

# The Dutch ‘X is zo + NP/VP’-construction

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This paper analyses Dutch sentences from a commercial campaign which make use of the ‘X is zo NP/VP’-construction. I consider this to be a construction (cf. Goldberg 1995; Verhagen 2005), not only because of its template-like character in which the adverb *zo* is followed by an unusual phrase type, but also because of its unexpected semantic properties. The analysis of this construction reveals a part of the Dutch ‘constructicon’.

**Keywords:** Construction grammar, Dutch constructicon, dictionary information

## 1. Contributing to the analysis of the Dutch ‘constructicon’

A long-standing and ongoing debate in linguistics concerns the division between grammar and the lexicon. In the last decades the separation between the two has been questioned by the theory of construction grammar (Fillmore 1988; Jackendoff 1995; Goldberg 1995, 2006). Construction grammar claims that language primarily consists of stored chunks with specific formal and semantic properties that are not fully predictable but neither completely arbitrary (cf. Goldberg 1995; Goldberg & van der Auwera 2012: 110).<sup>1</sup> Within the paradigm of construction grammar, analysing a language boils down to gaining insight into the ‘constructicon’ of that language (cf. Jurafsky 1992: 8; Verhagen 2005: 211; Goldberg 2006: 64).

For Dutch, several constructions have been examined in detail (cf. Verhagen & Kemmer 1997; Foolen 2004; Verhagen 2005; Boogaart 2007; Coleman 2010; Coleman, de Clerck & Devos 2010; Keizer 2012). The goal of this paper is to add to this list the analysis of another Dutch construction.

The construction examined in this paper consists of a fixed, unexpected pattern with *zo*, in which *zo* is followed by a nominal phrase (NP) or a (nominalised) verbal phrase (VP). The meaning of a sentence with this form is not fully predictable from its lexical parts. Therefore, the supposition of a construction is needed,

which explains and motivates the form and meaning of the sentence (cf. Goldberg & van der Auwera 2012: 110).

The structure of this paper is as follows: In the next section (Section 2), I will describe the lexical meaning of the Dutch adverb *zo* ('so'; 'like') and explain that *zo* is usually combined with an adjective phrase (AdjP). This section also discusses examples in which *zo* is followed by another phrase than an AdjP. After that, Section 3 will introduce a Dutch campaign which provides data of a new usage of the word *zo*, in which *zo* is followed by an NP, VP or PP (prepositional phrase). In Section 4, the data from the campaign will be analysed. Section 5 will provide theoretical insights into the construction, followed by the conclusions in Section 6.

## 2. Phrases after the adverb *zo* and its lexical meaning

The Dutch word *zo* is primarily known as an intensifier (cf. Haeseryn, Romijn, Geerts, de Rooij, Van Toorn 1997: §15.3.1.1). As an intensifier, *zo* is prototypically followed by an adjective phrase and it is used to express a high degree of the property described by the adjective. In the Dutch dictionary by Van Dale, the intensifier meaning is the second meaning (cf. especially 2013a meaning 2a) of the adverb *zo*. This is illustrated in (1) and (2).

- (1) Ik vind dit zo grappig.  
I find this so funny  
'I find this very funny.'
- (2) Ik durf niet, want de Eiffeltoren is zo hoog!  
I dare not because the Eiffel tower is so high  
'I don't dare, because the Eiffel tower is very high!'

Although neither the Ans (Haeseryn et al. 1997) nor Van Dale (2013a, 2013b) provide examples with an NP, *zo* in its intensifier meaning can occasionally be followed by a bare noun. Example (3), taken from the ANW-corpus (cf. Tiberius & Kilgariff 2009; Schoonheim & Tempelaars 2010: 718, 719), illustrates this. Examples with an NP like (3) are infrequent and they do not seem to be acceptable for all speakers.

- (3) Ze zijn daar niet zo voorstander van Ruinen. [Meppeler Courant, 1994]  
they are there not so supporter of Ruinen (= a Dutch village)  
'There, they don't like Ruinen that much.'

Besides the intensifier meaning, the contemporary dictionary by Van Dale (2013a) provides five other meanings of the adverb *zo*.<sup>2</sup> For all meanings, the vast majority of the examples show *zo* followed by an AdjP. In none of the examples given, a VP

is used after *zo*, in one a PP occurs after *zo* and in a few examples *zo* is combined with an NP. Since combinations of *zo* with other phrases than an AdjP are relevant for the sentences analysed in Section 4, (4)–(9) show these examples from Van Dale. Examples (4)–(8) contain an NP (in the broadest sense), (9) a PP. The specific meaning in Van Dale is added in square brackets.

- (4) Wat zeg je van zó iets? [1. corresponding to a thing/person/reality]  
 what say you of so something?  
 'What do you think of such a thing/something like that?'
- (5) zo iemand [1. corresponding to a thing/person/reality]  
 so someone  
 'such a person'
- (6) zo een bedrieger [1. corresponding to a thing/person/reality]  
 so an imposter  
 'such an imposter'
- (7) dat zijn zo de dingen die we doen [3. in a certain way]  
 that are so the things that we do  
 'That's what we do'
- (8) zo'n beetje [3. in a certain way]  
 so a little bit  
 'sort of'
- (9) melk, zó van de koe [4. time adverb]  
 milk sóo from the cow  
 'milk, directly/fresh from a cow'

Another usage of an NP (in its broadest sense) after *zo* is illustrated in (10)–(12) below. Dutch dictionaries do not provide examples like these. In popularizing texts on language use, these examples are discussed as new phenomena (like (10) in Cornelisse 2009:84 and (11) on [http://www.weideblik.com/site/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=315:zo-jaren-&catid=18:platforms](http://www.weideblik.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=315:zo-jaren-&catid=18:platforms) [accessed May 2014]). The examples are also possible in English (for (11) and (12) cf. Wee & Tan 2008).

- (10) Dat is echt weer zo00 Natasha  
 that is really again sooo Natasha  
 'That's so Natasha'
- (11) Dat is zo 2013 / jaren '90  
 that is so 2013 / nineties  
 'That's so 2013 / nineties'

- (12) Dat is zo vorige eeuw  
 that is so last century  
 ‘That’s so last century’

Examples (10)–(12) illustrate the use of *zo* followed by an NP (cf. especially (12)), but in a different way as in (3)–(8) above. Often the word *zo* receives emphasis, typographically realised as in (10) or by an accent (i.e. *zó*). The examples are special in that there is a kind of evaluation involved: Some awkward situation or stupid behaviour is evaluated as typical of Natasha or something is classified as typical of another time period (used to express that it is old-fashioned). Besides the evaluative comparison, the intensifier meaning of *zo* also seems to be present in the examples (10)–(12): They express that something is very old-fashioned or very typical of a person. The meaning descriptions in Dutch dictionaries (e.g. Prisma, WNT or Van Dale) do not cover this type of sentences.

As an intensifier, the word *zo* normally only occurs in evaluative comparisons in combination with *als*, sometimes even spelled as *zoals* (‘so/such a...like/as’). In this combination, *zo* has its intensifier meaning and *als* introduces a comparison (cf. Van Dale *zoals*). As expected, the intensifier *zo* is mostly combined with an AdjP, as in the ANW-example (13). Occasionally, an NP occurs after *zo*, as in (14), but again (cf. (3)) sentences like this with an NP are not acceptable for all speakers.

- (13) Niemand is zo stipt als jij [by Grunberg, 2003]  
 no one is so precise as you  
 ‘No one is as precise as you are.’

- (14) Neem nou die beroemde ‘Niemand is zo maniak als Mazda’  
 take now that famous no one is so maniac as Mazda  
 [De Standaard, 1996]  
 ‘Consider that famous one [= slogan] ‘No one is as (much a) maniac as Mazda.’

In the combination *zo...als*, it is the conjunction *als* which introduces the comparison. This conjunction is absent in (10)–(12).

The word *zo* can also be used as a conjunction comparable to *(zo)als* on its own, as in example (15) (taken from Van Dale 2013b). In this case, *zo* does not have an intensifier meaning. This example is clearly different from (10)–(12).

- (15) Zo vader, zo zoon.  
 like father like son

In this section, it has become evident that the meaning of examples (10)–(12) is not covered by descriptions in dictionaries. The examples (10)–(12) with *zo* are special, because *zo* is used as an intensifier adverb followed by an unexpected

phrase type and because the examples express an evaluation that cannot be clearly connected to one of the lexical items.

Therefore, the meaning of the sentences is not fully predictable from its parts and a construction will be needed to explain the examples. The same applies, but even more so, to the data in the next sections. In the next section, I will introduce examples similar to (10)–(12), which will be analysed in Section 4.

### 3. Data from the Dutch campaign *Roken kan echt niet meer* and comparable examples

In December 2012, the KWF Kankerbestrijding (the Dutch anti-cancer foundation) launched a Dutch anti-smoking campaign with the title *Roken kan echt niet meer* ('Smoking is just not possible anymore' ≈ 'Smoking is not done anymore'). The campaign consists of TV commercials and posters showing the sentence *roken is zóóó Y* ('smoking is sooo Y'), with different words found in the Y-slot. Celebrities participate in the campaign by showing this sentence with a personal filling. On the internet and on social media, users were asked to make their own anti-smoking slogan of this form. The campaign is still running.

Some examples of sentences used in the campaign are illustrated in (16)–(19). The sentences are used to express that smoking is something very old-fashioned and stupid.

- (16) Roken is zóóó floppydisk  
smoking is sooo floppy disk
- (17) Roken is zóóó witte legging  
smoking is sooo white leggings
- (18) Roken is zóóó faxen  
smoking is sooo faxing
- (19) Roken is zóóó postzegels verzamelen  
smoking is sooo stamps collecting

For an analysis of this particular usage of this 'X is zóóó Y'-template, I tried to find as many campaign examples as possible (till the end of January 2014). In total, 112 different examples were found. I will analyse these in the next section (Section 4). Examples were taken from the official website (<http://www.rokenkanechtnietmeer.nl/> [accessed January 2014]), from official video clips on the television and found on YouTube, from posters found via Google, and from the interactive environments on Twitter and Facebook, where users created their own sentences (<https://>

twitter.com/RokenIsZoTweets; <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Roken-is-z%C3%B3%C3%B3%C3%B3/304329996353699> [both accessed January 2014]). The fact that people who did not belong to the campaign team were able to create their own *roken is zóóó...*-sentences shows that the usage of ‘X is zo NP/VP’ is not just constructed campaign language but rather a natural usage of *zo* for Dutch speakers.

In addition to this, examples which have nothing to do with the campaign and which have other subjects than *roken* can be found on the internet. Example (20) shows a year, example (21) a real NP and example (22) a nominalised VP after *zo*. As in examples (16)–(19), (20)–(22) express that the subject X is as old-fashioned or stupid as Y (the year/NP/VP) is.

- (20) Vandalisme is zóóóóó 2004  
vandalism is sooooo 2004  
[<http://www.autoblog.nl/vuurwerkbom-blaast-auto-in-hilversum-uit-elkaar>, 31-12-2012, accessed May 2014]
- (21) Vraaggericht werken is zóóó web 1.0.  
On demand working is sooo web 1.0  
[<http://www.ambtenaar20.nl/?p=4043>, 20-09-2009, accessed May 2014]
- (22) Sushi is zóóóó mensen beoordelen op hun uiterlijk  
sushi is soooo people judge on their appearances  
[<http://uitdekleren.blogspot.nl/2013/12/sushi-is-zoooo-mensen-beoordelen-op-hun.html>, 13-13-2013, accessed May 2014]

Although the analysis in Section 4 will only take into account campaign sentences with *roken* as a subject, these examples show that the underlying pattern is ‘X is zo NP/VP’ with an open X-slot.

#### 4. Analysis of the data ‘Roken is zóóó...’

##### 4.1 Formal properties

All 112 sentences of the campaign start with the nominalised VP *roken* as the subject of the copula ‘to be’ in Dutch (*is*), followed by an emphasised adverb *zo*. Besides the campaign form *zóóó*, users on Facebook and Twitter make *roken is*-sentences with the variants *zó*, *zóóóó*, *zooo* and *zooooo*. The emphasis is a reflection of phonological stress on *zo*.

In three examples, an AdjP follows *zóóó*. In these cases, the adverb *zo* is used as expected on the basis of its intensifier meaning (cf. Van Dale 2013a *zo* (adverb), meaning 2a).

- (23) Roken is zóóó dom  
 smoking is sooo stupid/dull  
 'Smoking is so stupid'
- (24) Roken is zóóó stom  
 smoking is sooo stupid/dull  
 'Smoking is so stupid'
- (25) Roken is zóóó niet cool  
 smoking is sooo not cool  
 'Smoking is so uncool'

In two examples, shown in (26) and (27), a PP is used after *zo*. In these examples, *zo* also seems to have its normal intensifier meaning. Example (26) expresses that the predicated property *niet meer van deze tijd* applies to a high degree. In example (27) a metaphor is used for 'worthless' after *zo*.

- (26) Roken is zóóó niet meer van deze tijd  
 smoking is sooo not more of this time  
 'Smoking is so outdated'
- (27) Roken is zóóó op een bedje van gebakken lucht  
 smoking is sooo on a bed-DIM of baked air  
 'Smoking is so on a bed of hot air' [uttered by famous Dutch master chefs]

The vast majority of the sentences (93%), however, contain an NP or a (nominalised) VP after *zo*. Examples are provided by (16)–(19) above. The structure of the NP-sentences is comparable to the examples (10)–(12). An example with a year (cf. (11) above), which is slightly different from a real NP, also occurs, as illustrated in (28).

- (28) Roken is zóóó 2012  
 smoking is sooo 2012  
 'Smoking is so 2012'

An overview of the phrases combined with *zo* can be found in Table 1.

Table 1 also shows that the nominal and verbal phrase can be simple or complex. A simple phrase does not contain any other phrases embedded, such as a nominal phrase with an adjective phrase or a verbal phrase with a nominal phrase. Examples (16) and (18) above show simple phrases, whereas examples (17), (29) and (30) show complex NPs and examples (19), (31) and (32) illustrate complex VPs.

- (29) Roken is zóóó mannen die vrouwen onderschatten  
 smoking is sooo men who women underestimate  
 'Smoking is so men who underestimate women'

**Table 1.** Formal properties of the phrase after *zóóó*

<i>Followed by...</i>	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Adjective Phrase	3	3%
Nominal Phrase	44	39%
<i>Simple NP</i>	23	21%
<i>Complex NP</i>	21	19%
Verb phrase	61	54%
<i>Simple VP</i>	2	2%
<i>Complex VP</i>	59	52%
Other (e.g. (26), (27) and (28))	4	4%
TOTAL	112	100%

- (30) Roken is *zóóó* witte sokken in sandalen  
 smoking is sooo white socks in sandals  
 ‘Smoking is so white socks in sandals’
- (31) Roken is *zóóó* geen internet hebben op je telefoon  
 smoking is sooo no internet have on your (mobile) phone  
 ‘Smoking is so (having) no internet access on your phone’
- (32) Roken is *zóóó* gas geven met je opgevoerde brommer  
 smoking is sooo gas give with your tuned up moped  
 ‘Smoking is so accelerating with your tuned up moped’

A last formal property of the ‘roken is *zóóó*’-sentences is the fact that many neologisms occur in the phrases after *zóóó*. Examples are *duckface* (‘duckface’); *gangnam style* (‘gangnam style’); *je eigen status liken* (‘to like/liking your own status’); *out gaan op een festival* (‘to lose/losing consciousness at a festival’); *planking* (‘planking’); *selfies maken van je tong* (‘to make/making selfies of your tongue’); *swag & yolo* (‘swag & yolo’). The use of neologisms is no surprise, given that the sentences are meant for or made by young people and given that they are used to express that smoking is something which is uncool and not trendy anymore. In the next subsection, I will explain the semantic and pragmatic features of the construction in more detail.

#### 4.2 *Semantic and pragmatic properties*

The campaign is intended to convey the message that smoking is no good and that you should not start smoking. It will therefore be of no surprise that all sentences such as (16)–(19) and (23)–(32) are used to evaluate smoking as negative.

The negative evaluation is made by a comparison between smoking and an old-fashioned or stupid or dull phenomenon. The subject, i.e. *smoking*, shares



the property of being very (= *zo*) old-fashioned or dull with the phenomenon expressed in the NP or VP after *zo*. The dull or old-fashioned phenomena can be classified as a particular look (1), as some kind of behaviour (2), or as something that does not or hardly exist anymore (3). In around half of the cases smoking is compared with an old-fashioned phenomenon (a), in the other half with a dull or stupid phenomenon (b). Table 2 provides an overview.

**Table 2.** Semantic classes of comparison

Semantic category	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency	a. OLD	b. DULL / STUPID
1. Looks total	16	14%		
<i>Stupid looks</i>	3	3%		*
<i>Old-fashioned looks</i>	13	12%	*	
2. Behaviour total	68	61%		
<i>Stupid behaviour</i>	51	46%		*
<i>Old-fashioned behaviour</i>	17	15%	*	
3. Objects total	19	17%		
<i>Old computer/communication</i>	12	11%	*	
<i>Old object/phenomenon (other)</i>	7	6%	*	
Other	5	4%	44%	48%
Literary	4	4%		
TOTAL	112	100%		

All sentences using the construction belong to an informal register and are mostly used in spoken language, especially by relatively young people (which are the target audience of the campaign). These properties are also reflected by the only comparable example (with a date after the *zo*) that I have found in the ANW-corpus, illustrated in (33).<sup>3</sup>

- (33) Iemand die zich zorgen maakt om onbenulligheden, zoals, someone who himself worries makes about details like rapportcijfers, kan te horen krijgen: “Dat is zó tien september.” [Parool, 2002] marks/grades can to hear get that is so ten September ‘Someone who worries about details, like grades, may be told: “That is so September 10th”

The date is used to refer to the world before 9/11. Also, in this example, the evaluation is negative, because the sentence expresses that it is too unimportant to worry about grades. It is a very expressive way to communicate that you should not worry about unimportant things.

It is well known that constructions can have a highly expressive character (cf. Foolen 2004: 75–77, 96–97; Keizer 2012: 56). Campaign sentences such as

(16)–(19) and (23)–(32) are also very expressive. They are intended to communicate a clear message, which is not conveyed by just telling people that smoking is no good. Instead the campaign sentences contain a comparison, which causes people to carry out the negative evaluation themselves.

The comparison also has another effect: It gives the negative evaluation a playful or humorous character. This playfulness is also found in an example such as (10), in which someone is commenting on his/her own stupid behaviour in a kind of self-comforting way.

It is important to note that the evaluative comparison with its expressive, playful character cannot be directly linked to the lexical words. In other words, the comparison cannot be accounted for in a fully compositional way. The copula *is* is normally used to equate two things or to subsume one entity under another object (e.g. *smoking is an activity*) or to ascribe a certain property to an entity (e.g. *smoking is stupid*). This is not the case in sentences such as (16)–(32). In these examples, two entities are compared because they share a non-expressed property (e.g. being stupid or old-fashioned). This comparison is neither expressed by *is* nor by *zo*. *Zo* is used as an intensifier, which is in accordance with the fact that it receives emphasis. Instead of the lexical words, it is the template as such, i.e. *X is zo NP/VP*, which brings in the comparison. In other words, the evaluative comparison with its expressive, playful character is a clear example of a constructional meaning, connected to the ‘*X is zo NP/VP*’-construction.

## 5. The construction and its relation to other usages of *zo*

The fact that the semantics (the evaluative comparison) of sentences such as (16)–(32) or also (10)–(12) is not fully predictable from its parts does not have to imply that the meaning is completely unmotivated (cf. Goldberg & Van der Auwera 2012: 110–111, 121). The motivation for the meaning of the construction can come from its relation to other structures in language (cf. Foolen 2004: 78).<sup>4</sup>

As explained in Section 2, *zo* does quite often occur in comparisons, sometimes on its own (cf. (15)) and often in combination with *als*. A sentence such as (16) (here repeated as (36)), which is used to express something like (34), can therefore be paraphrased as in (35).

(34) Roken is zóóó ouderwets / passé  
smoking is sooo old-fashioned / outdated

(35) Roken is zo ouderwets / passé als een floppydisk  
smoking is so old-fashioned / outdated as a floppy disk

- (36) Roken is zóó floppydisk  
smoking is sooo floppy disk

A comparable relation between structures is illustrated in (37)–(39).

- (37) Een floppydisk is zóó ouderwets / passé  
a floppy disk is sooo old-fashioned / outdated
- (38) Een floppydisk is zo/zóó typisch jaren '90 / vorige eeuw  
a floppy disk is so typical years '90 / last century  
'A floppy disk is typical of the nineties / the last century'
- (39) Een floppydisk is zóó jaren '90 / vorige eeuw  
a floppy disk is sooo years '90 / last century

The meaning of a construction in which an NP follows the intensifier *zo*, as in (36) and (39), is synchronically related to sentences with a similar meaning as in (34)–(35) and (37)–(38). Figure 1 illustrates this possible motivation for the meaning of the construction. A solid line indicates a direct relation, a dashed line an indirect one. This motivation explains where the constructional meaning comes from and how language users are able to understand the construction.

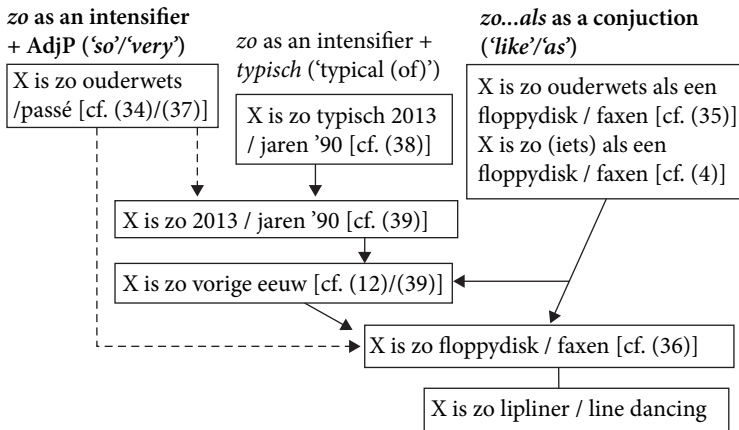


Figure 1. Structures that motivate the meaning of the 'X is zo + NP/VP'-construction

The use of an evaluative NP after *zo* is probably connected to the frequently occurring *X is zo jaren '90 / vorige eeuw*. This could be paraphrased with the adjective *typisch*, as in (38). The same goes for a sentence with a proper name, as in (10). The relation to a structure with the adjective *typisch* provides an explanation for the unusual phrase type (an NP) after the intensifier *zo*.

The use of an NP referring to a time period (such as *jaren '90* or *vorige eeuw*) is a possible motivation for referring to an object from this time period, e.g. *floppydisk*.

The fact that the *X is zo floppydisk* is used to express that *X* is as old-fashioned as a floppy disk, is not only connected to the ‘*X is zo jaren ’90/vorige eeuw*’-structure, but also to the occurrence of *zo* with a comparison, introduced by *als* (cf. (35)). In line with (36), it is possible to use other phrases, which refer to another implicit property, such as being dull or stupid.

## 6. The ‘*X is zo(oo) + NP/VP*’-construction

The Dutch campaign ‘*roken kan echt niet meer*’ yields sentences, made by campaign makers and by independent Dutch persons, with a special usage of the copula verb *is* in combination with the word *zo*. The pattern underlying these sentences turns out to be a productive pattern, which also occurs in other contexts (cf. e.g. (10)–(12), (20)–(22) and (33)).

All examples have specific formal properties and a particular meaning that cannot be accounted for in a fully compositional way. This means that the sentences must be based on a construction, which explains their form and meaning. The idea of an underlying construction is in accordance with the expressive character of the examples (cf. Foolen 2004: 75ff, 96ff). Properties of the construction are illustrated in (40):

- (40) Syntax: [[NP<sub>1</sub>] [*zijn*<sub>inflection</sub> [*zo*<sub>emphasis</sub> [NP<sub>2</sub>/VP]]]]  
 Semantics: mostly negative (but often humorous) evaluation of NP<sub>1</sub> by a comparison with NP<sub>2</sub>/VP  
 Pragmatics: informal; expressive (in a playful way)

These properties are possibly motivated by other usages of *zo*, such as *zo* in its intensifier meaning + an evaluative AdjP (Y); *zo + typisch* NP<sub>2</sub> (‘typical of NP<sub>2</sub>’) or *zo Y as* NP<sub>2</sub> (‘as Y as NP<sub>2</sub>’) (cf. Figure 1).

This analysis of the ‘*X is zo(oo) + NP/VP*’-construction is of importance for different reasons. From a practical perspective, the insights of this study can be used by lexicographers (cf. also Keizer 2012: 65–67). From a theoretical perspective, this paper makes a contribution to construction grammar by revealing a part of the Dutch constructicon (cf. Verhagen 2005). In this way, it is possible to account for language data that cannot be accounted for without the construction.

## Notes

\* I would like to thank my colleagues of the INL and three anonymous reviewers for their very useful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

1. A reviewer remarked that constructions indeed explain meanings which cannot come from the lexical parts, but that within a usage-based approach also a transparent form-meaning pairing can count as a construction (cf. e.g. Goldberg 2006). The question of whether the lack of full semantic predictability is essential for a construction or not is not directly relevant for the examples discussed in this paper, because sentences with the 'X is zo + Y'-construction are not fully semantically predictable. The evaluative comparison which refers to a shared property of X and Y (an NP/VP) cannot be connected to the lexical items (as explained in Section 2 and 4.2).
2. Van Dale 2013a describes *zo* in five different entries: Besides the adverb, *zo* is used as an abbreviation of *zondag* ('Sunday'), *zo* is described in its infrequent and old-fashioned use as a noun connected to *zieden* ('to boil'), *zo* can be an interjection and a conjunction. The first three additional entries are irrelevant and will not be discussed here any further. I will come back to *zo* as a conjunction in example (15).
3. This example shows a sentence that was originally uttered in an English context. A reviewer remarked that it is known that similar patterns occur in English, such as *X is so* followed by time phrases (cf. Wee & Tan 2008) or by proper names (cf. Wee & Tan 2008:2105). However, I do not know any English examples with other nominalised phrases which are used to evaluate the subject as in the Dutch 'X is zo + NP/VP'-construction, but this is left for further research.
4. A motivation in this sense is a relation between language structures from a synchronic point of view. Of course, these synchronic relations can be diachronically motivated in the sense that one structure is older than another one. The question how the construction could have evolved from a diachronic point of view is left for future research.

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