

Recurring in Dutch¹

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This article investigates the internal syntax of complex curse expressions in Dutch. It argues that they have the internal structure of coordinations and that the coordinated curse atoms are roots. It is further proposed that the expressive/affective meaning of curse expressions emerges from augmentative strategies at the level of curse atoms, syntax and sounds.

Key words: curse expression, root, recursion, coordination, augmentation

1. Introduction

This article investigates the internal syntax of Dutch curse expressions. To my knowledge, the structural properties of curse expressions have not figured prominently on the linguistic research agenda, in spite of the fact that knowledge of cursing is clearly part of our knowledge of language.² Jay and Janschewitz (2007:215) remark that “it [cursing; Norbert Corver] allows us to express a strong emotional state in symbolic form without getting physical.” Jay (2009:153) furthermore notes that “swearing is a uniquely human facility” and that this facility is acquired by children at an early age (Jay 1992, 2009). Basing myself on Dutch curse expressions, I will try to show the following: Firstly, complex curse expressions are structured (syntactic) objects (section 2). Secondly, the curse atoms that are at the basis of complex curse expressions are root categories (section 3). Thirdly, complex curse expressions are structured *syntactic* objects rather than complex words (section 4). Fourthly, they have the internal syntax of coordinate structures, which, in line with current analyses, are taken to be hierarchically organized structures that allow embedding of one coordinate structure in another (section 5). This recursive embedding of coordinate structures is at the basis of “recurring” (i.e., cursing + recursion); the possibility of expanding Dutch curse expressions in an unbounded way. Fifthly, the fixed linearization of curse atoms in certain complex curse

¹ Parts of this paper have been presented at Utrecht university, Leiden university, Nijmegen university, the University of São Paulo, the Universidade Autònoma Barcelona, the university of Verona, and the Annesso Cartesiano di Villa Salmi, Stoppe d’Arca/Arezzo. I would like to thank Hans Broekhuis, Noam Chomsky, Abel Corver, Denis Delfitto, Joe Emonds, Nico Frijda, Jane Grimshaw, C.-T. James Huang, Riny Huybregts, Marjo van Koppen, Shigeru Miyagawa, Andrew Nevins, Jairo Nunes, Marc van Oostendorp, Steven Pinker, Maria Polinsky, Henk van Riemsdijk and Luigi Rizzi for discussion of certain parts of this paper. I am also grateful to three anonymous NLLT-reviewers and NLLT-editor Marcel den Dikken for their useful comments on earlier versions of this article. All errors are mine, obviously.

² For recent discussion of cursing as a dimension of language use, see also Jay (2000) and Pinker (2007, chapter 7).

expressions is not incompatible with them being derived by a computational system (section 6). Sixthly, the externalization of curse expressions involves different types of phonological operations that 'augment' the sound representation of the curse expression (section 7). It will be argued that these augmentative sound strategies, in combination with the syntactic augmentative strategy of coordination, contribute to the expressive/emotive flavor of these curse expressions. Section 8 is the conclusion.

2. Curse expressions as structured objects

In this section I aim to show that complex curse expressions are structured syntactic objects rather than fixed unanalyzable units (see section 6, though, for some 'fixed' properties). They consist of subunits (computational atoms) that may be combined with each other by means of a computational system. Thus, a generative procedure seems to be at the basis of cursing in Dutch.

I start my investigation with the curse expression *godverdomme* 'god damned', which is one of the more frequently used curse expressions in Dutch. Traditionally, it is assumed that *godverdomme* has its etymological origin in the clausal expression *God + verdoem(e) + mij/me* (God damn me, 'God may damn me'), which means that the speaker's curse is directed towards himself (cf. Van Sterkenburg 1997:225), *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT)). Others have argued that this curse expression finds its origin in the clausal expression *God verdoeme*, (God damn), where *verdoeme* is a subjunctive verb, which, even though being a transitive verb ('X damns Y'), lacks an overt direct object noun phrase (cf. Philippa et al. 2003-2009). Thus, the meaning corresponds to: 'God may damn X (e.g., you, it)'. For the latter etymological interpretation, compare the English curse expression *goddammit!/goddamned!* (God damn it), which occurs besides *goddamn!*. In *goddammit!*, the pronoun *it* can be identified as the direct object of *damn*.³

The clausal origin is no longer felt to be associated with the structure and meaning of the curse expression. Rather, *godverdomme* is taken to be an expression with a non-compositional, expressive meaning; 'non-compositional' in the sense that its meaning does not derive from the meaning of its 'etymological parts', and 'expressive' in the sense that it designates an emotional state or attitude on the part of the speaker of the utterance (Cruse

³ The transitive nature of *damn* is clear from expressions such as *Damn it all!* and *Damn your impudence!*.

1986, Kaplan 1999, Kratzer 1999, Potts 2007). The expressive meaning of a linguistic expression like *godverdomme* does not seem to correspond to a single emotional state. As exemplified in (1), *godverdomme* can symbolize different types of emotional states such as anger (1a), frustration (1b), but also amazement (1c) and joy (1d). Thus, *godverdomme* can be a symbolic expression of emotions with a negative valence but also of emotions with a more positive valence.⁴

- (1) a. Godverdomme, nou moet je je bek houden!
 godverdomme, now must you your mouth shut
 ‘Goddamned, shut your mouth!’
- b. Godverdomme, het lukt me maar niet om die som op te lossen!
 goddamned, it manages me PRT not for this sum PRT to solve
 ‘Goddamned, I don’t succeed in making this sum!’
- c. Godverdomme, is Jan even slim!
 goddamned, is Jan but smart
 ‘Goddamned, amazing how smart Jan is!’
- d. Godverdomme, wat is dat een lekker biertje!
 goddamned, what is that a nice beer-DIM
 ‘Goddamned, this glass of beer is so delicious!’

Also at the level of syntax, the clausal properties of its etymological basis (*god, verdoeme*) are no longer recoverable in the curse expression *godverdomme*. For example, the word order of the expression is entirely fixed.

From this frozen behavior, one might draw the conclusion that a curse expression like *godverdomme* is an unanalyzable chunk, i.e., a single lexical atom (a word) stored in the lexicon which has no internal formal structure and which, consequently, does not result from the application of a system of computational rules (i.e., a generative procedure). Although this syntactically non-compositional approach towards Dutch curse expressions appears quite plausible at first sight, closer inspection of curse expressions suggests that there is a generative procedure at the basis of curse-formation in Dutch. That is, curse expressions can be decomposed into subparts (curse atoms/constituents), which can be combined (merged)

⁴ Certain Dutch speakers prefer the use of *godverdomme* with negative valence.

with each other in certain ways in order to yield complex structured objects (complex curse expressions).

A first indication that a curse expression can be a structured object consisting of identifiable elements (constituents) is the fact that a subpart of the expression *godverdomme* can be replaced by another element. In other words, the operation of substitution can be applied to subparts of the curse expression. This is illustrated in (2) and (3):⁵

- (2) godver + {domme, dikkie, dorie, shit, kut, klote, doosje, fuck, ...}⁶
godver + {domme, dikkie, dorie, shit, cunt, balls, box-DIM, fuck
'Goddammit!'
- (3) {god, pot, snot} + ver + domme
{god, pot, mucus} + ver + damned
'Goddammit!'

In (2), substitution regards the final atom of the curse expression. Observe that *ver*, which etymologically is a prefix of the verb *verdoemen/verdommen* 'to damn', need not be part of the substitution, which suggests that it no longer behaves as a prefix of *domme* in the curse expression *godverdomme*. The patterns in (3) show that also the initial part, *god*, of *godverdomme* can be replaced. Observe that the substituting elements in (2) and (3) can be nonce words (*dorie*, *dikkie*) or words that can be identified as lexical items of the Dutch lexicon (*kut* 'cunt', *klote* 'balls', *doosje* 'box-DIM', *shit* 'shit', *snot* 'mucus'). The substitutions in (2) and those in (3) can be combined yielding curse expressions such as *potverdikkie*, *potverdorie*, *potvershit*, *snotverdorie*, and *snotverkut*.

Some more examples of substitution in Dutch curse expressions are given in (4). Notice that in (4a), the element *ver* of *godverdomme* is not part of the curse expression, which again suggests that *ver+domme* no longer acts as a verbal unit.

⁵ Speakers display variation in their judgments of curse expressions. Some are quite liberal and accept a large variety of substitution patterns. For example, I for one accept all the patterns in (2) except for the one with *doosje*. One of the reviewers, on the contrary, only accepts the patterns with *domme*, *dikkie* and *dorie*. The pattern with *doosje* is given in Van Sterkenburg (1997).

A systematic, cross-dialectal/cross-idiolectal study of people's judgments of Dutch curse expressions falls beyond the scope of the present article. In view of the attested variation in the judgments of certain curse expressions, it may be useful to indicate the status of the curse expressions discussed in this article. First of all, most of the curse expressions given in this article are acceptable for me (as a speaker of a southern variety of Dutch). Secondly, many of the curse expressions discussed in this article can also be found in Van Sterkenburg's (1997) overview study on Dutch curses and swearwords. Thirdly, most of the curse expressions discussed in this article can be readily found on the internet (Google search). As a matter of fact, some of the examples that I give in this article are taken from the internet.

⁶ As noted in Van Sterkenburg (1997:228), *doosje* (box-DIM) possibly refers to the vagina.

- (4) a. god + {domme, dikke, dikkie, samme}
 b. non de + {dju, ju, pie, dikkie, sakker, knetter, kanon, shit, patat, ...}⁷
 non de + {dju, ju, pie, dikkie, sakker, crackle, cannon, french-fries, ...}

A second piece of evidence in support of the structural decomposability of a curse expression like *godverdomme* is the fact that (combinations of) subparts of *godverdomme* may occur as independent expressions:

- (5) a. *god*, wat ben jij een vervelend jong!
 god, what are you a nasty guy
 ‘God(damned), you are such a nasty guy!’
 b. *godver*, wat ben jij een vervelend jong!
 c. *verdomme*, wat ben jij een vervelend jong!
 d. *domme*, wat ben jij een vervelend jong!

Thirdly, the phenomenon of reduplication further suggests that units (curse atoms) can be identified within the curse expression that can be input to a process of iteration:

- (6) a. god god god verdomme
 b. god verdomme verdomme verdomme
 c. godver godver godver domme

Besides these 'bare' iterative patterns, we also find iterative curse patterns featuring a linking element *de* between the curse atoms (see also Van Sterkenburg 1997:58-59, 223-228):⁸

- (7) a. godver de godver de godver domme
 b. sakker de sakker de sakker de ju
 c. potver de potver de potver (domme)

⁷ The curse expression *non de ju* etymologically relates to French *nom de dieu* (name of god). *Sakker* presumably relates to Latin *sacer* ‘sacred’.

⁸ More examples of this curse pattern featuring *de* can be found in Van Sterkenburg (1997): *godver (de) kut* (godver de cunt), *godver (de) shit*, *godver (de) fuck*, *godver (de) ju*, *sakker (de) bleu*, *sakker (de) boeren* (sakker de farmers).

- d. non de non de non de ju
- e. non de ju de ju de ju

In (7) we have an iterative pattern in the sense that the curse atoms that are linked by *de* are identical in form.⁹ The examples in (8) show that it is also possible for *de* to link different types of curse atoms:^{10 11}

- (8) a. godver de non de ju
- b. godver de sakker de non de ju
- c. non de sakker de non de ju
- d. sakker de non de godver
- e. godver de mieljaar de non de ju

Importantly, the patterns in (7) and (8) can expand in an unbounded way. One can always add another curse atom to form an even longer curse expression. Thus, the structural composition of curse expressions displays the property of unboundedness, which makes swearing in Dutch an infinite gift (Yang 2006). On the basis of a finite set of elements, a potentially infinite array of curse expressions can be generated. For example, I can easily extend (8a) by adding another curse atom at the beginning (e.g., *godver* or *sakker*) of the curse expression, yielding more complex curse expressions such as **godver godver de non de ju** and **sakker godver de non de ju**, and also patterns featuring the linking element *de*: **godver**

⁹ Potts (2007) notes that in the case of expressives (e.g., English *damn*), repetition leads to strengthening rather than redundancy. That is, repetition indicates a heightening of the emotional state. His examples:

- (i) a. *Damn*, I left my keys in the car.
- b. *Damn*, I left my *damn* keys in the car.
- c. *Damn*, I left my *damn* keys in the *damn* car.

¹⁰ *Mieljaar* in (8e) relates to the cardinal *miljard* ‘billion’. This curse atom is typically used in Southern Dutch dialects spoken in Belgium.

¹¹ These patterns featuring repetition of a lexical element in combination with a connecting element *de* are also found in children’s television series as expressions of surprise. In the 1960s through 1980s, the Dutch clown *Pipo de Clown* used the emotive expression (ia) besides the extended repetitive pattern (ib). In the 1990s, the dwarf *Kaboutert Plop* used the patterns in (ii) as expressions of surprise. The pattern is also found in the Dutch equivalent of English *Hip hip hurray!*, as is illustrated in (iii):

- (i) a. sapper de flap (astonishment)
- b. sapper de flapper de flapper de (etc.) flap
- (ii) a. plopper de plop (astonishment)
- b. plopper de plopper de plopper de (etc.) plop
- (iii) a. hieper de piep hoera (joy)
- b. hieper de pieper de pieper de (etc.) piep hoera

de godver de non de ju and ***sakker de godver de non de ju*** (the curse atom in boldface represents the added curse atom); see also Van Sterkenburg (1997:58). More complex curse expressions can also be built by adding a curse atom at the end of the curse expression. Pattern (8c), for example, can be extended by adding another instance of *de ju* at the end of the expression, yielding *godver de non de ju de ju*. It should be noted that the presence of *de* is required here (**godver de non de ju ju*).¹²

In section 5 I will propose that the complex curse expressions in (6)-(8) have a hierarchically organized, right-branching (tail-)recursive structure and are built by a generative procedure (Merge) which takes curse atoms as its input. More specifically, I will argue that these curse expressions have a coordinate structure, as is illustrated in (9) for (8b). As shown by this representation, the coordinate structure (ConjP) *non de ju* is embedded within a larger coordinate structure (ConjP).

(9) [ConjP godver [Conj' [Conj de] [ConjP sakker [Conj' [Conj de] [ConjP non [Conj' [Conj de] [ConjP ju]]]]]]]]]

Summarizing, on the basis of diagnostic tests such as substitution, independent occurrence, reduplication and (unbounded) expansion with added curse atoms, I have tried to show that curse expressions like *godverdomme*, which appear to be fixed unanalyzable units, can be structurally decomposed into smaller units (curse atoms), such as *god*, *godver*, *domme*, *verdomme*. The combination of these units yields a complex curse expression that I take to have a hierarchically organized recursive structure. This structural decomposition of Dutch curse expressions brings us to the next question: What is the categorial nature of the curse atoms that function as constituents in complex curse expressions? This question will be addressed in section 3.

3. Curse atoms as roots

Recall from the beginning of section 2 that in a curse expression like *godverdomme*, the elements *god* and *verdomme* no longer seem to function as a noun and a verb, respectively. The same holds for a curse expression like *non de kanon* (see (4b)), where the element *kanon*

¹² In section 5, the patterns in which *de* is absent between two curse atoms will be analyzed as structures involving asyndetic coordination.

does not trigger the interpretation ‘cannon’, which is associated with the noun *kanon* in a linguistic expression like (10):

- (10) Het kanon vuurde.
the cannon fired

In the spirit of Borer’s Exo-Skeletal Model (2005a,b) and much recent work on Distributed Morphology (DM; cf. Halle and Marantz 1993, Harley and Noyer 1999), I propose that curse atoms such as *godver*, *kanon*, *sakker*, *non*, *ju*, *verdomme*, *et cetera* are roots, i.e., lexical vocabulary items that are not specified for categorial information (or any other formal-syntactic features). According to these theories, the categorial status is determined by the structure on top of the root. In DM, for example, a categorizing head (e.g., n, v) merges with the root and determines the categorial nature of the projected structure. For example, the root \sqrt{cat} becomes nominal by combining with a categorial head n: $[_n n [\sqrt{cat}]]$. In Borer’s Exo-Skeletal Model, it is not an empty categorial head which determines the categorial status of the nominal projection but rather a functional category like the definite article *the* as in *the cat*: $[_{DP} [_D the] [\sqrt{cat}]]$.

Some further illustrations that functional material brings in categorial information is given in (11) for the Dutch root \sqrt{wit} ‘white’. In (11a), the nominal nature of the phrasal structure *het wit* is determined by the definite article *het*. In (11b), the verbal nature of *witte* is determined by the past tense morphology *-te* on \sqrt{wit} . In (11c), it is the attributive adjectival inflection *-e* which determines the adjectival nature of *witte*.

- (11) a. Kate is in het wit.
Kate is in the white
‘Kate is dressed in white.’
b. Kate witte de kamer.
Kate whitewashed the room
c. Kate droeg een witte jurk.
Kate wore a white dress

Along similar lines, a root curse atom like *godver* can be assigned categorial status on the basis of locally available functional material. For example, the numeral *twee* and the plural morphology *-s* in (12a) define the nominal nature (and count interpretation) of the

phrasal expression *twee godvers*. The past tense morphology *-de* (i.e., T) in (12b) defines the verbal character of *godverde*. Finally, the attributive inflection *-(s)e* in *godverse* turns the root $\sqrt{\text{godver}}$ into an adjectival element (see (12c)).

- (12) a. Na twee godvers moest hij de klas uit.
 after two *godvers* must.3.Sg.PST he the class out
 ‘After two ‘goddammit’s he had to leave the classroom.’
- b. Jan godverde de hele dag
 Jan *godver*-3.Sg.PST the whole day
 ‘Jan was saying ‘goddammit’ during the whole day.’
- c. Hou je godverse smoel dicht!
 keep your *godver*-s-e mouth shut
 ‘Shut your damned mouth!’

Interestingly, if plural morphology is added to a complex curse expression like *non de kanon* (see (4b)), we get the plural morpheme *-s*, as in (13a), and not the plural morpheme *-en*, which is attached when *kanon* has the descriptive meaning ‘cannon’ (see (13b)). This asymmetry in plural morpheme attachment also hints at a different status of the expressive atom *kanon* and the descriptive noun *kanon*.

- (13) a. Na twee *nondekanons* moest hij de klas uit. (*twee nondekanonnen)
 after two *nondekanon*-PL must.3.Sg.Pst he the class out
 ‘After two ‘goddammit’s he had to leave the classroom.’
- b. twee *kanonnen* (*twee kanons)
 two cannon-s

This difference in lexical status arguably also holds for referential proper names such as *Jezus* ‘Jesus’ and *Jezus Christus* ‘Jesus Christ’ and their expressive homonyms *jezus!* and *jezus christus!*, which typically express astonishment. Referential proper nouns constitute DPs (i.e., $[_{DP} D_o [\sqrt{\text{Jezus}}]]$), where D encodes the referential property (Longobardi 1994), and function as arguments of a predicate, as in *Jezus slaapt* (‘Jesus sleeps’). I take this DP-layer to be absent in the emotive expressions *jezus!* and *jezus christus!*, which typically occur as interjective expressions. I propose that these expressions are roots (e.g., $\sqrt{\text{jezus}}$) or combinations of roots ($\sqrt{\text{jezus}} \sqrt{\text{christus}}$). Interestingly, similar to curse expressions, a subpart

of a complex emotive expression like *jesus christus!* can be replaced by another atom. For example, besides the pattern *jesus christus!* Dutch has emotive expressions such as *jesus maria!* (jesus mary), *jesus mina!*, and *jesus kriebel!* (jesus itch); see Van Sterkenburg (1997:262-264). The fact that besides *jesus mina!* and *jesus kriebel!* we also find *mozes mina!* and *mozes kriebel!* shows that the first atom, *jesus*, is itself substitutable. All these substitution possibilities suggest that both *jesus* and *christus* (and also their substitutes) lack referential meaning.

On the basis of the above-mentioned facts, I conclude that curse atoms constitute (bare) roots ($\sqrt{\quad}$). In this respect they differ from other so-called parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions, which constitute complex syntactic objects of the type $f\sqrt{\quad}$ (i.e., functional category + root): $n\sqrt{\quad}$, $v\sqrt{\quad}$, $a\sqrt{\quad}$, $p\sqrt{\quad}$. This root-status of curse atoms in complex curse expressions may also be one of the reasons that it is often quite difficult to paraphrase the exact meaning of the individual curse atoms and the complex curse expressions built from them. For example, the meaning of *kanon* in *non de kanon* (see (4b)) is less transparent than the meaning of *kanon* in (10), where it refers to an object. The presence of functional material (say n or D) arguably narrows down the meaning of the root: with n or D added, it gets an object-reading. Absence of this f-layer in (simplex and complex) curse expressions possibly makes their meaning less transparent. It is not my intention here to provide a complete and in-depth answer to the difficult question where exactly the curse-like meaning comes from. I will leave that for future research. In section 7, though, I will say a few words about the contribution of "structure augmentation" at the level of sound and syntax to the encoding of expressive meaning.

Summarizing, I have argued that complex curse expressions can be structurally decomposed into smaller units (curse atoms) and that these units are roots. This state of affairs raises the following question: If the computational atoms for building complex curse expressions—which I take to be *syntactic* objects—are roots, how do we ever get such a complex structure, since roots are generally taken to be invisible to syntactic computational operations (Chomsky 2011a)?¹³ One might hypothesize that roots can combine at the level of words and that complex curse expressions form compounds rather than syntactic units. However, in section 4 I will show on the basis of nuclear stress assignment that complex curse expressions behave like syntactic units rather than word units (i.e., compounds). In

¹³ That is, the root needs to merge with a functional category (*n*, *v*, et cetera) in order to be available for further syntactic computation; see Chomsky (2011b:27). See also Chomsky (2011a) for the claim that roots themselves do not enter into computation and do not label (more specifically, the time slot 1:01:48 - 1:02:12 and the time slot 2:16:08 - 2:16:19 of the videotaped lecture).

section 5 I will propose that coordination is the formal mechanism that is at the basis of complex curse formation. What makes coordinators optimal functional elements for building complex curses is the fact that upon merge they leave the root status of elements intact. That is, root (e.g., \sqrt{godver}) plus root (e.g., \sqrt{ju}) 'is a' (complex) root (i.e., [\sqrt{godver} Conj \sqrt{ju}]; *godver ju*).

4. Curse expressions as syntactic objects

In order to find out whether the structure of a complex curse expression is compound-like or phrase-like, I will make use of the placement of phonological stress (indicated here by capital letters), since the stress pattern in Dutch compounds is different from that of syntactic phrases (Booij 1977:70, Gussenhoven 1984, De Haas en Trommelen 1993:360). This is exemplified in (14)-(16), where the a-examples represent the compounds and the b-examples the syntactic phrases (Capital letters indicate that the syllable carries (primary) stress).

- (14) a. PAARden-shit
horse shit
'horse-dung'
- b. dit paard z'n BIT
this horse its bit
'this horse's bit'
- (15) a. STIEEre-kloten
bull balls
'bull's balls'
- b. de stier z'n KLOten
the bull his balls
'the bull's balls'
- (16) a. dat ROT-kanon¹⁴
that rotten-cannon
'that bad cannon' (i.e., a cannon which does not function properly)
- b. dat rotte kaNON

¹⁴ The absence of adjectival inflection on *rot* in (16a) clearly shows that *rot* forms a compound together with *kanon*. Notice that the attributive adjective in (16b) carries inflection (-e).

that rotten-INFL cannon
‘that cannon which is rotten’

Consider now the stress pattern in the curse expressions *godvershit*, *godverkloten* and *nondekanon*.

(17)

<i>compound stress</i>	<i>phrasal stress pattern with nonequal stress (i.e., primary & secondary)</i>	<i>phrasal stress pattern with equal stress</i>
a. *GODvershit	a.' GODverSHIT	a." GODverSHIT
b. *GODverkloten	b.' GODverKLOten	b." GODverKLOten
c. *NONdekanon	c.' NONdekaNON	c." NONdekaNON

The ill-formedness of the stress pattern in the first column (i.e., (17a-c)) shows that the curse expressions do not have compound stress. In other words, they are not complex words, but rather syntactic (i.e., phrasal) objects. Syntactic objects typically have the following stress pattern: If there are two accentuated syllables, the second one (the nucleus) is typically obligatorily stressed (primary stress), whereas the first one is optionally so (secondary stress). Thus, a phrase like *dit paard z'n bit* in (14b) has the following prosodic structure, where small capitals indicate secondary stress on the syllable and capitals indicate primary stress on the syllable: *dit PAARD z'n BIT*. As shown by the middle column in (17), this is the prosodic pattern which is also attested for the curse expressions at hand.¹⁵ In short, complex curse expressions like *godvershit*, *godverkloten* and *nondekanon* are not complex words but rather complex phrases (i.e., syntactic objects); more specifically, as I will argue in section 5, coordinate structures consisting of conjoined roots (e.g., [_V *godver* Conj *shit*]).

Besides the prosodic pattern with nonequal stress, we also find the prosodic pattern in the third column (17a"-c"), which has two syllables that are equally stressed. For some speakers this is the preferred pattern; for me (and several other people I asked) this pattern is possible but not obligatory. In line with Van Sterkenburg (1997:58) I assume that the more prominent stress on the first curse atom (i.e., *GOD* instead of *GOD* in (17)), yielding equal stress on the curse atoms involved, results from stress reinforcement of the first curse atom.

¹⁵ I would like to thank René Kager and Hugo Quené for discussion of the prosodic pattern of these curse expressions.

This reinforced stress expresses an augmented affect. Importantly, this equal stress pattern is also compatible with a phrase structural analysis of these curse expressions; the 'underlying' stress pattern is the one in the middle column, the equal stress pattern is derived by means of stress reinforcement of the first curse atom. Thus, the pattern *GODverSHIT*, just like *GODverSHIT*, are externalizations (Spell-outs at PF) of the (coordinate) syntactic structure [$\sqrt{\text{godver Conj } \sqrt{\text{shit}}}$]; see section 5.

In certain emotive linguistic expressions, this stress reinforcement, which yields the equal stress pattern in the third column of (17), is actually the only possible way of externalizing the syntactic expression. This is something we typically see with so-called substitution curses (Van Sterkenburg 1997:57) such as *godfried bomans* and *karel de grote*, which are, respectively, the names of a 20th century Dutch writer and Charles the Great (Charlemagne).¹⁶ In these substitution curses, atoms (roots) are used that do not have a taboo-like flavor at the lexical level. Thus, *godfried bomans* may be considered a substitute for a curse expression like *godver domme*, and *karel de grote* a substitute for a curse expression like *godver de ju*. As shown in (18)-(19), these substitutive curse expressions typically get the phonological pattern in which the first curse atom and the second curse atom receive equal stress. In other words, they must display the stress pattern of the third column in (17).¹⁷

- (18) a. GODfried BOmans (^{OK}proper name; * curse)
 b. GODfried BOmans! (curse)
- (19) a. KAREl de GROte (^{OK}proper name; * curse)
 b. KAREl de GROte! (curse)

Since these substitutive curse expressions, as opposed to their more taboo-ish counterparts, do not encode the affective/expressive dimension at the lexical level (i.e. at the level of the roots (curse atoms)), it seems there is only one other way to encode this dimension in a distinctive way, namely by reinforcing (i.e., augmenting) the stress of the first 'curse atom', which yields the equal stress pattern (see third column of (17)). Thus, linguistic encoding of affect must take place here at the level of phonology. Importantly, I will assume that the syntactic structure underlying the substitution curses (18b) and (19b) is the same as

¹⁶ I would like to thank one of the reviewers for drawing my attention to these interesting facts.

¹⁷ Also an emotive expression like *jesus christus!* 'jesus christ!' (cf. section 3), which consists of atoms that do not have a lexically taboo-ish flavor, must display the equal stress pattern: *JEZus CHRIStus!* ('jesus christ!'). The non-equal stress pattern *JEZus CHRIStus* (see the second column in (17)) can only be used if *Jesus Christus* refers to the individual Jesus Christ.

that of *godver domme* and *godver de ju*; that is, a coordinate syntactic structure containing conjoined roots: [_√ √*godfried* Conj √*bomans*], [_√ √*karel* Conj √*de-grote*].¹⁸

So far, I have tried to show on the basis of the placement of phonological stress that complex curse expressions have an underlying syntactic structure. They display phrasal stress and, consequently, do not form compounds.¹⁹ As I will argue in section 5, I take this syntactic structure to be a coordinate structure, more specifically a coordination of roots. If the complex curse expression consists of roots that lexically encode the expressive dimension (e.g., *godver*, *domme*, *ju*, et cetera), stress reinforcement of the first curse atom is optional (see (17)). In the case of substitutive curse expressions, stress reinforcement on the first substitutive curse atom is obligatory since the expressive dimension does not manifest itself lexically (see (18b), (19b)).

5. Curse expressions as coordinate structures

Having argued that complex curse expressions have a phrasal syntax, we can now investigate what their syntax looks like. In this section I will develop an analysis, already hinted at at the end of section 3, according to which complex curse expressions are coordinations of roots. Following Thiersch (1993, 1994), Kayne (1994) and Johannessen (1998) among others, I will

¹⁸ The fact that the emotive expression can be 'augmented' by simply adding another name to 'the list' also hints at a coordinate-like structure. Consider example (ia), which is drawn from the internet and which I take to have the structure in (ib). This complex emotive expression can, obviously, be replaced by the more simple *jezus marie* or, simply, *jezus*.

- (i) a. *jezus marie jozef*, wat hebben wij Vlamingen toch geleden!
 Jezus Mary Joseph, what have we Flemings PRT suffered
 'Jesus Mary Christ, how much we Flemings suffered!'
 b. [_√ √*jezus* Conj [_√ √*marie* Conj √*jozef*]]

¹⁹ Given the fact that complex curse expressions have a phrasal stress pattern (i.e., nuclear stress falls on the most deeply embedded element on the recursive side; cf. Cinque 1993), it is not unexpected that they can occur as (nonsense) lines in rhymes. Consider, for example, the following self-made rhymes in which the first line is a complex curse expression and the second line a phrasal unit (DP in (i) and CP in (ii)), which is made up of "normal" lexical items). In both lines, nuclear stress falls on the last word (i.e., the most deeply embedded element on the recursive side of the phrase).

- (i) GODver GLOEiende NON de SHIT
 TWEE KONIJnen AAN het SPIT
 two rabbits on the spit
 Line 1: 'Godammit!' Line 2: 'There are two rabbits on the spit.'
 (ii) GODver SAKker de NON de JU
 IK wil STAMPpot MET veel JUS
 I want hotchpotch with much gravy
 Line 1: 'goddamit!' Line 2: 'I would like to eat hotchpotch with much gravy.'

assume that a coordinate conjunction (Conj) projects a (binary branching) constituent structure containing a complement position and a specifier position. For a coordination like *Pieter en Jo*, in which two proper names (DPs) are coordinated, this yields the syntactic configuration in (20a). When we apply this structural analysis to a curse expression like *godver de ju*, we get the configuration in (20b), where, for the moment, I take *de* to be the instantiation of the conjoining head (Conj); see section 7, though, for a more refined analysis of *de*.²⁰

- (20) a. [ConjP [DP Pieter] [Conj' [Conj en] [DP Jo]]]
 b. [ConjP [\surd godver] [Conj' [Conj de] [\surd ju]]]

Recall from section 3 that I analyzed curse atoms as roots. Now why would a coordinating conjunction (Conj) be an adequate functional element for building complex syntactic structures on the basis of roots? An important characteristic of coordinators is that they connect constituents of the same kind to form a larger constituent of that same kind. For example, in (21a), two DPs —*de hond* and *de kater*— are connected to each other and form a larger constituent that has DP-like properties. That is, the coordinate structure as a whole displays the grammatical behavior that is characteristic of its coordinates. Thus, *de hond en de*

²⁰ I think it is useful to already point out here that this linking element *de* should not be analyzed as a definite article. The Dutch article *de* occurs before non-neuter singular nouns (e.g., *de hond* 'the dog', *de kat* 'the cat') and (neuter and non-neuter) plural nouns (e.g., *de honden* 'the dogs', *de katten* 'the cats', *de paarden* 'the horses'; compare: *het paard*, the_[+neuter] horse). Analyzing "linking" *de* as a definite article does not seem very plausible for a number of reasons. First of all, the occurrence of the definite article is restricted to nominal domains. A curse expression like *godver de ju* does not seem to be nominal in any respect, neither as regards its internal syntax nor as regards its external syntax. For example, if the curse expression were nominal, one would expect *de* to be able to occur at the beginning of the sequence, which is the normal locus of the Dutch definite article. This placement of *de* is impossible, however: *(*de) godver de ju*. A second possible argument against *de* as a definite article comes from patterns featuring a curse atom carrying a diminutive morpheme (Marjo van Koppen p.c.). If *de* were a definite article, one would expect it to be "replaced" by the neuter definite article *het* when it occurs in front of an element carrying a diminutive morpheme. In Dutch, the diminutive morpheme *-je* turns the (nominal) stem into a neuter element: e.g., *de kat* (the_[-neut] cat) - *het kat-je* (the_[+neut] cat-DIM); *de hond* (the_[-neut] dog) - *het hond-je* (the_[+neut] dog-DIM). As shown in (i), *de* never "changes" into *het* when it precedes a curse atom of the form *X+diminutive*.

- (i) a. Non de pie, wat was die goed!
 non de pie, what was he good
 'Wow, how good he was!
 b. Non de pietje, wat was die goed!
 non de pie-DIM, what was he good!
 'Wow, how good he was!
 c. *Non het pietje, wat was die goed!

In short, the linking element *de* that appears in curse expressions is homophonous with the definite article *de* but clearly should not be reduced to the latter element. In this context, see also Den Dikken's (2005) discussion of the *the* of English comparative correlatives (e.g., *the sooner, the better*), which isn't a definite article either.

kater displays the same grammatical behavior as its conjuncts *de hond* and *de kater*.²¹ For example, if two coordinated DPs bear accusative case, as exemplified by the German example in (21b), then this case property is also associated with the entire coordinate structure:

- (21) a. Jan heeft [_{ConjP} [_{DP} [_D de] √*hond*]] [_{Conj'} en [_{DP} [_D de] √*kater*]] geslagen
 Jan has the dog and the tom-cat beaten
- b. Jan hat [_{ConjP} [_{DP} [_D den_{acc}] √*Hund*]] [_{Conj'} und [_{DP} [_D den_{acc}] √*Kater*]] geschlagen

This inheritance behavior of the coordinate structure can be accounted for by taking coordinate conjunctions to be underspecified feature bundles that act as identity operators with respect to certain grammatical features, such as categorial features, case features and the bar-level property (cf. Thiersch 1993, 1994). Thus, [X1 and X2] "is-a" X. This means that [DP1 and DP2] "is-a" DP, and that [√ and √] "is-a" √. In other words, the conjunction does not project its lexical nature onto the projected structure. Or to put it differently, coordinators do not have a labeling function (Chomsky 2011b:25). In this respect, the functional category Conjunction differs from other functional heads such as *v*, *C*(omplementizer), *n* and *D*(eterminer), which do have a labeling function. This inability to label structures may make conjunctions excellent candidates for connecting roots. The complex structure that results from coordination of roots "is-a" root. This may also explain why it is possible to have a complex root like *godver de sakker de ju* as input to attachment of (nominal) plural morphology (22a), present tense morphology (22b) and attributive adjectival morphology (22c); compare (12a-c), where inflectional morphology gets attached to a simplex curse atom). Example (23) represents the relevant structural configuration:

- (22) a. Na twee *godver-de-sakker-de-ju-s* moest hij de klas uit.
 after two godver-de-sakker-de-ju-PL must.3.Sg.Pst he the class out
 'After two 'goddammit's he had to leave the classroom.'
- b. Hij *godver-de-sakker-de-ju-t de hele dag*.
 he godver-de-sakker-de-ju-3P.Sg the entire day
 'He is saying *godver de sakker de ju* during the whole day.'

²¹ I abstract away here from the fact that coordination of two singular (sg) DPs yields a coordinate structure that has plural (pl) interpretation; see (i). What is important for us is that the coordinate structure has number-properties, just like its DP-conjuncts.

(i) [_{ConjP/pl} [_{DP/sg} De hond] en [_{DP/sg} de kater]] vochten met elkaar
 the dog and the tom-cat fought-PL with each other

- c. Hou je *godver-de-sakker-de-ju-se* smoel dicht!
 keep your *godver-de-sakker-de-ju-s-e* mouth shut
 'Shut your damned mouth!'

(23) [[_{ConjP} [_√ *godver*] [_{Conj}' [_{Conj} *de*] [_{ConjP} [_√ *sakker*] [_{Conj}' [_{Conj} *de*] [_√ *ju*]]]]] -s/-t/-se]²²

One may object to the idea of root-level coordination on the basis of the examples in (24), which show that inflectional morphology —plural morphology (24a,b), tense morphology (24c), and adjectival inflection (24d)— cannot be attached to a coordination of two roots.²³

- (24) a. *Hoeveel [[*slager en juwelier*]*s*] ken jij? (OK: *slagers en juweliërs*)
 how-many butcher and jeweller -s know you
 'How many butchers and jewellers do you know?'
- b. *Nogal wat [[*haag en boom*]*en*] staan er in deze tuin. (OK: *hagen en bomen*)
 quite many hedge and tree -s stand there in this garden
 'There are quite a lot of hedges and trees in this garden.'
- c. *De boer [[*was en weeg*]*t*] het varken. (OK: *wast en weegt*)
 the farmer wash and weigh -s the pig
 'The farmer washes and weighs the pig.'
- d. *een [[*mooi en snel*]*e*] auto (OK: *mooie en snelle*)
 a beautiful and fast -e car
 'a beautiful and fast car'

It should be noted, though, that patterns of coordination exist in which right peripheral attachment of inflectional morphology to a root-level coordination is more, or even fully, acceptable. An important characteristic of these coordinations is that the two members form a more or less fixed combination.²⁴ In other words, they have an idiomatic flavor. A few

²² For the sake of simplicity, I have labeled the projections of the coordinator with the X-bar theoretic labels *Conj'* and *ConjP*. Crucially, the labeling information is determined by the conjuncts. If these are roots, then the entire configuration (*ConjP*) is a root syntactic object. Consequently, tense morphology can attach to this complex root.

²³ I would like to thank one of the reviewers for raising this issue.

²⁴ I would like to thank Marcel den Dikken for pointing out the relevance of idiomatic coordinations in this context.

examples of these root-level coordinations, some of which are drawn from the internet, are given in (25)-(27).

- (25) a. Hoeveel *oom en tantes* heb jij?
how-many uncle and aunt-s have you
'How many uncles and aunts do you have?'
- b. Ik kan me voorstellen dat er nogal wat *haak en ogen* zitten aan het wonen in
I can REFL imagine that there quite many hook and eye-s sit to the living in
een leefgemeenschap.
a commune
'I can imagine that living in a commune has certain problems.'
- (26) a. Ex-bondscoach José De Cauwer *wik en weegt* de kansen van de Belgische ploeg.
Former-national-coach JdC think and weigh-s the chances of the Belgian team
'Former national coach José De Cauwer weighs up the chances of the Belgian team.'
- b. Hoogdravende woorden voor iemand die niet *blik of bloost* als Antilliaanse
overblown words for someone who not look or blush-es when Antillian
tieners hun baby's maar dienen te aborteren [...].
teenagers their babies PRT have to abort
'Overblown words for someone who is not ashamed when Antillian teenagers have to abort their babies.'
- (27) a. De auteurs zijn in de praktijk *gepakt en gemazelde* juristen.
the authors are in the practice *ge-smallpox-t* and *ge-measles-d-e* lawyers
'The authors are lawyers who are very experienced in practice.'
- b. Geef een *kort en bondige* beschrijving van de voortgang.
give a short and brief-*e* description of the progress
'Give a very brief description of the progress that has been made.'

In (25a), the sequence *oom en tante*, which is interpreted as a couple, has the plural morpheme *-s* attached outside the coordination. For me, the pattern *oom en tantes* in (25a) is much better than *slager en juweliërs* in (24a). In (25b), the plural morpheme *-en* is attached to

the idiomatic expression *haak en oog*. Although I have a preference for *haken en ogen* (hooks and eyes; meaning: 'problems'), which has plural morphology on both conjuncts, the expression *haak en ogen* is much better for me than *haag en bomen* in (24b). In (25), present tense morphology (-t) is added to the idiomatic coordinations *wik en weeg* and *blik of bloos*. Also for these examples I prefer the pattern with tense morphology on both verbs (*wikt en weegt*; *blikt of bloost*). To my ear, however, a pattern like *wik en weegt* in (26a) sounds better than the (non-idiomatic pattern) *was en weegt* in (24c). Finally, the two examples in (27), which involve a fixed combination of two adjectives, sound quite natural to me. Although it is possible to have adjectival inflection on both coordinated elements (*gepokte en gemazelde*; *korte en bondige*), the pattern in which the inflection is outside the coordination is certainly possible for me.²⁵

In short, the examples in (25)-(27) show that root-level coordination with addition of inflection outside the coordination is possible to a certain extent, namely in the case of idiomatic coordinations and other fixed combinations of coordinated elements. Since, as we will see in section 6, complex curse expressions share other properties with idiomatic coordinations, their parallel behavior as regards the attachment of inflectional morphology is not entirely unexpected. The question, of course, remains as to why the patterns in (24) are out. The fact that the two coordinated elements do not correspond to a single "meaning unit" seems to be relevant. I will leave an in-depth analysis of this issue for future research. What I hope to have shown with the examples in (25)-(27) is that root-level coordination is possible in Dutch.

Now that I have argued that conjunctions are appropriate functional categories for building complex structures on the basis of roots, let us see whether there is any further support for this coordination analysis of complex curse expressions. A very helpful test for diagnosing coordinate-structure-like behavior would, of course, be Ross's (1967) Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC). However, if Chomsky (2011a,b) is right in saying that roots can only become active in syntactic computation (e.g., displacement) if functional material (n, v, *et cetera*) is added (i.e., if the element carries a label), then it immediately follows from the curse atom's root status that it is invisible to displacement operations. Consequently,

²⁵ Another type of expression which hints at the possibility of root-level coordination are expressions such as *vader-en-moeder-tje* (father-and-mother-DIM) and *cowboy-en-indiaan-tje* (cowboy-and-indian-DIM) in (i), which refer to children's games. In these examples, diminutive morphology gets attached to the coordinations *vader-en-moeder* and *cowboy-en-indiaan*, respectively.

(i) Jan en Marie spelen *vader-en-moedertje* / *cowboy-en-indiaantje*
 Jan and Marie play father-and-mother-DIM / cowboy-and-indian-DIM

islandhood is not at stake and the CSC cannot be used as a diagnostic tool for identifying the coordinate-like status of these curse expressions.²⁶

Fortunately, there are still a number of phenomena that hint at the presence of an underlying coordinate structure in the case of complex curse expressions. A first coordinate-like characteristic concerns the possibility of extending the curse pattern in an unbounded fashion. Coordination displays the property of recursion in the sense that a well-formed coordinate pattern (e.g., *Pieter en Jo* in (28a)) can be used as a building block in an even bigger coordinate structure (see (28b), where the ConjP *Pieter en Jo* is in the complement position of the higher Conj). In other words, language allows for recursively constructing nested coordinate structures. Along the same lines, a complex curse expression (e.g., *sakker de ju* in (29a)) can be used as a building block in an even bigger curse expression (see (29b), where *sakker de ju* is in the complement position of the higher Conj).

- (28) a. [ConjP Pieter [Conj' [Conj en] [ConjP Jo]]]
 b. [ConjP Rutger [Conj' [Conj en] [ConjP Pieter [Conj' [Conj en] [ConjP Jo]]]]]
- (29) a. [ConjP √sakker [Conj' [Conj de] [ConjP √ju]]]
 b. [ConjP √godver [Conj' [Conj de] [ConjP √sakker [Conj' [Conj de] [ConjP √ju]]]]]

A second coordinate-like property concerns the possibility of creating iterative patterns, i.e., patterns in which one lexical atom is used repeatedly. As exemplified in (30), this iterative use of a lexical atom is attested in coordinate patterns. The examples in (31) show that this repetitive use of a single atom is also found in complex curse expressions (see also section 2).

- (30) a. Jan *zeurde en zeurde en zeurde*.
 Jan whined and whined and whined
 ‘Jan was whining all the time.’

²⁶ To this we can add that the entire curse expression typically displays the external syntax of interjections/intercalations (cf. (i); see Schelfhout 2005) and, possibly, modifying adjuncts (cf. (12c)). Extraction from these domains is typically excluded.

(i) Nou moet je *godverdomme* je bek houden! (compare (1a))
 now must you goddamned your mouth shut
 ‘Goddamned, shut your mouth!’

- b. Jan zakte *dieper en dieper en dieper* de modder in.
Jan sacked deeper and deeper and deeper the mud into
'Jan sacked deeper and deeper and deeper into the mud.'

- (31) a. *godver de godver de godver* de ju
b. *non de non de non* de ju

As noted in Potts (2007), this iterative use of an expressive atom—a characteristic of expressives that he refers to as *repeatability*—has the effect that the emotive content is strengthened (i.e., it has an intensifying effect) and does not contribute 'redundancy' to the meaning of the iterated element. In other words, such patterns symbolically represent a heightening of the emotional state of the speaker.

A third property that complex curse-patterns featuring *de* and coordinate structures featuring *en* share is the possibility of leaving the linking element—*de* in curse expressions and *en* in coordinate expressions—phonologically unrealized between some of the conjuncts. In (32), for example, there is no overt coordinator present in between the first three conjuncts. The coordinator *en* only appears in between the last two conjuncts. Given the single occurrence of *en* in this complex coordinate structure in (32), this coordination pattern can be characterized as monosyndetic coordination. Along the same lines, we may call complex curse expressions like (33a,b) monosyndetic curse expressions. With the exception of the last two curse atoms, the atoms are not separated from each other by means of the connecting element *de*.

- (32) a. Jan *zeurde, zeurde, zeurde en zeurde*
b. Jan zakte *dieper, dieper, dieper en dieper* de modder in.

- (33) a. *godver godver godver* de ju
b. *sakker sakker sakker* de ju

As noted in Munn (1993) and Kayne (1994) for English but exemplified here for Dutch, there is a contrast in well-formedness between the partially asyndetic coordination in (34a)-(35a) and the one in (34b)-(35b). The coordinator *en* can only occur in between the last two conjuncts of the coordinate structure.

- (34) a. Ik zag [Roemer, Pieter en Jo]
I saw Roemer, Pieter and Jo
b. *Ik zag [Roemer en Pieter, Jo]
- (35) a. Jan [zeurde, zeurde en zeurde]
Jan whined, whined and whined
b. *Jan [zeurde en zeurde, zeurde]
Jan whined and whined, whined

If complex curse expressions have a coordinate-like structure, we may expect to find a similar contrast. Interestingly, for all Dutch speakers whom I have asked for their judgments, there is a subtle but clear contrast in acceptability between the a-examples and the b-examples in (36)-(37). For some speakers, this contrast seems to be slightly less strong, though, than the contrast between the a-examples and b-examples in (34) and (35). I will interpret the contrasts in (36) and (37) as corroborating evidence for the coordinate-like structure of complex curse expressions.

- (36) a. godver, sakker de kloten
b. ??godver de sakker, kloten
- (37) a. godver, godver de godver
b. ??godver de godver, godver

As exemplified in (39a) with *godver sakker ju*, overall asyndetic patterns, as found with normal coordinate structures (see (38B)), are also possible as complex curse expressions. The structural analysis of (38B) is given in (39b).

- (38) A: Welke drie spelers vormen de voorhoede van het Nederlands elftal?
Which three players form the forward-line of the Dutch team
B: Robben, Van Persie, Huntelaar.²⁷ (list of proper names)
- (39) a. [ConjP godver [Conj' [Conj ∅] [ConjP sakker [Conj' [Conj ∅] [ConjP ju]]]]]

²⁷ Recall the discussion of the emotive expression *jesus maria jozef!*, which I took to be a coordination of roots (see footnote 18). In the coordinate structure in (39b) the coordinated elements are DPs, and consequently have a referential meaning.

- b. [ConjP Robben [Conj' [Conj ∅] [ConjP Van Persie [Conj' [Conj ∅] [ConjP Huntelaar]]]]]

A fourth potential argument that hints at the coordinate-like nature of complex curse expressions comes from phenomena of parallelism between the two conjuncts. That is, the two atoms (conjuncts) that are connected to each other by means of the coordinator typically are alike (i.e., have an equal status) in one or more respects. For example, they may share their categorial status (e.g., two APs are coordinated, as in *a* [[_{AP} *kind*] *and* [_{AP} *intelligent*]] *person*) or their semantic status (e.g., two predicative XPs are coordinated, as in *John is* [[_{DP} *a Democrat*] *and* [_{AP} *proud of it*]]). In certain coordinate structures, the conjuncts display symmetry in "shape". One example of this was given in the German example (21b): The two coordinated DPs shared the property of bearing morphologically spelled out accusative case (*den Hund, den Kater*). Except for personal pronominal forms (e.g., [[_{DP} *hem*] *en* [_{DP} *haar*]] 'him and her') Dutch does not show overt signs of case symmetry. In a slightly more loose sense (i.e., symmetry is not obligatory but yields a certain rhythmic effect), Dutch sometimes shows symmetry in shape in the form of diminutive morphology. An example of this is the occurrence of diminutive morphology on the conjoined members of certain fixed combinations of names, such as *Suske en Wiske* (cartoon characters), *Fokke en Sukke* (cartoon characters), *Hanneke en Janneke*, *Hannie en Jannie*, *Peppie en Kokkie* (comic actors in Dutch children's television series in the 1970's).

Also in the domain of complex emotive expressions, we find similar signs of symmetry between the connected curse atoms (cf. Van Sterkenburg 1997:236). The following expressions of astonishment/frustration, for example, feature the diminutive-like element *ie* on the two atoms making up the complex emotive expression.

- (40) a. gossie possie
 b. gossie mikkie

Further illustrations of symmetry in shape are given in (41)-(43). In these examples, the accentuated vowels in the two curse atoms are identical. In other words, they display a kind of vowel harmony.

- (41) a. god verdomme (anger, frustration)
 b. gad verdamme (disgust)
 c. ged verdemme (disgust)

- (42) a. **god** verdorie (anger, frustration)
 b. **gad** verdarrie (disgust)
 c. **ged** verderrie (disgust)
- (43) a. **snot** verdorie (anger, frustration)
 b. **snat** verdarrie (disgust)
 c. **snet** verderrie (disgust)

A fifth similarity between coordinate patterns featuring *en* and complex curse expressions featuring *de* concerns the prosodic phrasing of those structures. More specifically, the prosodic phrasing of complex curse expressions is similar to that of coordinate structures having a list reading. As noted by Wagner (2005, 2010), such coordinate structures are prosodically flat; that is, the coordinates are separated by prosodic boundaries of equal strength and are thus prosodically on a par (see also Pesetsky 2007). This is exemplified in (44a,b), where the last atom of the complex coordinate structure is phonologically the most prominent; that is, it carries the nuclear stress of the complex expression. The prosodic boundaries are indicated with the pipe symbol ‘|’ and nuclear stress with capital letters.

- (44) a. A: Welke spelers zitten er in jouw team?
 which players sit there on your team
 ‘Which players are on your team?’
 B: Roemer | en Pieter | en JO |
- b. A: Wat koop jij iedere week in de supermarkt?
 what buy you every week in the supermarket
 ‘What do you buy in the supermarket every week?’
 B: koffie | en koekjes | en PEren |
 coffee and cookies and pears

Wagner (*ibidem*) remarks that the linear sequence making up the coordination pattern can also have a prosodically articulated structure; in that case, the coordinates are separated by boundaries of different strengths. More specifically, constituents separated by relatively weaker boundaries are perceived as grouping together. The larger (i.e., less deeply embedded) group is separated from the other group by a stronger boundary (||). This prosodically articulated coordinate structure is illustrated in (45), where *Roemer en Pieter* and *Ton en Jo*

form prosodic units. As indicated again with capital letters, nuclear stress falls on the second element of each of these pairs.²⁸

- (45) A: Dus er zitten twee tweelingen in deze klas? Wie zijn het?
 so there sit two twins in this class? who are it?
 'So, there are two twins in this classroom? Who are they?'
 B: Roemer | en PIeTer || en Ton | en JO
 Roemer Pieter and Ton and Jo
 'Roemer an Pieter are twins and so are Ton and Jo.'

When we look now at the prosodic phrasing of complex curse expressions, we observe that their phrasing resembles that of coordinate expressions with a list reading (see the B-expressions in (44a,b)). Compare, for example, the complex curse expressions in (46a)-(47a) with the list patterns in (46b)-(47b). The examples in (46) feature an overt connecting element (*de, en*), the examples in (47) represent asyndetic expressions.

- (46) a. godver | de sakker | de JU |
 b. Roemer | en Pieter | en JO | (see (44a.B))
 (47) a. godver | sakker | JU
 b. Roemer | Pieter | JO

Now that we have shown that complex curse expressions display properties of coordinate structures, we may raise the question as to what makes coordination such a good formal means for the composition of curses. I already mentioned, in passing, Potts's (2007) observation that the repetitive use of an expressive atom (e.g., *damn*) has an intensifying effect. Expressions involving the repetitive use of an expressive atom like *damn* (cf. footnote 9) symbolically represent a heightening of the emotional state of the speaker. Now, coordination seems to be an optimal formal (more specifically, syntactic) means for encoding the repeatability property with its concomitant intensifying (i.e., augmentative) meaning. Repeatability, and the intensifying meaning effect, may be obtained by coordinating instances of one and the same lexical item (see (30a)); let's call this "reduplicative repeatability". However, the same effect can be obtained by coordination of lexical items that are

²⁸ I will assume that the syntactic structure that corresponds to (45B) is the following:

(i) [_{ConjP} [_{ConjP} Roemer [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} en] [_{ConjP} Pieter]]]] [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} en] [_{ConjP} Ton [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} en] [_{ConjP} Jo]]]]]

(near-)synonomous; see Overdiep (1937:567). This pattern, which one may characterize as representing "synonomous repeatability," is exemplified in (48).

- (48) a. Zit niet [te *soezen* en te *suffen*]...! (Overdiep 1937:567)
Sit not to doze and to drowse
'Don't doze off!
- b. Loop niet [te *zeuren* en te *zaniken*]!
run not to carp and to dawdle
'Stop carping!'
- c. Jan hakte het vlees in [*stukken* en *brokken*]
Jan cut the meat in pieces and bits
'Jan cut the meat in bits and pieces.'
- d. [*Traag* en *langzaam*] trok de stoet voorbij.
slow and slow passed the procession past
'The procession passed us very slowly.'

As Overdiep (1937) notes for Dutch, these coordinations of synonyms encode repeatability and have an intensifying/emphatic meaning effect to it. Along the same lines, I assume that complex curse expressions involving coordination of (near-)synonomous curse atoms (e.g., *godver de sakker de non de ju*; see (8)) have this intensifying meaning effect, which linguistically represents the heightening of the speaker's emotional state.

Summarizing, I have argued that complex curse expressions display similarities to coordinate patterns having a list reading. In a way, complex curses are lists of curse atoms.²⁹ It was proposed that the internal syntax of complex curse expressions is the same as that of patterns of coordination: A conjunction (connector) heads a syntactic projection containing a complement and a specifier.³⁰ In coordinations, we have a lexical conjunction *en*, whereas in

²⁹ I presume that this coordinate structure analysis extends to complex curses of the type in (i), where the curse expression consists of a list of diseases and genitals.

(i) Wat een [[*tyfus kanker klere klote*] [zooi]] is dit!
What a typhoid cancer cholera balls mess is this
'What a bloody mess this is!!!'

³⁰ This hierarchical organization of complex curse expressions receives additional support from the phenomenon of echo-question formation. As shown in (i), the wh-word *WAT* 'what' used by speaker B "refers" to a string of elements in speaker A's utterance which B has not heard or understood properly. This string of elements typically corresponds to a syntactic unit (i.e., a constituent).

complex curse expressions, we may find the connecting element *de*, as in *godver de ju* (i.e., [_{ConjP} *godver* [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} *de*] *ju*]]). Sometimes this connecting element may remain phonetically empty (\emptyset), as in the asyndetic pattern *godver ju* (i.e., [_{ConjP} *godver* [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} \emptyset] *ju*]]) and the monosyndetic pattern *godver sakker de ju* (i.e., [_{ConjP} *godver* [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} \emptyset] [_{ConjP} *sakker* [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} *de*] *ju*]]]]). I further argued that curse atoms are roots and that a coordinator is an optimal functional element for building a complex syntactic object on the basis of roots. The outcome of conjoining two roots *is* a complex root expression. It was further proposed that augmenting the syntactic structure with reduplicating or synonomous curse atoms (roots) yields an intensifying meaning.

6. Coordination and linearization

An important outcome of my analysis is that complex curse expressions have an internal syntax. They are structured linguistic expressions, which result from the combination of curse atoms by means of overt (*de*) or silent (\emptyset) coordinators. Given the coordinate nature of these structured curse expressions, one might expect the linearization of the conjoined curse atoms to be quite free. The conjoined members of a coordinate structure like *Pieter en Jo* 'Pieter and Jo' can easily change positions: *Jo en Pieter*. And under a list interpretation (see, for example, (44a.B)), the members of a more complex coordination can easily change positions: *Roemer en Pieter en Jo*; *Pieter en Roemer en Jo*; *Roemer en Jo en Pieter*, *et cetera*.

-
- (i) Speaker A: [twee [foto's [van [koffers [op [wiel'tjes]]]]]]
two pictures of suitcases on wheels
- Speaker B:
- a. twee foto's van koffers op WAT? (WAT = *wiel'tjes*)
two pictures of suitcases on WHAT
- b. twee foto's van WAT? (WAT = *koffers op wiel'tjes*)
two pictures of WHAT
- c. twee WAT? (WAT = *foto's van koffers op wiel'tjes*)
two WHAT

If the echo-wh-word *WAT* typically replaces a string of words that corresponds to a syntactic constituent, then the following curse expressions of which a part has been questioned by the echo-wh-word *WAT* hint at a hierarchical organization of the curse atoms that make up the complex curse expression. In (iia) *WAT* replaces the final curse atom (which is in the complement position of the most deeply embedded ConjP); in (iib) and (iic), *WAT* replaces a ConjP.

- (ii) Speaker A: [_{ConjP} *godver* [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} *de*] [_{ConjP} *sakker* [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} *de*] [_{ConjP} *non* [_{Conj'} [_{Conj} *de*] *ju*]]]]]]]]
- Speaker B:
- a. *godver de sakker de non de WAT?* (WAT = *ju*)
- b. *godver de sakker de WAT?* (WAT = *non de ju*)
- c. *godver de WAT?* (WAT = *sakker de non de ju*)

It turns out now that the order of elements in a complex curse expression is not always as free as one might expect. Consider, first of all, an expression like *non de ju*, which under the proposed coordination analysis has the structure [_{ConjP} *non* [_{Conj} [_{Conj} *de*] *ju*]]. Its mirror order is impossible: **ju de non*. This irreversibility also holds for the subparts of a curse expression like *god domme*, which under a coordination analysis has the following structure: [_{ConjP} *god* [_{Conj} [_{Conj} \emptyset] *domme*]]. The reverse order does not occur as a curse expression: **domme god*.³¹ Also in curse expressions involving three curse elements, restrictions on linearization can be observed. As exemplified in (49), *godver* and *sakker* can reasonably well change positions, but the placement of *ju* is heavily restricted. It must occur in final position:

- (49) a. *godver de sakker de ju*
 b. [?]*sakker de godver de ju*
 c. **godver de ju de sakker*
 d. **ju de godver de sakker*

These fixed linearizations in curse expressions raise the question as to whether these expressions are really complex, in the sense of being composed of two or more distinct curse atoms. One might, on the basis of these fixed orders, assume that *ju* and *domme* are in fact not atomic but only occur as part of the simplex curse atoms *nondeju* and *goddomme*. In other words, these expressions would not have any internal structure. Something similar might be said about the curse expression *godverdomme* on the basis of the observation in (50), which represents my judgment. For me, it is impossible to place the linking element *de* in between *godver* and *domme* in complex curse expressions like (50).³² From this, one might draw the conclusion that *godverdomme* is a single, non-decomposable unit.

- (50) *godver de godver de godver (*de) domme*

Although these linearization facts are suggestive of an atomic analysis of curse expressions such as *nondeju*, *godverdomme*, *goddomme*, *et cetera*, this purely atomic (i.e., non-decomposable) analysis can be questioned on the basis of another observation I made earlier in section 2, viz., the substitutability of curse atoms (see (2)-(4)). For example, the first curse atom of *non de ju* can be replaced, yielding patterns such as *godver/sakker/so de ju*, or

³¹ This is bad only as a curse expression. As such it is fine, meaning 'silly god.'

³² I would like to thank one of the reviewers for drawing my attention to this restriction.

the last curse atom can be replaced, yielding patterns such as *non de pie/kanon/shit*. Importantly, none of these examples allows the reverse order: i.e., **ju de godver/sakker/so*; **pie/kanon/shit de non*.

The question arises how to deal with this tension between the two properties at issue: Fixed linear order, on the one hand, and substitutability, on the other hand. Let me add to this that all the curse patterns display the phrasal stress pattern (i.e., nuclear stress on the second curse atom; e.g., *non de JU*, *god DOMme*), which hints at a phrase-structural organization of the curse expression. The question that then arises is the following: How can these two properties be made compatible? That is, how can a structurally organized expression (sometimes) have a fixed linear order?

One might try to develop an answer to this question by drawing a parallel with other linguistic expressions that have a phrase structural organization and display certain "fixed properties" (e.g., linear order). One class of expressions that could be placed under this rubric are phrasal idioms, such as the following idiomatic coordinate patterns from Dutch:³³

- (51) a. Het was niet altijd [koek en ei] tussen hen (*ei en koek)
 It was not always cookie and egg between them
 'They haven't always been good friends.'
- b. Jan schreeuwde [moord en brand] (*brand en moord)
 Jan shouted murder and fire
 'Jan shouted in order to attract people's attention.'
- c. Jan zat in [zak en as]. (*as en zak)
 Jan sat in bag and ash
 'Jan was very sad and disappointed.'

But also non-idiomatic coordinate patterns sometimes show a fixed order, as in the following vocative noun phrases:³⁴

³³ As expected, these coordinate structures have a phrasal stress pattern: e.g., [_{ConjP} *koek* [_{Conj} [_{Conj} *en*] *EI*]].

³⁴ As Wagner (2010) also notes "The claim that bracketing is not linguistically fixed does not mean that their *order* is free. In fact, word order in actual coordinate structures is not necessarily free, either." He points out examples in which coordinate structures having a list interpretation are ordered based on chronology, scalar strength, and set-subset relations. Random permutations would seem more marked:

- (i) a. open Monday, Tuesday and Friday
 b. big, bigger, biggest
 c. Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.

- (52) a. [Dames en heren], gaat u zitten! (#heren en dames)
 ladies and gentlemen, go you sit
 'Ladies and gentlemen, please sit down!'
- b. [Jongens en meisjes], luister goed naar mij! (#meisjes en jongens)
 boys and girls, listen carefully to me

Importantly, the fixed order of a curse expression like *non de ju* is not necessarily incompatible then with a phrase structural organization of that curse expression. Possibly, the atomic, construction-like appearance might be the result of the frequent use of the relevant combinations (see Hornstein (2009:162-164) for arguments that the existence of constructions—i.e., a fixed compilation of atoms and rules—is compatible with a conception of grammar on the basis of computational operations). Possibly, speakers may also differ from each other as regards the extent to which they consider the combination of curse atoms (e.g., *non de ju*) to be atomic (i.e., construction-like). For example, one of the reviewers considers the form (*godver de*) *non de ju de ju de ju*, with iteration on the curse atom *ju*, to be marked or even impossible. This pattern, drawn from Van Sterkenburg (1997:58, 227), however, is fully acceptable to me. This inter-speaker variation also seems to hold for the pattern in (50). On the internet, for example, I found patterns such as those in (53). Admittedly, the number of hits for this curse pattern was much smaller than the number of hits for *godverdomme*. It does seem to suggest, though, that for certain speakers of Dutch *godverdomme* is less of a fixed construction than for others.

- (53) a. Ja! Godverdomme! Trap ik er weer in, godverdegodverdedomme.
 yes! godverdomme! step I there again in godverdegodverdedomme
 'Yes! Goddamit! I am fooled again, goddammit!'
- b. En godverdedomme, ik kan pas vrijdag mijn rijbewijs ophalen.
 and godverdedomme I can only friday my driver's-license pick-up
 'Goddamit, I can't pick up my driver's license before Friday.'

A full investigation of the dimensions of inter-speaker variation falls beyond the scope of this article. What I have tried to show here is that a fixed property (*in casu* linearization) of a curse expression is not necessarily incompatible with a phrase structural analysis of it based on smaller curse atoms. Furthermore, the computational basis of cursing is strongly supported

by phenomena such as substitution and recursion.

7. Decomposing *de*

In the previous sections I have decomposed Dutch curse expressions into smaller pieces (curse atoms, analyzed as roots) and I have argued that these pieces are organized into a hierarchical structure, more specifically a coordinate structure. In certain curse expressions, we have an asyndetic coordination in the sense that there is no overt conjoining element in between the two curse atoms (e.g., [_{ConjP} *godver* [_{Conj} [_{Conj} \emptyset] *ju*]]). In other expressions, we find an overt linking element between the two curse atoms, as in *godver de ju*. So far, I have interpreted this element as a realization of the coordinator: [_{ConjP} *godver* [_{Conj} [_{Conj} *de*] *ju*]]. In this section I will try to give a more precise characterization of this connecting element. In the spirit of the decompositional approach towards curse expressions taken in this article, I will show that this particular instance of *de* is non-atomic, and consequently not a direct lexicalization of the Conj-head. What I will propose is that *de* in a curse expression like *godver de ju* should be decomposed into two augmentative sounds—the sounds *d* and *e* (i.e., /ə/; schwa)—each of which contributes an expressive flavor to the externalized curse expression (cf. Overdiep 1937:113-114, 157-161, Corver 2004, 2006). The alveolar stop /d/ (cf. Booij 1995) will be analyzed as a paragogic sound that gets attached at the end of certain curse atoms. The schwa-sound will be analyzed as an externalization of the functional head Conj. Thus, the final representation of the curse expression *godver de ju* will be the following:

$$(54) \quad [\text{ConjP } \sqrt{\text{godver}} \mathbf{d} [\text{Conj}' [\text{Conj } \mathbf{e}] [\text{ConjP } \sqrt{\text{ju}}]]]$$

I start my decomposition analysis of *de* with the schwa-sound, which I take to be an externalization of the Conj-head. Let me, first of all, point out that schwa can occur "on its own" in the following emotive expressions that display iteration of the root *god* (/ɣot/) and its variant *gut*. The syntactic structure that corresponds to (55c) is given in (57), where the capital letters of the final curse atom indicate nuclear stress.³⁵

³⁵ Recall from section 5 (see the examples (34)-(35) and (36)-(37)) that in a monosyndetic coordinate structure involving three conjoined atoms, the overt coordinator should occur in between the last two atoms and not between the first two atoms. If the sound schwa is the externalization of Conj in (55)-(56), then we expect to find the same pattern. In fact, according to my judgments, we do. This is exemplified in (i) for example (55).

- (55) a. Oh god
 ‘Oh my god!’ (expression of fear/despair)
 b. Oh god *e* god
 c. Oh god *e* god *e* god (*et cetera*)
- (56) a. Ach gut
 ‘Oh poor X’ (expression of pity)
 b. Ach gut *e* gut
 c. Ach gut *e* gut *e* gut (*et cetera*)

(57) (Oh) [_{ConjP} god [_{Conj} [_{Conj} *e*] [_{ConjP} god [_{Conj} [_{Conj} *e*] [_{ConjP} GOD]]]]]]³⁶

Perhaps even more telling evidence in support of the "independent" occurrence of schwa (i.e., independent from *d*) comes from the examples in (58), which again are all drawn from the internet (Google); in my Dutch I also allow these patterns.³⁷

- (58) a. *Godvereju*, ik word helemaal lek gestoken door die kutmuggen!
 goddamned I become entirely punctured stung by those cunt-mosquitos
 ‘Goddamned, those fucking mosquitos sting me all over my body!’
 b. Ik word toch *godvereju* helemaal gestoord van die pleurisbeesten!
 I become PRT goddamned entirely crazy of those pleurisy-animals
 ‘Goddamned, those fucking animals drive me completely crazy!’
 c. Wie loopt mij *godveredomme* elke keer te bellen?
 who walks me goddamned every time to call
 ‘Goddamned, who is calling me all the time?’

-
- (i) a. Oh god, god *e* god
 b. ??Oh god *e* god, god

³⁶ I can pronounce this pattern both with a voiceless alveolar stop (orthographically represented: *gottegottegot*) and a voiced alveolar stop (*goddegoddegot*). Both orthographic patterns can be found on the internet (Google).

³⁷ So we have the following minimal variants of the curse expression *godver de ju*. As for (id), it should be noted, though, that an alternative analysis is available: given that the curse atom *ju* is derived from French *dieu* ‘god’, one may take the element *dju* also to be a curse atom which derives from French *dieu*. This would correspond to pattern (ic), with *dju* instead of *ju* as the right conjunct.

- | | | | | |
|-----|----|--------------|-----|---|
| (i) | a. | godver de ju | a.’ | [_{ConjP} [_√ <i>godver+d</i>] [_{Conj} [_{Conj} <i>e</i>] [_√ <i>ju</i>]]] |
| | b. | godver e ju | b.’ | [_{ConjP} [_√ <i>godver</i>] [_{Conj} [_{Conj} <i>e</i>] [_√ <i>ju</i>]]] |
| | c. | godver ju | c.’ | [_{ConjP} [_√ <i>godver</i>] [_{Conj} [_{Conj} <i>∅</i>] [_√ <i>ju</i>]]] |
| | d. | godver dju | d.’ | [_{ConjP} [_√ <i>godver+d</i>] [_{Conj} [_{Conj} <i>∅</i>] [_√ <i>ju</i>]]] |

- d. *Doe potveredomme* die gordijnen dicht!
do goddamned those curtains closed
'Goddamned, close those curtains!'
- e. *Sakkereju*, ik ben blij dat ik hier zoiets nooit tegenkom.
goddamned, I am happy that I here something-like-that never come-across
'Goddamned, I am happy that I am not confronted with something similar here!'
- f. *Nonneju*, wat mooi!
Goddamned, what beautiful
'Wow, how beautiful!'

It does not seem implausible to put this occurrence of schwa on a par with what I descriptively call augmentative schwa, i.e., the schwa that is added to certain elements for emphatic and expressive purposes. As exemplified in (59)-(61), certain pronouns, degree words and measure nouns can be phonologically augmented by means of schwa in (variants of) Dutch (see Corver 1997a, 2004, 2006).

- (59) a. A: Wie wil er een stuk taart? B: Ik / Ikke
Who likes there a piece cake I / I-*e*
'A: Who would like to have a piece of cake? B: Me!'
- b. A: Wat wil je kopen? B: Dat/Datte
what want you buy that / that-*e*
'A: What would you like to buy? B: That thing over there.'
- (60) a. Ik vind Jan zo verdomd(*e*) aardig.
I find Jan so damned(*e*) nice
'I find Jan a really nice man.'
- b. Ik vond die som zo verrekt(*e*) moeilijk.
I found that sum so damned(*e*) difficult
'I found that sum very difficult to solve.'
- (61) a. 'n kist(*e*) tōrref (Katwijk Dutch; Overdiep 1937:253-254)
a box(*e*) peat
'a really large box of peat!'

- b. 'n hóóp(e) wáeter
 a heap(e) water
 'a really large amount of water'

I propose that the augmentative schwa in (59)-(61) spells out (i.e., externalizes) a functional head position.³⁸ More specifically:³⁹

- (62) a. [nP [n -e] [NP ik]] (see (59a))
 b. [DegP ZO [QP verdomd [Q' [Q -e] [AP aardig]]]] (see (60a))
 c. [DP een [QP kist [Q' [Q -e] [NP tórref]]]] (see (61a))

I take the augmented pronominal form *ikke* to be derived by means of N (i.e., root)-to-n movement, where n externalizes as schwa. In (62b) and (62c), the degree modifier and the nominal measure phrase occupy the specifier position of QP (see Corver 1997a,b; Corver 1998). The Q-head (optionally) externalizes as schwa, yielding a doubly filled XP-

³⁸ At a certain level of abstraction, this augmentative schwa seems to fulfill the same role as the dummy verb *do* in sentences like *John DID eat an apple* (compare: *John ate an apple*) and *Please, do come home!* (compare: *Please, come home!*). *Do* does not contribute any 'descriptive' meaning but rather adds emphatic/expressive force to the sentence.

³⁹ Strictly speaking there are two ways in which 'insertion' of augmentative schwa can be conceived of: (i) substitution (i.e., it spells out Conj) or (ii) adjunction (i.e., it gets adjoined to the phonetically empty Conj). Since making a choice on this issue does not directly influence the core of my analysis, I will abstract away from it here. I should say that certain phenomena seem to hint at an adjunction analysis. See, for example, the augmented superlative form *'t hardst(-e)* (the fastest(-e), 'fastest') in (i), where the optional *-e* attaches to the superlative morpheme *-st*, the realization of Q (see Corver 1997a,b). The synthetic form *hardst(e)* is derived by head movement of A to Q (i.e., adjunction).

- (i) a. Jan reed ['t hard-st(-e)]
 Jan drove the fast-est-*e*
 'Jan drove fastest.'
 b. [DegP 't [QP [Q' [Q -st(+ -e)] [AP hard]]]]

Interestingly, this augmentative schwa sometimes appears on the coordinative conjunction *en* 'and' itself. An example of such an augmented coordinator is given in (iia,b). As noted by Overdiep (1937:562), this form *enne* typically introduces a new topic of conversation in a slightly more strengthened/emphatic way

- (ii) a. Enne wat ik wil zeggen...
 and-*e*what I want say...
 'And ... what I would like to say ...'
 b. Enne wie heeft er gewonnen?
 and-*e* ... who has there won
 'And ...who won?'

The form *enne*, in which the schwa is attached to the lexicalized conjunction *en*, possibly also hints at an adjunction analysis of augmentative schwa, i.e. [[Conj \emptyset]+e]. In what follows, I will abstract away from the issue whether schwa is adjoined to Conj or realizes Conj.

configuration; that is, both the Spec-position and the head position are pronounced. Along the same lines, I tentatively propose that the schwa that appears in complex curse expressions can be analyzed as an augmentative sound that realizes a functional head, viz., Conj (see (54)).

Having shown that schwa can occur on its own, which supports a decompositional analysis of *de*, let me discuss the alveolar obstruent /d/. As represented in (54), I propose that /d/ gets inserted at the end of certain curse atoms, viz., those ending in *-er* such as *godver* and *sakker*. The insertion of a paragodic alveolar obstruent at the end of a word results from a general tendency in Dutch dialects (as well as many other languages) to end in a segment that is as consonantal as possible (see Corver and Van Oostendorp 2005). These paragodic alveolar obstruents are typically attached to Dutch words ending with *n*, *l*, and *r*. Van Haeringen (1938) gives the following examples of Dutch words containing a paragodic alveolar obstruent: *iemand* 'someone' (*iemand* < *ieman*), *dubbeld* 'double' (*dubbeld* < *dubbel*), *sedert* 'since' (*sedert* < *seder*).^{40 41} In the context of our discussion of curse expressions, especially the last example is relevant since curse atoms like *godver* and *sakker* also end with the sound sequence *er* (i.e., /ər/). Some further examples of insertion of a paragodic alveolar obstruent at the end of a word ending with /ər/ come from Utrecht Dutch (cf. Van Oostendorp 2000). In this dialect we find words like *brommert* and *gozert*, which result from attachment of the voiceless alveolar alveolar stop /t/ to the words *brommer* 'moped' and *gozer* 'bloke', respectively.⁴²

⁴⁰ The words *iemand* and *sedert* are part of the Standard Dutch lexicon, the word *dubbeld* is archaic but is still found in various Dutch dialects (see e.g., Ter Laan (1953:142) for Groningen Dutch). See also the Dutch proper name (common in the Dordrecht/Rotterdam area) *Den Dubbelden* (Marcel den Dikken, p.c.).

⁴¹ As shown by the examples, the alveolar stop is orthographically represented as either *d* or *t*. They are all pronounced as /t/, i.e., as a voiceless alveolar stop, in those examples. In the examples I give, I use the orthography that is used in the written sources that I consulted. It should be noted here that Dutch has a phonological devoicing rule which states that voiced obstruents become voiceless at the end of a word. This final obstruent devoicing rule is also known under the German name of *Auslautverhärtung*. For example, it is generally assumed that *iemand* 'someone' has an underlying phonological representation with the phoneme /d/ at the end, which actually is also used in the orthographic representation. This phoneme /d/ surfaces, for example, when *iemand* gets the plural morpheme *-en* attached to it, resulting in a structure in which the alveolar obstruent is no longer at the word end (see (i)). Thus, the /t/ pronounced at the end of the singular form *iemand* results from final obstruent devoicing.

(i) Met twee *iemanden* mag je nooit spreken, namelijk Jan en Piet.
with two someones may you never talk, namely Jan and Piet
'You are not allowed to talk to two specific persons, namely Jan and Piet.'

⁴² The phenomenon of paragoge is quite common in dialectal variants of Dutch. See, for example, Overdiep (1937:160) for Katwijk Dutch, and Ter Laan (1953:138-143) for Groningen Dutch. Ter Laan gives among other the following examples from Groningen Dutch:

(i) a. Ik kom der moar enkelt (p.140) (paragodic *t* after *l*)
I come there just only-*t*
'I just come there now and then.'

As noted by Van Haeringen (1938), a paragodic alveolar obstruent can sometimes get an expressive value (with intensifying meaning). An example of this is the insertion of *-d*, pronounced as a voiceless alveolar stop /t/, after the agentive nominalizing suffix *-er* with words like *knoeier* 'bungler', *vreter* 'greedy-guts', *suffer* 'dullard', and *opschepper* 'braggart'.⁴³

- | | | | |
|---------|---|-----|---------------------------|
| (63) a. | een knoeier
a bungler
'some who really makes a mess/bungles' | a.' | knoei-er-d
bungle-er-d |
| b. | een vreterd
a greedy-guts
'someone who really eats a lot' | b.' | vreet-er-d
eat-er-d |
| c. | een sufferd
a dullard ⁴⁴
'a really dull/stupid fellow' | c.' | suf-er-d
doze-er-d |
| d. | een opschepperd
a braggart
'someone who really boasts loudly' | d.' | opschep-er-d |

The paragodic alveolar obstruent in these examples augments the sound structure and adds an expressive/affective flavor to the word. I assume that paragodic *d* in a linguistic expression like *godverd e ju* also contributes to the affective flavor of the curse expression.

If the paragodic alveolar obstruent is a sound segment that augments curse atoms ending in *er* (i.e., /ər/), we expect there to be simplex curse expressions ending in *er* that feature the paragodic obstruent. Importantly, such curse expressions would strongly suggest that the sequence *de* (i.e. /də/) in the complex curse expression *godver-de-ju* does not form a single lexical unit. As shown by the examples in (64), which are all drawn from the internet via a

-
- | | | | |
|----|---|----------|---|
| b. | ongeveert honderd gulden
approximately-t hundred guilder
'approximately one hundred guilders' | (p. 140) | (paragodic <i>t</i> after <i>r</i>) |
| c. | 't Levent is ter oet.
the life-t is there out
'Life is out of his body; i.e., He is dead.' | (p. 141) | (paragodic <i>t</i> after <i>n</i>) |
| d. | Wiegert
Wieger-t
'Wieger' (= proper name) | (p. 141) | (paragodic <i>t</i> after (<i>e</i>) <i>r</i>) |

⁴³ See also expressions such as *een engerd* (a scary+er+d; 'a creep'), *een goeierd* (a good+er+d; 'a really good/helpful guy'), *een slimmerd* (a smart+er+d; 'a really smart guy'), *een dikkerd* (a fat+er+d; 'a very fat guy').

⁴⁴ English *dullard* and *braggart* probably illustrate exactly the same thing as the Dutch examples (63c,d). The final *d/t* is probably the same type of paragodic element (Marcel den Dikken p.c.).

Google-search, simplex curse expressions ending with a paragodic obstruent can be found in Dutch (I for one do not have this use of paragodic *t* at the end of *godvert*):⁴⁵

- (64) a. *Godvert*, heb ik net dat klote eind naar Heilo gefietst, is de bespreking al klaar.
goddamned, have I just that fucking distance to Heilo cycled, is the meeting
already finished.
'Goddamned, I cycled all the way to Heilo and then it turns out that the meeting
has already finished!'
- b. Moeten ze *godvert* niet gaan staken, die hondekoppen!
must they goddamned not go strike, those dog-heads
'Then they shouldn't go on strike, those idiots!'
- c. Hij is *godvert* gewoon egoïstisch.
he is goddamned simply selfish
'Goddamned, he is simply being very selfish!'
- d. *Godvert*, ik ga ook altijd weg als het leuk begint te worden!
goddamned, I go also always away when it nice begins to become
'Goddamned, I always have to leave when the party begins!'

In view of the fact that the paragodic alveolar obstruent in *godver de ju* is pronounced as /d/ (i.e., a voiced alveolar obstruent), one may prefer to write *godverd* instead of *godvert* in (64); compare *iemand* 'someone' in footnote 41. In fact, the written form *godverd* can also be found on the internet. When *godverd* is used as a simple curse, the alveolar obstruent becomes voiceless as a result of the final obstruent devoicing rule, which turns voiced obstruents into voiceless obstruents at the end of a word. When *godverd* is part of a more complex curse like *godver de ju*, the alveolar obstruent, not being at the end of the complex curse, does not lose its [+voiced] character.

Let me point out here that this same contrast —that is, realization of the paragodic alveolar stop as [+voiced] or [-voiced]— can be found with other (i.e., non-curse) expressions. As Ter Laan (1953:142), for example, shows for Groningen Dutch, the paragodic alveolar obstruent is voiceless at the end of the predicatively used adjective in (65a); this is orthographically represented by the use of *t* (Compare *godvert*). In example (65b), where the adjective is used attributively and carries an adjectival inflection *-e* (schwa), the paragodic

⁴⁵ Van Sterkenburg (1997:160) also mentions the form *ajakkert*, which expresses disgust. It seems plausible that the *t* at the end is a paragodic alveolar stop.

alveolar obstruent is [+voiced], since it is not at the end of the adjectival expression.

- (65) a. 't Glas is *stokkent*. (Groningen Dutch)
 the glass is broken-*t*
 'The glass is broken.'
- b. Hai löpt mit *stokkende* klaaier.
 He walks with broken clothes
 'He walks around wearing broken clothes.'

A major goal of this article was to show that complex curse expressions in Dutch can be decomposed into smaller units (curse atoms) and that these units can be combined with each other through coordination (see (66a)). In the spirit of this decompositional approach to curse expressions, I showed in this section that the sequence *de* in *godver de ju* does not form a lexical unit, but should rather be analyzed as consisting of two "independent" augmentative sounds, one being a paragogic obstruent that gets attached to the curse atom *godver* and the other being a schwa that externalizes the functional head *Conj* (see (66b)).⁴⁶ Importantly, the two sounds form a unit at the level of syllable structure (i.e., [_σ de]); see (66c).

- (66) a. [_{ConjP} *godver* [_{Conj} Conj *ju*]]
 b. [_{ConjP} *godverd* [_{Conj} [_{Conj} *e*] *ju*]] (e = /ə/)
 c. [_σ god] [_σ ver] [_σ de] [_σ ju]

In line with my decompositional analysis of *de*, the following structural analysis can be assigned to an even more complex curse expressions like *godver de sakker de ju*. (67a) represents the coordination of roots, (67b) the augmentation with the paragogic obstruent *d* and the vowel schwa, (67c) the organization into syllabic units.

⁴⁶ In Den Dikken (2006:16-17), it is suggested that the syntactic structure of coordination and the syntactic structure of predication are parallel. Since predication structures can involve apparently meaningless material spelling out the RELATOR-head that mediates the predication, it will not be surprising to see (if predication and coordination are indeed syntactically parallel) that meaningless elements can show up in coordinate structures as well, as the lexicalisation of *Conj*. Although the schwa in "recurring" constructions seems to contribute some expressive/affective meaning, it is essentially meaningless in the sense that it does not have a grammatical or descriptive meaning. This lack of descriptive/grammatical meaning makes schwa very similar to copular elements lexicalising the RELATOR-head, including the spurious indefinite article *een* in binominal noun phrases like *die idioten van (een) doktoren* (those idiots of (a) doctors). As indicated by this same example, the spurious indefinite article can be left out; that is, the RELATOR-head can be phonetically empty. This, of course, is reminiscent of asyndetic coordination, where the *Conj*-head is also phonetically empty.

- (67) a. [_{ConjP} √godver [_{Conj} Conj [_{ConjP} √sakker [_{Conj} Conj [_{ConjP} √ju]]]]]
 b. [_{ConjP} √godver**d** [_{Conj} [_{Conj} **e**] [_{ConjP} √sakker**d** [_{Conj} [_{Conj} **e**] [_{ConjP} √ju]]]]]
 c. [_σ god] [_σ ver] [_σ de] [_σ sakker] [_σ de] [_σ ju]

8. Conclusion

Cursing allows human beings to express (externalize) an (internal) emotional state in symbolic (i.e., linguistic) form. As such, language is a “tool” that can be used for the expression of thought and emotion/affect. As noted by Jay (2009:153), “swearing is a uniquely human facility.” It is a facility that children acquire at a very early age (Jay 1992, 2009). Furthermore, as the variety of Dutch curse expressions given in this article has amply shown, cursing involves a creative aspect. The use of curse expressions is innovative and apparently free from control by external stimuli. A similar emotion-eliciting event may trigger the use of different but yet appropriate types of curse expressions on different occasions. In other words, an external stimulus or internal emotional state does not trigger a “fixed” linguistic curse expression. In this respect, the use of curse expressions by human beings is radically different from the use of expressive signals in animal communication systems.

A major outcome of my investigation of complex curse expressions in Dutch is that they have the internal structure of coordinations. It was further argued that the conjoined curse atoms are roots, and that the entire curse expression constitutes a complex root. The language of cursing provides a further illustration of an elementary, possibly the most elementary (cf. Hauser, Chomsky, Fitch 2002), property of human language: Recursion. "Recurring" (i.e., cursing + recursion), syntactically "implemented" by means of coordination, shows that a generative procedure is involved in the syntactic composition of curse expressions. On the basis of a set of discrete elements (the “curse atoms”) an infinite number of hierarchically structured curse expressions can be generated by the computational system (i.e., unbounded Merge). Although I have not been able to give a complete answer to the question how the expressive/affective meaning of a complex curse expression emerges from its parts, I have pointed out several formal strategies that are used to encode a heightened emotional state. From a descriptive point of view, these strategies can be characterized as being 'augmentative'; they make the structure 'bigger' and effectuate a concomitant intensifying meaning. Augmentation can, for example, be realized by syntactic means

(unbounded coordination yielding recursive structures) in combination with reduplicative (i.e., identical) or synonomous curse atoms. At the level of sound structure, augmentation in curse expressions was realized by means of the paragogic alveolar stop and augmentative schwa. A further illustration of augmentation at the sound level was the phenomenon of stress reinforcement, as it was found, for example, in substitution curses like *GODfried BOmans!*.

I hope to have shown in this article that cursing, being an act in which an emotional state is externalized through language, is rule based. A computational system (unbounded Merge) makes it possible to generate complex curse expressions (syntactic representations) that get externalized by means of different types of phonological rules. Linguistic expression of one's emotional state clearly has a cognitive, computational basis.

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