ind)
 [ODS 13 s.v. *med*, 1154]
 ‘The young ladies could possibly be dragged in’
 b. Hi as ei [_{pp} tús mä] kimen (Fering-Öömrang)
 ‘He didn’t come home with some other person(s)’

I have nothing much to say on the additive use of the particle. As a V*P-modifier it is comparable to focus particles like *ek* ‘also’. As an N*P-modifier in Frisian and Danish, it resembles postnominal adjuncts like Frisian *deropta* (e.g. *50 euro deropta* ‘50 euro extra’) or Danish *til* (*fem minutter til* ‘another five minutes’). An interesting question is of course why the use with N*P seems to be restricted to nouns denoting reason or cause and to the partitive construction.

That German has the particle before N*P, unlike Frisian and Danish, may have something to do with the fact that additive *mit* also precedes DP (and DegP) in German. In its use before DP *mit* might occupy the specifier position of a pre-DP quantifier phrase (cf. Giusti 1991). The construction reminds one

of partitive constructions in the older stages of the Germanic languages in which a DP with an adjective in the superlative is preceded by a numeral. Compare the following example from Old Frisian:

- (31) tria dae beste hinx dyer [*Oudfriesche Oorkonden* II 248, l. 61]
 ‘three of the best horses (lit. three the best horses)’

If *mit* before DP is in the specifier of a high quantifier phrase, *mit* before N*P might occupy the specifier position of a lower quantifier phrase in German (possibly Number Phrase).

5. Concluding remarks

In this article I have given a description of the comitative particle *mei* in West Frisian and compared it to its counterparts in the other Germanic languages. Needless to say that my analysis of the comitative particle only scratches the surface. Future research will have to answer many questions of principle and detail that could not be exhaustively treated here. Among the former are the question of the historical development of the comitative particle, the question of its semantics, and the question of the relevance of apparently word order-sensitive elements like the comitative particle for directionality, in particular the antisymmetry hypothesis (Kayne 1994).

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