Complement-dependent semantics in Wangerooge Frisian *quídder* 'say, tell; ask'

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1   Introduction

In Wangerooge Frisian, the usual word for 'say, tell' is the complement-taking predicate (CTP) *quídder*, as in (1):

(1) *daa quaa dan   kóoepmon, dat   dait kan   hii ni' doo*
     then say.3SG SDEF.M merchant   COMP.FC that can.3SG he   not do.INF
     'Then the merchant says that he cannot do that.' (449.132)

This verb is frequently attested in the Wangerooge Frisian corpus, which contains many instances of reported speech in fairy tales and other narrative texts.[1] However, the meaning potential of *quídder* differed from that of the English utterance predicates *say* and *tell*, Dutch *zeggen*, and West Frisian *sizze*. In this contribution I discuss the use of *quídder* with question-reporting complement clauses, where it had the meaning 'ask' rather than 'say, tell'.

2   Complement clauses in Wangerooge Frisian

Three types of finite complement clauses are attested in the Wangerooge Frisian material: factual/neutral (*that*-type) complements either introduced by *dat* 'that', as in (1), or containing no complementizer, as in (2); non-factual/polar (*if*-type) complements with the complementizer *wut* 'if', as in (3); and *wh*-type complements ("headless relative clauses") with an interrogative pronoun or adverb,

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[1] Wangerooge Frisian is a Germanic language previously spoken on the island Wangerooge in northern Germany. It went extinct in the first half of the 20th century, but was extensively documented by the autodidact linguist H. G. Ehrentraut in the mid-19th century. The examples discussed in this paper are all from the edition of Ehrentraut's *Nachlass* by Versloot (1996). More information on the language can be found in Versloot (1996, 2001) or Gregersen (2023a). The work presented here was supported by the Carlsberg Foundation (grant no. CF21-0502).

such as *weer* 'where', *huu* 'how', and *wéeruum dat* 'why'. The example in (4) is with *weer*.

(2) *djuu   ooel djuu   quaa,   yuu mii   nain wiin.*
     SDEF.F old DEM.F say.3SG she like.3SG no   wine
     'The old woman says she doesn't like wine.' (449.153)

(3) *daa gung-t djuu   faun weg, un la'uk-et, wut   yuu slep-t*
     then go-3SG SDEF.F girl away and look-3SG COMP.NF she sleep-3SG
     'Then the girl goes over and checks if she is sleeping.' (449.157)

(4) *un nain minsk wust,   weer hii blíiviin   weer*
     and no   person know.PST.3SG where he remained be.PST.3SG
     '… and no one knew where he had gone [lit. "remained"].' (449.164)

In most ways these behave like complement clauses in other Germanic languages. Complements without a complementizer have verb-second (V2) word order, while other complement clauses usually have verb-late order.[2] The distinction between non-factual (*if*-type) and factual (*that*-type) complements is semantic: *wut* 'if' is used when there is "uncertainty about the complement proposition" (Nordström & Boye 2016: 133), whereas factual complements lack this uncertainty component.

The distribution of *wut*- and *dat*-complements is to a large extent complementary: *wut*-complements are found when the truth of the proposition of the complement is at issue, typically after predicates of asking or other attempts to get information, e.g. *fraig* 'ask' and *(too)lauk* 'look, check'. On the other hand, some CTPs always occur with *dat*-complements, such as commentative (factive) predicates like *mísselk* 'sad' and *frau* + REFL 'be happy', propositional-attitude predicates like *leiv* 'believe' and *mein* 'believe (mistakenly)', and predicates of fearing like *greoot* 'fear' and *ong* 'afraid'.[3] However, there are certain CTPs which may occur with different types of complement clauses. This is found after some utterance and knowledge predicates, e.g. *wítte* 'know', which may take both *dat*- and *wut*-complements, as in (5)-(6), as well as *wh*-complements like the *huu*-clause in (7):

(5) *daa we'it-ert yaa nich, dat   yuu deer wíziin hää.*
     then know-PL they not   COMP.FC she there been have.3SG
     'Then they don't know that she [Cinderella] has been there.' (449.196)

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[2] V2 order is found in some *dat*-clauses, however, as discussed in Gregersen (2023b).
[3] The terms for the different complement types are from Noonan (2007).

(6) *hii wet   nich, wut   hii up 't   haud gung-t,*
     he know.3SG not   COMP.NF he on WDEF.N head walk-3SG
     af up 'e   foot
     or on WDEF.PL foot[PL]
     'He doesn't know if he is walking on his head or his feet' (446.320)

(7) *yaa we'it-ert   gans nich, huu dait tóogung-t*
     they know-PL   really not   how that happen-3SG
     'They really don't know how that works' (449.216)

The examples in (5)-(6) are exactly parallel to the Spanish examples with *saber* 'know' given by Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008: 353). Just like Spanish *saber*, the meaning of Wangerooge Frisian *witte* stays the same no matter which type of complement clause it takes. As I will show in the following section, however, the situation was different with the utterance predicate *quídder*.

3   The meaning of *quídder*

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, *quídder* appears to have been a very frequent predicate in Wangerooge Frisian. It is attested at least 700 times in the Ehrentraut material (*c.* 100,000 words of running text). In fact, in an earlier investigation of *dat*-clauses (Gregersen 2023b), it was found to be the most frequent CTP occurring with *dat*-complements. It is also attested with complement clauses without a complementizer, as in (2) above, and it may introduce direct speech:

(8) *daa quaa   hii: "naa, maam, dait hää   nain nood*
     then say.3SG he no   mum   that have.3SG no   necessity
     'Then he says, "No, mum, that isn't necessary"' (446.124)

Hence, *quídder* is certainly among the central speech-reporting verbs in Wangerooge Frisian, if not the most prototypical one.[4]

   In the material *quídder* also occurs with *wut-* and *wh*-complement clauses. However, in these cases the meaning of the verb is not 'say, tell', but 'ask'. This is illustrated with *wut*-complements in (9)-(10):

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[4] Unsurprisingly for a very frequent verb, the conjugation of *quídder* is irregular (cf. Nübling 2001 on 'say' verbs in other Germanic languages). The present-tense paradigm in the Ehrentraut material is 1SG *quídder*, 2SG *quost/quååst*, 3SG *quaa* (occasionally spelt *qua*), PL *quíddert*. The past-tense paradigm is 1SG *queid*, 2SG *queitst*, 3SG *queid*, PL *que'iden*. The present-tense forms 2SG *quidderst*, 3SG *quidder* and *quith* are also mentioned in Ehrentraut's notes, but do not occur in the texts.

(9) *daa quaa dan   weert,   wut   yaa 'n   wä'ädenschüp*
     then say.3SG SDEF.M innkeeper COMP.NF they INDF   bet
     máckii   wul-t   uum siin huus un gø'øder
     make.INF will-PL about his house and possessions
     'Then the innkeeper asks if they should make a bet about his house and
     possessions' (449.132)

(10) *nu qua diu   mam jen   him, wut   hi him nich scheem-t*
     now say.3SG SDEF.M mum against him COMP.NF he him not shame-3SG
     'Now his mum asks him if he isn't ashamed of himself' (449.52)

Similarly, (11) shows *quídder* 'ask' taking a *wh*-complement with *weer* 'where',
and (12) one with *weruum dat* 'why':

(11) *daa ston-t   deer 'n lítk-en swerg an 'e   wii, dan   quaa*
     then stand-3SG there INDF little-M dwarf by WDEF road DEM.M say.3SG
     jeen   him, weer hii weg   wul
     against him where he away will.3SG
     'then a little dwarf is standing by the road, he asks him where he is going'
     (449.120)

(12) *oel könings-wüüf yu fang-t   an to húull-en un to spektáakel-n un*
     old king-wife   she start-3SG VP to cry-GER and to fuss-GER   and
     qua   jen   hiri mon,   weruum dat   hi dait dain hää
     say.3SG against her husband why   COMP.FC he that done have.3SG
     'The old queen begins to cry and make a fuss and asks her husband why
     he has done that' (449.23)

In English, utterance predicates may of course also combine with *if*- and *wh*-
complements. Unlike Wangerooge Frisian *quídder*, however, English *say* and
tell retain their usual meaning ('state verbally') when combined with one of
these complement types, as shown by the following paraphrases:

(13) a. *The innkeeper says if they should make a bet (or not).*
     b. *His mum tells him if he should be ashamed of himself (or not).*
     c. *He tells him where he is going.*
     d. *She says to her husband why he has done that.*

Other Germanic utterance verbs that behave like English *say* and *tell* in this re-
gard include Dutch *zeggen*, West Frisian *sizze*, German *sagen*, and Danish *sige*.
I have found no evidence of this pattern in Wangerooge Frisian – whenever

quídder takes a *wut-* or *wh*-complement, it means 'ask', not 'say, tell'. As far as I am aware, this makes this particular utterance predicate unique in the Germanic language family, though similar patterns may undoubtedly be found in other languages; cf. Ndjerareou et al. (2010: 27) on the Central Sudanic language Ngambay. It would be interesting to investigate this kind of complement-dependent semantics in other languages of the world.

Uncommon abbreviations

FC   factual
GER   gerund
NF   non-factual
SDEF   strong definite
VP   verbal particle
WDEF   weak definite

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