

THE DICTIONARY REPRESENTATION OF THE WESTERLAUWERS FRISIAN MODAL PARTICLE DOCH¹

Anne Dykstra

1. Introduction

The main object of my paper is to establish how the meaning and the function of the Frisian modal particle (MP) *doch* (and its variants *dochs*, *dôch* and *dôchs*) may best be represented in a dictionary entry. MPs are notoriously hard to deal with in a dictionary, as they do not seem to have a meaning of their own. In many dictionaries, including the *Wurdboek fan de Fryske Taal / Woordenboek der Friese Taal (WFT)*, MPs are described, rather than defined, in fairly unspecific terms of manner and context. Much is left to the dictionary users to figure out for themselves. Consider the following 'definitions' of the adverb *doch* in the WFT²: **5.** (*ter versterking van een gebod, aansporing, wens, enz.*) [to intensify a command, an encouragement, a wish, etc.] and **6.** (*in uitroepen van verontwaardiging, verbazing, spijt, schrik, enz.*) [in exclamations of indignation, surprise, regret, fright, etc.].³

In this paper I will first briefly discuss the semantic and functional characteristics of MPs in general. Then I will concentrate on the meaning and function of the Frisian MP *doch*. Finally, I will suggest a sample dictionary entry, in which my findings as to the meaning and function of *doch* will be incorporated.

2. Meaning and function of Modal Particles in general

Foolen (1993:36-38) argues that MPs primarily have to do with the illocutionary function of an expression. An expression has two aspects: a (propositional) content and a(n illocutionary) function. MPs operate primarily on the functional, illocutionary level. They highlight a certain aspect from the context that is relevant to the illocutionary function of the expression, usually a certain attitude of [70] the speaker or the hearer. An expression, Foolen continues, always represents a speech act. At the same time, however, it may represent a mental act. Apart from the illocutionary function, MPs may also refer to the mental aspect.

Foolen illustrates the above with some Dutch examples, of which I will give one here. Speaker A asks B: *Ga je mee?* [are you coming?] and B answers: *Ik heb toch geen TIJD!* [I have *toch* no TIME!]. The function of B's answer is that of a rejection of a suggestion here. That would also have been its function without *toch*. By using *toch*, however, B implies that A knows, or should have known, that it is impossible for B to come, because he has no time, so why ask him to come along in the first place!

The illocutionary function of an expression is the 'point of attachment' for the functional contribution of the MPs. MPs do not deal with the propositional content as such, but with the propositional content as part of a mental or social act (Foolen (1993:172)).⁴ Foolen's approach implies that MPs should be dealt with in relation to the sentence type they occur in, as sentence mood is *the* formal aspect to express the function of an utterance (Foolen (1993:173)). The assertion that there is a relation between

meaning and sentence mood would seem to be supported by the fact that all *WFT* citations in 5. and 6. but two, are either imperatives or *wh*-exclamations.

Meaning and function of MPs have also been investigated in relation to sentence mood by others, e.g. by Thurmair (1989). Thurmair (1989: 98) takes a 'bedeutungsminimalistische Position', i.e. she assumes that every MP has only one basic meaning, though it is possible that

die Bedeutung in Zusammenwirken mit dem Satzmodus 'verschiebt'. Eine solche Verschiebung könnte auch vom Hörer erkannt werden; denn der Hörer kann z.B. eine 'Frage' von einer 'Aufforderung' unterscheiden und kann deshalb auch eventuelle Änderungen in der Bedeutung einer Modalpartikel je nach Satzmodus unterscheiden.

Thurmair uses binary features to describe the central meaning and function of MPs. Some of these are <bekannt> / <unbekannt>, <Korrektur> / <Zuspruch> and <Konnex> / <Übergang>. The main function of the features is to refer to the 'im Dialog immer wieder notwendigen Absicherung gemeinsamer Wissensinhalte' (p. 100), i.e. what speaker and hearer both (should) know. [71]

3. Meaning / function of the Frisian Modal Particle *doch*

With Thurmair's generalizing approach in mind, I will analyze the meaning and the function of the Frisian MP *doch* by trying to establish the speaker's attitude towards the hearer and his behaviour, without actually using features, though. I will restrict myself here to the occurrence of the MP *doch* in declarative and in imperative sentences.

3.1. Declarative sentences (finite verb second; no imperative marking; falling intonation; no *wh*-element)⁵

The speaker in the first example sentence reacts to a statement or an assumption with which she disagrees:

(1) Do tinkst doch wier net, dat ... [you think *doch* really not that ...]

By using *doch* she indicates that to her it is very obvious that the hearer is mistaken, so obvious indeed that the hearer should have realized it too. She reproaches him for not having seen that. The element of reproach is also present in:

(2) Do soest doch wizer wêze moatte. [you should *doch* be wiser]

The hearer did or said something that was foolish in the eyes of the speaker, unexpectedly foolish, as he considered the hearer wiser. The speaker reproaches the hearer by pointing this out to him. By means of the MP *doch*, the speaker stresses that the hearer really should have known better. It is also possible for the speaker to express his surprise and reproach to a third person:

(3) Jan soe doch wizer wêze moatte. [Jan should *doch* be wiser]

Again *doch* is indicative of the speaker's assumption that the person he is talking to knows, or should know, that Jan should have known better than to do or say such a foolish thing. The element of criticism is even stronger in: [72]

(4) Do soest doch wat foar heit keapje! [you were *doch* to buy sth. for dad!]

Occasionally, the speaker and the hearer are one and the same person, as in:

(5) Hy sei yn himsels, 'myn bril moat hjir doch earne lizze'. [He said to himself, 'my glasses should lie *doch* here somewhere']

(6) No soe 'k doch better wêze moatte, tocht se. [Now I should *doch* feel better, she thought]

The person in (5) refers to his own (assumed) knowledge as to where his glasses should be. One might say that he criticizes himself for the fact that this knowledge does not result in finding his glasses. The woman in (6) compares her physical condition to what she thinks it should be. By means of *doch* she expresses her disappointment or her irritation about the apparent discrepancy between the two.

In (7) and (8) the speaker refers to something that (he thinks) is commonly known or agreed upon:

(7) Hy leit de hiele dei mar wat op bêd. Soks kin doch net! [he's lying all day in bed. Such can *doch* not]

(8) Sa'n bern mei in skerp mes boartsje litte, dat docht men doch net! [To let such a child play with a sharp knife. That does one *doch* not]

Doch may also be used when the speaker suspects someone to hold ideas that are very different from his own. Imagine two men sitting at a table. One of them is reading a newspaper and he casually remarks: 'Cruijff is ek dea' [Cruijff is *ek* dead]. The other man, a Cruijff fanatic, jumps to his feet and cries:

(9) Cruijff dea, mar dat is doch freeslik! [Cruijff dead, but that's *doch* terrible] [73]

By means of *doch* he emphasizes that everybody ought to know that Cruijff was the world's best soccer player ever. In fact, he wants the person he is talking to, to share his ideas about Cruijff and to acknowledge that his casual reaction to Cruijff's death is improper. A similar idea is expressed by the following *doch* sentences:

(10) Ik fyn Jantine doch sa'n skat, hin. [I think J. *doch* such a darling, you know]

(11) Sy hat *doch* moai hier. [She has *doch* beautiful hair]

The speaker may be argued to say that any idea the hearer might have of Jantine's loveliness or of her hair should be adjusted.

In sum, when speakers use the MP *doch*, they not only refer to what is, or should be, known by the hearer, they also, and this is even more important, want to make it clear to the hearer that his attitude or his behaviour is not in accordance with this knowledge, but that it should be. This is, as Thurmair (1989:112) points out for German, why *doch*-sentences often have words or expressions that involve objection, protest or argument:

(12) Pardon, mar ik sei doch dat ik tekst en útlis jaan soe? [Sorry, but I said *doch* that I would explain things]

(13) Ferdomme Hiltse, DO tinkst doch net dat ik alles mar út 'e tomme sùgje. [Damn it H., YOU don't *doch* think that I just make it all up]

(14) Ei, man, jo hoege jo wiif doch sa net út te skellen! [Hey man, you don't *doch* have to scold your wife like that]

As a speaker may use the MP *doch* to refer to what the hearer knows, he may also use it to remind the hearer of something he knows and which is relevant to either the speaker or the hearer or to both. The speaker may (mildly) criticize the hearer for his forgetfulness: [74]

(15) Heit, ik mocht doch noch in koekje hawwe? [Dad, I was *doch* to have another cookie?]

(16) Bouke, do soest doch noch in koekje hawwe? [B., you were *doch* to have another cookie?]

(17) Do en ik soenen doch jûn nei de film? [you and I were *doch* to go to the movies tonight?]

Doch may also be used as a kind of steppingstone for what the speaker really wants to tell. The hearer may or may not know about what is referred to by *doch*:

(18) Ik wie juster doch by de dokter? No, dêr siet in man sûnder noas! [I was yesterday *doch* at the doctor's? Well, there was a man without a nose]

The *WFT*-citation in 6. neatly fits into this pattern (I have added some context):

(19) Dat spyt my dôch stom, dat myn nije mantel hjoed net thús komd is. [I *dôch* think it a pity, that my new coat didn't arrive today]

The hearer knows that the speaker was longing for the new coat to arrive. *Dôch* is used to express the speaker's disappointment and also to elicit a sympathizing reaction from the hearer.

Finally, the speaker may anticipate a possible devious attitude or behaviour of the hearer. By using *doch*, the speaker makes sure that he is one up on the hearer:

(20) Sjoch net sa swart. It is doch altyd gesellich by ús heit en mem? [Don't you look so surly. It is *doch* always nice at mum and dad's]

A common characteristic of the *doch*-sentences dealt with so far is that the speaker wants the hearer to react positively to what he says, he wants the hearer to adopt his point of view. [75]

3.3. Imperative sentences (*finite verb first position, imperative marking*)

Imperative sentences are typically used when you are giving commands to someone, telling him what to do or not to do. Imperative sentences may express different levels of insistence, however, which may range from downright commands to kind encouragement. The reference is to the hearer who, generally speaking, does or says something that does not please the speaker. The speaker wants the hearer to change his attitude, *doch* is an extra means to make this clear to the hearer (Thurmair (1989:118). The feature <bekannt> is not always as obvious as in:

(21) Pleagje dyn broer doch net altyd sa! [Don't you *doch* always tease your brother!]

(22) Kom doch út dy hjitte sinne! [Come *doch* out of the hot sun]

The hearer in (21) knows that he should not tease his brother and that he should stop teasing right now, because the speaker is irritated by his behaviour. The speaker in (22) refers to the well-known fact that overexposure to the sun's heat may cause sunburn or even a sunstroke or skin cancer. By means of *doch* the speaker tells the hearer that he is a fool to disregard this common knowledge. The pretty desperate speaker of the WFT citation

(23) O God, lit my doch net langer libje! [O God, let me *doch* no longer live!]

expects the hearer to see that life is unbearable to him and he uses *doch* to urge the hearer to take appropriate action. A certain amount of desperation is also expressed in another WFT citation:

(24) Anke, sis dan dôch datst my kinste. [A., say then *dôch* that you know me] [76]

The speaker is sure that Anke knows him and he wants her to say so. Through the MP *dôch* he tells Anke that a positive reaction to his imperative request is very important to him. Sheer panic is expressed by:

(25) Helje my doch op! Helje my doch op! Fabians lûd sloech oer. [Come *doch* and get me! Fabian's voice broke]

Fabian uses *doch* to make the hearer realize that he is in urgent need of

help to get out of the predicament he is in.

The next examples should be interpreted as commands rather than requests:

(26) Mins, sjit doch op, jo geane nei hûs! [Woman, do *doch* hurry up, you're going home]

(27) Donderje doch op, raasde Wouter fannijs. [Get *doch* the hell out of here, Wouter cried again]

(28) Hâld dy de bek doch! [Shut *doch* up!]

In (26)-(28) the hearer's attitude is obviously not to the speaker's liking. This, and the speaker's irritation about the hearer's behaviour, are expressed and intensified by the MP *doch*.

Doch may also be used in sentences expressing some (earnest) advice to the hearer to change the present situation in a certain way:

(29) Dûk doch ûnder, rette sy him, mar hy wegere. [Go *doch* into hiding, she advised, but he refused]

The boy who utters the following imperative sentence with *doch*:

(30) Dûnsje doch mei har, sy wol wol [Dance *doch* with her, she is willing]

means to encourage his friend, who is too shy to ask the girl. When someone turns up unexpectedly at your doorstep, you might say:

(31) Kom der doch eefkes yn! [Come *doch* in] [77]

By means of *doch* you let the hearer know that you realize he may not want to come in or that he may think he was not supposed to come in, thus making it easier for him to turn down your invitation, or alternatively, to accept it (cf. Foolen (1993:177)). The last example I will discuss here also assumes a possible devious attitude of the hearer:

(32) Jo waskje noch mei X? Nim doch Y! [You are still washing with X? Take *doch* Y!]

This time, however, the implication of the *doch*-sentence is that it would not be wise for the hearer to reject the speaker's suggestion.

5. Conclusion

We have seen that there is more to the Frisian MP *doch* than the WFT tells us, probably there is even more to it than I have been able to show here. In this final paragraph I will try and show the consequences of the above observations for the dictionary representation of *doch*.

I think it stands to reason that more attention should be paid to the functional aspect of MPs, preferably in a separate dictionary entry. As it is essential for MPs that they are not stressed, the dictionary should give this information too.

Due to the obvious relation between meaning and function on the one hand and sentence type on the other hand, the ordering of the dictionary entry should be by sentence type.

As MPs determine to some extent the roles of the speaker and the hearer, the speaker-hearer relation should be explicated in the dictionary entry.⁶

Form and content of an entry are of course dependent on the type of dictionary. The sample entry given in the appendix is of the WFT type of dictionary. For convenience's sake the metalanguage will be English.

*Fryske Akademy
Postbus 54
NL-8900 AB Ljouwert / Leeuwarden*

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doch, MP. <unstressed>

Generally, the speaker uses ~ to point out a conflict between the hearer's attitude or behaviour and his (assumed) knowledge.

1. Declarative sentences:

- By means of ~ the speaker makes clear that he expects the hearer to see and admit that his attitude or behaviour is in direct conflict with what it should be. ||

Do soest ~ wizer wêze moatte.

Dò soest ~ wat foar heit keapje!

Mar ik sei ~ dat ik tekst en útlis

jaan soe? Ei, man, jo hoege jo

wiif ~ sa net út te skellen!

(The speaker may also use ~ to refer to what is considered

common knowledge:) Sa'n bern

mei in mes boartsje litte, dat

docht men ~ net!

- The speaker and the hearer may be one. The speaker finds that the actual situation is not in accordance with his own (assumed) knowledge. By means of ~ he expresses his surprise, irritation, disappointment, etc. about this discrepancy. || Hy

preuvele yn himsels, 'myn bril

moat hjir ~ earne lizze'. 'No soe ik

~ better wêze moatte', tocht se.

- The speaker may use ~ when he suspects the hearer's ideas to differ from his own. He wants the hearer to see that those ideas are wrong and that he expects him to share or understand his. || Cruijff

dea, mar dat is ~ freeslik! Ik fyn

Jantine ~ sa'n skat, hin.

- The speaker may use ~ to anticipate and to parry a possible devious attitude or behaviour of the hearer. || Sjoch net sa swart.

It is ~ altyd gesellich by ús mem!

- The speaker may use ~ to re-

mind the hearer of something he

knows, but apparently forgot. ||

Heit, it mocht ~ noch in koekje

hawwe? Do en ik soenen ~ jûn

nei de film ta?

- The speaker may use ~ to in-

troduce a topic of conversation. ||

Ik wie juster ~ by de dokter? No

dêr siet in man sûnder noas! Dat

spyt my ~ stom, dat myn nije

mantel hjoed net thúskomd is.

2. Imperative sentences:

- By using ~, the speaker implies that the hearer knows or should know that he'd better change his attitude or behaviour. || Pleagje

dyn broer ~ net altyd sa! Kom ~ út

dy hjitte sinne! Hâld dy de bek ~!

Donderje ~ op!

- The speaker may use ~ to

convey to the hearer that he

wants or expects him to react

positively to the speaker's advice,

encouragement, invitation, etc. ||

Dûk ~ ûnder, rette se him, mar hy

wegere. Dûnsje ~mei har, sy wol

wol! Kom der ~ eefkes yn!

- The speaker may use ~ to

convey to the hearer that he

would greatly appreciate a

positive reaction to his imperative

request. By means of ~ the

speaker also indicates that he

assumes the hearer to be in a

position to do so. || O God, lit my ~

net langer libje! Anke, sis dan ~

dast my kinste.

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[78] Notes

¹ *Westerlauwers Frisian* is the language that is spoken in the Dutch Province of Friesland.

² In the WFT it is not customary to apply the term modal particle. MP's are dealt with under their adverbial homonyms.

³ Cf. also the MP's *dan*: **4.** (met modale functie) *toch* [(with modal function) yet] and *ek*: **6.** in toegevende bijzinnen, ter versterking van de concessieve betekenis [in concessive sentences, to intensify the concessive meaning]; **7.** ter uitdrukking van allerlei vage gevoelens [to express all kinds of vague feelings]; **8.** in wensende zinnen, in uitroepen [in sentences expressing a wish or an exclamation].

⁴ Cf. Thurmair (1989:94): 'Mit Modalpartikeln kann der Sprecher [...] dem Gesprächspartner Hinweise darauf geben, wie er das Gesagte auffassen und wo er es einordnen soll, sowie Hinweise darauf, wie der Sprecher die Äußerung bewertet, wie er die Vorgängeräußerung aufgenommen hat oder wie er das Wissen und die Erwartungen des Hörers einschätzt. Diese Hinweise soll der Hörer natürlich auch in seiner Reaktion berücksichtigen, auf diese Weise ist es auch eine der Funktionen der Modalpartikeln, den Gesprächspartner in einer bestimmten Richtung zu beeinflussen.'

⁵ Declarative sentences with rising intonation should be interpreted as interrogatives and therefore require a different analysis, cf. (Do komst hjoed doch wol? [You are coming today, are you?]).

⁶ I would like to stress that the two sentence types discussed here do not reveal all aspects of the speaker-hearer relation. In interrogative sentences, for instance, the reference is to the speaker's knowledge rather than the hearer's.