The quest for syntactic dependency. Sentential complementation in Sign Language of the Netherlands
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And so this linguistic quest begins. We are packed with the necessary equipment, cautious to avoid the pitfalls of linguistic description and prepared to fight the dragons of linguistic analyses. We know precisely what to search for and how to tackle this task. Pay attention now, for the first adventure is about to begin.

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was explained that considerable problems arise when carrying out most of the morphosyntactic tests in NGT to establish the syntactic relation between clauses in potential complement constructions. In many cases there is not enough information available concerning the property relevant for the test. This, of course, makes the test results with respect to syntactic dependency unreliable or hard to interpret. The syntactic status of the clauses in potential complement constructions in NGT will therefore be established by the distributional dependency test, a test that is applicable without being dependent on other properties.¹

3.2 Distributional dependency

As shown in chapter 1, there are different ways of syntactically linking the semantic complement to the semantic main predicate: the clauses can be in a relation of coordination or parataxis, or in a relation of subordination. Van Valin & LaPolla (1997:449) use the distributional dependency of the clauses in complex sentences to distinguish the two types of relationship. If the clauses in

¹ The results of the distributional dependency test and on topicalisation that were presented earlier in van Gin & Baker (2003) no longer hold. They are now more refined.
a complex sentence are able to occur on their own structurally as independent sentences, the syntactic relation between them is one of coordination. Whereas, if one of the clauses is not able to occur as an independent sentence, the relation between the two clauses is one of syntactic subordination.

Van Valin & LaPolla argue that if one of the clauses cannot occur on its own as an independent clause, there is a relation of syntactic dependency between the clauses. Within syntactically dependent clauses they further distinguish between subordination and cosubordination. A cosubordination relation displays characteristics of both coordination and subordination. Like coordination, the clauses in a cosubordination construction are in a sequence, but, unlike coordination, there is a syntactic dependency relationship between the clauses, as is the case in subordination, too. In contrast to subordination cosubordinated clauses are neither modifiers nor arguments of the ‘matrix’ clause. Still, a cosubordinated clause cannot stand as an independent sentence because it lacks the expression of a crucial and obligatory grammatical category, e.g. tense, illocutionary force, negation, etc. In subordination there is a purely structural dependency between the main and the subordinated clause, even though the latter is fully inflected for the obligatory grammatical categories. In the Papuan language Kewa all three constructions (subordination, cosubordination, and coordination) can be found (Franklin 1971 in van Valin & LaPolla 1997:450, ex. (8.16)).

(1) a. Nipú ípu-la pare ni paalá na-pia
   3SG come-3SG.PRES but 1SG afraid NEG-be.1SG.PRES
   ‘He is coming but I am not afraid.’

b. (Ní) Épo lá-ri épa-wa
   1SG whistle say-SIM.SP come-1SG.PAST
   ‘I whistled while I came.’ or ‘I came whistling.’

c. (Ní) Épo lá-lo-pulu irikai épa-lia
   1SG whistle say-1SG.PRES-CAUSAL dog come-3SG.FUT
   ‘Because I am whistling, the dog will come.’
The clauses in sentence (1a) are coordinated since both clauses can occur as independent sentences. The clauses in (1b) are in a cosubordination relation. Though the second clause can stand on its own, the first clause cannot because it lacks agreement, an obligatory grammatical category in Kewa sentences. Therefore, this first clause is syntactically dependent on the second clause for this grammatical marking. The clauses in sentence (1c) both contain all the obligatory grammatical categories for independent sentences, yet the first clause cannot stand on its own because it is a modifier. Hence, the relation between the clauses is one of subordination.

Since the topic of this study is to uncover whether semantic sentential arguments are sentential arguments in a syntactic respect, too, and since cosubordination is always about clauses that are not arguments (or modifiers) of the matrix predicate, either syntactically or semantically, I will not refer to this kind of clausal relationship in the remainder of this study and make a distinction solely between coordination and subordination.

The distributional dependency of the predicates can be used as a diagnostic for establishing the relationship in potential NGT complement sentences. The focus will be on the possibility of the semantic main clause occurring on its own. If the semantic main predicate cannot occur on its own, the semantic dependent clause, which is semantically an argument of the matrix predicate, is syntactically dependent on, or subordinated to the semantic matrix predicate.

In other words, the goal of the distributional dependency test is to uncover the argument structure of the semantic complement-taking predicate. This was done by asking the informants whether this predicate and a subject, or an Agent or Experiencer argument, can stand as an independent sentence in a neutral context (e.g. *Ellie wants*). If not, a Theme or Patient argument (and in case of the utterance predicates also a Recipient argument) was added to find out if the argument structure was saturated in this way (e.g. *Ellie wants whiskey, Ellie wants me to take a goal-kick*). Since for NGT nothing was known about argument structure in general, I used simple Theme and Patient arguments first before adding Theme and Patient clauses in order to detect the base argument structure.

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2 See chapter 2 section 2.3 for more detailed information on the interview method used in this study.
It should be noted that it is important to use the distributional dependency test in a neutral context where no prior discourse entities have been established. NGT is a language that allows subjects and objects to be null if it is clear from the context what these arguments are (see section 1.4.4 in chapter 1). However, in a neutral context all semantic arguments of the verb need to be lexically present.

3.3 Results
In this section I will describe and discuss the results of the distributional dependency test. Each complement-taking predicate is dealt with in a separate subsection.

3.3.1 Phrasal predicates: to begin and to be busy
The NGT verb for to begin is illustrated in (2).

(2) \[ \text{\textsc{BEGIN}} \] (NGT)

The verb in (2) can have an agreement marking that corresponds with the subject. In these cases the verb is made at the same location as the subject. This subject agreement marking is, however, not obligatory. In most cases the verb is made in neutral space.³

Without any context, the informants cannot use the NGT verb to begin in combination with a subject argument only, as in (3), because it is not clear what activity the subject begins with.

³ The neutral space agreement marking can be considered as the default agreement marking (see Neidle et al. 2000:34 for ASL). Sometimes the location of the signer can be considered as the default agreement marking, too, as is often the case with the subject agreement of the NGT verb to see (see section 3.3.3). Unfortunately, not much is known yet about the distribution of default and non-default agreement marking in signed languages (cf. Neidle et al. 2000:34ff. who link a non-definiteness effect to neutral object agreement marking in ASL).
Strangeley enough, the sentence in (3) does not become grammatical by simply adding an indefinite pronoun like *something*, as can be seen in (4). Nor is it possible to insert a demonstrative like English *this* or *that*. Although a point sign can be used as a demonstrative, it cannot be used in the NGT equivalent of the English sentence *Inge begins this*.

The sentence in (4) seems to remain ungrammatical even in a context in which a person A asks a person B what Inge is doing or going to do. Person B cannot answer then with the sentence in (4) if he does not know what Inge will begin doing exactly. So probably, the reason for the ungrammaticality of (4) is a pragmatic one. Unfortunately, I had no time to go deeper into this matter, but more research is required here.

The sentence in (3) with a subject and a verb only can, however, be grammatical when signed in a particular context. One of the informants gave the example of a classroom situation in which the students have to do exercises. The teacher can then sign the sentence in (3) to express that Inge has
to start. In this case, sentence (3) must contain a null object that refers to the event of doing the exercises.\footnote{Josep Quer rightly remarks that the case discussed here can be one of Null Complement Anaphora, which is an instance of the general phenomenon of ellipsis.}

Complex sentences as in (5) are considered by all informants as being part of the sign system NmG. The sentences in (5) are thus considered ungrammatical in NGT.

\begin{enumerate}
\item [(5)] a. \begin{enumerate}
\item [\*inge] \begin{enumerate}
\item [begin]
\item [book]
\item [read.book]
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

‘Inge begins to read a book.’

b. \begin{enumerate}
\item [\*inge] \begin{enumerate}
\item [begin]
\item [cook]
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

‘Inge begins to cook.’

There are two ways in which the meanings of the sentences in (5) can be expressed in NGT. First, the signers can use a sign, or a string of signs, that indicates that the act of reading or cooking is commencing. This is shown in sentence (6), which can be literally translated as ‘Inge opens a book’. Note that the sign to open a book looks like the sign for book but is made with a more prominent movement of the hands and the body (note the lifted shoulders).
Second, the time adverbial *now* can be inserted before or after the subject, as in (7). This time adverbial, however, makes the meaning of the sentence ambiguous as to whether the act of reading is starting or whether it has already been going on for some time.

Thus, the NGT verb *to begin* in combination with a subject cannot occur without any formerly established discourse. Surprisingly, the subject-verb combination cannot occur with a simple Patient/Theme or direct object argument or clause either. Unfortunately, I had no time to investigate this matter more thoroughly. To express that an event commences, either a sign that depicts the start of an act can be used, or the time adverbial *now*. This latter
option makes the sentence ambiguous as to whether an event starts or whether it is already being performed.

An almost similar story holds for other phasal verbs such as *to be busy* (8). This sign cannot have any agreement marking.

(8)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{BE.BUSY} \\
\end{array}
\]

(NGT)

As opposed to the NGT verb *to begin*, the verb *to be busy* can occur in an independent sentence with subject argument only, without any further discourse (9).

(9) a.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{WE} \\
\text{BE.BUSY} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘We are busy.’

b.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{INGE} \\
\text{BE.BUSY} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘Inge is busy.’

(NGT)

Yet, just as *to begin*, complex sentences with the NGT verb *to be busy*, as in (10), are considered ungrammatical in NGT although they can be part of the sign system NmG. Again, the time adverbial *now* can be used to make the sentence a grammatical NGT sentence (but with an ambiguous meaning), as in (11a-b).
From this it can be concluded that, although NGT has phasal predicates, it does not exploit these predicates in complex sentences, let alone as complement-taking predicates in sentential complementation. This is not at all exceptional. In her typological study on complement constructions, Cristofaro (1997:89) remarks that phasal predicates, among others, are expressed by special particles in certain languages. Unfortunately, she does not give any examples. Nor does Cristofaro make clear whether this necessarily implies the absence of phasal predicates in those languages.
3.3.2 Desiderative or volitional predicates: to want

In NGT two forms for the verb to want can be found. In (12a) is the neutral verb to want. The verb in (12b) expresses ‘strongly want’ or ‘really want’. Until now no differences in the distribution of these two verbs as semantically complement-taking predicates could be found. Both verbs show no agreement.

(12) a. 
\[\text{(NEUTRAL) WANT}\]

b. 
\[\text{(REALLY) WANT}\]

(NGT)

The sentences in (13) are grammatical if they are expressed in a context in which the Patient argument has already been established. For example, if someone asks Who wants coffee? it is possible to answer that question in NGT with one of the sentences in (13). It can be assumed that the sentences in (13) have a pro in object position in these contexts, because if no such context is established, the sentences in (13) are ungrammatical as independent sentences.

(13) a. 
\[\text{*MARIJKE WANT}\]

b. 
\[\text{*MARIJKE (REALLY) WANT}\]

‘Marijke wants.’

(NGT)

In neutral contexts in which a null object cannot be inferred from the former discourse, subject-verb sentences with to want as in (13) become grammatical if an overt Patient or direct object is added. This is shown in (14).
From the examples in (13) and (14) it becomes clear that in a neutral context the direct object of NGT to want needs to be overtly present. This indicates that in complex NGT sentences with to want, as in (15), where the direct object has the form of a clause, this latter clause is syntactically subordinated to to want. The second clauses in (15) can occur on their own as independent sentences. Nonetheless, this fact does not alter the status of these clauses as subordinated clauses.
c.

DOCTOR WANT WOMAN POINTright signerGO.
HOMEneutral

'The doctor wants the woman to go home.'

(NGT)

3.3.3 Direct perception predicates: to see

The NGT verb *to see* shows agreement for two arguments. The starting location of this verb marks the Agent or subject argument, the end location the Patient argument. The fact that this verb has two agreement slots already indicates that this verb has two arguments. The verb does not have to agree with the actual locations of the arguments. It can have neutral agreement markings that are the location of the signer for subject agreement and neutral space for object agreement (cf. fn.3). The locations of the signer and neutral space are the neutral markings for all agreement verbs with two agreement slots. In (16a-c) the neutral conjugation and two other possible conjugations are shown, respectively.

(16) a.  

b.  

c.

signerSEEneutral space  signerSEEleft  rightSEEleft

(NGT)

The verb *see* cannot form an independent sentence with the subject argument only, unless a direct object is established in the former discourse. In

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3 Sometimes, the palm in the sign *to see* is not orientated to the location of the subject but to the location of the object. Still, the sign moves from the location of the subject to the location of the object. This movement from the subject to the object location makes this verb a so-called *to*-type verb, as opposed to *from*-type verbs that move from the location of their object to the location of their subject (Padden 1988, Meir 1998).
that case, the object argument slot in the sentence in (17) is filled with a null argument.

(17) *INGE
signSEEneutral space

‘Inge sees.’

(NGT)

However, in a neutral setting the direct object argument needs to be expressed lexically. As well as objects, animate referents (18a-b), and events (18c), the direct object of the NGT verb to see can also be an indefinite pronoun (18d), unlike the verb to begin in (4).

(18) a.

INGE POINTright rightSEEleft MARIJKE POINTleft

‘Inge sees Marijke.’

b.

INGE signSEEfront CAT POINTfront

‘Inge sees the cat.’

c.

YESTERDAY POINTsigner ACCIDENT signSEEneutral space

‘Yesterday I saw an accident.’
Complex sentences with this verb are considered being part of NGT. Some examples are in (19).

(19) a. 'Inge sees that Marijke goes home.'

b. 'The two of us see the man steal a book.'

c. 'Inge sees him/her dancing.'
Since the direct object of the NGT verb *to see* needs to be lexically present in a neutral context, it must be concluded that if this object has the structure of a clause as in (19) this clause is syntactically subordinated to the verb *to see*. As in (15) the potential complement clauses in (19) can occur on their own as independent sentences.

Strikingly, the NGT verb *to see* shows object agreement for the subject of the second clause in many cases. This might indicate that a null object argument is present in the matrix clause that corresponds to the subject of the second clause. If this were the case, the complex sentences in (19) should then be analysed as parataxis or coordination, since the first and second clause are able to stand on their own as independent sentences. This is illustrated for the complex sentence (19b) in (20), for convenience only the glosses are given.

(20) THE.TWO.OF.US signeSEEfront pro(=man) [ MAN POINTfront BOOK STEAL ]

'The two of us see (him); the man steals a book.'

(NGT)

However, if a null object argument were present, the sentence in (21) with two coordinated clauses, and the position of the empty argument filled with a lexical object should be grammatical, too, which is not the case in NGT.

(21)

*THE.TWO.OF.US signeSEEfront POINTfront [ MAN POINTfront

BOOK STEAL ]

'The two of us see him; the man steals a book.'

(NGT)
Since the structure in (21) is ungrammatical as *one* sentence in NGT, it must be concluded that no empty argument is present in the complex sentences in (19) and that the second clauses in (19) are subordinated clauses.

That *to see* can show object agreement for the subject of the second clause might indicate abstract case that is assigned by the matrix verb to this latter argument, as happens with case in so-called *exceptional case-marking (ECM)* constructions, as in (22).

(22) a. *Ik zie [hem dansen].*
   ‘I see him dancing.’
   b. *Daniëla believes [him to be a liar].*

The Dutch and English clauses between brackets in (22) are infinitival clauses subordinated to *to see* and *to believe*, respectively. According to the Case Filter every overt noun phrase must be assigned abstract case (Rouveret & Vergnaud 1980). Since the infinitival embedded predicates cannot assign case to their subjects, the embedded subjects receive (accusative) case from the matrix verbs, otherwise they would violate the Case Filter.

The object agreement of the NGT verb *to see* that corresponds to the subject of its embedded clause might hint that a similar process of (abstract) exceptional case-marking is working in NGT, too, although case is not visible in NGT.6 However, this would imply that the embedded verbs in NGT potential complement clauses of *to see* are infinitival verbs. Yet these verbs can show agreement even for their subjects, as in (19a). Furthermore, the second clauses in (19) can occur on their own as independent single sentences. If the verbs were infinitival this would not be possible. Therefore, what it is exactly that the object agreement of *to see* indicates is not clear at the moment but it cannot point to an (abstract) ECM construction. Nevertheless, the object agreement of *to see* does confirm morphologically that there is a tighter

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6 It is possible in NGT to use a special handshape in possessive constructions (a closed fist or a flat hand with extended fingers, palm facing towards the location of the possessor) which might be regarded as genitive case. This special handshape or overt expression of genitive case is, however, not obligatory in possessive constructions. See also Neidle et al. (2000:32) who mention the use of a special handshape in possessive construction in ASL as well.
relationship between the two clauses in the complex constructions in (19) than a parataxis relationship.

3.3.4 Commentative predicates: to like

The NGT sign for to like is depicted in (22). It is similar to the NGT adjective nice. This predicate can show agreement for its Theme argument by making the sign at the location of this argument as in (23) but this is not obligatory.

(22)

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{LIKE} \\
\end{array} \]

(NGT)

(23)

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{MARIJKE} & \text{POINT}_{\text{right}} & \text{CHAIR} & \text{POINT}_{\text{left}} & \text{LIKE}_{\text{left}}
\end{array} \]

‘Marijke likes the chair.’

(NGT)

If the Patient argument the chair in (23) has already been established in the discourse (e.g., Look at that chair), it is possible to express one of the sentences in (24) without mentioning this argument again (sentence (24a) is with overt agreement, sentence (24b) without). In this case a pro in object position refers to the chair. But without any context, the sentences in (24) are ungrammatical.
(24) a.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{INDEX\_signer} \\
\text{POINTER\_right} \\
\text{LIKE\_neutral\_space}
\end{array}
\]

\text{Marijke likes (it).}

(NGT)

For the sentences in (24) to become grammatical in a neutral context, the Patient argument must be lexically present, as in (23) or the sentences in (25).

(25) a.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{INDEX\_signer} \\
\text{POINTER\_right} \\
\text{LIKE\_neutral\_space}
\end{array}
\]

\text{I like him/her.}

b.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{INGE} \\
\text{CAT} \\
\text{POINTER\_left} \\
\text{LIKE\_neutral\_space}
\end{array}
\]

\text{Inge likes the cat.}

(NGT)

From this it must be concluded that the second clauses in the complex sentences in (26), although they can stand on their own as independent sentences, are syntactically subordinated to the matrix verb to like.
(26) a. INGE POINT_right LIKE_neu.space MAN left VISIT_right

'Inge likes (the fact) that the man visits her.'

b. POINT_right LIKE_neu.space AMERICA right FLY_left_backwards

'He/she likes to fly to America.'

(NGT)

3.3.5 Pretence predicates: to pretend

There are three different predicates in NGT that mean to pretend. The predicate in (27a) is the most commonly used, although the other two can be used in the same contexts. The sign in (27c) is accompanied by an oral component that consists of pursed lips and a constant expiration.

(27) a. b. c.

PRETEND PRETEND PRETEND

(NGT)

The sentences in (28) with only a subject argument and one of the predicates to pretend are ungrammatical as sentences on their own without any context. One informant can make the sentences in (28) grammatical by adding an indefinite pronoun (29), but the other two informants could not.
(28) a. *INGE PRETEND

b. *INGE PRETEND
c. *INGE PRETEND

'Inge pretends.'

(NGT)

(29)

?INGE POINT\text{right} SOMETHING PRETEND

'Inge pretends to do something.'

(NGT)

For all informants it holds that the sentences in (28) become grammatical if another clause is added, as in the complex sentences in (30). Irrespective of the fact whether an indefinite pronoun is possible or not, the judgements of the sentences in (28) reveal that the second clauses in (30) are subordinated clauses. Here too, the subordinated clauses are able to stand on their own as independent sentences.
(30) a.

'\[\text{POINT}_{\text{signer}} \quad \text{PRETEND} \quad \text{TO LOOK AROUND INNOCENTLY}\]

'I pretend to be as innocent as a babe unborn.'

b.

'\[\text{INGE} \quad \text{PRETEND} \quad \text{MARIJKE} \quad \text{HOUSE}\]

'Inge pretends that Marijke is going home.'

c.

'\[\text{POINT}_{\text{right}} \quad \text{PRETEND} \quad \text{POINT}_{\text{right}} \quad \text{CLOWN}\]

'He/she pretends to be a clown.'

d.

'\[\text{POINT}_{\text{signer}} \quad \text{PRETEND} \quad \text{THE TWO OF US} \quad \text{ILL}\]

'I pretend that the two of us are ill.'
3.3.6 (Acquisition of) knowledge predicates: *to know (something)*

The NGT verb *to know* is made at the temple and accompanied by the mouthing of the spoken word *weten* that is Dutch for *to know (something)*. This spoken word is necessary to distinguish this sign from the NGT predicate for *to believe* that looks similar, see (35a). The verb cannot show agreement.

\[(31)\]

\[\text{KNOW} \]

(NGT)

The Patient argument of this verb needs to be expressed overtly if it is not established in former discourse. This can be seen by comparing (32) with (33); the sentence without a Patient argument is considered ungrammatical in a neutral context.

\[(32)\]

\[\text{*MARĲKE KNOW} \]

*Marijke knows.*

(NGT)
This means that the second clauses in the complex sentences in (34) are syntactically subordinated clauses of the NGT complement-taking predicate *to know*, although they can occur as independent sentences.

(34) a.

\[
\text{POINT}_{\text{signer}} \quad \text{KNOW} \quad \text{POINT}_{\text{addressee}} \quad \text{addressee COME}_{\text{signer}}
\]

'I know that you are coming to (see) me.'

b.

\[
\text{INGE} \quad \text{POINT}_{\text{right}} \quad \text{KNOW} \quad \text{COMPUTER}
\]

\[
\text{POINT}_{\text{left}} \quad \text{BROKEN}
\]

'Inge knows that the computer is broken.'
3.3.7 Propositional attitude predicates: *to believe*

NGT has four different verbs that mean *to believe.* The sign in (35a) is the most common sign for *to believe* in NGT. It looks similar to the NGT verb *to know* in (31) but can be discriminated from this latter verb, because it is accompanied by the mouthing of the spoken word *geloof* which is Dutch for *belief.* The sign in (35b) is less commonly used but means the same as the sign in (35a). The predicate in (35c) is only used when a great deal of emotion from the viewpoint of the signer is involved. If the thing that is believed is not true, the sign in (35d) can be used, although the common sign in (35a) can be used in this context as well. The sign in (35d) is accompanied by an oral component that consists of the tongue sticking out of the mouth slightly and a constant expiration. None of the four signs show agreement.

Again, without any context it is not enough to utter a subject argument and one of the verbs in (35), as can be seen in (36). A Patient argument needs to be expressed overtly, as in (37).

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7 Excluded from this discussion is the verb *to believe* in the sense of 'to have faith’ for which NGT uses yet another sign (i).

(i)
(36) a. 
\[ \text{*INGE BELIEVE} \]
\['\text{Inge believes.'} \]

b. 
\[ \text{*INGE BELIEVE} \]
\['\text{Inge believes everything.'} \]

(NGT)

c. 
\[ \text{*INGE BELIEVE} \]
\['\text{Inge believes Marijke.'} \]

(NGT)
As a result, clauses that function as the direct object of the verbs *to believe* in (35) are syntactically subordinated to these verbs (38). These subordinated clauses can occur as independent sentences.⁸

(38) a.  

\begin{figure}[h]  
\centering  
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}  
\caption{Inge believes that Marijke is going home.}  
\end{figure}

b.  

\begin{figure}[h]  
\centering  
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}  
\caption{The woman believes that she is pregnant.}  
\end{figure}

c.  

\begin{figure}[h]  
\centering  
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}  
\caption{He/she believes that the earth is flat.}  
\end{figure}

⁸ I take for granted that the Experienceer is realised as a subject and the embedded clause as object complement clause. However, since no case marking is detected, it might well be the case that the grammatical functions are the opposite, which is not unusual with psych predicates. I leave this for future research (thanks to Josep Quer who brought this matter to my attention).
3.3.8 Doubt predicates: to doubt
There are two signs in NGT that mean to doubt or to be unsure. The only difference seems to be that the sign in (39b) is considered as a slightly informal variant of the first. This latter sign can also mean maybe.

(39) a. 

\[\hat{\text{DOUBT}}\]

b. 

\[\hat{\text{DOUBT/MAYBE}}\]  

(NGT)

The sentences in (40) are only grammatical if they are expressed in an appropriate context, e.g. a situation in which Inge has to choose between two chairs or between two solutions to a problem. In these contexts the sentences in (40) contain a null direct object that refers to this context. Without overt or null object, thus in a neutral context, the sentences are ungrammatical as independent sentences.

(40) a. 

\[\hat{\text{DOUBT}}\]

b. 

\[\hat{\text{DOUBT}}\]

\[\text{*INGE}\]

\[\text{Inge doubts.}\]  

(NGT)

The sentences in (40) become grammatical in a neutral context if an overt direct object is added. The direct object can be a simple noun, as in (41), but it
seems that only nouns referring to animate entities or proper names are possible. For one informant it is necessary to add the auxiliary verb OP to show who has doubts about who (41b). The auxiliary verb OP has no lexical meaning but clarifies only who is the subject of an act (localised at the starting location of the sign) and who is the object (localised at the final location of the sign; see chapter 1 section 1.4).

\[(41) \ a.\]

\[\text{INGE} \quad \text{DOUBT} \quad \text{MARIJKE} \quad \text{PERSONleft}\]

'Inge has doubts about Marijke.'

\[b.\]

\[\text{INGE} \quad \text{POINTright} \quad \text{DOUBT} \quad \text{rightOPleft}\]

\[\text{MARIJKE} \quad \text{POINTleft}\]

'Inge has doubts about Marijke.'

(NGT)

The direct object can be a clause, too, as in (42). Because of the ungrammaticality of the sentences in (40), the second clauses in (42) are syntactically subordinated. They can stand on their own as independent sentences.

\[9\text{In (41a) the object Marijke is localised by the sign person, which is not an uncommon way in NGT to localise referents.}\]
(42) a.

inge 

Doubt

Marijke

LeftCome

‘Inge is not sure whether Marijke will come to her.’

b.

Point

Doubt

Tomorrow

Point

Signer GO.

Away

‘I am not sure if I will leave tomorrow.’

3.3.9 Utterance predicates: to ask and to tell

The NGT verb for to ask can show agreement for a subject and for a Recipient argument. The start location of the verb reflects the subject agreement and the end location the Recipient agreement (43). The citation form of the verb is in (43a). In (43b-c) are two possible conjugations as an illustration. The NGT predicate to attract attention can also be used (44). The context makes clear then that the meaning is ‘to ask’ and the question itself is expressed as direct speech. This latter predicate shows the same agreement possibilities as to ask for the same arguments.

(43) a.

b.

c.

Signer Ask Neutral Space

Signer Ask Left

Left Ask Right

(NGT)
In a neutral context, it is not possible in NGT to express the subject and the verb to ask only, as in (45). However, it is possible to add an object argument for the sentence in (45) to become grammatical. This object argument can have the semantic role of Recipient, as in (46), or it can be the semantic Theme (47).

(44) a. 

In a neutral context, it is not possible in NGT to express the subject and the verb to ask only, as in (45). However, it is possible to add an object argument for the sentence in (45) to become grammatical. This object argument can have the semantic role of Recipient, as in (46), or it can be the semantic Theme (47).

(45) 

'Inge asks.'

(NGT)

(46) a. 

'Inge asks Marijke.'

(NGT)

b. 

'The student asks the teacher.'

(NGT)
Note that if only the subject argument and the Theme argument are expressed (47), the Recipient needs to be inferred from the context and from the overt object agreement (thus the object agreement always refers to the Recipient, even if this argument is not overtly expressed). Otherwise, the sentence is ungrammatical. Note also that in certain contexts the neutral object agreement can refer to a Recipient or a group of Recipients localised at that neutral location in former discourse. Moreover, the neutral object agreement can refer to people in general if the question is not directed to a particular person or group of people, but this must be clear from the context. In sentence (48) both the Recipient and the Theme are expressed.

With respect to the optional absence of the Theme argument, the NGT verb *to ask* shows a completely different pattern from what could be seen with the complement-taking predicates previously discussed. With the predicates *to*
want, to see, to like, to pretend, to know, to believe, and to doubt the Theme or Patient argument (which is always the syntactic direct object argument) has to be lexically present in order for simple sentences with these predicates to be grammatical in a neutral context. But with the verb to ask the Theme argument does not need to be present, not even in a neutral context.

This outcome has a direct bearing on the status of simple Theme arguments of to ask. Is this Theme argument of NGT to ask an adjunct, in which case to ask is a two-place predicate, or is the Theme an argument and does the NGT lexicon contain two predicates to ask, or one predicate with two different argument frames: a transitive verb or frame to ask with a subject and Recipient argument only, and a ditransitive verb or frame to ask with a Theme as its third argument? The status of the simple Theme as argument or adjunct is important because it will ultimately determine the status of the second clause in complex sentences with to ask, as in (49) and (50). If to ask is always a two-place predicate, the simple Theme argument is actually an adjunct. On the basis of the distributional dependency test, the second clause in a complex sentence with to ask is not subordinated to to ask either, because this verb can occur with a subject and Recipient argument only as an independent sentence, and so does the second clause. The two-place predicate is then better glossed as to inquire.

However, if the predicate is ambiguous between a two-place and a three-place predicate, the simple Theme argument is an argument of the three-place predicate and the second clause in complex sentences with to ask is subordinated to this verb. Since this is not clear yet, both possibilities are given in the translations, i.e. with and without a referential pronoun that occupies the argument position of to ask.
1st ADVENTURE: DISTRIBUTIONAL DEPENDENCY

(49) a.

Marijke asks the student whether Inge teases him, or ‘Marijke asks the student, *this* does Inge tease him?’

b.

Someone asks me: ‘Is Ingeborg coming?’ or ‘Someone asks me *this*: “Is Ingeborg coming?”’

(NGT)

(50) a.\(^{10}\)

Inge asks me if we are going home, or ‘Inge asks me *this*: whether we are going home?’

\(^{10}\) Remember that the sentences in (50) without a lexical indirect object are only possible if this argument has been established in former discourse.
Like the verb for *to ask* the verb for *to tell* in NGT shows agreement for its subject and Recipient argument. The citation form of this verb is in (51a), and two possible conjugations are in (51b-c).

(51) a. 

b. 

c. 

Here, too, the NGT predicate *to attract attention* (44) can be used meaning *to tell*, with what is told as a direct speech argument.\(^\text{12}\)

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\(^{11}\) Two of the three informants can use all locations for the two agreement slots of *to tell*, but for one informant the location of the signers needs to be in the subject or in the Recipient argument slot.

\(^{12}\) Only recently, the international interest organisation Deaf Power started to stimulate the use of the sign in (i) meaning 'to sign' among signers all over the world, instead of the predicates that the different signed languages use for *to tell*. The reason for this is that these latter predicates are considered by Deaf Power to make iconic use of the mouth as a place of articulation. One of my informants can conjugate the *to* type verb in (i) for all locations, and according to him other signers who do not yet conjugate this sign, will start doing so in the near future.

(i)
The NGT verb *to tell* behaves in a similar way as the verb *to ask*. It is grammatical to express the verb and its subject argument only if the Recipient argument can be inferred from the context (52). Otherwise, the Recipient has to be expressed overtly and the sentence is grammatical as an independent sentence (53). The Theme argument can be expressed as well, as in (54).

(52)  
\[\text{*INGE} \quad \text{signer TELL-neutral space} \]
\[\text{Inge tells.} \]

(NGT)

(53)  
\[\text{INGE POINT left} \quad \text{left TELL right} \quad \text{MARIJKE POINT right} \]
\[\text{Inge tells Marijke.} \]

(NGT)

articulation. The sign can show agreement for its subject by making it at the location of the subject. Sequentially with every movement of the sign the signer mouths /fuh/.  

(ii)  
\[\text{TELL OF A.} \quad \text{HEARING PERSON} \]
For *to tell* holds too that, if no overt Recipient is expressed, the context can make clear that this argument is implicitly present although this need not be a particular person or group of people. The sentence then is grammatical meaning 'to tell to someone in general' as in *Inge told a joke* in English in which it is clear that in a common situation other people are present to whom Inge told a joke (55).
Theme is an argument of the three-place variant of *to tell* and the Theme clause is an argument, too, and hence a syntactically subordinated clause of *to tell*.

(56) a.

```
INGE   POINT_left   left_TELL signer   POINT signer

MARIJKE   HOUSE   signer_GO_TO neutral space
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‘Inge tells me that Marijke is going home.’ or ‘Inge tells me *this*: that Marijke is going home.’

b.

```
INGE   right_ATTRACT signer   ATTENTION_left

POINT_right   HOUSE   signer_GO_TO neutral space
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‘Inge tells him/her that she, is going home.’ or ‘Inge, tells him/her *this*: that she, is going home.’
c.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{MAN} & \text{left TELL \_ signer} & \text{POINT \_ signer} & \text{SON}
\end{array}
\]  

role shift

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{signer VISIT \_ right} & \text{GRANDMOTHER} & \text{POINT \_ right}
\end{array}
\]  

role shift

"The man told me: “My son visits grandmother.”’ or “The man told me this: “My son visits grandmother.”’

\[\text{(NGT)}\]

3.4 Conclusion and discussion

With the aid of the distributional dependency test it could be shown that the complement-taking predicates to want, to see, to like, to pretend, to know, to believe, and to doubt in NGT require two arguments, namely a subject and an object, that cannot be left unmentioned in a context in which these arguments have not yet been established. The object argument can have the form of a clause with its own predicate-argument frame. Since the object argument cannot be null in a neutral context, this implies that the object clause is syntactically subordinated to these complement-taking predicates.

For the phasal predicates to begin and to be busy it turned out that NGT does not use these predicates at all as complement-taking predicates. To express that an activity or event has started or is going on for some time, the time adverbial now is used or a sign or a string of signs that describe this matter of fact. Since these latter constructions represent no instance of clause linkage, it is of no use to investigate them further. I therefore decided to not consider these constructions in the remainder of this study.

With respect to the NGT verbs to ask and to tell, the distributional dependency test could not unambiguously clarify the exact argument structure of these two predicates. It could be the case that NGT to ask and to tell are two-
place predicates with a subject and Recipient in their argument frames (to ask is then better glossed as to inquire). If a Theme occurs as well, then the Theme clause has to be analysed as being coordinated to, or in a parataxis relation with the predicates to ask and to tell, because both the clause with to ask or to tell and the Theme clause can stand on their own as independent sentences.

However, it could also be the case that the NGT predicates to ask and to tell are ambiguous between two-place and three-place predicates. If a Theme is present, then it is an argument of the ditransitive verb to ask or to tell. And although the Theme clause can occur as an independent sentence, the clause with ditransitive to ask or to tell cannot, because it is lacking a third argument. The conclusion in this latter case must be that the Theme clause is syntactically subordinated to to ask and to tell.

Consequently, although the distributional dependency test can give evidence for the subordinated status of clauses, it is not decisive in every case. Furthermore, this test says nothing about the potential complement clauses being argument clauses. This is of special importance in the light of the observation that in some languages the argument structure of (certain) complement-taking predicates can be saturated by a referential pronoun while the potential complement clause is in an adjunct position (Bennis 1986:103ff.). Some examples from Dutch are in (57).

(57) a. Ellie, betreurt het, dat zij, dat liedje voor mij gezongen heeft.
   "Ellie, regrets it, that she, sang that song for me."

b. *Daniëla gelooft het, dat Ellie dat liedje voor mij gezongen heeft.
   "Daniëla believes it, that Ellie sang that song for me."

c. *Ellie, zegt het tegen Daniëla, dat zij, dat liedje voor mij gezongen heeft.
   "Ellie, says it to Daniëla, that she, sang that song for me."

From (57) it already becomes clear that a referential pronoun cannot saturate the argument structure of every class of complement-taking predicate. Still, since NGT is a pro-drop language, it might be hypothesised that the
Theme clauses with certain classes of complement-taking predicates in NGT are in adjunct position while the object argument position of these complement-taking predicates is filled with a null referential pronoun _pro_. The Theme clauses are not complement clauses then, but adjunct clauses (cf. Barbiers to appear:18 who proposes such a structure for factive complement clauses in Dutch, English, and German). I will come back to this in chapter 6, section 6.4. The Theme clauses cannot be cosubordinated clauses because cosubordinated clauses cannot stand as independent sentences.

In the following three chapters, I hope to find out what the syntactic status of the potential complement clauses is by performing four more tests. Moreover, I hope that the results of the next chapters can confirm the results of this chapter, and clarify the argument structure of the two utterance predicates.