

Verb-particle constructions in translated Dutch: a pilot study

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State of the art

1.1 Universals of translation

Universals of translation

“features which typically occur in translated text rather than original utterances and which are not the result of interference from specific linguistic systems” (Baker 1993: 243).

- **Explicitation**

(see Øverås 1998, Olohan & Baker 2000, Englund Dimitrova 2005, Pym 2005)

- **Simplification**

(see Blum-Kulka & Levenston 1983, Ghadessy & Gao 2001, Paloposki 2001, Williams 2004)

- **Leveling Out/Convergence**

(see Redelinguys 2016)

- **Normalization**

(see Vanderauwera 1985, May 1997, Tirkkonen-Condit 2002, Jantunen 2005)

Source-language interference

- ▶ Whereas Baker does not consider **source-language interference** a translation universal, other scholars do, e.g. Toury's 1995 "law of interference"
- ▶ Linguistic features of translated texts vary based on the source language
 - ▶ Cappelle (2012): fewer manner-of-motion verbs in English texts translated from French than in texts translated from German
 - ▶ Cappelle and Loock (2017): verb-particle constructions (VPCs) occur more frequently in English translations from Germanic languages than in English translations from Romance languages

VPCs in Dutch

- ▶ In Dutch, VPCs are formed by combining a base verb such as *werken* ‘work’ with a preverbal element such as *uit* ‘out’.
 - ▶ This type of word formation is quite productive in Dutch:
 - ▶ *Uitwerken* ‘elaborate’, *doorwerken* ‘work through’, *inwerken* ‘train/introduce (someone) to the job’, *opwerken* ‘work your way up’, *afwerken* ‘finish’
 - ▶ These preverbal elements usually have a **spatial origin** and may **alter the valency** of the base verb.
 - ▶ *Uit* ‘out’, ‘off’, ‘from’
 - ▶ *Over* ‘over’, ‘above’, ‘across’
 - ▶ *Af* ‘off’, ‘out’, ‘down’, ‘away’
- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Ik werk.</i>
‘I work.’
(intransitive) | → | <i>Ik werk een plan uit.</i>
‘lit. I work a plan out’
(transitive) |
|--|---|--|
- ▶ While Dutch VPCs have been extensively studied (Blom 2005, Van Kemenade & Los 2003), their treatment in translation remains a relatively underexplored field.

VPCs in English

- ▶ English is closely related to Dutch, but it has a different range of structural possibilities
 - ▶ Three types of VPCs can be distinguished:
 - ▶ V + adverb (*look out*)
 - ▶ V + preposition (*look for*)
 - ▶ V + adverb + preposition (*look out for*) (cf. Denison 1998: 222)
- ▶ In contrast to Dutch, the particle follows the verb

VPCs in translated English

- ▶ Cappelle & Loock (2017): hypothesized that typological differences shine through in translation
 - VPCs with *up*, *down* and *out*
 - Corpora: BNC and TEC
 - Results: more frequent use of VPCs in English translated from Germanic languages than in English translated from Romance languages
- Can the same be observed in Dutch for VPCs with *op*, *af* and *uit* ?

VPCs in translation from French

- ▶ VPCs are common in **Germanic languages** but less frequent in **Romance languages** (Herslund 2005; Hijazo-Gascón & Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2013)
- ▶ Related to the distinction between **satellite-framed** (e.g., English) and **verb-framed languages** (e.g., Romance languages) (Talmy 1985/2000)
- ▶ In translation (English → French) the adverb or preposition in the source text is transposed into a verb in the target text (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995: 103-104)
 - The *manner aspect* of the English verb is often left untranslated:
 - *He **walked out** of the office.* → 'Il est **sorti** du bureau.'

Prefixed verbs in French

- ▶ Although French lacks VPCs, it does feature **prefixed verbs**
- ▶ Cappelle and Loock (2017) found that such prefixed verbs in French often prompted the use of VPCs in English translations
- ▶ A similar pattern may be observed in Dutch; for example, the French verb *revenir* 'come back' may be rendered as *terugkomen* in Dutch

2. Research question

Research questions

- ▶ Do Dutch subtitles translated from French feature fewer VPCs than Dutch subtitles translated from English, as we would expect based on Cappelle and Loock's (2017) findings?
- ▶ Which elements in the source language are more likely to result in VPCs in Dutch translations?

3. Method and data

OPUS Subtitle Corpus via Sketch Engine

Non-translated subtitles		
	English	Dutch
Aligned sentences	31 M	37,2 M
Date of collection	2011	2011

Translated subtitles	English > Dutch	<	French > Dutch	<
Aligned sentences	31 M	37.2 M	22,2 M	25.3 M
Date of collection	2011		2011	

- Subtitles closely resemble informal conversations (Levshina 2017 on English)
- A subtitle corpus is likely to contain a relatively high number of VPCs, which are a hallmark of informal and spoken English (Dempsey, McCarthy & McNamara 2007)

Corpus Query: VPCs with *op* / *af* / *uit*

Source language (English or French):

<s/>

Target Language Dutch:

```
[word="op.*" & tag="verb.*" |  
([tag="verb.*" ]){0,2} [word="op"] );Filter  
by aligned corpus:opus2_en;Shuffle:]
```

Manual check of separable forms:

✓ *Dat levert weinig op.* - *That yields little.*
x *Volgens mij valt ze op mannen in maillots.*
- *I think she likes men in tights.*

4. Results

General results - VPCs with *op*

Proportion of VPCs with <i>up</i> / <i>op</i> in non-translated subtitles		
	English VPCs with <i>up</i>	Dutch VPCs with <i>op</i>
Extrapolated number of VPCs	241,919	167,986
Aligned sentences	31,000,000	37,200,000
Percentage of extrapolated VPCs with <i>up/op</i> out of the total aligned sentences	0.78%	0.45%

$z = 193.06, p \text{ is } < .00001$

The extrapolated number of VPCs in the table is calculated as follows: $100/111 = 0.92 * 82885 \text{ (number of hits)} = 76041$

Dutch translated...	...from French	..from English
Extrapolated number of VPCs	85,988	153,889
Aligned sentences	22,200,000	31,000,000
Percentage of extrapolated VPCs with <i>up/op</i> out of the total aligned sentences	0.39%	0.50%

$z = 59.63, p \text{ is } < .00001$

Consistent with Cappelle & Loock (2017)

Crosslinguistic similarities between Dutch and English VPCs with *op* / *up* in translation

Source elements in the English subtitles corresponding to VPCs with *op* in the Dutch subtitles

Simplex verbs	48			<i>to hang</i> → <i>ophangen</i> <i>to solve</i> → <i>oplossen</i> <i>to sacrifice</i> → <i>opofferen</i>
English VPCs	47	VPCs with <i>up</i>	25	<i>to hang up</i> → <i>ophangen</i> <i>to blow up</i> → <i>opblazen</i>
		VPCs with other particles	22	<i>to put away</i> → <i>opruimen</i> <i>to write down</i> → <i>opschrijven</i>
Other source elements	5			Come on, brother. Hang in there → kom op, broer, geef <u>niet</u> op.
Total	100			

VPCs with *op* in Dutch translated from French

Source elements in the French subtitles corresponding to VPCs with *op* in the Dutch subtitles

Simplex verbs	63			<i>C'est le maximum que je puisse tirer en un jour. → Mijn limiet. Dat kan ik per dag opnemen.</i>
Other source elements	17			<i>Debout. → Sta op.</i>
French prefixed verbs	16	with <i>re-</i>	8	<i>Il finit par le retrouver et, bien sûr, il le fait retourner à l'école [...] → Hij spoorde hem op en haalde hem terug.</i>
		other prefixes	6	<i>L' Irak a déployé ses blindés. → Iraakse pantserbrigades rukken op.</i>
		with <i>sur-</i>	2	<i>Surveille-la → Let op haar.</i>
Nouns	3			<i>Des résultats sur l'écouteur? → Heeft het oordopje wat opgeleverd?</i>
Total	100			

General results - VPCs with *af*

Proportion of VPCs with <i>off</i> / <i>af</i> in non-translated subtitles		
	English VPCs with <i>off</i>	Dutch VPCs with <i>af</i>
Extrapolated number of VPCs	76,041	68,807
Aligned sentences	31,000,000	37,200,000
Percentage of extrapolated VPCs with up/op out of the total aligned sentences	0.25%	0.18%

$z = 53.89, p < .00001$

Dutch translated...	...from French	..from English
Extrapolated number of VPCs	44,335	156,818
Aligned sentences	22,200,000	31,000,000
Percentage of extrapolated VPCs with up/op out of the total aligned sentences	0.20%	0.51%

$z = 179.42, p is < .00001$

Crosslinguistic similarities between Dutch and English VPCs with *af* / *off* in translation

Source elements in the English subtitles corresponding to VPCs with *af* in the Dutch subtitles

Simplex verbs	58			<i>to wonder</i> → <i>afvragen</i> <i>to burn</i> → <i>afbranden</i>
English VPCs	29	VPCs with <i>off</i>	17	<i>to take off</i> → <i>afnemen</i> <i>to turn off</i> → <i>afzetten</i>
		VPCs with other particles	12	<i>to trace back</i> → <i>afstammen</i> <i>to depend on</i> → <i>afhangen</i>
Other source elements	13			<i>One day, <u>you</u>'ll have to tell me how you learned that</i> → <i>Ik vraag me af hoe je dat geleerd hebt. 'lit. I ask myself how you learned that.'</i>
Total	100			

VPCs with *af* in Dutch translated from French

Source elements in the French subtitles corresponding to VPCs with *af* in the Dutch subtitles

Simplex verbs	73			<i>C'est fini ! → Het is afgelopen!</i>
French prefixed verbs	14	with <i>de-/dé-</i>	6	<i>Ce qui suit se déroule entre 10h et 11h. → Het volgende speelt zich af tussen 10 en 11 uur.</i>
		with other prefixes	8	<i>Vous pouvez retirer vos écouteurs, si vous le souhaitez. → U mag uw koptelefoon afdoen als u dat wilt.</i>
Other source elements	9			<i>Oh, ça m'a l'air parfait. → Lekker afgerond, zie ik.</i>
Nouns	4			<i>Comment ça, "la fin"? → Hoe bedoel je, afgelopen?</i>
Total	100			

The transposition of a French noun into a Dutch VPC may be related to the nominal or static nature of French versus the verbal or dynamic nature of Dutch, and is frequently observed in French-to-Dutch translations (Linn & Molendijk, 2020: 215; Van Willigen-Senemus et al., 1996).

General results - VPCs with *uit*

Proportion of VPCs with <i>off / af</i> in non-translated subtitles		
	English VPCs with <i>out</i>	Dutch VPCs with <i>uit</i>
Extrapolated number of VPCs	229,427	96,012
Aligned sentences	31,000,000	37,200,000
Percentage of extrapolated VPCs with up/op out of the total aligned sentences	0.74%	0.26%

$z = 287.60, p \text{ is } < .00001$

Dutch translated...	...from French	..from English
Extrapolated number of VPCs	69,180	120,407
Aligned sentences	22,200,000	31,000,000
Percentage of extrapolated VPCs with up/op out of the total aligned sentences	0.32%	0.39%

$z = 46.35, p \text{ is } < .00001$

Partly consistent with Cappelle & Loock (2017)

Crosslinguistic similarities between Dutch and English VPCs with *uit* / *out* in translation

Source elements in the English subtitles corresponding to VPCs with *uit* in the Dutch subtitles

Simplex verbs	52			<i>You look great.</i> → <i>Je ziet er prachtig uit.</i>
English VPCs	32	VPCs with <i>out</i>	25	<i>to look out</i> → <i>uitkijken</i> <i>to stick out</i> → <i>uitsteken</i> <i>to find out</i> → <i>uitzoeken</i>
		VPCs with other particles	7	<i>to unload</i> → <i>uitladen</i> <i>to take off</i> → <i>uitdoen</i>
Other source elements	16			<i>I' m fine.</i> → <i>Maakt niet uit.</i>
Total	100			

VPCs with *uit* in Dutch translated from French

Source elements in the French subtitles corresponding to VPCs with *uit* in the Dutch subtitles

Simplex verbs	42			<i>Je m'en fiche.</i> → <i>Alsof mij dat uitmaakt.</i>
French prefixed verbs	28	with <i>de-/dé-</i>	9	<i>Déshabillez-vous.</i> → <i>Mannen, uitkleden</i> <i>...vous êtes prêt à les dédommager au comptant?</i> → <i>Ze uitkopen?</i>
		with other prefixes	21	<i>Enlève-la</i> → <i>Doe het uit.</i>
Other source elements	22			<i>C'est important?</i> → <i>Wat maakt dat uit?</i>
Nouns	8			<i>En cas de déconnexion [...]</i> → <i>Als de verbinding uitvalt [...]</i>
Total	100			

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a modern, layered effect. The text is centered in the white space between these shapes.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Discussion and conclusion

	Dutch translated from French	Dutch translated from English
VPCs with <i>op</i>	0,39%	0,50%
VPCs with <i>af</i>	0,20%	0,51%
VPCs with <i>uit</i>	0,32%	0,39%

- VPCs more frequent in Dutch subtitles translated from English than in Dutch subtitles translated from French
 - Dutch translations from English feature more VPCs than non-translated Dutch, reflecting the high frequency of VPCs in English
- **These findings support the hypothesis that crosslinguistic differences influence translation choices**
- Interestingly, Dutch translations from French featured slightly more VPCs with *af* and *uit* than non-translated Dutch, contrary to expectations

Discussion and conclusion

- A VPC in the source language does not automatically correspond to one in the target language
 - Only 46% of Dutch VPCs with *op* align with English VPCs, while the rest involve simplex verbs or other structures
 - Similarly, just 29% of *af* VPCs and 32% of *uit* VPCs are translations of English VPCs, indicating weak correspondence
 - Likewise, French prefixed verbs made up at most 28% of the source elements of the Dutch VPCs; the most common source element in French remained a simplex verb as well

→ **Wide range of translation options: no 1 to 1 correspondence**

→ **Source language influence should not be overlooked**

Venues for future research

- ▶ Analyze the impact of register
- ▶ Include more languages
- ▶ Larger samples
- ▶ Include different VPCs

Thank you!

Reference:

Verb-particle constructions in translated Dutch: A pilot study

<https://doi.org/10.61430/MZXA9993>

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