

Een scriptie over *iets, wat, zoiets* én *zowat*, het is wat!

A construction grammar approach to the Dutch indefinite pronouns *iets, wat, zoiets*, and *zowat*

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1. Introduction

A word that is frequently used in Dutch is the indefinite pronoun *iets*. According to the dictionary Van Dale (2018), the meaning of *iets* is ‘a not further specified case’ or ‘a little quantity’. Despite or probably precisely because of this vague meaning, *iets* can be used in very different ways. Take the following examples:

(1) Ik eet iets.

‘I eat something.’

(2) Er is iets met mijn computer.

‘There is something with my computer.’

(3) Dat heeft iets.

‘That has something.’

These are only a couple of sentences the word *iets* occurs in, but they already show a great variation with respect to the use of this pronoun. In (1), the use of *iets* perfectly matches the definition given by Van Dale: *iets* refers to an undefined kind of food and/or a small amount of food. In a sentence such as (2), however, *iets* seems to refer to an unspecified, negative matter: the computer has a certain defect; something is *wrong* with the computer. The sentence thus expresses a negative evaluation.¹ In (3), on the other hand, *iets* seems to refer to an aspect of the concept that *dat* ‘that’ refers to that is evaluated positively. However, in neither (2) nor (3) do elements occur which could explain these negative and positive interpretations: *iets*, but also other elements of the sentence such as *hebben* ‘have’ and *zijn* ‘be’, are not positive or negative on their own.

Another interesting aspect about the above-mentioned sentences is that *iets* can be replaced by the indefinite pronoun *wat*, apparently without a change of meaning. However, *iets* and *wat* are not always interchangeable. For example, the ANS (1997:5.9.3.2.v), the standard grammar of Dutch, states that in a sentence such as (4), *wat* cannot be replaced by *iets*. Note that this sentence includes a negative evaluation (despite the use of the word *moois* ‘beautiful’).

¹ In this thesis, the terms ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ do not refer to the polarity of an expression – i.e. whether the expression is affirmative or negative – but always to the evaluation (or the desirability) of the situation that is expressed.

(4) Het is me wat moois!

‘It is something beautiful (to me)!’

The indefinite pronoun *zoiets* is formally very similar to *iets*, and seems to be used in sentences which express evaluations as well: sentence (5), for example, seems to state a negative evaluation. Similar to *iets*, the part *iets* in the word *zoiets* can be replaced by *wat* (resulting in *zowat*), but again, these words cannot always be used interchangeably. In sentence (6), for example, *zoiets* cannot be replaced by *zowat*:

(5) Dat is ook zoiets.

‘That is also something like that.’

(6) Dat is ook zoiets vreselijks.

‘That is also something terrible like that.’

Certain expressions with *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat* (such as those above) thus give rise to a specific interpretation which, as mentioned, is not the same as the literal meaning of the expressions. (In other words, the meaning of the expressions cannot be ascribed to the meaning of the individual words within the expressions, or to the combination of these words.) Therefore, it is to be expected that these expressions can be described as constructions within the theory of construction grammar. Construction grammatical approaches view constructions as conventional form-meaning pairings, that is, units of linguistic knowledge (words, phrases, expressions, et cetera) in which a certain form is linked to a certain meaning (Goldberg 1995:6; Hilpert 2014:2). If it is assumed that sentence (2) above, for example, is a construction, it follows that the negative interpretation of (2) is an aspect of the meaning side of the construction with the form *er-is-iets-met-x* ‘there-is-something-with-x’. The negative interpretation is conventionally associated with this specific form, and because of that, it can be called a construction.

However, the question is whether all expressions in which *iets* (or *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat*) occurs can be viewed as constructions. Intuitively speaking, (2) and (3) seem to be constructions, as was mentioned before, but in example (1) there is, purely intuitively speaking as well, something else going on: here, it seems that the meaning of the sentence is completely predictable on the basis of the (combination of the) elements in the sentence, and it does not seem to be the case that a specific meaning is associated with this expression that cannot be calculated on the basis of the meaning of the separate words. In addition, there are

many other expressions containing the word *iets* (or *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat*) for which it is not immediately clear how they relate to the above-mentioned examples and to each other with respect to their status as constructions. For example, sentences (7)-(9) are more neutral than (2) and (3) (that is, in terms of positive and negative evaluation), but these examples seem to be less straightforward in their meaning than (1) as well:

(7) Ik kan daar wel iets mee.

‘I can [do] something with that.’

(8) Dat zegt iets over hem.

‘That says something about him.’

(9) Er komt iets los bij die mensen.

‘Something is coming loose with those people.’

The above-mentioned observations about differences between *iets* expressions are based on intuitions alone. These intuitions, however, do not make clear in what way construction grammar would treat these kinds of expressions, or put differently: whether or not construction grammar would view the expressions with *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat* as constructions. Construction grammar theory does pay attention to the question what is and what is not to be viewed as a construction, but the question is whether the existing criteria to call a certain expression a construction can also be applied to determine whether expressions with *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat* as the above-mentioned are viewed as constructions within construction grammar theory. This question is answered in this thesis by means of a literature study as well as empirical research aimed at examining the usage of the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*. The latter is done by means of introspection and corpus research with the so-called OpenSoNaR corpus (cf. Oostdijk et al. 2013) using different searching strategies. In this way, this thesis is not only aimed at approaching *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* expressions from a construction grammar perspective, but the aim is also of a methodological nature in that several research methods are employed and subsequently assessed on their suitability to search for expressions in which *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* are used.

In chapter 2, I briefly explain the theory of construction grammar and the criteria this theory uses for determining constructions, and I discuss literature on the indefinite pronouns which are central to this study. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 explore different methods for studying the usage of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* and for collecting possible *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions: introspection (chapter 3), corpus research by means of searching for the

indefinite pronouns only (chapter 4), and corpus research by means of searching for linguistic chunks of more than one word (chapter 5). Each chapter ends with an evaluation of the method, and it is argued which of the expressions (detected in the research) can be called constructions using the criteria found in the literature. These results yield a construction network, in which the *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions are related to one another (chapter 6). Chapter 7 contains a discussion and chapter 8 the conclusion.

2. Constructions and the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*

In section 2.1, I explain the theory of construction grammar in some more detail than was done in the introduction. I make clear what the literature says about the concept ‘construction’, and especially how, according to the literature, it can be decided whether or not a certain expression is a construction. The idea of a construction network is explained in section 2.2, because this knowledge is crucial for relating constructions to one another (which is done in chapter 6). I discuss literature on the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* in section 2.3. Section 2.4 gives a summary of the chapter and an outline for the remainder of the thesis.

2.1 Constructions in construction grammar theory

Linguistic theories dealing with linguistic knowledge and the way in which this knowledge is cognitively represented, agree on the fact that words are arbitrary and conventional form-meaning pairings and as such have to be learnt and stored in the language user’s mental lexicon. A word with the form *boom* ‘tree’, for example, is associated with a specific, conventional meaning (the concept ‘tree’) (Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013:1; Verhagen 2005:198-199; this idea is also already found in De Saussure 1916).

Before the development of construction grammar, the dominant idea in linguistics was that, apart from the mental lexicon in which all words with their form and meaning are stored, each language user also possesses a mental grammar, in which rules for the combination of linguistic elements (such as words) into bigger entities are stored. With this knowledge, it would be possible to create word groups such as phrases and sentences.

Construction grammatical theories, however, reject this strict division of lexicon and grammar: not only words, but all linguistic elements (morphemes, words, idioms, abstract sentence patterns) form conventional form-meaning pairings in this view; it is those pairs that are called constructions (Goldberg 1995:6; Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013:1). The only thing a language user needs in order to know his language, according to construction grammar, is a mental network of constructions, the constructicon (Hilpert 2014:2). The constructions that are represented in this network may be fully fixed, which is, for example, the case with an idiomatic expression such as *de appel valt niet ver van de boom* ‘the apple does not fall far from the tree’, meaning ‘children look like their parents’, they may have a few fixed elements but also variable ones, as in *hij baande zich een weg door de menigte* ‘he made his way through the crowd’, a concrete instance of the construction [NP – REFL – *een weg* – V – PP /

Adv] ‘an entity specified in NP creates a way and bridges it – by means of activity V – in a domain specified in PP / Adv (Verhagen 2005:204), and they may only consist of variables, which is the case in *ze niesde het schuim van de cappuccino* ‘she sneezed the foam off the cappuccino’, a concrete instance of the construction [NP₁ – V – NP₂ – PP / Adv] ‘an entity specified in NP₁ causes – by means of activity V – that another entity specified in NP₂ bridges a route specified in PP / Adv’ (Verhagen 2005:209).

According to construction grammar, all the language user’s linguistic knowledge is stored in the mental construction network. The knowledge the language user has about a certain construction consists of his or her whole experience with that construction: phonological, morphological, and syntactic properties, conventionalised meanings, variants, the social contexts in which the construction can be used and its pragmatic characteristics (Hilpert 2014:2; 123).

How, then, is it possible to determine whether an expression is a construction, and therefore, a form-meaning pairing? According to Hilpert (2014), there are a few different strategies. First of all, the criterion of non-predictability is important. According to this criterion, a construction has to be unpredictable on an aspect of the form side or of the meaning side. Unpredictability on the meaning side means that the interpretation of, for example, an idiom is more than the meaning of the individual words the idiom contains. This is the case with an idiom such as *de appel valt niet ver van de boom* ‘the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree’, because the meaning of this expression has nothing to do with apples falling from trees, but with similarities between children and their parents. The form side of a construction is unpredictable ‘if it is not an instance of a more general formal pattern’ and thus cannot be formed on the basis of general rules for sentence structure or word formation (Hilpert 2014:10-11). An example of this is the comparative correlative *hoe X-er, hoe Y-er* ‘the X-er, the Y-er’, as in *hoe meer ik erover nadenk, hoe leuker ik het vind* ‘the more I think about it, the more I like it’. A formal characteristic of this construction which sets it apart from other Dutch sentences is the fact that the verb in the main (second) clause is generally in final position (*hoe leuker ik het vind*), while normally, main clauses in Dutch always have the main verb in second position (Broekhuis & Corver 2016:1291; Assendelft to appear).

A third criterion concerns the question whether or not (an element of) the sentence has idiosyncratic limitations. For example, with a ditransitive sentence such as *Ik gaf het meisje een bos bloemen* ‘I gave the girl a bunch of flowers’, it is impossible to replace the recipient (the girl) by an inanimate object (such as ‘the table’); the ditransitive does not allow this kind

of replacement, and because of this restriction, the ditransitive can be considered as a construction (Hilpert 2014:18-19).

A fourth way to identify constructions is by looking at collocational preferences. For example, by means of a collocation analysis (see Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003), it can be investigated, with a corpus, whether or not certain words (for example verbs) occur relatively more frequently than expected in certain sentences or contexts and whether other words in the same position in the sentence occur less frequently than expected. Since this kind of information about the possibilities for combining certain words is also said to be stored in the construction, these cases can also be considered constructions. In English, for example, the auxiliary verb *will* is remarkably more often combined with certain infinitives than could be expected on the basis of the frequency of those infinitives in general, while other infinitives occur less often in combination with *will*. Therefore, it is possible to assume a construction [will INF] (Hilpert 2014:20-22).

With the above-mentioned four criteria, it should be possible to decide whether or not a certain expression is a construction (or an instance of a construction). If no arguments can be given to call a certain expression a construction, each part of that sentence should be analysed in terms of more general constructions (Hilpert 2014:12).

The above-mentioned criteria are a good starting point for the current study to identify constructions with *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat*. If it turns out that there are, for example, different *iets* constructions, it is to be expected that these are related to each other in a certain way, especially because all constructions contain the word *iets*. Relations between constructions can be visualized in a construction network. This concept is discussed in the following section.

2.2 The construction network

A central term related to the theory about the construction is ‘inheritance’. Inheritance refers to the assumption that more abstract constructions are higher in the construction network than more concrete, lexically more specified constructions. Properties of a construction (both at the form side and at the meaning side) are being transferred from the more abstract constructions on the higher levels to the more concrete constructions on the lower levels of the network (Hilpert 2014:57-58). In a construction network, there are four possible types of connections between different levels: instance links, polysemy links, metaphorical links, and subpart links.

An instance link connects a specific instance of a construction with this construction. For example, the idiom *hij heeft Abraham gezien* ‘he has seen Abraham’ (‘he has become

fifty’), is a transitive sentence, and therefore, it is connected with the transitive construction and forms a specific instance of this construction (Hilpert 2014:60; Goldberg 1995:79).

Constructions can also be connected by means of polysemy links, by which several (formally similar) constructions which have conceptually related meanings are connected. For example, the basic meaning of the so-called caused motion construction (e.g. *she kicked the ball over the fence*) is ‘X causes Y to move along or towards Z’. Apart from this basic sense, the caused motion construction can also convey additional meanings such as assisted motion (*John helped Mary out of the car*) and enabled motion (*Mary allowed the dog out of the bathroom*) (Hilpert 2014:35-36). These extended senses are linked to the central meaning by means of polysemy links in the construction (Hilpert 2014:60; Goldberg 1995:75).

Metaphorical links also connect two constructional meanings. For example, a movement through space (the caused motion construction) and a resultative event (the resultative construction) can be expressed by the same syntactic pattern, as can be seen in examples such as *John combed his hair to the side* (caused motion) and *Anne tied her hair into a bun* (resultative). Because of this, a link is assumed between the caused motion construction and the resultative construction (Hilpert 2014:61; Goldberg 1995:81).

The three discussed types of links all connect constructions at different levels of abstraction with each other. However, the fourth type of inheritance link, the subpart link, may also relate constructions at the same level of abstraction. This link connects constructions which are partly similar in form or meaning, but which cannot be considered as instances of one another. For example, the transitive (*he bakes a cake*) and the ditransitive (*he bakes her a cake*) clearly share formal characteristics, and therefore, it can be assumed that they are linked to each other in the construction as well (Hilpert 2014:62-63; Goldberg 1995:78).²

2.3 Literature on the use of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*

Because not much has been written about the use of the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*, the sections below will mainly discuss the meanings of these words as described in dictionaries – the WNT (*Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* ‘Dictionary of the Dutch language’) and Van Dale – and the ANS (*Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst*), the standard grammar of Dutch. Where appropriate, other publications are mentioned as well.

² The subpart links seem somewhat comparable to the similarity links in Verhagen (2003:53-56). The latter are used to connect structural features of different constructions which are on the same level of abstraction.

2.3.1 Iets and wat

The indefinite pronouns *iets* and *wat* are used in very similar ways; therefore, they are discussed in one subsection.

According to the WNT, the indefinite pronoun *iets* has six meanings:³

1. Any thing, that is, a certain (im)material matter or thing, e.g. *zei je iets?* ‘did you say something?’ This meaning of *iets* can be followed by a noun or an adjective that serves as a noun in the genitive, e.g. *iets moois* ‘something beautiful’.
2. A thing, such a thing (as described in an adjunct), e.g. *dat is iets wat ik niet begrijp* ‘that is something I do not understand’.
3. A small part or amount; a little bit, e.g. *zijn houding heeft iets ernstigs* ‘his attitude has something earnest’.
4. An important part; a lot, e.g. *dat zegt nogal iets* ‘that says quite something’.
5. In contrast with *niets* ‘nothing’: something that exists or is present, e.g. *ik maak iets van niets* ‘I make something of nothing’.
6. A matter or person of a certain significance, e.g. *iets te zijn is de droom van die knaap* ‘to be something is the dream of that boy’.

Apart from the indefinite pronoun, the WNT also reports an adverbial use of the word *iets*, in which function the meaning of *iets* is ‘a (little) bit’, e.g. *iets vroeger* ‘a bit earlier’.

Van Dale (2015:1658) distinguishes three main meanings of *iets*:

1. As a noun, e.g. *een mooi iets* ‘a beautiful something’.
2. As an adverb of degree, which is the same as the adverbial use of *iets* mentioned in the WNT.
3. As an indefinite pronoun, with six sub-meanings:
 1. A non-specific, undefined matter or thing; see WNT meaning 1 above.
 2. Referring to a matter described in further detail in an adjunct, e.g. *dat is iets van later zorg* ‘that is something to worry about later’; see WNT meaning 2.
 3. Referring to a more specific matter. This meaning entails meaning 2 in the WNT and expressions such as *dat is echt iets voor jou* ‘that really is something for you’ (i.e. that is something you will like, that is something you can expect from you), *hij heeft iets* ‘he has something’ (i.e. a disease, an uncomfortable matter, or attractive characteristics), expressions with *iets van*

³ Unless otherwise indicated, the example sentences in section 2.3 are taken from the literature under discussion (sometimes with slight adjustments).

‘about’, e.g. *er zijn iets van honderd mensen* ‘there are about one hundred people’, and expressions such as *heb je weleens iets van hem gelezen* ‘did you ever read something from him?’, where the context makes clear that *iets* refers to a book.

4. A little bit; a small part, e.g. *hij heeft iets van zijn oom* ‘he looks a bit like his uncle’, which is similar to meaning 3 in the WNT.
5. An important part; a lot, see meaning 4 in the WNT.
6. A matter or person of a certain significance, see meaning 6 in the WNT above.

Although both the WNT and Van Dale distinguish between six meanings of the indefinite pronoun *iets*, it can be concluded that the meanings do not exactly match each other: the contrast with *niets* is only a separate meaning in the WNT, and meaning 2 and 3 in Van Dale seem to correspond to only one meaning in the WNT (meaning 2).

A further interesting point about the example sentences given in the dictionaries is that some of these instances are the same as or similar to the instances of possible *iets* constructions I mentioned in chapter 1. For example, *hij heeft iets* ‘he has something’ and *dat zegt nogal iets* ‘that says quite something’ can be compared to sentences (3) and (8), respectively. For expressions of the form *dat zegt iets*, it has already been argued in the literature that this is in fact an instance of a more general construction *dat-zegt-X*, in which *X* is ‘an indefinite quantifying expression’ such as *iets*, but also *veel* ‘much’, *alles* ‘everything’, *genoeg* ‘enough’, et cetera (Jansen 2017:615). The dictionaries, then, seem to already provide some possible constructions, since they attach a certain form (patterns such as *dat-zegt-X* and *X-hebben-iets*, which can be derived from the example sentences) to a certain meaning (in this case, ‘an important part, a lot’ and ‘X has a disease, an uncomfortable matter, attractive characteristics’, respectively). Also note that, according to Van Dale, *iets* in *hij heeft iets* can refer to both negative (diseases and uncomfortable matters) and positive (attractive characteristics) aspects.

Wat has many different functions in Dutch. For example, it can be used as an interrogative pronoun (comparable to English ‘what’) or a relative pronoun (comparable to English ‘that’), but it can also be used as an indefinite pronoun, in which function it is comparable to *iets*. The WNT mentions five meanings for the indefinite pronoun *wat*:

1. A thing; an undefined matter; something, e.g. *ik weet wel wat* ‘I know something’. In this meaning, *what* can be followed by an adjective in the genitive (e.g. *wat moois*

‘something beautiful’) or by a relative clause (e.g. *er is nog wat dat ik niet kan zeggen* ‘there is something else that I cannot say’).

2. A small part / amount; a little bit, e.g. *we hebben wat gegeten* ‘we ate something’.
3. An important part; a lot, e.g. *hij heeft nogal wat* ‘he has quite something’, i.e. ‘he is rich’.
4. A matter or person of a certain significance, e.g. *dat moet wel wat zijn* ‘that has to be something’. Fixed expressions such as *het/dat is wat* ‘it/that is something’, which, according to the WNT, are ‘powerful reactions’ on situations or events, are also mentioned under this meaning.
5. Some, e.g. *hij vroeg om wat geld* ‘he asked for some money’.

As an adverb, *wat* has three meanings:

1. A bit (adverb of quantity), e.g. *het heeft wat geregend* ‘it rained a bit’.
2. A bit (adverb of degree), e.g. *hij voelde zich wat rustiger* ‘he felt a bit more relaxed’.
3. With emphasis on *wat*: very, e.g. *dat is wát leuk* ‘that is very nice’.

There clearly are resemblances between the meanings distinguished for *iets* and *wat* by the WNT: with respect to the indefinite use of both words, meaning 1 for *wat* is similar to meaning 1 and 2 in the entry for *iets*; *wat* meaning 2 is similar to *iets* meaning 3; *wat* meaning 3 is similar to *iets* meaning 4 and *wat* meaning 4 to *iets* meaning 6. Important to note is that *wat* in meaning 5 cannot be replaced by *iets*. With respect to the adverbial use, meaning 1 and 2 for *wat* are similar to the meaning the WNT ascribes to adverbial *iets*. However, *wat* cannot be replaced by *iets* in the third meaning.

Van Dale (2015:4509-4510) distinguishes six uses of *wat* – as an interrogative pronoun, a relative pronoun, an indefinite pronoun, an adverb, an interjection and as an interrogative pronoun that functions as a noun. For the indefinite pronoun, three uses are mentioned:

1. In the same meaning as *iets*, e.g. *ik zie wat* ‘I see something’, *is dat niet wat voor jou?* ‘isn’t that something for you?’, and, as a fixed expression (according to Van Dale), *misschien wordt het wat tussen hen* ‘maybe it becomes something between them’, i.e. ‘maybe they will end up being engaged or married’. This is the same as meaning 1, and possibly also 3 and 4, in the WNT.
2. A small amount; a bit, which is the same as meaning 2 and 5 in the WNT.
3. *heel wat* ‘a lot’, *vrij wat* ‘rather a lot’. These are mentioned under meaning 3 in the WNT.

The adverb *wat* has two meanings, according to Van Dale, which are the same as meaning 2 and 3 in the WNT (meaning 1 in the WNT is mentioned under meaning 2 of the indefinite pronoun in Van Dale).

Apart from the context where *wat* means ‘some’, Van Dale mentions *heel wat* and *vrij wat* as contexts where it is not possible to replace *wat* by *iets*. It is also striking that Van Dale does not classify the indefinite pronoun *wat* to the same extent as is done for *iets*: whereas six different meanings are distinguished for *iets*, all these uses are put under one meaning for the indefinite pronoun *wat*. The meanings for *wat* in the WNT are much closer to the categorization for the WNT lemma *iets*. Furthermore, it is interesting that one of the adverbial meanings of *wat* in the WNT is mentioned under the indefinite pronoun function of *wat* by Van Dale. This shows that the difference between the two functions is not always clear. One last observation concerns the, according to the WNT and Van Dale, ‘fixed expressions’ *het/dat is wat* ‘it/that is something’ and *misschien wordt het wat tussen hen* ‘maybe it becomes something between them’: the fact that they are called fixed expressions (and have a specific meaning that cannot be derived from the literal meaning of the expressions) already indicates that these can be seen as constructions.

The ANS (1997:5.9.3.2.v) takes *iets*, *niets* ‘nothing’ and *wat* together as independent, non-collective indefinite pronouns. *Iets* can be used in a specific (10), non-specific (11), or generic (12) way.

(10) Ik heb iets gevonden.

‘I found something.’

(11) Er moet iets gedaan worden.

‘Something must be done.’

(12) Iets is waar of niet waar.

‘Something is true or not true.’

When *iets* is used specifically, it means that it refers to a specific, identifiable matter or thing. In (10), for example, the speaker knows where *iets* refers to (for example, a lost document that the speaker has found again). In (11), *iets* is used non-specifically, because *iets* does not refer to an identifiable matter or thing: it is clear that something has to be done, but the speaker does not exactly know what. In the generic use, finally, as in (12), *iets* refers to matters or things in general. *Niets*, then, can only be used as the negative form of non-specific *iets*. *Wat*

can replace *iets* in most, but not all functions. For example, *wat* cannot stand in first position, which means that (12) cannot be replaced by (13) according to the ANS:

(13) *Wat is waar of niet waar.

On the other hand, as became clear from the above discussion of the meanings mentioned in the WNT and Van Dale, *wat* cannot always be replaced by *iets* either. Thus, as indefinite pronouns, *iets* and *wat* can be used interchangeably most of the time, but they do not have the exact same uses.

Haspelmath (1997), who gives an overview of ‘the formal and semantic properties of indefinite pronouns’ (Haspelmath 1997:1), comes up with a classification of indefinite pronouns such as *iets* based on nine core functions (meanings or contexts) of indefinite pronouns (Haspelmath 1997:2-3):

1. Specific, known to the speaker, e.g. *er is iets gebeurd toen jij weg was: raad eens wat!* ‘something happened while you were away: guess what!’
2. Specific, unknown to the speaker, e.g. *ik hoorde iets, maar ik kon niet zeggen wat voor geluid het was* ‘I heard something, but I couldn’t tell what kind of sound it was’.
3. Non-specific, e.g. *je kunt iets anders proberen* ‘you can try something else’.
4. Polar (yes/no) question, e.g. *is er iets met je gebeurd?* ‘did anything happen to you?’
5. Conditional protasis (*if ... then* types of clauses), e.g. *als je iets verdachts ziet, moet je het me meteen vertellen* ‘if you see anything suspicious, tell me immediately’.
6. Standard of comparison, e.g. *in Freiburg is het weer beter dan waar dan ook in Duitsland* ‘in Freiburg the weather is nicer than anywhere in Germany’.
7. Direct negation, e.g. *er zal niets gebeuren* ‘nothing will happen’.
8. Indirect negation, e.g. *ik denk niet dat er iets zal gebeuren* ‘I don’t think that anything will happen’.
9. Free choice, e.g. *iedereen kan dit simpele probleem oplossen* ‘anybody can solve this simple problem’.

According to Haspelmath (1997:2), indefinite pronouns occur in series; each series comprises a set of indefinite pronouns referring to the major ontological categories (person, thing, place, time, manner, et cetera). Dutch has four series of indefinite pronouns: (i) the *iets*-series (*iemand* ‘somebody’, *iets* ‘something’, *ergens* ‘somewhere’, *ooit* ‘sometime’, *een* ‘a’), (ii) the *dan ook*-series and (iii) the *niets*-series; the determiner *enig* (‘any’) is the only member of its

series (iv) (Haspelmath 1997:246). Each of the series covers some or all of the functions 1-9 above. Figure 1 shows which series cover which functions in Dutch.

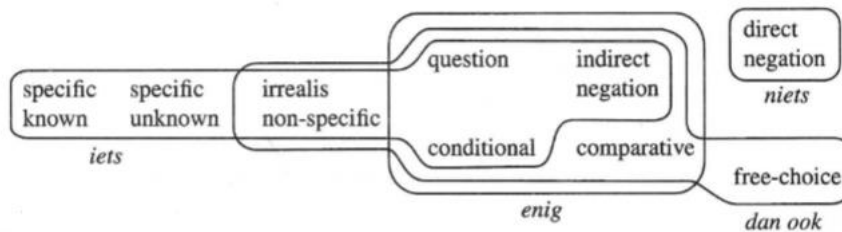


Figure 1. Distribution of functions over the Dutch indefinite pronouns (Haspelmath 1997:68)

As can be seen in figure 1, the Dutch *iets*-series covers functions 1-5 and 8 (see the preceding page for example sentences with *iets* for each of the six functions). Haspelmath (1997) does not explicitly mention it, but since *wat* and *iets* are interchangeable most of the time, it follows that *wat* is also possible in functions 1-5 and 8. In fact, *wat* can also be used in functions 6 and 9, when it is combined with *dan ook*. For *iets*, this is not possible.

2.3.2 Zoiets

According to the WNT, *zoiets*, a combination of *zo* and *iets*, means ‘something that is comparable with, something in the same sphere as mentioned in the context’, Van Dale (2015:4726) describes its meaning as ‘something like that’, and the ANS as ‘such a case’.

One construction containing the word *zoiets* received considerable attention in the literature: the *heb-zoiets-van* construction, which is somewhat comparable to the *be-like* construction in English. An example is *ik had zoiets van waar ben je mee bezig* ‘I was like what are you doing’. Coppen (2010) approaches this construction from a construction grammar perspective: by discussing the form and meaning of all elements present in the construction – the verb *hebben* ‘to have’, the quotative *zoiets van*, and the quotation – Coppen (2010:50) argues for an inheritance tree in which the *heb-zoiets-van* construction is connected to constructions such as *(zo)iets-AP-hebben*, in which AP is an adjective with the genitive case marking *-s* (e.g. *iets moois hebben* ‘to have something beautiful’). Moreover, Coppen & Foolen (2012) discuss the quotative with *van* that is part of this construction in further detail. They also mention the construction *iets van* ‘something of’, which has a similative or approximative meaning in sentences such as *hij heeft iets van zijn vader* ‘he has something of

his father’ (i.e. ‘he looks like his father’) and *ik zag iets van blauw in dat schilderij* ‘I saw something of blue (i.e. something bluish) in that painting’ (Coppen & Foolen 2012:264).

Not only do these studies show that there are specific expressions containing the words *iets* and *zoiets* that can be described as constructions, the fact that both *zoiets* and *iets* are used in the constructions in the inheritance tree given by Coppen (2010) already gives an indication that constructions with *iets* and *zoiets* may be connected to each other in the construction. This issue is further explored in chapter 6.

2.3.3 Zowat

Zowat can be a pronoun and an adverb. As an indefinite pronoun, *zowat* means ‘something like that’ or ‘such a thing’ according to the WNT, and ‘the same, like’ according to Van Dale (2015:4744), as in *we hebben nog brood, kaas en zowat* ‘we still have bread, cheese and the like’ (example is my own).

In the adverbial use, *zowat* has two meanings, according to the WNT:

1. Approximately; about; almost, e.g. *het is zowat drie dagen geleden* ‘it is about three days ago’.
2. In fact, without it being actually the case, e.g. *ze worden zowat als werkpaarden gebruikt* ‘they are in fact used as work horses’.

Van Dale also distinguishes between two meanings for the adverb *zowat*:

1. Almost; approximately, which is the same as meaning 1 in the WNT.
2. To express something negative, e.g. *om daar alleen heen te gaan, dat is ook zowat* ‘to go there alone is also something’, i.e. ‘that is not nice, that is risky’.

The second function of *zowat* as an adverb in Van Dale – which is not mentioned by the WNT – is the one that is central in this thesis, since here, the usage of *zowat* is comparable to the usage of the indefinite pronouns *iets*, *wat*, and *zoiets*. It is surprising that Van Dale considers *zowat* as an adverb and not as an indefinite pronoun for this function, while *zowat* is used in a context in which it is interchangeable with *iets*, *wat*, and *zoiets*, which are all indefinite pronouns.

2.4 Thesis aims and preview

The decision to incorporate the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* in this research, is based on the fact that these words are formally very similar, and can be used in the same context (with similar meanings), e.g.:

- (14) Dat is ook iets.
- (15) Dat is ook wat.
- (16) Dat is ook zoiets.
- (17) Dat is ook zowat.

Not much has been written about the exact usage of these words. An investigation of the existing literature showed that there is no agreement between the various sources (the WNT, Van Dale, ANS, and Haspelmath 1997) on the division of the functions or meanings of the words, while sometimes a certain use of a specific word is not mentioned at all (as was the case for *zowat* in sentences such as (17) in the WNT). This thesis aims at contributing to the knowledge about the usage of the indefinite pronouns *iets*, *zoiets*, *wat*, and *zowat* by studying these words from a construction grammar perspective. In section 2.1, various criteria were described which can be used to identify constructions in the sense of construction grammar. By trying to apply these criteria to expressions containing *iets*, *zoiets*, *wat*, or *zowat*, this thesis aims to investigate whether these criteria are adequate for identifying these expressions as constructions. It is expected that it is indeed possible to identify constructions containing indefinite pronouns such as *iets* with these criteria.

In order to test the construction grammatical status of expressions containing one of the indefinite pronouns, these expressions first have to be collected. In the next three chapters, three methods which can be used to trace these expressions are further explained (in section 1 of each chapter) and put into operation (section 2). Each chapter also ends with a discussion of the evidence the research has yielded for the existence of constructions with the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* (section 3), and an evaluation of the method (section 4).

3. Introspection

3.1 Methodology

One way of collecting linguistic data is by means of introspection. According to Talmy (2007:xii), '[I]ntrospection is conscious attention directed by a language user to particular aspects of language as manifest in her own cognition.' This basically means that the language user consults her own (native) language knowledge and intuitions about, for example, the meanings of a certain word, in order to figure out the possible meanings of this word. It is also possible for the researcher to observe linguistic aspects, such as words, grammaticality, or intonation, by participating in an ongoing communication event (such as a conversation in which the researcher participates), and consciously examine these linguistic aspects by using her own intuitions on these aspects (Talmy 2007:xiii).

Introspective judgments are a type of data that is used for construction grammar research as well. In fact, many of the very first construction-based studies were based on introspection only, such as Lakoff (1987) and Goldberg (1992) (Gries 2013b:94; Boogaart, Coleman & Rutten 2014:3). Concerning the topic of this thesis, I applied introspection by consciously paying attention to expressions with the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*, either by actively thinking about possible expressions myself or when hearing them in conversations or texts I came across. For every expression I collected in that way, I consulted my own intuitions to determine how these expressions can be used, that is, which kinds of words can appear in the open slots of the expressions, what the expression means, and so forth. This means that the results that are discussed in the next section are fully based on my own intuitions. Sometimes, however, I also consulted another native speaker of Dutch to confirm my own intuitions about aspects of the expressions.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 *Iets*

The most 'basic' use of *iets* seems to be the cases in which *iets* is the subject, e.g. *iets is waar of niet waar* 'something is true or not true', the object of a transitive verb such as *maken* 'to make', *eten* 'to eat', *drinken* 'to drink', *kopen* 'to buy', *lezen* 'to read', *koken* 'to cook', et cetera, or when it follows a preposition, e.g. *ik ben door iets gestoken* 'I have been bitten by something'. In these instances, *iets* can be replaced by any kind of noun or noun phrase, with the restriction that it has to be a noun that fits the meaning of the verb. The context the word

iets is used in thus specifies the meaning of *iets* further. *Iets* can also be specified by a relative clause, by the word *anders* or by an adjective ending on *-s* (e.g. *moois* ‘beautiful’).

As was already mentioned in the introduction, these uses of *iets* do not seem to be constructions, because their interpretation is straightforward. There are, however, fourteen patterns containing *iets* I came up with that could be considered as constructions. Their forms and meanings are described in the remainder of this subsection.

- X hebben (toch/ook/echt/wel/...) iets (met Y)
‘X have (particle) something (with Y)’

In *X-hebben-iets*, the noun or pronoun occurring on the position of X can refer to things, (abstract) matters, or animate entities such as persons. When referring to things or matters, the expression means that the thing referred to has positive characteristics (e.g. *dat verhaal / dat / het heeft iets* ‘that story / that / it has something’, i.e. the story is, for example, beautiful, or touching). When X refers to people, it can also mean that the person in question has positive characteristics (e.g. *die jongen heeft iets* ‘that boy has something’, i.e. he is charming, funny, or has another positive trait), but in this case, as was also mentioned in Van Dale, ‘something’ can also refer to negative matters, such as a disease. I think, however, that there is a difference between the two with respect to intonation: when the verb ‘to have’ is stressed (*hij hééft iets*), the meaning that the person has positive characteristics is more likely than the disease interpretation. Moreover, particles are used more often with the positive meaning. In the cases where X refers to more than one person, another possible meaning can be added as well: *zij hebben iets* ‘they have something’ can also mean that the people in question have a relationship (with each other).

When adding the prepositional phrase ‘with Y’, the construction always means that the person or persons specified in X has or have a certain relationship with Y. The phrase in position Y does not necessarily have to refer to human beings: for example, you can say *hij heeft iets met boeken* ‘he has something with books’, i.e. he loves books, books have a special meaning to him, et cetera.

The construction *x-hebben-iets* can also be part of a construction where a perspective is added by means of the subject X and a verb such as *vinden* ‘to find’: *X vinden Y (toch / ook / echt / wel / ...) iets hebben* ‘X think Y have (particle) something’. An example sentence is *wij vinden die film echt iets hebben* ‘we really think that movie has something’, i.e. it has positive characteristics.

- X zijn (toch/ook/echt/wel/...) iets (voor Y)
'X be (particle) something (for Y)'

X-zijn-iets is similar to the expressions under meaning 6 in the WNT and Van Dale (see section 2.3): 'a matter or person of a certain significance'. This already shows that there is a specific meaning attached to this expression. An example is *die film is echt wel iets* 'that movie is really something', meaning that it is of very high quality, starring good actors, or in another way outstanding. *X-zijn-iets* can also take the form of a question, e.g. *was die film iets?* 'was that movie something?', which is a question about the quality of the movie.

The expression can also be used for a negative evaluation, particularly in combination with the particle *toch*, e.g. *dat is toch iets!* 'that is something!' (with the accent on *dat*), meaning that the matter referred to with *dat* is unacceptable, undesirable or in another way perceived negatively. However, I feel that in this context, *wat* is used more often instead of *iets* (see section 3.2.2 for further discussion).⁴

The addition of the prepositional phrase *voor Y* can be used in two contexts: in sentences such as *deze stoel is echt iets voor mijn kamer* 'this chair really is something for my room', it means that the chair will perfectly fit the room, or that it will be very nice to have in the room. In other words, the entity specified in *Y* will benefit from the entity specified in *X*. In sentences such as *dat is ook echt iets voor jou (om dat zo te doen)* 'that is also really something for you (to do it like that)', the meaning is that certain behaviour is characteristic for the person in question.

As was the case for *X-hebben-iets*, it is also possible to add a perspective to *X-zijn-iets*, by means of verbs such as *lijken* or *vinden*: *X lijken Y (toch / ook / echt / wel / ...) iets* 'X seem (particle) something to Y' and *X vinden Y (toch / ook / echt / wel / ...) iets* 'X think Y really is something'. These expressions can be said to have the form [X vinden [Y zijn iets]] and [voor Y lijken [X zijn iets]]. Example sentences are *wij vinden die film echt iets* 'we really find that movie something' and *die film lijkt mij wel iets* 'that movie seems something to me', which both mean that the persons in question think it is a good or interesting movie, or that it has another positive characteristic. It seems to me that the combination of *iets* with *lijken* is most

⁴ A very similar pattern is *dat is (echt wel) een ding(etje)*, literally translated as 'that is (really) a (little) thing', in which the 'thing' seems to refer to a negative matter or situation (in a very vague way). See Cornelisse (2009:13-14) and Landsbergen (2016) for further observations about this construction.

common in questions, e.g. *lijkt dat je iets?* ‘do you think that is something?’ Here, a particle can be left out, while the declarative sentence seems odd to me without a particle.

- X worden (toch/ook/nog/echt/wel/...) iets
‘X become (particle) something’

The expressions with *worden* have many similarities with the expressions with *zijn* as the main verb discussed above, with the exception that the verb *worden* gives the interpretation that a person or matter still has to become significant. The particles also seem to have another distribution: *nog* ‘still’, for example, is used more easily with *worden* than with *zijn*. Another interesting aspect about *nog* is that it seems that, when this particle is used without any other particles, the expression contains a negative evaluation, or is used ironically. For example, the phrase *dat wordt nog iets!* ‘that will become something!’ is used to express doubt about a good outcome; it is expected that the matter referred to by *dat* will have a negative result. However, similar to the negative evaluation for *X-zijn-iets* discussed above, I think this interpretation is more common with *wat* than with *iets* for *X-worden-iets* as well (see 3.2.2 for further discussion).

- X kunnen (toch/ook/nog/echt/wel/...) iets met Y / daar kunnen X (wel/...) iets mee
‘X can (particle) (do) something with Y’

Example sentences for this construction would be *ik kan denk ik wel iets met die informatie* and *daar kan ik wel iets mee*. The literal translations of these sentences are ‘I think I can something with that information’ and ‘I can something with that’. Again, the expression contains a positive evaluation: the above-mentioned sentences are used to indicate that, for example, certain information can be *used* by the subject specified in X, to his or her benefit (the information is *useful*). An extra unexpected element about this expression is that you would expect a verb such as *do* or *use* to appear in the sentence, while it is in fact not present.

- er komt (toch/nog/wel/...) iets uit X
‘something is (particle) coming out of X’

Er-komt-iets-uit-X also holds a positive evaluation of a situation. The element on position X can refer to human entities, e.g. *er komt toch nog iets uit die jongen* ‘something is coming out

of that boy after all', or to non-human entities, e.g. *er komt iets uit dat onderzoek* 'something is coming out of that research'. These expressions mean that something *good* is coming out, i.e. a good idea, a good result, et cetera.

- X zien (toch/nog/wel/...) iets in Y
'X see (particle) something in Y'

The construction with *zien* means that X is of the opinion that Y has a positive characteristic. For example, *ik zie wel iets in dat onderwerp* 'I see something in that topic' means that the subject thinks the topic has potential; it feels like it is a good topic. *Ik zie iets in jou* 'I see something in you', then, means that the subject thinks that the other person possesses a positive trait.

- X maken (toch/nog/wel/...) iets van Y
'X make (particle) something of Y'

An example sentence is *we maken wel iets van dat tentamen* 'we are going to make something of that exam'. Y is commonly substituted by *er*, e.g. *we maken er wel iets van* 'we are going to make something of it'. The construction also often appears in the imperative, e.g. *maak iets van je leven* 'make something of your life'. The pattern is used to express that the persons specified in X are planning to or have to achieve a good result with the entity specified in Y: if you have to make something of your life, for example, it means that you need to live a good, meaningful life.

- er zit iets in (X)
'there is something in (X)'

The one variable slot in this pattern can take a non-animate entity. An example sentence is *er zit iets in dat verhaal* 'there is something in that story'. The pattern means that X has positive characteristics, for example that it is useful, or that it possesses a certain truth. A commonly used expression is the sentence *daar zit iets in* or *er zit iets in* 'There is something in that', which basically means 'good point'. Here, X is left out, and *er* can be substituted by *daar*.

- X doen iets met Y
‘X do something with Y’

Sentences following this pattern can have two meanings: on the one hand, X can refer to an animate entity, who performs a certain task using an entity specified in Y, e.g. *die man doet iets met auto's* ‘that man does something with cars’, which means that he repairs or sells cars, for example. On the other hand, when X refers to a non-animate entity (an event or an object) and when Y refers to a human entity, for example, *dat liedje doet iets met me* ‘that song does something to me’, the meaning is that Y is emotionally moved by X. This can be both in a positive and in a negative way. It can be said, then, that there are two different constructions with the pattern *X-doen-iets-met-Y*.

- er komt iets los bij X
‘something is coming loose with X’

Only phrases referring to human entities can take the position of X, since the verb ‘to come loose’ refers to an emotional state. This emotional state, however, can be both positive and negative: *er komt iets los bij die mensen* ‘something is coming loose with those people’, for example, can be used when people become really excited, but also when they become very angry or sad. The exact interpretation of the sentence has to be based on the context the sentence is uttered in.

- er is iets (met X)
‘there is something (with X)’

In contrast with almost all above-mentioned patterns, this expression seems to contain a negative evaluation: it means that something *bad* is going on, or that something is *wrong*. Similar to *X-lijken-Y-iets*, it seems that the combination of *er*, *is* and *iets* often has the form of a question (*is er iets?*), with which somebody actually asks if something is wrong. When used in the declarative form, the construction is often followed by a phrase indicating uncertainty, for example *er is iets, maar ik weet niet wat* ‘something is going on, but I do not know what’.

When *met X* is added to the expression, it can be used as a declarative sentence more easily than the construction without this prepositional phrase.

- iets van X
‘something of X’

Normally, the preposition *van* means ‘of’ in Dutch, but in this construction, it means that *iets* belongs to the category of things specified in X (somewhat comparable to English ‘like’). An example sentence for this construction is *ik wil iets van salade* ‘I want something like salad’: the speaker means that he wants something that is comparable to salad or that falls in the same category as salad. This is the approximative meaning Coppen & Foolen (2012) also reported for *iets van* (see section 2.3.3).

- X hebben iets (weg) van Y
‘X have something of Y’

This expression is also mentioned in Coppen & Foolen (2012), and in Van Dale, in which it gets a separate entry under the lemma *iets*. It means that the entity specified in X looks like Y, or has specific characteristics in common with Y. An example is *hij heeft iets weg van een aap* ‘he has something of a monkey’, i.e. he looks a bit like a monkey.

- X zeggen (toch/ook/wel/...) iets (over Y)
‘X say (particle) something (about Y)’

As mentioned in section 2.3, this construction is discussed in Jansen (2017). An interesting aspect about this pattern is that the word *iets* can be substituted by other ‘indefinite quantifying expressions’ (Jansen 2017:615) such as *veel* ‘a lot’, *genoeg* ‘enough’, and *alles* ‘everything’. The position of X is mostly taken by the demonstrative pronoun *dat* ‘that’ (*dat zegt iets* ‘that says something’). Nouns or pronouns referring to humans, however, are not possible in this position. A sentence such as *hij zegt iets* ‘he says something’ is, of course, a correct sentence, but here, the meaning is different: with a human referent, words are actually uttered, while in the expression with a non-human referent, this is not the case.

3.2.2 Wat

In almost all cases discussed above, *iets* can be substituted by *wat*. For the pattern *iets-van*, however, this is impossible, and I also find it difficult to see how *wat* can be followed by a relative clause, although the WNT did mention this as a possibility (see section 2.2.2). There

also seem to be differences between *wat* and *iets* in terms of the interpretation the expressions have when the one or the other word is used. As was already mentioned in section 3.2.1, when *wat* is used in constructions such as *X-zijn-iets*, the expression seems to give rise to a negative interpretation more easily than when *iets* is used. Most of the time, this is the case when X takes the form of a pronoun such as *dat* or *het* (e.g. *dat is ook wat* ‘that is also something’, *het is wat* ‘it is something’, *het is ook altijd wat* ‘it is also always something’). The same story applies to *X-woorden-iets*: sentences such as *dat wordt nog wat!* ‘that will become something!’ indicate an expectation for a bad ending or a difficult process. The use of *iets* for this kind of interpretation seems less acceptable.

There is one other pattern that was not discussed above and that has a preference for (or is even exclusively used with) the indefinite pronoun *wat*:

- Had je/hadden jullie wat?!
‘Did you have something?!’

This expression is used in a kind of aggressive way to make clear to the interlocutor that the speaker does not like their intervention, for example, when somebody is looking at the speaker or says something the speaker does not like. Similar to this is the expression *heb ik iets/wat van je aan?!*, literally meaning ‘do I wear something that belongs to you?!’, which is used to make clear – in an aggressive way – that somebody is staring at the speaker and that this speaker does not like that.

3.2.3 Zoiets

The word *zoiets* is most frequently used in contexts where it means ‘such a thing’, e.g. *dat is inderdaad zoiets* ‘that is indeed something like that’. Here, *zoiets* refers back to a matter or thing (to what specific matter or thing it refers has to become clear from the context) that is comparable with the matter or thing referred to by *dat*.

Apart from this use, there are three patterns in which *zoiets* is used in a different way:

- X hebben zoiets van [citaat]
‘X have something of [quotation]’

This pattern was already discussed in section 2.3.2 because the *heb-zoiets-van* construction is extensively discussed by Coppen (2010), among others. The construction means that X ‘has

something (by approximation) of a mental condition that leads towards the quotation [quotation] of the inner voice' (Coppen 2010:51). Thus, the construction introduces a quotation which – by approximation – quotes the thoughts of the subject specified in X. An example is *ik had zoiets van dat ga ik niet doen* 'I was like I am not going to do that'.

- X zijn (ook/nog/weer/...) zoiets
'x be (particle) something (like that)'

In this pattern, X cannot refer to animate entities, and it often takes the form of the pronoun *dat* 'that', which then refers to a matter or thing that was mentioned earlier in the communication event. Expressions following this pattern seem to have a negative interpretation. For example, *dat is ook zoiets* 'that is also something (like that)' can be paraphrased as 'that is also something you do not want; something undesirable; a stupid/strange thing'. *Zoiets* does not refer to an identifiable matter or thing, but rather, it can be seen as referring to a general category with undesirable, stupid, and strange things; this whole category is comparable to the matter referred to by *dat*.

- Wie verzint/doet/bedenkt (nu) zoiets?
'Who (now) makes up/does something like that?'

Although *zoiets* still has the neutral meaning 'such a thing' in this expression, sentences following this pattern are actually only used when *zoiets* refers to a negative matter or thing. For example, when somebody has stolen something, people can say *wie doet nu zoiets?* 'who does something like that?' to condemn this behaviour.

3.2.4 Zowat

Apart from the uses where *zowat* means 'almost, approximately' (e.g. *ik ben zowat bejaard* 'I am almost old'), there is another pattern in which *zowat* is used in a very different way:

- X zijn (ook/nog/weer/...) zowat
'x be (particle) so what'

This pattern is used when X refers to a matter or event that is evaluated negatively. For example, when somebody says that, instead of going to a party by car, it is also possible to go

there by train, somebody else can react to that by saying *ja, maar dat is ook weer zowat* ‘yes, but that is also again so what’, by which the speaker means that it will be a great effort, a lot of hassle, or very complicated to go by train. *Zowat* in these kinds of contexts basically means: ‘something you do not want’.

3.3 Evidence for *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions

On the basis of the discussion of the patterns in the sections above, it is possible to give arguments for calling these patterns constructions in the definition of construction grammar. As was explained in section 2.1, construction grammar has a few criteria on the basis of which constructions can be identified. These were: unpredictability of form and meaning, idiosyncratic limitations, and collostructional preferences. On the basis of introspection, it is not possible to give collostructional preferences as an argument to call something a construction since these have to be based on corpus research, but the other criteria can shed some light on the constructional status of the above-mentioned patterns.

First of all, all patterns that were discussed have an unpredictable meaning. For *iets*, the patterns are mostly used for positive evaluations, as is for example the case with *X-hebben-iets*, *X-zijn-iets*, *X-zien-iets-in-Y* and *er-zit-iets-in-X*. Some contain a negative evaluation, such as *er-is-iets-met-X*, while others refer to emotional states, which can be both positive and negative, such as *X-doen-iets-met-Y*. Moreover, some patterns seem to have a preference for *wat* when expressing negative evaluations, such as *X-zijn-wat* and *X-woorden-wat*. Apart from the use as quotation marker, the patterns discussed for *zoiets* express negative evaluations as well, as does the pattern for *zowat*. The patterns that do not have positive or negative evaluations as a component of their meaning, such as *X-hebben-iets-van-Y* and *X-hebben-zoiets-van*, also have a meaning that cannot be expected on the basis of the dictionary definition of the words within the expression (in these cases, that X looks like Y and that X has a certain thought, respectively).

With respect to unpredictability of form, most patterns follow the normal ways of sentence formation, the only oddities being the use of *weg* in *X-heeft-iets-weg-van-Y* and the absence of a verb such as *doen* ‘to do’ in *X-kunnen-iets-met-Y*. As was discussed for some of the patterns in the preceding section, some of the variable slots (indicated with X and Y) only take a specific type of entities as their referents. For example, in the *X-doen-iets-met-Y* construction, Y can only refer to humans, while X is more suitable for reference to matters or things (at least, in the construction with the ‘emotional-state interpretation’). In *X-zeggen-iets*, nouns and pronouns referring to humans cannot take the position of X; when X does refer to

people, the pattern has a different meaning. These idiosyncratic limitations have to be stored as part of the form of the expressions, which is an argument to call these patterns constructions.

Although especially the criterion of unpredictability of meaning is sufficient to call the patterns discussed above constructions, I think there are two additional arguments for this conclusion, which have to do with the translatability of the patterns and with the possibility of substitution of the indefinite pronouns. Concerning translatability, I hypothesized that it is not always possible to translate *iets* and *wat* as used in the patterns discussed in the preceding section into English ‘something’, while the ‘normal’, dictionary uses of these words can be translated with ‘something’ (e.g. *we eten iets* can be translated into English as *we are eating something*). It has been noted in the literature that constructions are language-specific: a construction that is found in two different languages that is identical in form, meaning, and distribution is rare (Goldberg 2013:23). For example, a construction that seems very similar in English and in Dutch is the so-called *way* construction, as in *he made his way through the crowd* – *hij baande zich een weg door de menigte*. However, Verhagen (2003) shows that, despite the similarities, there are also differences. For example, the English construction uses the possessive *his* where Dutch has the reflexive *zich*, and the verbs that are used differ as well (Verhagen 2003:34). It can therefore be expected that the specific constructions with the indefinite pronouns investigated in the present study cannot be literally translated into English, while maintaining the same meaning.

To confirm this, I have asked three native speakers of British English (one with no knowledge of Dutch, one with near-native Dutch language competencies, and one with Dutch as a second native language) to read section 3.2 above and indicate whether the literal translations of the Dutch sentences are also correct in English, and have the same meaning as they have in Dutch. Although there were some deviations in the answers the three informants gave, it was clear that some patterns are not used in English in the same way as they are used in Dutch. Particularly, the informants reported that *x-have-something(-with-Y)* is not used in English for indicating relationships, *x-become-something* is not used for (positive or negative) evaluations, *er-komt-iets-los-bij-X* cannot be translated into English, *something-of* cannot be used for approximative meanings, and *there-is-something(-with-X)* is actually not used without ‘something’ being specified further (for example, by *wrong*). On the other hand, *x-be-something*, *x-see-something-in-Y*, *x-make-something-of-Y*, *x-do-something-to-Y*, and *there-be-something-in-Y* have the same (non-compositional) meaning in English as they have in Dutch.

The expressions discussed for *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat* could not be literally translated into English.

The fact that the literal translations of some of the expressions into English do not have the same meaning as they have in Dutch, suggests that these constructions are non-compositional in Dutch, and therefore, that they are constructions. A translation test can thus work as an argument for the conclusion that a certain expression is a construction. Croft (1998) applies a similar test when discussing the pragmatic model of mental representation. The pragmatic model states that a certain linguistic element which has two uses, such as a word with two meanings, is represented in mind as one unit with a general meaning; the two uses of the word are derived from this general meaning and from general cognitive principles, which depend on the specific context the word is used in (Croft 1998:154). In order to demonstrate that the representation of a certain linguistic unit (such as a word) cannot be explained by this model, Croft argues for making cross-linguistic comparisons: when a certain use of the linguistic unit is impossible in another language, or has a different meaning, that is, when that use of the linguistic unit cannot be translated into another language with an equivalent form, the pragmatic model cannot apply to this unit; instead, the language-specific use of the unit has to be stored, and is not derived ‘on-line’ from a general meaning (Croft 1998:158-159; Cappelle 2014:259).

Although the purpose of Croft’s translation test is different from the purpose it has in this thesis (since it is used as evidence for how linguistic units are cognitively represented, not for the constructional status of expressions), the reasoning that a certain use cannot be derived and has to be stored separately suggests that it is a construction, which means that the two tests are in a way related.

A substitution test can also shed light on the difference between *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* as used in constructions and as used in sentences with a compositional meaning. As was already mentioned at the beginning of section 3.2.1, when *iets* is used as the object in a transitive sentence, such as *we gaan iets eten* ‘we are going to eat something’, *iets* can be replaced by all kinds of nouns indicating food, such as *patat* ‘French fries’ or *brood* ‘bread’. A substitution of *iets* can be more difficult when it is followed by a relative clause or an adjective, but it is not impossible: *dat is iets wat ik niet begrijp* ‘that is something I do not understand’, for example, can be rephrased as *dat is een ding/probleem dat ik niet begrijp* ‘that is a thing/problem I do not understand’, and *het krijgen van een kind is iets heel moois* ‘getting a child is something very beautiful’ can be rephrased as *het krijgen van een kind is een heel mooie gebeurtenis* ‘getting a child is a very beautiful event’.

For the uses of *iets* (as well as *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*) in the constructions discussed above, however, replacing the indefinite pronoun by a neutral noun such as ‘thing’ or ‘event’ seems to be much more difficult, if not impossible. I described the meanings of the patterns above mainly using the terms ‘positive evaluation’ and ‘negative evaluation’; sometimes, I also tried to make the meaning of the construction more concrete by stating that, for example, *die film is echt wel iets* could mean that the movie is of very high quality, or that it discusses a certain topic from an interesting point of view. These, however, were only possible paraphrases of what might be communicated by these constructions; what exactly is meant by the use of the word *iets* remains unclear and is basically impossible to catch in one word. The only thing the hearer gets from the statement is a vague indication that the speaker values a certain matter positively or negatively, but in what way and in what respect does not become clear. This makes it hard to substitute the indefinite pronouns in these kind of patterns with a noun, and when it can be substituted, it will always need an evaluative element, such as an adjective, to go with the noun.

For the few constructions where there was no positive or negative evaluation attached to the patterns, replacement by a noun phrase is still not possible or very restricted: in *X-hebben-iets-met-Y*, *iets* can be replaced by noun phrases such as ‘a relationship’ or ‘a special connection’; for *er-komt-iets-los-bij-X*, *iets* might be replaced by a noun phrase such as ‘a certain feeling’, although it seems that this does not cover the full meaning of the expression with *iets*; in *iets-van* (e.g. *iets van salade* ‘something like salad’), *iets* may be replaced by a noun, but then *van* needs to be replaced as well and that substitution is less straightforward (e.g. *een gerecht dat vergelijkbaar is met salade* ‘a meal comparable to salad’); for *X-hebben-iets(-weg)-van-Y*, the same difficulty applies: *iets* can be replaced by ‘a trait’, for example, but then, *van* has to be replaced as well, resulting in a sentence such as *hij heeft een karaktereigenschap die vergelijkbaar is met die van zijn moeder* ‘he has a trait that is comparable to that of his mother’. When *weg* is present in the construction (*hij heeft iets weg van zijn moeder*), *iets* cannot be replaced by a noun phrase at all.

These examples illustrate that replacing indefinite pronouns by noun phrases is impossible when these are part of the patterns discussed in section 3.2, which may indicate that the indefinite pronoun is used in a different way in these patterns than in patterns where it can be replaced by a noun, such as transitive sentences with main verbs such as *eten* ‘to eat’. However, it is not the case that *iets* cannot be substituted by another word at all in the discussed patterns. As was already discussed for *X-zeggen-iets*, *iets* can be substituted by quantifying expressions such as *veel* ‘much’, *genoeg* ‘enough’ and *alles* ‘everything’ in this

construction. In some other patterns, *iets* can also be substituted by at least *veel* ‘much’ and *weinig* ‘little’, most notably in the patterns *X-kunnen-iets-met-Y*, *X-zien-iets-in-Y*, *X-doen-iets-met-Y*, *er-komt-iets-los-bij-X* and *X-hebben-iets(-weg)-van-Y*. In patterns such as *X-hebben-iets* and *X-zijn-iets*, however, *iets* cannot be replaced by other quantifying expressions. This may indicate that the patterns in which *iets* can be substituted are different kinds of constructions compared to the ones in which *iets* cannot be substituted.

All in all, both the translation and the substitution test seem to be good instruments to distinguish between different uses of the indefinite pronouns: difficulty with replacing *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat* by a noun phrase or translating these words into English may be an indication that the expression the indefinite pronoun occurs in is a construction.

3.4 Evaluation of methodology

The discussion of the patterns above showed that it is possible to come up with a wide variety of constructions containing *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat* in a fairly easy way, by only following the researcher’s own native linguistic knowledge and intuitions. Broekhuis (2016:319-320) also mentions the economical way in which data can be obtained as an advantage of the introspective method. In some domains of linguistics, most notably formal or generative linguistics, introspection is still the main methodology that is used (Talmy 2007:xii; Broekhuis 2016:304). However, this method also has some clear disadvantages (see Schütze 2016 for extensive discussion). Here, I discuss two disadvantages of introspection which are directly related to the present study.

Firstly, relying on one’s own knowledge is a very unsystematic way of searching for possible constructions. The fact that I came up with the above-mentioned constructions, does not mean that these are the only possible constructions: there are definitely patterns that are not in the overview above, because I did not think of them (Broekhuis 2016:320 and Schütze 2016:53 for a similar objection to introspection).

Moreover, it is very well possible that other native speakers of Dutch have other intuitions about these (and other) constructions (which is also pointed out by De Hoop 2016, Broekhuis 2016:320 and Schütze 2016:38). For example, in the discussion above, I have mentioned a few times that certain patterns are often used in a certain form (e.g. *lijkt dat je iets?* for the construction *X-lijken-Y-iets*), or that only certain entities (e.g. only human or only non-human) can appear in the position of a variable slot in the construction. This, however, is only based on how I would use these constructions myself, but this does not necessarily have to be the same for other individuals in the language community. It is possible that there is

variation in how different speakers judge the acceptability of certain expressions (see e.g. Broekhuis & Corver 2016 for some acceptability differences). This means that another researcher's introspection results could be different from my results described above.

In sum, introspection is a method to search for possible constructions with *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*, but it is rather unsystematic and subjective. A more objective kind of data that is often used, and particularly in construction grammar approaches, is observational data, which is obtained from actual language usage. This method is adopted in the next two chapters.

4. Corpus research 1

4.1 Methodology

Next to introspective data, observational data (found in corpora) are often used for linguistic research, including construction-based research (see for references to construction-based corpus studies Gries 2013b:97). In this chapter, the method of corpus research is used in order to analyse the usage of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* in actual language use, and to distinguish different constructions containing these words. More particularly, this research is aimed at determining if the constructions that were described in the previous chapter are also found in actual language use in the corpus, and if there are still other constructions (that were not discussed in chapter 3) to be found as well.

The corpus that was used for this research, is the OpenSoNaR corpus (Oostdijk e.a. 2013). This 500-million word corpus consists of written texts originating from the Netherlands and Flanders. Various written genres, with varying degrees of formality, are represented in the corpus, such as newspaper and magazine articles, auto cues, blogs and chats. An advantage of using this corpus is the fact that it is a very large corpus, which makes it plausible that this corpus would represent the different contexts *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat* can be used in. A disadvantage is that this corpus does not contain spoken language. Intuitively, I assume that constructions such as the above-mentioned are more frequent in spoken language than in written language. However, because there are also some genres represented in the corpus that are informal and can be said to closely represent spoken language, such as chats and tweets, it can be assumed that these constructions also appear in the OpenSoNaR corpus. Moreover, using a corpus of written language allows me to investigate whether or not these specific expressions are used in written language, and to what extent.

For this research, only the Netherlands-Dutch part of the OpenSoNaR corpus was used in order to restrict the size of the corpus and to leave possible differences between Netherlands-Dutch and Flemish-Dutch with respect to the use of the indefinite pronouns out of this research. Because the exact way in which the occurrences of the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* were extracted from this corpus differs per word, the exact methodology is explained in further detail at the beginning of each of the subsections of section 4.2 below.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Iets

To determine what kind of uses of the word *iets* are present in language use, I conducted a small-scale corpus study with data from one genre (SMS). The advantage of this sub-corpus is that it is rather small and since *iets* is a frequently occurring word in Dutch, such a small corpus is needed to make it more manageable to search the data. Moreover, I chose the SMS corpus because SMS messages can be considered informal written language. Intuitively, as I mentioned above, I expect that *iets* is used more often in expressions such as (1), repeated here as (18), in informal language than in formal language, and therefore, I expect that I will find more instances of these uses of *iets* in this corpus than in, for example, a corpus with newspaper articles.

(18) Dat heeft wel iets.

‘That has something.’

A search within the Netherlands-Dutch SMS corpus on the word ‘iets’ resulted in 649 hits. I divided all of these instances in thirteen categories, which can be found in table 1 on the following page, together with an example sentence for each of the categories.⁵ For the categories (2)-(12), the division is mostly based on the formal contexts the occurrences of *iets* were used in (e.g. the fact that *iets* was followed by a subordinate clause), and sometimes on semantic features as well (e.g. the fact that *iets* is used to indicate approximation when followed by *van* or *met*). The categories (1) and (13) are more complicated. Especially category (1) is very broad, in which at least categories (2)-(6) can fall as well. The difference, however, is that the instances in categories (2)-(6) are more specific: they all have grammatical features (a subordinate clause, an adjective, et cetera) which the occurrences in category (1) do not have. Most of the categories (2)-(6) have their own meaning under the entry of *iets* in the dictionaries WNT and Van Dale (see section 2.3.1). This is also the reason why I made a separate category (2) (in which *iets* is contrasted with *niets*): the explicit contrast of *iets* with *niets* is also a distinct meaning in the WNT. It can be said, then, that all occurrences of *iets* that do not fall into any of the other categories, were placed in category (1). More particularly, the instances of the word *iets* in this category are practically always

⁵ The examples in this chapter are taken from the corpus, unless indicated otherwise. The sentences are, however, corrected for spelling and shortened words are written out.

occurring as the object of transitive sentences, with verbs such as *doen* ‘to do’, *eten* ‘to eat’, *afspreken* ‘to plan’, *weten* ‘to know’, *horen* ‘to hear’ and *kopen* ‘to buy’.

Category (13) contains expressions such as the ones discussed in the previous chapter: in these instances, *iets* is not used in a neutral way, as is the case with the instances in category (1), but it has a non-descriptive, and often positive or negative evaluative, interpretation, without any specific formal features binding the occurrences in this category together (but see the discussion of these sentences below).

Table 1 indicates the number of occurrences in the SMS corpus for each of the 13 categories.

	category	example sentence	number of occurrences
(1)	‘any thing’	<i>wij eten wel iets onderweg</i> ‘we will eat something on the way’	266
(2)	‘any thing’, contrasting with <i>niets</i>	<i>iets is beter dan niets</i> ‘something is better than nothing’	1
(3)	‘any thing’ + subordinate clause	<i>is er nog iets dat je wilt eten?</i> ‘is there anything you want to eat?’	20
(4)	‘any thing’ + adjective with -s	<i>maak er iets moois van</i> ‘make something beautiful out of it’	85
(5)	‘any thing’ + <i>anders</i>	<i>maar we kunnen ook iets anders kiezen</i> ‘but we can also choose something else’	34
(6)	‘any thing’ that could be followed by <i>anders</i> (or <i>dergelijks</i>)	<i>moet je dan nog koffie of iets hebben?</i> ‘do you need coffee or something (else)?’	3
(7)	‘any thing’ + <i>van/met</i> , indicating approximation	<i>kun je voor mij iets van paracetamol mee nemen?</i> ‘could you bring me something like paracetamol?’	31
(8)	‘a bit’ + comparative	<i>we zijn iets later</i> ‘we are a bit later’	137
(9)	‘a bit’ + prepositional phrase indicating time	<i>ben er iets na half vijf denk ik</i> ‘I will be there a bit after half past four I think’	16
(10)	‘a bit’ + <i>te</i>	<i>was iets te spannend</i> ‘it was a bit too exciting’	26

(11)	‘a bit’ other than (8)-(10)	<i>kan misschien iets uitlopen</i> ‘it can maybe overrun its time a bit’	4
(12)	noun	<i>het menselijk geheugen is een vreemd iets</i> ‘the human memory is a weird something’	5
(13)	other (<i>iets</i> used in a non-descriptive way)	<i>ik bel echt als er iets is</i> ‘I will really call if there is something (wrong)’	21
	total		649

Table 1. Number of occurrences of *iets* for each category

As can be seen in the table, most occurrences of *iets* are found in the first category, which can be seen as the most basic, ‘dictionary definition’ use of *iets*. However, as can be concluded from the various categories that are distinguished in table 1, there is more to say about the use of *iets*. Particularly, it appears that *iets* often occurs in specific contexts. If we only look at the categories where *iets* means ‘any thing’ (the first seven categories in table 1), *iets* can be followed by a subordinate clause, an adjective, the word *anders* or the preposition *van* or *met*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all of these additions are used to specify the word *iets* further: for example, for the sentence *hij heeft iets moois* ‘he has something beautiful’, it is obvious that more information is given than with the sentence *hij heeft iets* ‘he has something’, because in the first case, it is clear that the undefined object *iets* is at least beautiful.

I am not going into much detail about categories (8)-(12) since these are not the kinds of uses of *iets* I focus on in this thesis. However, it is interesting to see that for the adverbial cases of *iets*, where *iets* means ‘a bit’, patterns can be deduced as well: *iets* is most often followed by a comparative, but it can also be followed by a prepositional phrase indicating time, by *te* and an adjective, or it can be used without any additions (category (11)). Category (13) is discussed later in this section.

The question is, now, whether the *iets* patterns found in the corpus can be seen as constructions according to the criteria discussed in section 2.1. A pattern can be identified as a construction when it is unpredictable on the form side or on the meaning side, when it has idiosyncratic limitations, or when there are collocational preferences. I do not discuss collocational preferences here, since this is the topic of the next chapter. The other criteria, however, do not seem to apply to the categories (1)-(6): *iets* always has the meaning ‘any thing’, which can be specified further by an additional phrase, consisting of a subordinate clause, an adjective or the word *anders*, and there seem to be no formal oddities or

idiosyncratic limitations either. However, for category (7), *iets + van/met*, there does seem to be an unpredictable element on the meaning side, because the combination of *iets* with *van* or *met* indicates approximation rather than that *iets* means ‘any thing’ and the phrase with *van* or *met* gives a specification of *iets*. Important to note is that not all occurrences of *iets* followed by *van* or *met* have the specific interpretation of approximation. Compare examples (19) and (20) from the corpus with the (invented) examples (21) and (22):

(19) Kun je voor mij iets van paracetamol mee nemen?

‘Could you bring me something like paracetamol?’

(20) De aanleiding was volgens mij iets met stoofpeertjes en rollade.

‘The reason I think was something with stewed pears and roulade.’

(21) Dat is iets van mijn moeder.

‘That is something from my mother (i.e. it belongs to my mother).’

(22) We eten vanavond iets met sla.

‘We are going to eat something with lettuce tonight.’

While in (19) and (20) the interpretation of approximation is present, it is not in (21) and (22); utterances such as the last two are examples of category (1) in the table above and are used in a more descriptive way than (19) and (20).

Although it seems that *iets van* and *iets met* are presented as if they are the same construction (form: *iets + prepositional phrase*, meaning: indicating approximation), there does seem to be a difference in degree of unpredictability between *iets van* and *iets met*: in (20), the use of the preposition *met* still also gives rise to the interpretation that the ‘iets’ contains stewed pears and roulade, next to the interpretation that a certain event probably happened because of (something like) pears and roulade. This can be illustrated by changing the word *iets* for a noun phrase, for example, *de maaltijd*:

(23) De aanleiding was volgens mij de maaltijd met stoofpeertjes en rollade.

‘The reason I think was the meal with stewed pears and roulade.’

In the case of (19), with *iets van*, this kind of substitution is not possible (as was also already argued in section 3.3): if you change the word *iets* to *een doosje* ‘a box’, for example, the sentence means that the box is made of paracetamol:

(24) Kun je voor mij een doosje van paracetamol mee nemen?

‘Could you bring me a box from paracetamol?’

Yet, there are also examples of *iets met* in which *iets* is less easily replaced by a noun, for example in (25). It seems that *iets met* is used in this sentence instead of *het heeft iets te maken met* ‘it has something to do with’.

(25) De kans zal overal klein zijn... Iets met vraag en aanbod :)

‘The chance will be small everywhere... Something with supply and demand :)’

It can be said that (19) and (20) differ in meaning from what can be expected on the basis of the combination of the words *iets* and *van* or *met* (regarding the difference in meaning between (19) and (20) on the one hand and (21) and (22) on the other), but it seems that the unpredictability is stronger for *iets van* than for *iets met*, since in the last case, *iets* can sometimes be replaced by a noun, while with *iets van*, this seems impossible. Hence, on the basis of the criterion of unpredictability (of meaning), but also in combination with a substitution test, *iets van* and *iets met* can be considered as constructions, in which these forms are associated with an approximative meaning.

For the purpose of this thesis, category (13) in table 1 (‘other’) is an interesting one, because this category already consists of expressions with *iets* that have a more specific meaning than would be expected on the basis of the words the expression contains. In other words, the criterion of unpredictability of meaning was already a criterion on the basis of which the expressions were put in this category, which means that all expressions in this category would have to be constructions.

When taking a closer look at the specific instances within this last category, it appears that there is a striking similarity between most of the instances: 18 out of the 21 appearances have either a form of *zijn* ‘to be’ as their main verb, or are elliptical sentences in which *zijn* can be added as the main verb (such as in (26) below). Examples are:

(26) Wij gaan naar Mundial op zondag, iets voor jou?

‘We are going to Mundial on Sunday, something for you (i.e. something you like)?’

(27) Is het iets om do naar Nijmegen te komen?

‘Is it something (i.e. a good idea) to come to Nijmegen on Thursday?’

(28) Hopelijk is die Body Workout iets, anders blijf ik toch maar een dooie dweil.

‘Hopefully that Body Workout is something (i.e. helpful, good for the body et cetera), otherwise I will stay a dead mop (i.e. weak).’

(29) Als er iets is altijd bellen hè!

‘If there is something (i.e. something wrong), always call me, alright?’

(30) Er was iets met haar broer in Thailand.

‘There was something (i.e. something wrong) with her brother in Thailand.’

As can be seen in the additions (between brackets) in the translations, the literal meaning of the sentences is not the same as the intended meaning, which makes them different from the expressions in the *iets* category meaning ‘any thing’. What is striking as well is the fact that the actual meaning can be positive or negative: while (26), (27), and (28) have a positive evaluation (the question is whether Mundial is something the hearer *likes*, and whether it is a *good* idea to go to Nijmegen; the body workout is *helpful*), (29) and (30) include a negative evaluation (something is *wrong*). The difference in meaning agrees with a difference in the construction of the sentences: in (27) and (28), the words *die* ‘that’ (followed by a noun) and *het* ‘it’ are used and in (26), the word *dat* can be added (*is dat iets voor jou?* ‘is that something for you?’), while in (29) and (30), the word *er* ‘there’ is used. It is possible that the use of these words in combination with the verb *zijn* and with *iets* gives rise to the positive or negative evaluation. Before this possibility is investigated in the sub-section below, however, it is necessary to mention the three instances in the ‘other’ category without *zijn* as a main verb:

(31) We moeten nog wel met iets komen maandag anders worden we nooit verkozen

‘We have to come with something (i.e. something good) on Monday, otherwise we will never be elected’

(32) Ik vond de formulering dat je zin had in een cynisch avondje niet echt iets voor jou

‘I found the formulation that you felt like having a cynical evening not something for you (i.e. typically something you would say)’

(33) Ik had eerlijk gezegd niet gedacht dat het je iets zou doen

‘To be honest, I would not have expected that it would do something to you (i.e. that you would be affected by it)’

As can be seen from the translations of the sentences, the actual meaning of the sentences is more than the literal meaning, and therefore, according to the criterion of the unpredictability of meaning, they can be seen as constructions.

Er-zijn-iets and het-zijn-iets

To investigate whether the use of the word *er* in combination with a form of the verb *zijn* and with *iets* results in negative evaluations and the word *het* instead of *er* gives rise to positive evaluations, I conducted searches within OpenSoNaR with the lemmas [er] and [het] followed by [zijn] followed by [iets]. For *er-zijn-iets*, this resulted in 724 hits for the Netherlands-Dutch corpus (all genres taken together). From these results, I took the first 300 occurrences and divided them into categories on the basis of the words that followed *iets*. In table 2 below, the most striking results are displayed. For the full list of categories and their number of occurrences, see Appendix 1.

	category	example sentence	number of occurrences
(1)	<i>mis</i>	<i>er is iets mis</i> ‘something is wrong’	16
(2)	<i>mis/loos met</i> + noun phrase	<i>er is iets mis met uw auto</i> ‘something is wrong with your car’	25
(3)	<i>met</i> + noun phrase	<i>er is iets met Chamo</i> ‘something is going on (i.e. wrong) with Chamo’	25
(4)	negative adjective + prepositional phrase (<i>aan/met/in</i>)	<i>er is iets fataals aan een portret</i> ‘there is something fatal about a portret’	24
(5)	negative adjective + <i>aan de gang/gaande/aan de hand</i> (+ <i>met</i> + noun phrase)	<i>er is iets raars aan de hand met het jongetje Cole</i> ‘there is something strange going on with the boy Cole’	27
(6)	positive/neutral adjective + prepositional phrase (<i>aan/met/in</i>)	<i>er is iets moois met groente en fruit</i> ‘there is something beautiful about vegetables and fruit’	9
(7)	positive/neutral adjective + <i>aan de gang/gaande/aan de hand</i>	<i>er was iets mysterieus gaande</i> ‘something mysterious was going on’	1

(8)	<i>aan de gang/aan de hand/gaande</i>	<i>er is iets aan de hand</i> ‘something is going on’	18
	total		145

Table 2. Number of occurrences for additions to *er-zijn-iets*

Categories (6) and (7) in table 2 show that *er-zijn-iets* can be used in positive contexts, but given the small number of occurrences for these categories compared to the categories (4) and (5) with negative adjectives, it seems clear that most adjectives used with *er-zijn-iets* are negative evaluative. (In total, there are ten occurrences of positive adjectives against 51 occurrences of negative adjectives.) Moreover, other categories distinguished in table 2 have predominantly negative interpretations as well. Particularly in categories (1) and (2), the use of the word *mis* ‘wrong’ gives rise to this interpretation. In category (3), there does not seem to be a word that points towards a negative evaluation, but when considering the translation of the example sentence (which is similar to sentence (30) above), it is clear that the sentences from category (3) contain a negative evaluation as well. Because the interpretation of these expressions does not follow from the literal meaning of the expressions, all sentences in category (3) can be considered instances of a construction according to the criterion of unpredictability of meaning. For the other categories (1)-(7), the unpredictability of meaning does not seem to apply, because the meaning can be composed out of the meaning of the individual parts of the sentences.

Category (8), finally, almost exclusively contains instances of *aan de hand*, which almost all have a negative evaluative interpretation, meaning that something is wrong. See for example sentence (34) below. However, a negative interpretation does not necessarily have to be the case, as is shown in (35):

(34) Want daarvoor is de sirene: om te waarschuwen. Er is iets aan de hand.

‘Because that is why the siren is there: to warn you. Something is going on / something is wrong.’

(35) Er is iets aan de hand wanneer de haute-couturiers en de parfumeurs denken dat ze niet achter mogen blijven. Het tatoeëren is ook in het uitgaansleven razend populair geworden.

‘There is something going on when the haute-couturiers and the perfumers think that they cannot stay behind. Tattooing has become immensely popular in the nightlife as well.’

In (35), the fact that something is going on does not mean that something is wrong, as is the case in (34); rather, it means that something exciting is happening, a new trend is being set. Sentence (35), however, was the only clear example of a non-negative interpretation of *er-zijn-iets-aan-de-hand* in my corpus. Thus, this construction can be associated with a negative evaluative meaning.

Since there are only a few instances of *gaande* and *aan de gang* in the corpus, it is less easy to find any patterns for those expressions, but at least, it seems to be the case that these can be used for negative as well as for positive evaluations.

An interesting aspect about *gaande*, *aan de gang*, and *aan de hand* is that these expressions can be preceded by an adjective (see category (5) and (7) in table 2). Investigating whether these adjectives are predominantly negative or positive evaluative can also shed light on the question whether or not these expressions are mostly used in negative or positive contexts. A comparison of categories (5) and (7) in table 2 above already indicates that most adjectives are negative (only 1 is positive and 27 are negative), but to find more examples of each expression combined with an adjective, I conducted a search with the entire OpenSoNaR corpus (i.e. the Netherlands-Dutch and Flanders-Dutch corpus, and all genres) searching on the lemmas [er][zijn][iets][][aan][de][gang] and [er][zijn][iets][][gaande], and with the Netherlands-Dutch corpus searching on the lemmas [er][zijn][iets][][aan][de][hand]. The Flanders corpus was used for the expressions with *aan de gang* and *gaande* in addition to the Netherlands corpus because these expressions are less frequent than those with *aan de hand*.

The specific searches left one word open between *iets* and the expression (indicated by the brackets [] above), which allowed me to find all possible adjectives on this position. The results for these three searches are summarized in table 3 on the following page. Contrary to the results in table 1 and 2 above, *anders* is counted as a (neutral) adjective in table 3, instead of this word being a separate category. In this way, all words occurring on the position of the brackets [] are present in table 3 on the following page.

expression	occurring positive/ neutral adjectives	# adjectives	occurring negative adjectives	# adjectives
<i>er-zijn-iets- ADJ-aan-de- hand</i>	<i>anders</i> ‘different’	6	<i>raar</i> ‘weird’ <i>merkwaardig</i> ‘curious’ <i>vreemd</i> ‘strange’ <i>ernstig</i> ‘serious’ <i>gek</i> ‘crazy’ <i>vervelend</i> ‘annoying’ <i>zorgelijk</i> ‘worrisome’ <i>ongewoon</i> ‘unusual’ <i>erg</i> ‘bad’	12 6 13 2 1 1 1 1 1
total		6	total	38
<i>er-zijn-iets- ADJ-gaande</i>	<i>anders</i> ‘different’ <i>mysterieus</i> ‘mysterious’ <i>groot</i> ‘big’	4 1 1	<i>droevig</i> ‘sad’ <i>gek</i> ‘crazy’ <i>raar</i> ‘weird’	1 1 1
total		6	total	3
<i>er-zijn-iets- ADJ-aan de gang</i>	<i>opmerkelijk</i> ‘remarkable’ <i>enorm</i> ‘enourmous’	1 1	<i>raar</i> ‘weird’ <i>pervers</i> ‘perverse’ <i>eigenaardig</i> ‘peculiar’ <i>gek</i> ‘crazy’ <i>vreemd</i> ‘strange’	1 1 2 1 2
total		2	total	7

Table 3. numbers of positive and negative adjectives per expression

Although the total number of occurrences for *gaande* and *aan de gang* is low (even when using a larger corpus than for *aan de hand*), an interesting pattern is visible when considering the differences between the three expressions. It appears that *gaande* and *aan de gang*, even on the basis of a few occurrences, can be used in combination with both positive and negative adjectives. *Er-zijn-iets-ADJ-aan-de-hand*, however, is always used with a negative adjective or with the neutral word *anders*.

The results given in table 2 and 3 thus show that expressions with *er-zijn-iets* predominantly have a negative interpretation. However, table 2 is made up of only about half of the total number of occurrences of *er-zijn-iets* that I investigated. When examining the rest

of the results, it appears that negative evaluative contexts are frequently occurring here as well (see for the full list of contexts Appendix 1). Expressions include *er is iets niet in orde/niet goed/fout* ‘something is not right’ (seven times), *er is iets niet goed/fout/verkeerd/ mis gegaan* ‘something has gone wrong’ (eighteen times in total), and *er is iets gebeurd* ‘something has happened’ (fourteen times, although three of those seemed to be used positively). *Er-is-iets* can also be used in a more neutral context, for example in combination with a subordinate clause or with a past participle such as *besteld* ‘ordered’, as in (36). In the latter case, however, *is* is not the main verb of the sentence, and therefore, these cases seem to be instances of a different construction.

(36) *Er is iets besteld.*

‘Something has been ordered.’

When examining the contexts *het-zijn-iets* is used in, it becomes clear that this construction is used in a very different way than *er-zijn-iets*; particularly, the contexts are not as negative. Again, the first 300 occurrences (out of a total of 356) from a search with the lemmas *het*, *zijn*, and *iets* in the Netherlands-Dutch corpus were examined. Table 4 gives the contexts in which *het-zijn-iets* is used mostly. See Appendix 1 for a complete overview of the contexts for *het-zijn-iets* in this corpus.

	category	example sentence	number of occurrences
(1)	subordinate clause	<i>het is iets wat intern functioneert</i> ‘it is something that functions internally’	128
(2)	adjective	<i>het is iets vanzelfsprekends</i> ‘it is something natural’	62
(3)	<i>anders</i>	<i>het is iets heel anders</i> ‘it is something very different’	38
	total		230

Table 4. Number of occurrences for additions to *het-zijn-iets*

When examining the different adjectives used, it appears that most of them are either positive or neutral, as can be seen in table 5 on the following page.

occurring positive/neutral adjectives	total adjectives positive/neutral	occurring negative adjectives	total adjectives negative
<i>vanzelfsprekend, mysterieus (2x), psychisch, bijzonder (6x), nieuw (3x), positief (2x), uniek (3x), persoonlijk, regionaal, natuurlijk (2x), prachtig, spannend, spiritueel, speciaal (2x), individueel, heilig, aangeboren, kort, buitengewoon, cultureel, subtiel, symbolisch, onbeschrijflijk, wazig, fantastisch, groot, dierlijk, fundamentalistisch, plezierig, dynamisch, diep, aandoenlijk, instinctief, biologisch, Siciliaans, fijn⁶</i>	49	<i>onnatuurlijk, emotioneel, vreselijk, moeilijk, angstaanjagend, nietig, slecht, hyperig, onomkeerbaar, ongrijpbaar, wreed, verschrikkelijk (2x), erg⁷</i>	14
<i>anders</i>	38		
total	87		14

Table 5. numbers of positive and negative adjectives per expression

⁶ Translations of the words are: naturally, mysterious, psychic, extraordinary, new, positive, unique, personal, regional, natural, magnificent, exciting, spiritual, special, individual, holy, innate, short, extremely, cultural, subtle, symbolic, indescribable, hazy, fantastic, big, animal, fundamental, enjoyable, dynamic, deep, touching, instinctive, biological, Sicilian, nice.

⁷ Translations of the words are: unnatural, emotional, horrible, difficult, terrifying, puny, bad, hypish, irreversible, elusive, cruel, terrible, bad.

However, sentences such as (26), (27) and (28), which were the original reason why I took a closer look at *het-zijn-iets*, are not part of the most frequently occurring structures; in fact, only seven out of the 300 instances are similar to the expression in (26) (see category (7) in Appendix 1), while none are similar to (27) and (28).

In sum, by taking a closer look at the patterns *er-zijn-iets* and *het-zijn-iets*, it has become clear that the patterns with *er* are predominantly used for negative evaluations (which is also demonstrated by the fact that it is most often combined with a negative adjective), while the patterns with *het* are more often used in a neutral or positive way (which was also apparent in the combination with adjectives). It thus seems to be the case that there are certain, quite opposite, elements of the meaning (i.e. negative and positive evaluations) connected to specific patterns containing *iets*, which indicates that these patterns are indeed constructions.

Summary

The search within the SMS corpus revealed that *iets* is used in some very specific contexts (e.g. followed by a subordinate clause or adjective), but for only two of the categories that were distinguished was it argued that the expressions were constructions according to the criteria stated by construction grammar theory: *iets* followed by *van* (and *met*, although the constructional status was less clear for this combination), indicating approximation, and the instances in the ‘other’ category, most particularly the patterns *er-zijn-iets* and *het/dat/die-zijn-iets*, indicating positive or negative evaluations.

In section 4.3, these results are discussed in more detail in the light of the criteria for identifying constructions, but first, the results for the words *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* are described in the upcoming subsections.

4.2.2 Wat

Wat is an even more frequently occurring word in Dutch than *iets* because it has many different uses, which resulted in 1725 hits from the same SMS corpus as I used for *iets*. 1048 of these 1725 hits were occurrences of *wat* as an interrogative, relative or exclamative pronoun; the other 676 hits (instances of *wat* as an indefinite pronoun or adverb) are divided in categories in table 6 on the following page.⁸

⁸ 1048 and 676 does not add up to 1725; the one missing hit appeared to be an instance of *zowat* (but written as *zo wat*), and is counted with the results for *zowat* in section 4.2.4 instead of here.

	category	example sentence	number of occurrences
(1)	‘any thing’	<i>we gaan vanavond wat drinken in de stad</i> ‘we are going to have a drink in the city tonight’	230
(2)	‘any thing’ + adjective with -s	<i>ik moet vandaag wel wat nuttigs doen</i> ‘I have to do something useful today’	35
(3)	‘any thing’ + <i>anders</i>	<i>dat is wat anders</i> ‘that is something else’	5
(4)	‘a bit’ + comparative	<i>je moet wat vriendelijker zijn</i> ‘you have to be a bit friendlier’	109
(5)	‘a bit’ + <i>te</i>	<i>deze broek zit wat te strak</i> ‘these pants are a bit too tight’	4
(6)	‘a bit’	<i>we lopen misschien wat vertraging op</i> ‘we might face some delay’	130
(7)	‘some’	<i>Jan heeft wat flessen gehaald</i> ‘Jan got some bottles’	124
(8)	<i>heel wat</i>	<i>er valt nog heel wat te leren voor alle partijen</i> ‘much has to be learnt for all parties’	2
(9)	other	<i>is het feestje wat?</i> ‘is the party something (i.e. fun/nice/worth it)?’	37
	total		676

Table 6. Number of occurrences of *wat* for each category

Categories (1)-(6) and (9) are the same as the *iets* categories (1), (4), (5), (8), (10), (11) and (13) in table 1, respectively. *Wat* in category (7) and (8) in table 6 cannot be substituted by *iets*. Interestingly, however, there are more categories distinguished for *iets* in which *iets* cannot be substituted by *wat*: *wat* cannot stand in contrast with *niets* (37), it cannot be followed by a subordinate clause (38) (although the WNT argues that it can, cf. section 2.3.2), it cannot be followed by *van* or *met* indicating approximation (39), and, with respect to the adverbial use, it cannot be followed by a preposition indicating time (40).

(37) **Wat is beter dan niets.*

‘Something is better than nothing.’

(38) *Is er nog wat wat je wilt eten?

‘Is there anything you want to eat?’

(39) *Kun je voor mij wat van paracetamol mee nemen?

‘Could you bring me something like paracetamol?’

(40) *Ben er wat na half vijf denk ik.

‘I will be there a bit after half past four I think.’

The results, then, show that *iets* and *wat* are used in slightly different contexts. Moreover, there also seems to be a difference in relative frequency between *iets* and *wat* in contexts where both words can be used. Most strikingly, *iets* is more often followed by an adjective or by *anders* than *wat*: while *wat* plus an adjective appears 35 times in the corpus and *wat* plus *anders* only 5 times, for *iets*, the frequency was 85 and 34, respectively, while the total number of hits for both words is very comparable (676 for *wat* and 649 for *iets*). Apparently, when using an indefinite pronoun followed by an adjective, preference is given to *iets* instead of *wat*.

When taking a closer look at the ‘other’ category (9) in table 6, it appears that the outcomes for this category are somewhat different from the ‘other’ category for *iets* as well. Again, there are a few patterns to be deduced from the instances. To begin with, more than half of the expressions in category (9) have either *zijn* (thirteen times) or *worden* (eight times) as their main verb, such as examples (41)-(44). As can be seen, both the expressions with *worden* and with *zijn* can be used for negative and for positive evaluations.

(41) Is het feestje wat?

‘Is the party something (i.e. nice/worth it)?’

(42) Het is ook wat met die dingen...

‘It is also something (i.e. a lot of hassle) with those things...’

(43) Sinterklaas wordt nog wat, eerst op 4 bij Remke thuis en dan 5 naar Wognum.

‘Sinterklaas will be something (i.e. busy/stressful), first at Remke’s on the fourth and then to Wognum on the fifth.’

(44) Buwh, ben misselijk... denk niet dat vuurspuwen dan wat wordt...

‘Buwh, I feel sick. I do not think that spitting fire will become something (i.e. will work)’

The other instances in category (9) in table 6 are variations on the following patterns (including the number of times the patterns were appearing in the corpus):

- *X missen wat* ‘X miss something (i.e. nice/worth it)’, e.g. *je mist wat* ‘you miss something’ (three times);
- *X hebben wat aan Y* ‘X have something AAN Y (i.e. can use Y to their benefit)’, e.g. *hopelijk hebben we er wat aan* ‘hopefully we have something AAN it’ (three times);
- *X vinden Y wat* ‘X find Y something (i.e. good, worth it)’, e.g. *laat maar weten of je dat wat vindt* ‘let me know if you find that something (i.e. if you like it)’ (two times);
- *X lijken Y wat* ‘X seem something (i.e. good) to Y’, e.g. *lijkt het je wat om deze week af te spreken?* ‘does it seem something to you (i.e. do you like it) to meet up this week?’ (two times);
- *X kunnen wat met Y* ‘X can something with Y (i.e. can use Y to their benefit)’, e.g. *daar kunnen we wel wat mee* ‘we can [do] something with that’ (two times);
- *X kunnen wat hebben* ‘X can have something (i.e. take a beating)’, e.g. *ik kan wel wat hebben* ‘I can have something’ (one time);
- *er komt wat van X* ‘there comes something from X (i.e. activity X is performed)’, e.g. *is er wat van werken gekomen?* ‘have you worked?’ (one time);
- *X maken wat van Y* ‘X make something of Y (i.e. something good)’, e.g. *maak wat van je leven* ‘make something of your life’ (one time);
- *X hebben wat* ‘X have something (i.e. something good)’, e.g. *dan heb je ook wat* ‘then you have something’ (one time).

Again, the additions in the translations make clear that the meanings of these expressions are more than the meaning of the combination of the individual words. It is striking, however, that all above-mentioned patterns with *wat* have a positive interpretation, except the patterns with *zijn* and *worden*, which can also be used negatively. It thus seems that the same construction (*X-woorden/zijn-wat*) is sometimes used for a positive evaluation, while in other cases, it is used for a negative evaluation. I believe, however, that there are differences in form between the different interpretations of the *worden-wat* and *zijn-wat* constructions. To demonstrate this, I carried out some additional research on the basis of the sentences (41)-(44), the results of which are described below.

X-zijn-wat and X-worden-wat

A first observation is that when the expressions with *zijn* have the form of a question (such as in (41)), they seem to have a positive interpretation. To test whether this is always the case, I have searched in the Netherlands-Dutch part of the OpenSoNaR corpus on the lemmas [zijn][][wat][?], in which one word was left open between *zijn* and *wat*. Out of a total of 188 hits, 170 were instances of the pattern *zijn-x-wat?*, with the words *er* ‘there’, *dit* ‘this’, *dat* ‘that’, *het* ‘it’ and the noun *Facebook* appearing on the position of *x*.⁹ When examining these results, it is indeed the case that all instances of this construction have the same positive interpretation as (41), except when *er* appears on the open position: then, the question contains a negative evaluation (*is er wat?*).¹⁰ This matches the outcomes for the patterns *er-zijn-iets* and *het-zijn-iets* discussed for *iets* in section 4.2.1.

Secondly, it seems that for the pattern *het-zijn-wat*, as in sentence (42), the use of particles can change the interpretation of the sentence. When used without a particle, *het-zijn-wat* basically always has a negative interpretation: I searched on the lemmas [het][zijn][wat] in the Netherlands-Dutch OpenSoNaR corpus, which yielded 335 results, 42 of which were instances of this pattern, the others being sentences in which *wat* was used as a relative or interrogative pronoun. 34 of these instances were used negatively, while five were used positively and the other three were undecided because of lack of context (see Appendix 2). The five positive examples of this pattern, however, can be explained. Two of these uses seem to be instances of another construction. In one of the instances, a woman used the phrase *het was wat* ‘it was something’ when referring to the fact that she lost a few pounds weight to indicate that it was less than she expected, but that she (at least) lost a bit of weight. Here, *wat* is thus used in opposition to *nothing* (‘something is better than nothing’). There is, I think, a difference in form between this pattern and the negative uses of *het-zijn-wat*, which has to do with intonation: in the case of ‘something is better than nothing’, the accent is on the word *wat* (*het is wát*), while in the negative use of the pattern, it is on the verb (*het ís wat*). Obviously, this cannot be tested with a corpus with written texts, but when there is indeed a difference in intonation, the two uses cannot be instances of the same construction *het-is-wat*, since there is a difference in form and meaning.

⁹ In the other instances, *wat* was an interrogative pronoun, not an indefinite pronoun.

¹⁰ 23 instances have been excluded from the research because of lack of context. See Appendix 2 on page 90 for the sentences used for the research.

Two other uses of positive *het-is-wat* expressions appear to be sarcastic uses of the pattern, in which there seems to be a positive evaluation, while in fact, the writers are making fun of the fact that somebody is called ‘superblogger’ and that the tips are free today, respectively, which makes the expression rather negative evaluative:

(45) Het is wat, een #superblogger genoemd worden door @Robert_Engel. ;) *pinkt traantje weg*

‘It is something, being called a #superblogger by @Robert_Engel. ;) *wipes a tear away*

(46) Het is wat met de #gratis #tips vandaag!

‘It is something with the #free #tips today!’

The final positive use of the pattern seems to be genuinely used as a positive evaluation: when discussing members of a certain society who have been members for 65 years, one of the writers reacts to that fact with the utterance *tsja, het is wat hè?* ‘yeah, it is something, right?’ This expresses admiration for being a member for such a long time. However, since this is the only clear example of a positive use of this pattern against 34 examples of a negative use, *het-zijn-wat* is clearly used for negative evaluations. Only when the particle *wel* is added to the search can more positive uses of the pattern be found. Unfortunately, there are not many instances of [het][zijn][wel][wat] to be found in the OpenSoNaR corpus, but at least, there were two examples of the pattern that were used in a positive way (to indicate that a party and a meeting, respectively, were worth it going to), against one example that was used more negatively (to indicate that a certain boy is in a class with almost no other boys); see Appendix 2. The particle *wel* can clearly add a more positive interpretation to the pattern.

The fact that the use of particles matters for the interpretation of *wat* patterns also becomes apparent when taking a closer look at the pattern *x-woorden-nog-wat*, as in sentence (43). The particle *nog* that is used in (43) seems to strengthen the negative evaluation of this expression. To investigate this possibility, I searched for the lemmas [woorden][nog][wat] in the entire OpenSoNaR corpus. This resulted in 164 hits, 70 of which were instances of the pattern *x-woorden-nog-wat*. For 8 instances, it was not possible to decide whether they were used in a positive or in a negative way, but for the remaining 62 instances, 50 were used for a negative evaluation, and 12 for a positive evaluation. The pattern is thus clearly used more often when evaluating a situation negatively, but in addition to this, another interesting result

is found when focussing on the words that fill the position of X. This is made clear in table 7 below.

word on position X negative	number of occurrences negative	word on position X positive	number of occurrences positive
<i>dat</i> ‘that’	36	<i>het</i> ‘it’	8
(ellipsis)	9	<i>dat</i> ‘that’	3
noun	4	<i>dit</i> ‘this’	1
<i>het</i> ‘it’	1		
total	50	total	12

Table 7. Number of occurrences of words on position X in the *X-woorden-nog-wat* pattern

Because the positions are ordered from most frequently occurring to least frequently occurring in the table, it is clear that the negative use of *X-woorden-nog-wat* is used most of the time with the word *dat*, while it is almost never used with *het* on the position of X; for the positive use of the pattern, this is exactly the other way around. It thus seems to be the case that the exact form of the pattern – the use of particles, the word that can take the open slot in the pattern – can give an indication whether the pattern is used for a positive or for a negative evaluation.

It is of course possible to say much more about the different forms the patterns *X-woorden-wat* and *X-zijn-wat* can take and what different meanings are attached to those forms, but this requires a separate study with much more corpus research than can be done within the scope of this thesis. This section is only meant to illustrate that differences in meaning between uses of certain patterns may correspond to differences in form, which is an indication that these patterns are constructions.

Comparison with *iets*

In the discussion of table 6, I already pointed out some similarities and differences between the categories distinguished for *iets* in section 4.2.1 and *wat* in this section. With respect to the ‘other’ category, however, there are also some similarities and differences. To begin with, the patterns with *zijn* as the main verb are well represented for both *iets* and *wat*. This is probably due to the fact that *zijn* is a very frequent verb in itself, which makes it more likely that instances with this verb are found in a corpus. Surprisingly, however, only *wat* appears

together with *worden*, although this is a rather frequent verb as well, and a search within the Netherlands part of the OpenSoNaR on [het][worden][iets] and [het][worden][][iets] (the latter with one word left open between *worden* and *iets*) revealed only five instances of the pattern *X-worden-iets*, all with a negative evaluation, similar to the same pattern with *wat*. It seems to be the case, then, that both words can be used in the same (negative) way in this pattern, but that *wat* is used more frequently than *iets*. For the other patterns found for *wat*, it is also the case that *wat* can be substituted for *iets*, but again, it may be the case that these are more often used with *wat*, which may also be the reason why, with the exact same corpus and with about the same number of occurrences for *iets* and *wat* (649 and 676, respectively), *wat* had more instances in the ‘other’ category than *iets*.

A further interesting point is the fact that the patterns *het-zijn-iets* and *het-zijn-wat* are both investigated in detail in the last two sections, which makes a comparison between the two possible. It is already striking that *het-zijn-iets* is used in a completely different way from *het-zijn-wat*: for *het-zijn-iets*, most occurrences appear with additions such as subordinate clauses and adjectives, while this is not the case with *het-zijn-wat* (because, as was already shown in table 6, *wat* cannot be combined with a subordinate clause, and is less often combined with an adjective than *iets*). *Het-zijn-wat* seems to be used exclusively with the negative evaluative meaning that was discussed above, while *het-zijn-iets* seems to be either neutral or positive.

Although this research thus already yields some differences in distribution between *iets* and *wat*, further research is needed to determine these differences in detail.

Summary

As was the case with *iets*, the search within the SMS corpus revealed that the use of *wat* can be brought down to a limited number of categories, some of which can also be distinguished for *iets*, while others cannot. The ‘other’ category appeared to contain some very interesting patterns, most particularly the patterns *X-zijn-wat* and *X-worden-wat*, which appeared to be able to indicate both positive and negative evaluations, depending on the specific form of the expression (i.e. the element on position X and the use of particles). It was argued that these patterns are in fact constructions (more on this in section 4.3). Interestingly, the outcomes for *wat* differ from those for *iets*. Particularly, *wat* showed a much greater variation in patterns (probably because there were more instances of *wat* in the ‘other’ category), and the pattern *het-zijn-wat* is used for negative evaluations, while *het-zijn-iets* is not.

4.2.3 Zoiets

Zoiets is not as frequently used as *iets* and *wat*; therefore, I chose to include the SMS and Chat corpora for this research. I chose the chat corpus in addition to the SMS corpus because the chat genre is very closely related to SMS, since both genres have an informal character and are dialogic. The corpus search resulted in 260 hits, divided into the categories in table 8.

	category	example sentence	number of occurrences
(1)	‘such a thing’, ‘approximately’	<i>op zich had ik zoiets wel verwacht</i> ‘in a way I expected something like that’	152
(2)	<i>of zoiets</i>	<i>heb jij toevallig een zakmes of zoiets?</i> ‘Do you by any chance have a pocket knife or something?’	59
(3)	<i>net zoiets / net zoiets als / zoiets als</i>	<i>dat is net zoiets als een boek doneren zonder de klinkers</i> ‘that is about the same thing as donating a book without the vowels’	25
(4)	<i>heb-zoiets-van</i>	<i>ik had zoiets van dat ga ik niet doen</i> ‘I was like I am not doing that’	12
(5)	<i>zoiets + adjective with -s</i>	<i>dat is zoiets verschrikkelijks</i> ‘that is such an awful thing’	5
(6)	other	<i>om nou in mijn eentje te chatten is ook zoiets</i> ‘to chat all on my own is also something (i.e. not desirable)’	7
	total		260

Table 8. Number of occurrences of *zoiets* for each category

As was mentioned in chapter 2, Coppen (2010) already argued that the instances in category (4) are instances of a construction in the sense of construction grammar. For category (1)-(3), it cannot be assumed that these are constructions based on the criterion of unpredictability, since in all three categories, *zoiets* has the meaning ‘such a thing’ or ‘something like that’, which is a descriptive and, therefore, predictable use of *zoiets*. However, for the seven cases in the ‘other’ category, it is a different story. First of all, there is a clear pattern to be deduced from these instances: all sentences have a form of the verb *zijn* ‘to be’ as its main verb (or the

main verb is missing because the sentence is elliptic, but in this case, the verb would have been a form of *zijn* as well). Moreover, the word *ook* ‘also’, sometimes followed by *weer* ‘again’, is present as well. See (47).

(47) En ik dacht tja, dan kan ik wel de hele tijd dat filmpje gaan zitten kijken, maar dat is ook zoiets hè?

‘And I was thinking well, I can watch that movie clip the whole time, but that is also something like that (i.e. not desirable), right?’

Again, the translation shows that this expression has an unpredictable meaning: *zoiets* does not refer to a neutral ‘something’, but to something that is undesirable, such as watching a certain movie clip for a long time. This, then, shows that, according to the criterion of unpredictability of meaning, this kind of expression would be considered a construction.

4.2.4 Zowat

Zowat is used even less frequently than *zoiets*. A search within all genres present in the corpus resulted in 757 hits, which I used for this research. Based on the results, I divided the occurrences in three categories: one with the, according to the dictionaries, indefinite use (1), one with the adverbial use of *zowat* in the meaning ‘almost, approximately’ (2), and one with the occurrences that are used in a similar way to *iets* (3). The results are in table 9.¹¹

category	Example sentence	number of occurrences
‘such a thing, like’	<i>Sars, Noord Korea, Cuba en nog zowat onderwerpen passeren de revue</i> ‘Sars, North Korea, Cuba and more of those subjects are discussed’	7
‘almost, approximately’	<i>ik was zowat bevroren</i> ‘I was almost frozen’	742
other	<i>nouja, dat is ook weer zowat...</i> ‘well, that is also something (i.e. something you do not want)’	9
total		758

Table 9. Number of occurrences of *zowat* for each category

¹¹ The one extra result comes from the results for *wat* (see footnote 8).

It can be concluded from this table that there are only very few instances of the ‘other’ category compared to the ‘almost’ use of *zowat*.

A closer look at the exact contexts the instances of *zowat* in the ‘other’ category are used in reveals that only three kinds of expressions are used, with the verb *vinden* ‘to find’ (three times), *zeggen* ‘say’ (two times) and *zijn* ‘to be’ (four times):

(48) Maar ik vind het toch ook wel zowat om mensen een zo dringende verslaving af te pakken.

‘But I think it is something (i.e. not desirable) to take away such an acute addiction from those people.’

(49) Ja, daar zeg je zowat. Leuk idee.

‘Yes, there you say something. Nice idea.’

(50) Nouja, dat is ook weer zowat ...

‘Well, that is also something (i.e. something you do not want).’

What can be seen in the examples above, is that at least (48) and (50) are expressions with a negative evaluation. However, *zowat* in itself is not a word with a negative meaning, and neither is one of the other words in the expressions. The negative interpretation of these expressions, then, has to be part of the expression as a whole and is not the result of the meaning of the individual words. Therefore, on the basis of the criterion of unpredictability of meaning, these expressions can be considered constructions.

Example (49), however, shows that *zowat* is not always used for a negative evaluation. The other instance from the corpus with the verb *zeggen* is not negatively used as well:

(51) Daar zeg je zowat. Ik ben er wel voor.

‘There you say something. I am in for it.’

It seems that the verb *zeggen* in combination with *zowat* indicates that the speaker has heard something that is new for him or of which he has not thought before. This should be a construction as well, because this meaning cannot be deduced from the words of the expression. It should, however, be a different construction than where (48) and (50) belong to, because it clearly has a different meaning.

4.3 Evidence for *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions

In section 4.2, many patterns were discussed in which the word *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* or *zowat* are used. The main reason given above to call these patterns constructions was based on the construction grammatical criterion of unpredictability of meaning: because all patterns have an element in their meaning that is not present in the combination of the individual parts of the patterns, they have to be constructions.

In chapter 3, I have already pointed out that there may also be other indications that certain patterns are constructions. I proposed the translation test and the substitution test as useful instruments for deciding whether a certain pattern is a construction. The results of the corpus research in this chapter point towards another instrument that can help deciding whether or not certain patterns are constructions. This has to do with the placement of adjectives in the constructions: in section 4.2.1, adjectives were used to investigate whether the pattern *er-zijn-iets* was more negative evaluative than the pattern *het-zijn-iets*. *Er-zijn-iets* turned out to predominantly combine with negative adjectives, while *het-zijn-iets* mostly co-occurs with positive (or neutral) adjectives. This can be seen as an extra indication to treat *er-zijn-iets* and *het-zijn-iets* as constructions: because of the preference for positive or negative adjectives, the patterns are clearly not neutral. At least for *iets* constructions, then, investigating the kind of adjectives that are used in the patterns can help to see that the patterns are not used in a neutral way, and therefore, have to be constructions. This argument can be seen as a more specific interpretation of the criterion of collostructional preferences (because certain patterns are shown to have preferences for certain adjectives). Collostructional preferences are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

4.4 Evaluation of methodology

This corpus research has yielded some interesting results with respect to the contexts *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat* are used in. The search for *iets*, for example, resulted in the finding that *er-zijn-iets* predominantly has a negative interpretation, while *het-zijn-iets* is not used for negative evaluations. For *wat*, there appeared to be a number of different constructions with the pattern *X-woorden-wat* and *X-zijn-wat*, which were either positive or negative. When *zoiets* is used with *zijn*, it always indicates a negative evaluation, and *zowat* seemed to be negative when combined with the verbs *vinden* and *zijn*, but when combined with the verb *zeggen*, the pattern has another, non-negative meaning.

In this way, this corpus research both confirmed some patterns that were already discussed in chapter 3, but it also added some perspectives that did not appear from the

introspection in that chapter. For *zowat*, one of the two patterns (the one with the verb *zeggen*) was not mentioned in chapter 3; for *zoiets*, two out of the three patterns discussed in chapter 3 were found. As for *iets*, three patterns found in chapter 3 were confirmed in section 4.2.1 (*x-zijn-iets*, *er-is-iets* and *x-doen-iets-met-Y*), while two other patterns did not appear in chapter 3, but were present in the corpus: *x-vinden-Y-iets-voor-Z* and *x-komen-met-iets*. The same can be said about *wat*: much more patterns from chapter 3 were confirmed by this corpus research (*x-hebben-wat*, *x-zijn-wat*, *x-worden-wat*, *x-vinden-Y-wat*, *x-lijken-Y-wat*, *x-kunnen-wat-met-Y*, *x-maken-wat-van-Y*), and again, there were also four patterns that were missed in the research discussed in chapter 3 (*x-missen-wat*, *x-hebben-wat-aan-Y*, *x-kunnen-wat-hebben*, *er-komt-wat-van-x*). Moreover, while *x-worden-wat* and *x-zijn-wat* were discussed in chapter 3, nothing was said about the implications that, for example, different words on the position of X would have on the interpretation, simply because I did not realise this. This makes clear that it is not possible to find all aspects of a construction, such as the use of specific words in open slots, using the introspection method, while corpus research can reveal these uses.

This corpus research also allowed to test some of my intuitions that were put forward in chapter 3. For example, I hypothesized that *x-zijn-iets* and *x-worden-iets* would be used more negatively when *wat* would take the place of *iets*, and that the addition of the particle *nog* in *x-worden-iets* would add a negative interpretation to the construction. The hypothesis that *x-zijn-wat* is used more negatively than *x-zijn-iets* was indeed confirmed; it could not be confirmed for *x-worden-iets/wat* because that pattern was not present in the corpus for *iets*, but adding the particle *nog* to the pattern *x-worden-wat* showed that these instances were indeed negative most of the time, at least, when *dat* takes the position of X (with *het*, the interpretation could still be positive). This corpus research has thus tested some intuitions I had about some of these constructions, which also shows the added value of conducting corpus research.

However, there are also two major problems with searching a corpus in the way that was done for this research (i.e. by searching for the indefinite pronouns only). Firstly, the number of instances in the ‘other’ category is rather limited compared to the total number of instances that can be found for all words under investigation: only between one and five percent of all occurrences of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat* in this corpus falls into the ‘other’ category. Secondly, particularly with respect to *iets* and *wat*, it was not possible to find all instances of *iets* I gave as examples of possible *iets* constructions in chapter 1. For example, an expression with *iets* or *wat* in combination with *hebben* as the main verb, such as in (1), repeated here as (52), was not present in the SMS corpus. Only a very limited number of

different verbs were found – *zijn* ‘to be’, *komen* ‘to come’, *vinden* ‘to find’, *doen* ‘to do’ – while it is easy to think of other verbs that can be used with *iets* and fall into the same category (‘other’) as well, such as (53) with *zeggen* ‘to say’:

(52) Dat heeft wel iets.

‘That has something.’

(53) Dat zegt wel iets.

‘That says something.’

For the constructions with *zoiets* and *zowat*, it may also be possible that there are expressions with different verbs which were not found due to the low number of expressions. In other words, not all possible uses of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat* appear in the data when using a small corpus, but because of the rarity of expressions that fall in the ‘other’ category, it is also hard to search for these other uses with a larger corpus using the same method. The fact that certain linguistic phenomena may be infrequent in corpora is also mentioned by Abbuhl, Gass & Mackey (2013:126) as a limitation of corpus research. In this respect, the method of introspection has a clear advantage over corpus research.

It has to be noted, however, that the method followed in this chapter cannot be seen as ‘pure’ corpus-based research. I attempted to follow a bottom-up, data-driven approach to the corpus by only searching for the indefinite pronouns under investigation in order to find patterns, but in order to arrive at possible constructions, I still needed to interpret the results. For example, I divided the different uses of the indefinite pronouns into categories, and I classified adjectives and expressions following the pattern *x-woorden-nog-wat* as either positive or negative. Classification is in fact of an introspective nature, which is also pointed out by Levshina & Heylen (2014:18). In other words, the research presented in this chapter is actually a combination of corpus research and introspection. Moreover, although this research was not aimed at searching for collocations, the search for strings such as *er-zijn-iets* and the combinations of certain patterns with adjectives that was investigated in this chapter, are already examples of this type of research. Chapter 7 discusses these methodological issues in further detail, but first, the method of searching for collocations is explored in a more systematic way in the next chapter.

5. Corpus research 2

5.1 Methodology

As was mentioned in section 2.1, collocational preferences are a criterion in construction grammar theory to assume that a certain pattern is a construction. In this chapter, this criterion is operated in order to trace more *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions by searching for collocations for the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*. Collocations can be defined as idiosyncratic restrictions on the connectivity of lexical elements (Geeraerts 1986:134). Collocations, more generally referred to as co-occurrences, are made up of two (or more), mostly directly adjacent words which are co-occurring more frequently than could be expected on the basis of chance (Gries 2013a:137-138). So, for example, if *iets* is occurring with another word, say, *van* (resulting in *iets van*) more frequently than could be expected (that is, than the chance is that two random words are occurring adjacent to each other), then this can be seen as a collocation. The frequency of co-occurrence of the words that make up the collocation, then, is very important, but in order to get results that are not distorted by the overall frequency of a word (e.g. verbs such as *to be* are very frequent in language in general, which means there is a great chance that these verbs are very frequently co-occurring with *iets*), the results have to be corrected for word frequency. This is what is done in collocational studies (see Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003; Gries 2013b:100 for references to collocational studies).

Because the results in chapter 4 show that at least some *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* patterns are made up of more elements than two, it seems logical to not only look at co-occurrences of *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* with one other word, but also with two, three, and maybe even more words (so-called n-grams). However, this is problematic when using the OpenSoNaR corpus, because the online version of this corpus cannot be used to search directly for collocations. Therefore, the results presented in this chapter are obtained with an offline version of the OpenSoNaR corpus, with which it was possible to search for collocations using the programme R. However, because this method requires a lot of programming and running the script is a heavy load for the computer, only the collocations consisting of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat* and one other word were included in this research, and not n-grams. Only the Netherlands-Dutch corpus was used, and digital genres such as SMS, discussion lists and chats were left out, because these genres contain citations (because of which the same sentences are appearing more than once in the corpus), which affects the outcomes.

In order to find patterns with more than two words, I also searched the online Netherlands-Dutch corpus using the search option [] in the corpus, with which it is possible to search for a non-specified word. In this way, it is possible to search for, for example, [][[iets], which results in combinations of *iets* with two non-specified words preceding *iets*. When grouping the hits on lemma in the corpus, it is possible to see what kind of words precede *iets* in this case, and with what frequency the specific combinations occur. Frequency, however, cannot be corrected for in this way. By applying the criteria for identifying a construction to the patterns found, it was examined whether these could be seen as constructions. The results for all four indefinite pronouns are presented in section 5.2.

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Iets

The top-13 results for collocations with *iets* are presented in table 10. More results can be found in Appendix 3. The right column gives the results of the calculation of association measures, which indicate the collocational strength, i.e. how strongly the two words attract each other; the higher the number, the stronger the collocation.¹²

word co-occurring with <i>iets</i>	collocational strength
<i>anders</i> ‘different’	5707,821
<i>te</i> ‘too’	2722,266
<i>meer</i> ‘more’	1877,946
<i>wat</i> ‘what’	1877,619
<i>nieuws</i> ‘new’	1483,239
<i>de</i> ‘the’	1424,733
<i>minder</i> ‘less’	1372,944
<i>bijzonders</i> ‘special’	1035,055
<i>moois</i> ‘beautiful’	886,7343
<i>dergelijks</i> ‘like that’	875,9472
<i>mis</i> ‘wrong’	864,4978
<i>over</i> ‘over’	853,7481
<i>aan</i> ‘on’	798,5307

Table 10. Top-13 collocations of *iets* and their collocational strength

¹² I would like to thank Alex Reuneker for helping me obtaining these data for *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*.

Apparently, *iets + anders* is the strongest collocation; some similar patterns, with the form *iets + adjective with -s*, are also in the top-10: *nieuws, bijzonders, moois* and *dergelijks*.

According to the criterion of collocational preferences, it can be assumed that there is a construction [*iets ADJ*], because these words have such a high collocational strength.

The high position of *wat* is due to the subordinate clauses starting with this word (as a relative pronoun); the words *te, meer* and *minder* follow *iets* when it has the meaning ‘a bit’. I also put in the eleventh and thirteenth collocation, *iets mis* and *iets aan*, because these are two of the negative contexts *er-is-iets* is used in (*er is iets mis, er is iets aan de hand*), as discussed in section 4.2.1. This shows, then, that *iets* strongly attracts these words.

In table 11 below, the results are presented of the search in the online OpenSoNaR corpus on the word *iets* in combination with two words on the left and one on the right, and in combination with three words on the left and one on the right. I only examined the fifty most frequent expressions that resulted from each of the searches (i.e. the first page with results in the corpus), and on the basis of these expressions, I decided whether they could be constructions or not. I have also searched for other combinations (two words on the left, four words on the left, and four words on the left and one on the right), but in the case with two words on the left, the search did not seem to be specific enough (it was very hard seeing patterns in these results), whereas for the others, the results did not add any more constructions than those found with the searches displayed in table 11.

[word][word][iets][word]		[word][word][word][iets][word]	
expression	hits	expression	hits
als er iets zijn	182	hebben je hier iets aan	48
je er iets aan	123	. als er iets zijn	47
dat er iets zijn	122	hebben je er iets aan	45
je hier iets aan	91	. dat zeggen iets over	35
dat er iets met	82	dat je hier iets aan	35
er zijn iets met	76	‘ zijn er iets ?	32
zijn er iets ?	59	. er zijn iets met	25
hebben wel iets van	46	er zitten iets in	20
		het zeggen iets over	20
		het hebben iets van	20

Table 11. Most frequent expressions containing *iets*

As can be seen in the table, some expressions that have already been discussed in section 4.2.1 appear in this research as well, such as *er-zijn-iets-met*, *zijn-er-iets-?* and *als-er-iets-zijn* (all variations on the construction *X-zijn-iets*). However, there are also some patterns that were discussed in chapter 3 as constructions, but that did not appear in the corpus research in chapter 4: *dat/het-zeggen-iets-over*, *er-zit-iets-in*, and *(het)-hebben-(wel)-iets-van*. The construction *X-heeft-iets-aan-Y* was not mentioned in the preceding chapters (but the pattern was found for *wat* in the corpus research). This, then, shows that this research method can yield some constructions that cannot be found easily when searching for the word *iets* only, or by introspection.

5.2.2 Wat

For collocations with *wat*, the top-10 results are presented in table 12. More results can be found in Appendix 3.

word co-occurring with <i>wat</i>	collocational strength
<i>er</i> ‘there’	10067,26
<i>ze</i> ‘she, they’	3592,569
<i>hij</i> ‘he’	3411,265
<i>ik</i> ‘I’	3110,976
<i>je</i> ‘you (singular)’	2776,649
<i>betreft</i> ‘about, concerning’	2263,583
<i>minder</i> ‘less’	1568,037
<i>we</i> ‘we’	1437,885
<i>anders</i> ‘different’	1125,221
<i>meer</i> ‘more’	1069,827

Table 12. Top-10 collocations of *wat* and their collocational strength

The problem with the word *wat* is that it can function as an interrogative pronoun, a relative pronoun, an exclamative pronoun, an indefinite pronoun, and as an adverb. This is also reflected in the results above: the first six results are all collocations in which *wat* is used as a relative pronoun, and *minder* and *meer* co-occur with the adverbial use of *wat* (meaning ‘a bit’). Only with *anders* is *wat* used in an indefinite way. The next collocation with *wat* as an indefinite pronoun is *wat beters*, on place 67 with a collocational strength of 88,30264,

followed by *wat moois* on place 75 and a collocational strength of 81,33367. These results are very different from the results for *iets*, where the collocational strengths for various collocations with *iets* plus an adjective were much higher. This shows that adjectives are much more attracted by *iets* than by *wat*, which was already suggested by the results in section 4.2.2.

The results for the patterns which are obtained by searching for more than one word in addition to *wat* are in table 13. Again, the first fifty results were examined. The number of words used for the searches is different from the searches of *iets*, because only patterns in which *wat* is an interrogative or relative pronoun were found when searching for two or three words next to *wat*. Also, other patterns with the same number of words as those in table 13, such as [word][word][*wat*][word][word], were not included in the table because they did not result in other patterns than those already presented.

[word][word][word][<i>wat</i>][word]		[word][word][word][word][<i>wat</i>][word]	
expression	hits	expression	hits
lijken mij wel wat	79	hopen dat je hier wat aan	58
kunnen er ook wat van	76	hopen dat je er wat aan	56
dat je hier wat aan	63	dan hebben je ook wat .	39
hebben je er wat aan	60	dat lijken mij wel wat .	37
		misschien hebben je er wat aan	32
		misschien hebben je hier wat aan	22

Table 13. Most frequent expressions containing *wat*

There are only a few patterns found: *X-lijken-Y-wel-wat*, *dan-hebben-X-ook-wat*, *X-kunnen-er-ook-wat-van* and various variations on *X-hebben-wat-aan-Y*. Again, other patterns were found than with the corpus research in 4.2.2, and the advantage of the patterns found here is that all hits are instances of the constructions, which makes it unnecessary to filter out the instances by hand (which would be the case when searching for smaller portions of a construction, because then it is possible that other constructions that also consist of these words are polluting the data).

On the other hand, it is not possible to get a full picture of all instances of the constructions within the corpus: there is a lot of variation in form, given the fact that even punctuation is seen as a word, which means that not all variants of the constructions are

appearing in the first fifty results. Moreover, it is still the case that many possible constructions are missing in the results.

5.2.3 Zoiets

The results for the collocations of *zoiets* are presented in table 14 below.

word co-occurring with <i>zoiets</i>	collocational strength
<i>als</i> ‘like’	1297,408
<i>de</i> ‘the’	83,45564
<i>moois</i> ‘beautiful’	79,90581
<i>niet</i> ‘not’	78,82249
<i>belangrijks</i> ‘important’	73,38784
<i>bestaat</i> ‘exist’	71,92386
<i>kan</i> ‘can’	61,86878
<i>gebeurt</i> ‘happens’	56,50546
<i>nooit</i> ‘never’	52,97705
<i>banaals</i> ‘banal’	50,23126

Table 14. Top-10 collocations of *zoiets* and their collocational strength

The fact that *zoiets* is a rather infrequent word in the corpus results in less strong collocations than that were found for *iets* and *wat*. The strongest collocation by far is *zoiets als*, which was also very frequent in the corpus research discussed in section 4.2.3. Other rather strong collocations are the combinations of *zoiets* and an adjective: three adjectives appear in the top-10 (*moois*, *belangrijks* and *banaals*). The fact that the adjective ‘banal’ is in the top-10 is surprising, since the word itself is not very frequent in language use. It is possible, however, that this word is accidentally combined with *zoiets* a few times in the corpus, and because the results are corrected for overall frequency, it then seems that *banaals* is often combined with *zoiets*, while in fact, it may also be a matter of coincidence. This is a disadvantage of the collocational analysis (see also Bybee 2010:97-101).

Another striking result is that *zoiets* in combination with *van* is a very weak collocation: the word *van* is on place 357 with a collocational strength of 0,124335. This is surprising, since the construction *X-hebben-zoiets-van* was frequently occurring in the results in section 4.2.3. An explanation for this difference may lie in the fact that for the collocations,

all texts from the OpenSoNaR corpus were used, except some informal genres such as the SMS and chat corpora. It is to be expected that *x-hebben-zoiets-van* is used in informal genres more often than in formal genres; when the informal genres are left out of the research, it is therefore not surprising that this construction is not present in the corpus.

Very different results are obtained when searching for patterns with two or three words preceding *zoiets*, see table 15. Again, only the fifty most frequently occurring patterns have been examined.

[word][word][zoiets]		[word][word][zoiets][word]		[word][word][word][zoiets]	
Expression	hits	expression	hits	expression	hits
ik hebben zoiets	70	hebben ik zoiets van	49	hoe kunnen je zoiets	20
hebben ik zoiets	66	ik hebben zoiets van	40	zijn ook nog zoiets	19
zijn ook zoiets	39	, ook zoiets .	14	. ik hebben zoiets	17
dat zijn zoiets	32	. ook zoiets .	11	hebben ik ook zoiets	11
, ook zoiets	26	ik ook zoiets van	9	ik hebben ook zoiets	9
		hebben echt zoiets van	8	ik hebben zelf zoiets	7
		zijn ook zoiets .	8	‘ ik hebben zoiets	6
				zijn ook weer zoiets	6
				dat zijn nog zoiets	6
				hebben ik echt zoiets	6

Table 15. Most frequent expressions containing *zoiets*

It is very striking that this research method yields many variations on the *x-hebben-zoiets-van* construction, while with the collocations, this was not the case. This difference thus seems to be due to the presence of informal genres such as SMS and chat in the corpus. Moreover, there are also many instances found for the pattern *x-zijn-zoiets*, sometimes with an ellipsis of the verb (as is the case with *, ook zoiets .* and *. ook zoiets .*). The results also show that the construction is combined with (combinations of) the words *ook*, *nog* and *weer*.

5.2.4 Zowat

Table 16 shows the results for the words co-occurring with *zowat*. Since the collocational strength is rapidly decreasing for this word, only the top-5 results are given.

word co-occurring with <i>zowat</i>	collocational strength
<i>elke</i> ‘every’	47,13436
<i>alle</i> ‘all’	42,72814
<i>alles</i> ‘everything’	30,99819
30	26,35052
<i>omzeep</i> [<i>helpen</i>] ‘to kill’	25,15237

Table 16. Top-5 collocations of *zowat* and their collocational strength

As could be expected, since the negative use of *zowat* is very infrequent, all of the collocations given above have to do with the ‘almost, approximately’ interpretation of *zowat*. Since I already examined all instances of *zowat* in the Netherlands-Dutch OpenSoNaR corpus in section 4.2.4, it cannot be expected that I would find more instances of *zowat* using another method. However, in order to see whether I could also find these instances by searching for more words than only *zoiets*, I searched for these patterns in the same way I did for the words *iets*, *wat* and *zoiets*, but this time, using the Flanders-Dutch corpus in addition to the Netherlands-Dutch corpus as well. The results are given in table 17.

[word][word][<i>zowat</i>]		[word][word][<i>zowat</i>][word]		[word][word][word][<i>zowat</i>]	
expression	hits	expression	hits	expression	hits
<i>zijn ook zowat</i>	36	-	-	<i>dat zijn ook zowat</i>	12

Table 17. Most frequent expressions containing *zowat*

As becomes clear, it is possible to find the construction *X-zijn-zowat* in this way, but on the other hand, there are also instances which are not instances of this construction included in the hits, which have to be filtered out by hand. It may also be necessary to search all pages with patterns of the form [word][word][*zowat*] et cetera to find every instance of the construction. For *zowat*, then, this method does not seem to be working since the construction is too infrequent.

5.3 Evidence for *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions

Although the search for collocations did not yield a lot of results because it was only possible to search for a combination of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat* with one other word, it seems to be the case for *iets*, and probably for *wat* and *zoiets* as well, that there is a construction *iets* ADJ-s,

since some adjectives have a relatively high collocational strength (they are in the top-10). It may even be the case that these very frequently occurring adjectives are stored in the construction network separately. Bybee (2006), for example, argues that specific exemplars of a certain construction can be stored in mind if they are used frequently enough.¹³

When searching for co-occurrences of more than one word in the corpus, some patterns that were already found in the corpus research in chapter 4 – such as *x-hebben-zoiets-van* – also appeared in the data here, while other constructions, which were described in chapter 3 but which were not found in the corpus research in chapter 4 – such as *x-zeggen-iets* and *x-hebben-iets-van* – did appear in the results in this chapter. Also, the fact that *dat-is-zoiets* can occur not only with *ook*, but also with the particles *nog* and *weer* (as was also already mentioned in chapter 3) is only visible in the results of this chapter, and not in those of chapter 4. Finally, some patterns appeared in the results which were not described in chapter 3 or 4, such as *x-kunnen-wat-van-Y*.

The criterion of collocational preferences provided an argument to call the strong collocations that were found constructions, and with regard to the patterns that were not found in the previous chapters, the criterion of semantic unpredictability helped in deciding whether or not a certain pattern was a construction. The substitution test was helpful here as well: none of the indefinite pronouns in the constructions could be replaced by a noun phrase.

Another indication that may point towards the conclusion that a certain pattern is an expression has to do with the frequency of occurrence of that expression. For *x-hebben-zoiets-van* and *x-hebben-iets/wat-aan-Y*, for example, it is striking that these patterns are occurring very often in the first fifty results, in slightly different forms. The fact that they are occurring so frequently, may indicate that these patterns are fixed, and as such, are separate constructions (and as such, are stored in the mind, cf. Bybee 2006; Goldberg 2013:26). This reasoning is somewhat related to the criterion of collocational preferences, although the conclusion that something is a construction is only based on an impression of the frequency of the patterns, and not on a full collocational analysis.

It is worth noting that the frequency-related criterion of collocational preferences defines certain patterns as constructions which would not have been constructions according

¹³ It has to be noted, however, that Bybee does not agree with the approach of collostructional analysis (e.g. Stefanowitsch and Gries 2003) that the collostructional strength has to be corrected for overall frequency, see Bybee (2010:97-101) and Bybee (2013:62-63). Schmid & Küchenhoff (2013:537-547) also raise problems inherent to collostructional analyses.

to the criterion of unpredictability of meaning. For example, *iets-ADJ* was considered a compositional pattern in chapter 3, but because of the high collocational strength that was found for collocations of *iets* and certain adjectives in this chapter, there is still an argument to see this pattern as a construction.

5.4 Evaluation of methodology

In chapter 4, corpus research was conducted by searching for only one word at a time. This meant that for each of the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat*, many results had to be analysed to find the (very infrequent) occurrences of these words which were argued to be part of constructions. Sometimes, these results led to searches with more words (for example, *het is wat*), which allowed for a more fine-grained picture of the uses of the specific constructions. Obviously, this is a very time-consuming method. Therefore, searching for patterns with more than one word as a basis seems to be advantageous in this respect. However, it turned out in this chapter that this method also has its disadvantages.¹⁴

First of all, as was already mentioned, searching for collocations, and especially for co-occurrences of more than two words (n-grams) appeared to be very difficult and time-consuming as well, although this problem is not inherent to the methodology as such, but was due to the corpus that was used, which did not allow for direct searches for collocations. Another problem with the corpus was that the digital (informal) genres could not be used for the collocational analysis. This had a rather large impact on the results, which is well illustrated by the results for *X-hebben-zoiets-van*, a pattern that was highly frequent in the corpus as a whole, but appeared to have a very low collocational strength. These disadvantages of the results for the collocations for this research, however, may not be present when using another corpus.

A disadvantage of searching for patterns with words adjacent to *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* in the way this was done in this chapter, is the fact that, as was already mentioned, it is still necessary to go through large amounts of results. Especially when searching for *iets* in combination with two or even three words, sequences of words are obtained that do not necessarily have to be fixed patterns only. For example, for *iets* the pattern *als-er-iets-is* was found, but the hits that are covered by this pattern are also instances where *is* is followed by a subordinate clause, e.g. *als er iets is wat je me wilt vertellen* ‘if there is something that you

¹⁴ The disadvantages discussed here are specific for the current study; however, as was mentioned in footnote 13, there is criticism on the collostructional method in general as well.

want to tell me'. Therefore, it is still necessary to go through all instances of this pattern to categorize the hits according to their context in order to be able to find constructions. When searching for larger sequences, this problem does not apply anymore, but the disadvantage of searching for these larger sequences is that the patterns become too fixed. Even very small deviations (such as differences in interpunction) are already counted as another pattern, which results in the instances of one construction being spread over many different hits in the list. In order to find all instances of one construction, and also to find all possible constructions, it would be necessary to go through all the results, which is still time-consuming since there are thousands of different hits for the patterns with *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat*. Therefore, this method is also not suitable for getting a complete overview of possible constructions containing these words.

Despite these disadvantages, the research conducted in this chapter also yielded some results which are valuable for the collection of different *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions: some constructions that could not be found in the corpus research in chapter 4, were found in the corpus research that was central in this chapter, and the results also gave an idea of the frequency with which certain patterns are occurring in actual language use.

6. Construction networks

The research in the last three chapters resulted in the collection of various constructions containing the word *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat*. One of the assumptions in construction grammar theory is that all constructions are linked to each other in a construction network. In this chapter, I illustrate what such a construction network would look like for the *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions found in the previous chapters.

6.1 Choice of the constructions

Since it would require too much space and would complicate the discussion to a high extent, I have not included all constructions found in the previous chapters in the construction networks. Especially for *iets* and *wat*, there are more constructions to include in the network than can be done within the scope of this thesis. Instead, I made a selection based on the available constructions.

First of all, I only included the constructions that were obtained in the corpus researches. I made a further selection on the basis of the frequency with which a certain pattern occurred in the corpus data, and the amount of discussion that was dedicated to the constructions: when a certain pattern was only mentioned once, I did not include it in the construction network, while constructions that were discussed into some more detail – and occurred frequently in the corpus data – were included in the network. I thus do not strive for completeness with the networks to be discussed in the next section. They are only meant as an illustration how such construction networks would look like.

The following constructions were selected:

- *Iets*: *iets* + subordinate clause; *iets* + adjective; *iets anders*; *iets van*; *er is iets (met X)*; *het/dat/NP is iets*.
- *Wat*: *wat* + adjective; *wat anders*; *is X wat?*; *X zijn wat*; *X worden wat*.
- *Zoiets*: *of zoiets*; *net zoiets als*; *zoiets* + adjective; *X hebben zoiets van*; *dat is zoiets*.
- *Zowat*: *X zijn zowat*; *X vinden Y zowat*; *daar zeggen X zowat*.

6.2 The networks

In this section, the networks are presented and explained for each of the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat* separately. In section 6.3, possible links between the four networks are suggested.

6.2.1 Iets

The highest node in the construction network is constituted by the word *iets*, which has the meaning ‘an undefined matter or thing’. Since in all constructions *iets* still has this meaning aspect of vagueness and indefiniteness, all other constructions are linked to this word by means of instance links. This means that all constructions with *iets* are on a lower level than the word *iets*. From section 4.2.1 and 5.2.1, it appeared that *iets* is frequently occurring with a subordinate clause, with *anders* and with several adjectives on *-s* (given the frequency of occurrence in 4.2.1 and the high collocational strength attached to these elements in 5.2.1). Following Bybee (2006) and Goldberg (2013:26), this can be an indication that these high-frequency collocations are stored in memory. It may even be the case that specific adjectives which were frequently occurring with *iets*, such as *nieuws*, *moois*, and *bijzonders*, are stored in mind as separate constructions. I included them in the network because of their high collocational strength, but it should be tested in, for example, experimental research whether these really are stored separately (see the next chapter for further discussion).

Iets van is argued to be a construction, given the fact that it has an unpredictable meaning. Also, *van* always has to be followed by an indefinite noun phrase (such as *een salade* ‘a salad’, *paracetamol*). This information has to be stored in the construction as well.

The constructions with *zijn* – *er-zijn-iets* and *het(/dat/NP)-zijn-iets* – have different meanings (the first one has a negative and the other a positive evaluation), which means that they cannot be the same construction. Based on the fact that both have formal characteristics in common and that a broader, overarching meaning is possible for these constructions (something like ‘evaluates the situation’), I assume that there is a more abstract construction *X-zijn-iets*, which has (at least) two daughter constructions, *er-zijn-iets* and *het-zijn-iets*, the one with a negative and the other with a positive evaluation. These constructions are the mother construction of other constructions, such as *er-zijn-iets-met-X* and *er-zijn-iets-aan-de-hand* for *er-zijn-iets* and *het/dat-zijn-iets-ADJ-s* for *het-zijn-iets*, since these patterns inherit all aspects of the form and meaning side of the mother construction. *het/dat-zijn-iets-ADJ-s* is of course also a daughter construction of the construction *iets-adjective-s*. *er-zijn-iets-aan-de-hand*, in its turn, also has a daughter construction, *er-zijn-iets-aan-de-hand-ADJ-s*.

The construction network in which all above considerations are taken into account, is presented in figure 2 on the following page.

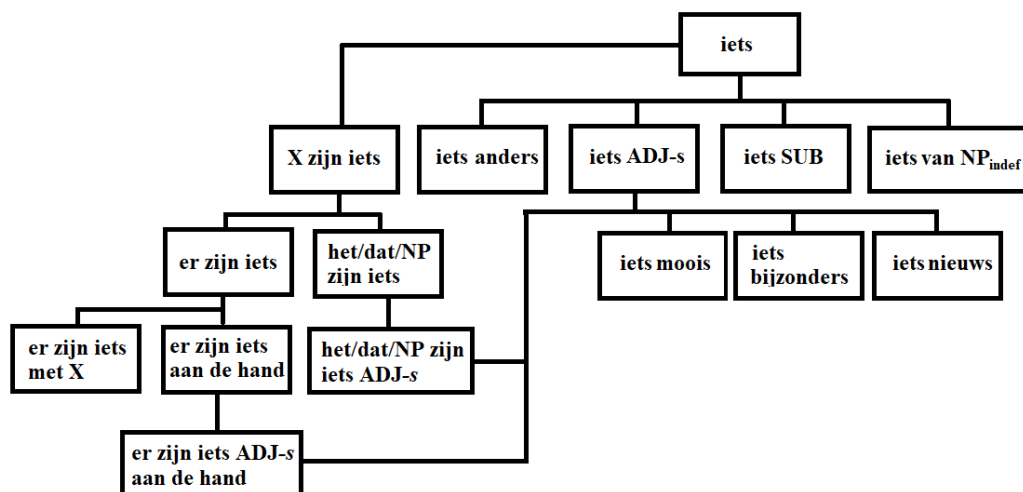


Figure 2. Construction network for *iets*

6.2.2 Wat

Wat also has *wat* plus an adjective and *wat anders* as daughter constructions, because the collocational strength for these collocations is rather high; as with *iets*, specific frequently occurring adjectives may be stored separately. Therefore, the three adjectives with the highest collocational strength (*extra*'s, *beters*, and *moois*) are included in the network. Similar to *X-zijn-iets* and *het-zijn-iets*, *zijn-er-wat* and *zijn-het/dat/NP-wat* are used for negative and positive evaluations, respectively, which sets them apart from each other, but a shared mother construction *zijn-X-wat* is possible. *X-zijn-wat* and *X-worden-wat* may also be derived from a shared mother construction in which the verb is not specified. This higher-order construction necessarily has a meaning such as 'evaluates the situation', because the constructions with *zijn* and *worden* can be used for both positive and negative evaluations. Because of this meaning and because of the formal resemblances, *zijn-X-wat* can also be assumed to be a daughter of this construction.

X-zijn-wat and *X-worden-wat* can be seen as mother constructions of more specified constructions, which can, dependent on the use of particles and, in the case of *worden*, the use of *het* or *dat*, be positive (e.g. *het-zijn-wel-wat* and *het-worden-nog-wat*) or negative (e.g. *het-zijn-wat* and *dat-worden-nog-wat*).

All this information yields the construction network in figure 3 on the following page.

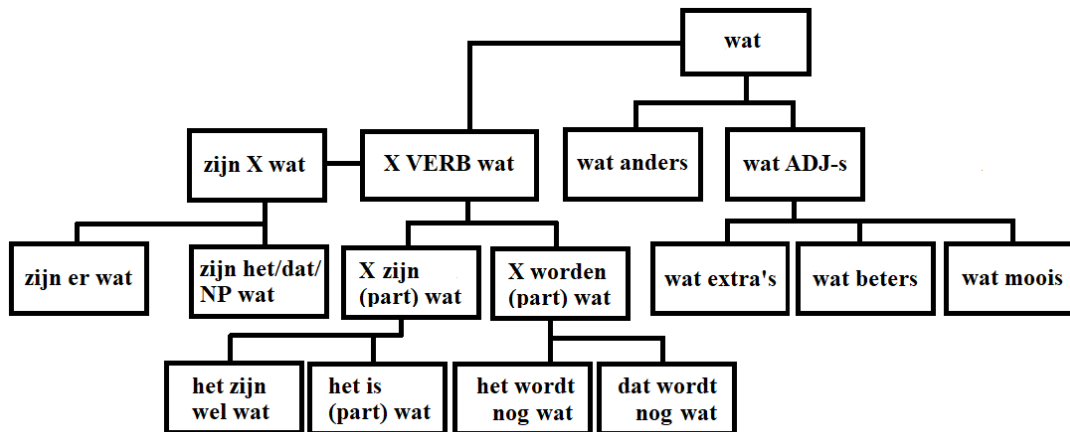


Figure 3. Construction network for *wat*

The construction network is rather different from the construction network for *iets*. This is partly due to the fact that *wat* cannot combine with a subordinate clause or *van*, and partly to the fact that other constructions were found in the corpus research for both words. Moreover, two of the three adjectives *wat* is combined with are different from those *iets* is combined with; the only shared adjective is *mooi*.

6.2.3 Zoiets

The results in 4.2.3 showed that *zoiets* is often combined with *of* and *net ... als*, which makes a separate construction for these words plausible. *X-hebben-zoiets-van* is a construction as well, given the unpredictable meaning and the frequency of occurrence. It may also be the case that *zoiets* plus an adjective is a construction as well, because some adjectives (*moois*, *belangrijks*) showed up in the top-10 of collocations. The construction *dat-zijn-zoiets* is, of course, a construction as well. There is a slot between *zijn* and *zoiets* which can either be left empty, or is filled with a particle such as *ook*, *nog* and/or *weer*.

Taking everything together, these observations add up to the construction network presented in figure 4.

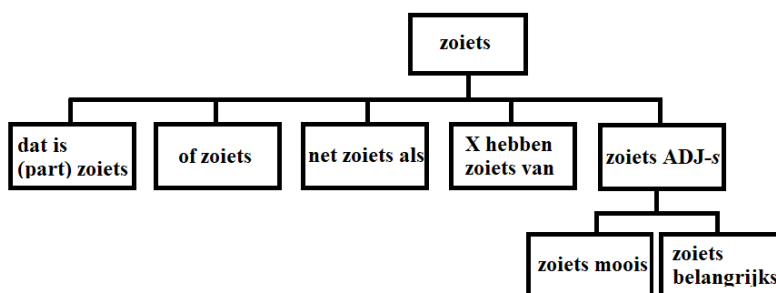


Figure 4. Construction network for *zoiets*

Again, the adjective *mooi* is shared with both *iets* and *wat* as one of the strongest collocations. Apart from the combination with an adjective, the network for *zoiets* is very different from the networks for *iets* and *wat*, because – apart from *dat is zoiets* – *zoiets* appears in very specific constructions *iets* and *wat* do not appear in.

6.2.4 Zowat

Given the very few instances of *zowat* found in the corpus, only three patterns were found: *daar-zeggen-X-zowat*, *X-zijn-zowat* and *X-vinden-Y-zowat*. Because of their different structures and elements (different verbs, different numbers of open slots), they can be assumed to be three separate constructions. *daar-zeggen-X-zowat* seems to be unconnected to the other uses of *zowat* because it has a positive rather than a negative connotation, but *X-zijn-zowat* and *X-vinden-Y-zowat* should be connected to each other, because their meaning is basically the same. The structures of both constructions, however, are different, which means that a subpart link (a link on the same level of abstraction within the network) is more plausible than that the one construction is an instance of the other.

This gives the construction network in figure 5.

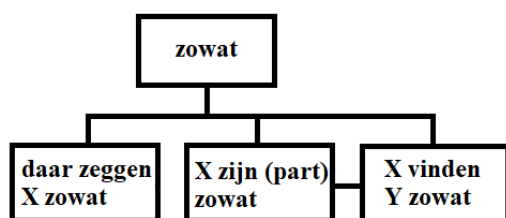


Figure 5. Construction network for *zowat*

6.3 Possible relations between the networks

The construction networks given in the previous section are far from complete: not only are not all possible constructions with the words *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat* represented in the networks, possible links to constructions that do not contain the indefinite pronoun that was central in the network are also not made. It is to be expected, however, that there are links, since construction grammar assumes that the whole language can be represented in one network of constructions (the constructicon, see section 2.2). For example, *iets* SUB can be linked to an abstracter level X SUB, of which NP SUB, for example, is a daughter as well.

With regard to the four networks presented above, it can certainly be assumed that there are relations between these networks. *Iets*, *wat*, *zoiets* and *zowat* can be used in similar

sentence structures with similar meanings (for example, *het is wat*, *dat is ook zowat*, and *dat is ook zoiets* are both negative evaluations; *wat*, *iets*, and *zoiets* can be followed by an adjective). These constructions thus can be assumed to be connected to each other in the construction. This is probably done by means of subpart links, with which constructions that are similar in form and meaning, but are no instances of each other, are connected. Since some constructions only seem to differ from each other in the use of the word *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat*, it can be the case that they are connected to each other by means of subpart links.

Another possibility is that there is a construction such as *dat-is-x*, with the indefinite pronouns as variables for *x*. Especially for *zoiets* and *zowat* this could work, because *dat is zoiets* and *dat is zowat* seem both to be used exclusively for negative evaluations. On the other hand, there may still be a (subtle) difference in meaning between the two, which makes an analysis with different constructions more plausible.

7. Discussion

This thesis has dealt with two main issues: (1) how to obtain expressions in which the word *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat* is used, and (2) how to decide whether these expressions are constructions in the sense of construction grammar. With regard to the first question, different research methods have been used in order to trace possible constructions containing one of the four indefinite pronouns that were central in this thesis. With the results obtained with each of these methods presented in the previous three chapters, the question can be answered what each of the methods contributed to the search for constructions, and what the advantages and disadvantages are of the methods compared to each other.

To begin with, it can be said that I have used two different kinds of linguistic data: introspective data, and corpus data. The discussion of using introspection versus corpus data for linguistic research has received a lot of attention in the literature. Examples are Sampson (2007, esp. 14-20) and Arppe et al. (2010), but more recently, a discussion about the *Syntax of Dutch*, a three-volume Dutch grammar, was about this issue as well. Broekhuis (2016), one of the authors of *Syntax of Dutch*, replied to some reviewers of the grammar, who criticised the authors for using almost exclusively introspective judgments and no corpus data (e.g. De Hoop 2016). Broekhuis (2016), however, argued that introspection is a more valuable method of collecting data for the aim of the grammar than corpus research.

Discussions such as this one are about the value of introspection versus corpus research for acceptability judgments (the question whether certain expressions are acceptable or not), which is somewhat different from the purpose of my research – tracing constructions. However, as was already mentioned in section 3.4, some disadvantages of introspection – the fact that it is subjective and unsystematic – also apply to my research.

Despite the disadvantages and the criticism the method of introspection received, I believe that this methodology was invaluable for the present study. In fact, not only did introspection play a role in chapter 3, but also in chapter 4 and 5 (which were presented as discussing corpus research). The fact that I divided the different uses of *iets*, *wat* et cetera in categories in chapter 4 is an example of the role of introspection: although I tried to make the categories as objective as possible by basing them on the formal context the indefinite pronouns occurred in, there were also categories which were not based on the context, but on interpretation of the instances. For example, the choice to put an instance of *iets* in the category ‘any thing’ or in the ‘other’ category, in which the occurrences of the indefinite

pronouns with a constructional status were placed, was based on the interpretation of that instance, and not on its formal context. Moreover, some categories contained multiple contexts, such as the category ‘*iets* plus adjective plus prepositional phrase’, in which the preposition could be *aan*, *met*, or *in*. Not only can this categorization lead to discussion (other researchers may want to use other categories), it is also possible that the classification makes irrelevant distinctions or that important distinctions are missed (Levshina & Heylen 2014:18).

In chapter 5, I used introspection, for example, to select the patterns of more than two words that I assumed to be constructions. It can be said, then, that chapter 4 and 5 exhibit a qualitative approach to the corpus data, which means that linguistic forms occurring in the corpus are closely inspected by the researcher in order to make generalizations (Arppe et al. 2010:5-6). Another type of corpus research is quantitative research, in which generalizations are made on the basis of statistical (co-)occurrences of linguistic forms (Arppe et al. 2010:5-6). Radically quantitative studies, such as Levshina & Heylen (2014) and Beekhuizen & Bod (2014), are completely data-driven and approach the corpus bottom-up, which makes this method extremely objective, since no intervention of the researcher is needed in obtaining the data. However, Arppe et al. (2010:5) also point out that a disadvantage of this kind of research is that it cannot capture details and cannot produce fine-grained results, while qualitative corpus research can.

One of the problems the current study faced which could be solved by adopting a more quantitative approach is the fact that the qualitative method that was used was very time-consuming, because I filtered all constructions out by hand. Hence, I could not go through a lot of data, which may be the reason why I did not find all constructions I expected to find (based on the results from the introspection chapter). It may, for example, be helpful to extend the method of collocation analysis to involve combinations of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* in combination with two, three, or even more words. A more radical bottom-up approach (a collocation analysis is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, cf. Arppe et al. 2010:5), however, would not be recommendable. The aim of the corpus research was to identify constructions, and this necessarily involves introspection. The fact that a certain pattern has a non-compositional meaning, for example, cannot be made clear by using statistics; it still has to be based on intuitions. Moreover, since some constructions are very infrequent, it remains to be seen whether quantitative research would be able to find them. Even when using a collocation analysis, very infrequent patterns which may be constructions based on the criterion of non-compositionality, may not be found.

Although introspection was very important for this research, the value of corpus research should not be underestimated either. Because of the corpus research conducted in chapter 4 and 5, some perspectives were added to the usage of the indefinite pronouns that could never have been obtained by introspection alone. For example, in chapter 4, evidence was found that there is a difference in evaluation between *het wordt nog iets* and *dat wordt nog iets*, and in chapter 5, it was concluded that there has to be a construction *iets-ADJ*, because of the frequent co-occurrence of *iets* plus an adjective. It can actually be said that the methods all complement each other: while it is possible to detect unpredictable elements and limitations in an expression by means of introspection, corpus research can confirm these introspective judgments and can help to detect formal differences between constructions (such as with *het/dat wordt nog iets*), and collocation research can detect constructions on the basis of frequency and co-occurrence.

In addition to introspection and corpus research, other methods can be used as well to investigate the uses of the indefinite pronouns discussed here. Apart from introspective and observational data, experimental data are also widely used in linguistic research, and in particular in construction grammar research as well (e.g. Jolsavi, McCauley & Christiansen 2013; see Gries 2013b:101-106 for more references). For example, on-line and off-line experimental methods can be used (Kaiser 2013). In an on-line experimental setting, participants can be tested by measuring their reaction times. The assumption of this kind of experiment is that longer reaction times indicate a longer processing time and more processing difficulty (Kaiser 2013:137). It can therefore be assumed that participants behave differently when presented with fixed expressions (constructions) than with compositional ones in terms of reaction times. Off-line, the native intuitions of a large number of people about certain patterns with *iets* can be investigated by means of a survey, for example by asking them to judge certain expressions on their positivity and negativity. However, considering the time these types of research would cost to carry out, the present research had to be limited to introspection and corpus research, so I leave the other methodologies for future research.

For the expressions that were found with the research methods used for the present study, it was examined whether these were constructions using the criteria for identifying constructions which were found in the construction grammar literature. Of the four criteria, the criterion of unpredictability of meaning turned out to be the criterion which was the most useful one to argue that a certain expression was a construction. The criterion of collocational preferences was used when arguing that collocations can be seen as constructions.

Unpredictability of form and the criterion of idiosyncratic limitations were only used sporadically, and only in addition to the criterion of unpredictability of meaning. This is probably due to the fact that deviances in form and limitations in form and meaning are less easy to spot than deviances in meaning. Moreover, most constructions found in the present study seemed to follow the normal patterns of sentence formation, which makes the criterion of unpredictability of form unapplicable.

The four criteria, and especially those of unpredictability of meaning and collocational preferences, can thus be applied to constructions with *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, or *zowat*. Sometimes, more than one criterium applies to the same expression (for example, *iets-van* has an unpredictable meaning and has an idiosyncratic limitation because only indefinite nouns can follow *van*), but this does not have to be the case. In fact, the criteria can even contradict each other. For example, the fact that a certain expression scores low on collocational strength does not have to mean that this expression is not a construction: if it has an unpredictable meaning, for example, it still is. It thus seems that the two criteria adhere to another view of what a construction is (i.e. a non-compositional versus a compositional, but frequent pattern).

Apart from the four criteria, there may also be other indications that a certain expression is a construction. Especially in chapter 3, I proposed additional tests that could be used to determine the constructional status of an expression: a translation test (when the expression cannot be translated into English, it is probably a construction), and a substitution test (when the indefinite pronoun cannot be substituted by a noun phrase, it is likely that the pronoun is a fixed part of the expression, and therefore, that it is a construction). Two other indications for a constructional status that were suggested in chapter 4 and 5 can be seen as variations on the criterion of collocational preferences: the addition of adjectives in expressions (when expressions such as *er is iets (ADJ) aan de hand* ‘something (ADJ) is going on’, are combined with positive or negative adjectives more often, this may indicate that the patterns themselves are also positive or negative, and therefore, have a non-compositional meaning), and the (impression of the) frequency of occurrence of a certain pattern (when an (almost) fixed pattern is frequently occurring, it is probably a construction). These tests may be easier to apply to certain constructions than the more abstract criteria. For example, it may be difficult to see what the unpredictable element of the meaning of a construction actually is, while substitution of a word, for example, is not difficult to do. It may, however, be the case that the substitution and adjective test can only be used for constructions with words such as *iets* (since *iets* can, as a pronoun, be replaced by a noun, and can be combined with adjectives, which is not necessarily the case for other words).

Concerning the construction networks that were proposed in chapter 6, it is definitely possible that the relations between the constructions could be represented differently. For some constructions, such as *X-zijn-wat* and *X-worden-wat*, it was assumed that these are daughters of a more abstract construction *X-VERB-wat*, but these kinds of choices are actually more or less randomly made. Of course, there are reasons why they could be daughters of the same mother construction (they are similar in form and it is possible to come up with an overarching meaning for the mother construction), but apart from this, there is no evidence that these constructions should be analysed in this way.

For future research, it would be interesting to investigate the difference in use between *iets* and *wat* in more detail than was done in this study. The current research already showed that there are some differences between these words in terms of their distribution and their interpretation when used in certain constructions. This last point is illustrated by the difference between *het is wat*, which has a negative evaluation, and *het is iets*, which does not have a negative evaluation. However, it was not possible to explore these differences further within this thesis.

Another interesting aspect to investigate is the use of auxiliary verbs and particles in the constructions. This study did not look into the use of particles systematically. Only for some constructions (e.g. *dat wordt nog wat*) was the use of a particle investigated. This, however, yielded interesting results, which could be explored further in future research. Auxiliary verbs are not discussed at all in this research, but they seem to be used in particular ways as well. If the auxiliary *zullen* ‘will’, for example, is added to the construction *dat wordt wat*, yielding *dat zal wat worden* ‘that will become something’, the meaning seems to be exclusively negative in the version with the auxiliary verb, while the version without the auxiliary can be used for both positive and negative evaluations.

What can also be examined in future research is variation in the use of constructions between different registers and genres. The corpus that was used for this research only contained written texts. This may have affected the results, since it may be that certain constructions are only, or more frequently, found in spoken language than in written language. Moreover, there seems to be a difference between formal and informal genres: for *x-hebben-zoiets-van*, the results of the collocations showed that this construction is almost absent in more formal genres, while in informal genres such as SMS, this construction is found very frequently. For spoken language, the outcomes concerning this construction would probably be different as well. The same may also apply to the other construction identified in this study.

8. Conclusion

From the investigation of the uses of *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* (by means of introspection and corpus research) from a construction grammar perspective, it can be concluded that the criteria set up in construction grammar theory on the basis of which it can be decided whether or not a certain expression is a construction, can in general be applied to the *iets/wat/zoiets/zowat* constructions found in this research. All of the four criteria given in the construction grammar literature – unpredictability of form and meaning, idiosyncratic limitations, and collocational preferences – have been used in this research to argue that a certain pattern can be seen as a construction, although unpredictability of meaning turned out to be the most useful criterion. Moreover, two specific tests were applied in this research as well to arrive at the conclusion that a certain expression is a construction:

- Translation test: when a certain expression cannot be literally translated into English (while maintaining its meaning), the expression is a construction.
- Substitution test: when *iets*, *wat*, *zoiets*, and *zowat* cannot be substituted by a noun phrase, this means that the pronoun is a fixed part of the expression, which is an indication that this is a construction.

Some expressions with *iets* are predominantly combined with either positive or negative adjectives, as in *er is iets vreselijks aan de hand* ‘something terrible is going on’, which can also be an indication that a pattern such as *er-is-iets(-aan-de-hand)* is negative, and therefore, non-compositional. Finally, when fixed patterns are frequently occurring in a corpus, this may also be a reason to assume that this pattern is a construction.

The different methods used for this research – introspection, corpus research by searching for the indefinite pronoun under investigation, and corpus research by searching for collocations – all yielded *iets/wat/zoiets/wat* constructions. The method of introspection could be considered to be the most important one, since introspective judgments were used to interpret the corpus data as well. However, this does not mean that corpus research does not have an added value. In fact, the different methods complemented each other, in that the corpus research yielded data that could not have been found by using introspection only. However, within the scope of this thesis, it was not possible to get a full picture of the uses of these pronouns by applying these methods. Therefore, this is ‘iets’ for further research.

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Appendix 1

	category	example sentence	number of occurrences
(1)	<i>mis</i>	<i>er is iets mis</i> ‘something is wrong’	16
(2)	<i>mis/loos met</i> + noun phrase	<i>er is iets mis met uw auto</i> ‘something is wrong with your car’	25
(3)	<i>met</i> + noun phrase	<i>er is iets met Chamo</i> ‘something is going on (i.e. wrong) with Chamo’	25
(4)	negative adjective + prepositional phrase (<i>aan/met/in</i>)	<i>er is iets fataals aan een portret</i> ‘there is something fatal about a portret’	24
(5)	negative adjective + <i>aan de gang/gaande/aan de hand</i> (+ <i>met</i> + noun phrase)	<i>er is iets raars aan de hand met het jongetje Cole</i> ‘there is something strange going on with the boy Cole’	27
(6)	positive/neutral adjective + prepositional phrase (<i>aan/met/in</i>)	<i>er is iets moois met groente en fruit</i> ‘there is something beautiful about vegetables and fruit’	9
(7)	positive/neutral adjective + <i>aan de gang/gaande/aan de hand</i>	<i>er was iets mysterieus gaande</i> ‘something mysterious was going on’	1
(8)	<i>aan de gang/aan de hand/gaande</i>	<i>er is iets aan de hand</i> ‘something is going on’	18
(9)	<i>anders gaande/aan de hand</i>	<i>er is iets anders gaande</i> ‘something else is going on’	8
(10)	positive/neutral adjective + another addition than those in (6) and (7)	<i>er is iets essentieels opgerakeld</i> ‘something essential has been pulled up’	8
(11)	past participle of verb or <i>aan het</i> + verb: <i>veranderen</i> ‘to change’ (13x), <i>loskomen</i> ‘to come loose’ (1x), <i>toevoegen</i> ‘to add’ (1x), <i>vallen</i> ‘to fall’	<i>er is iets fundamenteel veranderd</i> ‘something has changed fundamentally’	63

	(1x), <i>misgaan</i> ‘to fail’ (12x), <i>gebeuren</i> ‘to happen’ (14x), <i>bestellen</i> ‘to order’ (2x), <i>bereiken</i> ‘to reach’ (1x), <i>knakken</i> ‘to break’ (1x), <i>niet goed gaan</i> ‘to go wrong’ (1x), <i>verloren</i> ‘lost’ (1x), <i>fout gaan</i> ‘to go wrong’ (3x), <i>kapot gaan/maken</i> ‘to break’ (2x), <i>verkeerd gaan</i> ‘to go wrong’ (2x), <i>aanspoelen</i> ‘to wash up’ (1x), <i>verkeerd vallen</i> ‘to fall wrongly’ (1x), <i>tussenkomen</i> ‘to come in between’ (2x), <i>erbij komen</i> ‘to join’ (1x), <i>afpakken</i> ‘to take away’ (1x), <i>verloren gaan</i> ‘to be lost’ (1x), <i>ontdekken</i> ‘to discover (1x)’		
(12)	subordinate clause	<i>er is iets wat we niet begrijpen</i> ‘there is something that we do not understand’	29
(13)	<i>van</i>	<i>er is iets van een privésector in opkomst</i> ‘something of a private sector is coming up’	2
(14)	<i>mee</i>	<i>dit klinkt als een sensationele onthulling, maar er is iets mee</i> ‘this sounds like a sensational revelation, but something is wrong with it’	2
(15)	<i>niet in orde/niet (helemaal) goed/fout</i> ‘not right’	<i>er is iets niet in orde</i> ‘something is not right’	7
(16)	<i>voor/tegen te zeggen</i> ‘to argue for/against’	<i>er was iets te zeggen voor de dramatische formulering</i> ‘something	10

		could be said in favour of the dramatic formulation'	
(17)	<i>anders</i>	<i>er is iets anders</i> 'there is something else'	7
(18)	'a bit' + <i>comparative</i>	<i>er is iets meer openheid gekomen</i> 'there is some more openness'	3
(19)	'a bit' + <i>te</i>	<i>er zijn iets te veel figuren</i> 'there are a bit too many figures'	2
(20)	one occurrence of: <i>te doen</i> 'to do', <i>te koop</i> 'for sale', 'a bit' <i>van, op komst</i> 'coming up', <i>zichtbaar</i> 'visible', <i>tussen</i> 'between', <i>aan blijven hangen</i> 'to stick'	<i>er lopen mensen, er is iets te doen</i> 'people are walking there, there is something to do'	7
(21)	no addition	<i>er is iets</i> 'there is something'	7
	total		300

Table 18. Number of occurrences for additions to *er-zijn-iets* (complete)

	Category	example sentence	number of occurrences
(1)	subordinate clause	<i>het is iets wat intern functioneert</i> ‘it is something that functions internally’	128
(2)	adjective	<i>het is iets vanzelfsprekends</i> ‘it is something natural’	62
(3)	<i>anders</i>	<i>het is iets heel anders</i> ‘it is something very different’	38
(4)	<i>van NP</i> (indicating time)	<i>het is iets van deze tijd</i> ‘it is something of this time’	8
(5)	‘a bit’ time	<i>het is iets voor vieren</i> ‘it is a bit before four o’clock’	8
(6)	comparative	<i>het is iets meer dan twee procent</i> ‘it is a bit more than two per cent’	21
(7)	<i>voor NP</i>	<i>het is iets voor vervelende, armzalige actievoerders</i> ‘it is something for annoying, poor campaigners’	7
(8)	<i>ertussenin</i>	<i>het is iets ertussenin</i> ‘it is something in between’	2
(9)	<i>met NP</i> (approximative meaning)	<i>het was iets met een stichting</i> ‘it was something with a foundation’	9
(10)	<i>te</i>	<i>het is iets te vaak gebeurd</i> ‘it happened a bit too often’	3
(11)	‘a bit’ + past participle	<i>het is iets afgekoeld</i> ‘it cooled down a bit’	1
(12)	<i>als</i>	<i>het is iets als een jas</i> ‘it is something like a coat’	1
(13)	preposition (<i>van / uit / tussen / aan</i>) + NP	<i>het is iets van mij</i> ‘it is something that belongs to me’	7
(14)	without addition	<i>veel te weinig maar het is iets</i> ‘not enough but it is something’	5
	total		300

Table 19. Number of occurrences for additions to *het-zijn-iets* (complete)

Appendix 2

Occurrences for *is X wat?*

Negative

Terneergeslagen kwam ik thuis. **Is er wat ?** vroeg mijn vrouw.
Tijdens het avondeten had ik voor het eerst in mijn leven helemaal geen honger. "**Is er wat?**" vroeg mijn moeder.
"Wat kijk je somber", zegt zijn moeder. "**Is er wat?**"
Pruttel, pruttel . '**Is er wat?**' 'Wat?' 'Je zit me zo aan te kijken.'
Ik sper mijn ogen open. Hij ziet me kijken en zegt: '**Is er wat?**' 'Nee, nee,' zeg ik haastig.
" Ja, **is er wat?** Ik ben homo en wat dan nog?!"

Positive

Ik zag bij de HEMA verstelbare die ook schaatsen kunnen worden. **Is dat wat?** of beter een ander soort?
Ik wil heel erg graag horen wat jullie ervaringen zijn met keukenwinkels qua prijs en kwaliteit. Bijvoorbeeld die keukenwinkel in V&D (Almat) **is dat wat?**
Ontregelde geesten: heeft iemand die al gelezen? En zo ja **is het wat?**
Ik zag laatst in de bibliotheek een cd-rom pakket voor kinderen die beginnen met een vreemde taal. **Is dat wat?**
Pasgeleden was er een draadje over een soortgelijk onderwerp. Toen kwam er van iemand het antwoord voorbij dat ze bij de expo een appeldoos verkopen. Misschien **is dat wat?** Of blijft het dan niet lekker fris.
Ik zag in een folder de nieuwe senseo. Er zit een speciaal bakje bij voor verse melk , zodat je in een druk dus ook cappuchino en latte machiato kan krijgen. Heeft iemand dit weleens gedronken en zo ja **is het wat?**
Skiën in tsjehie: **is dat wat?** We zijn van plan om voor het eerst sinds jaren op wintersport te gaan.
was het wat? het was heeeeeel gezellig
Ik om wel eens de term "chef de bureau" tegen voor (kennelijk) een soort oppersecretaresse / manusje-van-alles. Misschien **is dat wat?**
De Montessorischool, **is dat wat?** Of de van der Walschool. Ik vind vooral de sfeer op een school belangrijk, de houding van de leerkrachten ten opzichte van de kinderen en heb een voorkeur voor een school die extra aandacht besteed aan creativiteit en cultuur.
Ik heb laatst met bonuspunten (en een behoorlijke bijbetaling) een prachtige blauwe gietijzeren pan gekocht bij Albert Heijn. Een braadpan dus, en hij was er ook in het rood. Misschien **is dat wat??** Succes met zoeken verder
Egberdien, jij had het over iets van "zandverstuivingen" .. waar de kinderen leuk hadden gespeeld... **is dat wat?** Soort picknick?
er kunnen stoeltjes op en tassen aan, hij heeft een speciale standaard, het stuur klapt niet "om" als je hem wegzet, en nog een aantal handigheidjes waar ik zo 1-2-3 ook niet meer op kom.
Misschien **is dat wat?**
<http://www.gedachten-gedichten.nl> / **is dit wat??**
Is dit wat? Hallo heb je hier wat aan?
er is een boek, Babytijd (auteur Hathaway e.a.), is heel praktisch met veel tips over doorslapen.
Misschien **is dat wat?**
Ook al leest mijn zoon erg goed, ik hoef niet aan te komen met gewone leesboeken, vindt ie niks aan. Dus misschien **is dit wat?**
Je kunt hem bijvoorbeeld ook yoghurt geven met een beetje fruit (half stuk lijkt me genoeg), dan heb je alles in een. **Is dat wat?**
Goedkope omafietsen, **is dat wat?** Wij willen voor onze dochter van 10 een nieuwe omafiets kopen
Wie heeft ooit zo'n ding gekocht? **Is het wat?**

Ik weet inmiddels dat de theorie achter "Oei ik groei" uit de duim van de schrijver komt en niet door feiten wordt gestaafd, idem met de fases van meneer Vervaet... Ik las laatst over mevrouw Kohnstamm - **is dat wat?**

Hoi Maria Hier op OO is ook een forum over meerlingen te vinden! Misschien **is dat wat?**

Nu had ik zelf bedacht om dat op een schaal te leggen met nog wat haring erbij en toast en stokbrood staat al op tafel. Maar, **is dat wat ?**

Goedkope dvd spelers, **is dat wat?** Ik zag vandaag bij Scheer en Foppen een dvd speler van 30 euro. Kan dat wat zijn voor die prijs?

Nederland heb het nederlandse nummer nog niet gehoord: **is het wat?**

Sun, ben erg benieuwd naar je paarse muren. Wij willen voor onze tweede graag paarse muren, misschien **is het wat?**

Dus wellicht: de burens zullen toch wel eens denken als ze.... horen . **Is dat wat?**

Was het wat? Smaakt het? Smaakt het naar meer?

De verharding van onze Nederlandse maatschappij, **is dat wat?** De moord op Fortuyn en Van Gogh. Mmm, is dat al niet weggevloeid in het putje der vergetelheid? Ja, ik kan er wel wat mee doen. De islam aanvallen - heb ik ook al duizend keer gedaan.

In het weekend kwam ik terug en zondag - hoogste tijd - wist ik nog steeds niet waarover ik voor De Groene Amsterdammer zou schrijven. Ik bladerde de twee Franstalige weekbladen door.

Driss Benzekri, overleden toen ik in Nederland was, werd uitgeluid. **Is dat wat?** dacht ik.

"Dat huilende kameeltje, **is dat wat?**" En dat een distributeur van verantwoorde arthouse-films dan streng zegt: "It's nice. Nice, nothing more."

Na de Tweede Wereldoorlog werd min of meer als norm gehanteerd dat de inkomensverschillen niet groter dan 1:5 zouden behoren te zijn. **Is dat wat?** Politici moeten erg op hun tellen passen om onder druk van wat zij veronderstellen dat de publieke opinie op dat moment is, de emoties aan te wakkeren of meteen maatregelen aan te kondigen

nee, ligt in die bocht. **Is dat wat?** Wij gaan altijd naar het hert :)

Leusden? **Is dat wat?**

half uurtje, **is dat wat?** Vind veel verschillende tijden en temperaturen op www. Verwarrend.

vraagje, dat terras-schoonmaak-ding van jou, **is dat wat?**

Kan ook een kanarie-geel pak aan doen .., **is dat wat?** Of het GO-logo op mijn hoofd tatoëren! sneakers ..., **is dat wat?** Zag ze in de nieuwe #JFK (26) staan

Ja .., **is het wat?** Ik heb de 1e aflevering nog niet eens gezien!

@babyenborst heeft capsules te koop, more milk +, en is ook lactatiekundige. Misschien **is dat wat?**

Had nog een leuk idee voor #beebbox De lansinoh zoogcompressen. **Is dat wat?**

Geen ervaring mee , maar misschien **is http://bit.ly/fTqp1g wat?**

En, **was het wat?** #vuurwerk #Houten

Is dit wat? <http://bit.ly/hNYQ7h>

Ik kwam nog een interessante boektitel tegen: Pat Patfoort, Ik wil, jij wilt niet, Geweldloos Opvoeden. Misschien **is dat wat?**

Is dit wat? <http://bit.ly/filmVPg>

LEEF! is bij ons een meubelzaak in Den Haag. Net verbouwing gehad geloof ik. **Is dat wat?**

Nee, nog niet. **Was t wat?**

Mss is 'Pleeteit' wat? Of moet het echt een jongensnaam zijn? @Teitloos Het was dan ook een afgeleide van 'Stoere jongens, ferme knaapen' . @Teitloos Fermeteit - **is dat wat?**

" Voor jou geselecteerd " - **is dat wat?**

@AhmedBenYerrou en **was het wat?**

@jvkup **is het wat?** Ik heb de video ervoor aangezet

@jaccodeboer **Is het wat?** #Tao Dat #DWDD begint steeds meer op #Koffietijd te lijken.

@kruithoph was / **is het wat?**

Ik zie daar nooit mensen binnen. Zat eigenlijk te wachten op het faillissement. **Is het wat?** Wat zou je aanraden?

Ken jij toevallig God vs Humans (dacht dat het zo heette). **Is dat wat?**

@grid8400 **is het wat?** dat kinect?

@GraficusErectus rond die tijd kun je een boterhammetje mee eten. **Is dat wat?**

Was het wat? Ben wel benieuwd.

@JanJelle Ik opteer voor accountoloog. **Is dat wat?** ;)

En, **was het wat?** #colombiana

Ik zag deze op de Groupon vandaag (hoe toevallig!!): Samsung externe hardeschijf -

<http://t.co/7kwgTv9> --- & gt ;**is het wat?**

ik weet echt te weinig van google voice; **is dat wat?**

Wat lees je? **Is het wat?**

'O ja? **Is het wat?'** 'Nou, ik vond er niet zoveel aan.

Dus je hebt ineens iets heel duurs gekocht? :-)) ik wil al heel lang een zeppelin, **is dat wat?** 'Tja ...

Maar dan heb je ook wat. Niks voor op je verjaardag?

Misschien een vrolijk bandje van de Rockacademie, denk ik aan. **Is dat wat?** #lowbudget

BLommie, ben jij op de loods geweest siteren? **Was het wat?**

Bert B te U heeft nog wat tablets... **is dat wat?**

@sevensheaven 7 MM dan? **is dat wat?**

@dhravreeling **is dit wat?** (linkjes) <http://is.gd/7ICEtq> @ramoen alleen die knopjes he? ;)

@TofikDibi Had jouw naam doorgegeven #radio1. **Was het wat?**

@vanhooft Klinkt goed, gaat wat worden zo te horen! Vanavond waarschijnlijk naar Inception. **Is het wat?**

@FleurigMelle ja? **was t wat?** * supernieuwsgierig *

Gisteravond Budget TV en TV kantine gemist en vergeten op te nemen. **Was 't wat?**

Dwz jij hebt afspraak en ik weet niet wanneer jij daarmee klaar bent. Ik kan nu pas om 12.15 uur.

Is dat wat?

@TetsieaBlijham **was het wat?** het appartement?

@DirkBruinsma: TweetDeck net geïnstalleerd... **Is dat wat?**

Voetbalmania hier in huis #glee gemist **was het wat?**

@kluun **is het wat?** Ik ben na 2 maanden er nog niet over uit wat ik vond van ik haal je op ik neem je mee!

We hebben even gekeken en als we nu iedere dag 1/3 deel rijden, dan komen we vandaag in de buurt van Heilbronn. **Is dat wat?**

De film Capote, vanavond 00.10 op Net 5, **is dat wat?**

@HansNouwens www.eetiquette.com **Is dat wat?**

ach, daar had ik ook moeten zitten vandaag maar er kwam een presentatie tussendoor. **Is het wat?**

Ga nu Comedy Live terugkijken. **Was het wat?**

ik wilde daar laatst ook naar toe, was net het laatste tafeltje weg. **Is het wat?** #visenmeer

@ArnoldRenkema Niet gezien. **Was het wat?**

@DZaart laten we even wachten hoe t zal gaan in nwe gemeentehuis qua verbinding/stream

#raad075 @DZaart @emrekanik @markvkollenburg #075beraad en #raad075. **Is dat wat?**

Een verslag van een week op Google +, **is het wat?** - Internet & Media –

@AlexanderNL Eerste gevoel erbij, **is het wat?**

@GroenLiesbeth en **is het wat?** #borisd

@Theakoster Die paal, erfstuk Krol, is een schademaker, **is dit wat?**

Vrijdag 4 maart? Vanaf 16.30 uur. **Is dat wat?** #leuk

Zeg, dat Digtene **is dat wat?** Het ruikt heel erg naar Senseo en Euroshopper. Maar werkt het?

Ik wil graag een draadloos huis

Persoonlijk ben ik wel voor Disney-filmpjes van Donald Duck of Mickey Mouse. Werkte ook wel voor 3- of 4-jarigen. **Is dat wat?**

@annecoppens **is Facebook wat?** Had laatst op twitter nog gevraagd of ik er ook 1 aan zou maken :P

@Freekvdbergh Wauw, **was het wat?**

Jij al aan de GooglePlus dus? **Is het wat?** Ben zelf wat huiverig om er weer één bij te pakken

Adele in Paradiso, ik hoor er maar weinig over. **Was het wat?** Vast niet.

Echt Amerikaans, niet mijn ding. Shutter island **is dat wat?**

@HarcoSorbat Gerard de Vries, **is dat wat?** Geen zon, wel benauwd, als dat geen noodweer gaat worden

@JoostWessels1 en **is het wat?** #woodyallen

Mensen, dat Google +, **is dat wat?** Ben net terug van vakantie en heb het helemaal gemist

Hee, die heb ik helaas gemist. **Was het wat?**

Wie heeft het boek gelezen? **Is het wat?**

Na 23-7 hebben wij hier in #030 een oventje en magnetron over, **is dat wat?**
 @ NS_Machinist **is dat wat?** #seats2meet
 @martvanderburg en **is het wat?** voor alle fietsers onder ons, ontzettend gave fietstocht (niet voor watjes...)
 @Robin700 Nee, moet morgen vroeg op, **is het wat?**
 @reinoutw ik red vandaag trouwens 5 uur wel. **is dat wat?**
 @OnlineMarketeer oh spannend. **Was het wat?**
 @ikachan das niet duur. Maar **is t wat?**
 @LindieMegens service bij Belcompany Boxmeer is erg goed! @LindieMegens Tmobile? **is dat wat?** Check Vodafone eens. Goedkoper en beter.
 Vraag: **Was het wat?**
 @KoenIngels en... **Was t wat?** #neukettes
 iemand de nieuwe VK-thriller-serie Those Who Kill al gezien? **is het wat?** #dtv
 YEAH De nieuwe VK-thriller-serie Those Who Kill: **is het wat?** #dtv
 @ Nathalie_S Zoon is 6 bijna 7. `Kidsweek junior' **is dat wat?** #6wekenvoor6euro?
 Tijdmachine? **is het wat?**
 @Dennisisonfire **is dat wat?** Lezen?
 @dennismons dat #gepest werd wel gehyped, **is het wat?** Als in, is het echt tenenkrommend **is dit wat?** <http://bit.ly/gPQ8aY> boekenfestijn #Rotterdam 27 t/m 30 jan.
 Zag er goed uit, **is het wat?** #vaasjesvrijdag
 nee, die heb ik volgens mij nog niet gezien.... **is 't wat?**
 ik krijg van de week een nieuwe htc desire hd... **is dat wat?**
 @striptekenaar **is dit wat?** <http://bit.ly/hvBRIB>
 Heb ik het bandje bij la place gemist? **Was t wat?**
 Iemand gezien dat de kijkshop een androidtab voor 125 euro heeft? **is dat wat?** #dtv
 @burobraaf **is dit wat?** <https://www.3vcash.nl/>
 3e rang in de Stadsschouwburg Groningen, **is dat wat?**
 Ik wilde vanavond naar de Smashing Pumpkins, de schaatsclub of de 010 Couchsurf meeting, maar ben zo moe dat ik denk ik nergens heenga :(**is t wat?**
 @Kajrietberg **is dit wat?** <http://bit.ly/fwsnm0> het lijkt te doen wat jij wilt...
 @annetsmith tips: afspraken maken & wijzigen, stemknoppen, geavanceerde hantekeningen (plaatjes etc.). **is dat wat?**
 @elmarrekens **is het wat?** #Ironie
 @Franklnn En? **Was het wat?** #boekinbed
 Afspraak nog in juli, **is dat wat?** suggesties per DM ;)
 @svendavid **is het wat?** #srmgoeroe
 @PatrickBoonstra Hier het bewijs: <http://t.co/kHiG0JU>. **is het wat?**
 @AntalvanPelt **is dit wat?** <http://t.co/HULUwvj>.
 @arnoudnl lol... **was t wat?** @vermorken vond je t wat?
 @GOERYYY haha **is t wat?** Had ook niet anders verwacht van je btw ;)

Occurrences for *x zijn wat*

Negative

Vragen ook of ze een staartje in haar haar wil maar nee dat wil ze niet dus dan ga je heeeel hard huilen Tja **het is wat** als je jong bent

Vervelend dat wachten Dag Yolanda , <p> <p> **Het is wat** hé dat wachten .

Ja proppen olifantje **het is wat** he waarom zou ik niet mogen zeggen dat ik het onsmakelijk vind als ik iemand zie proppen met eten ? kwesten , ja tuurlijk is het niet leuk om te horen dat iemand anders dat onsmakelijk vind

Het is wat hoor , die magische 1000cc grens . Inderdaad schijnt het bij flesvoeding niet goed te zijn wegens belasting van de nieren . Inmiddels hebben we alles al geprobeerd , meer water (geeft ook minder calorieën en hoeft niet perse de honger te stillen)

Het is wat , zwaar hoor ! Heel veel sterkte en hopelijk gaan die hormonen een beetje indimmen

ik zit bijna alleen met vrouwen in de klas , alweer ... vorig jaar was het ik en een andere jongen dan (die zeur) en nu met remi ja , **het is wat** ik kan er ook weinig aan doen dat er een overvloed aan vrouwen is in nijmegen

Huh ? Dus als een bepaalde lijn hoog zit , ben je op dat gebied (fysiek , emotioneel danwel intellectueel) op je top . Pfoe . **Het is wat** .

Het zal de leeftijd zijn ... vanavond zag het er ook goed gewassen uit , misschien dat hij er nu toch op gaat letten ... **Het is wat** die jeugd (hahaha) het zal wel weer overgaan hoop ik .

Maaiké nog steeds geen internet !!!!! **Het is wat** zeg .

Arme geit . **Het is wat** .

Op de schoolfeesten op school wordt geen alcohol gedronken . Maar op het examengala onlangs, buiten de deur, des te meer - heb ik van andere ouders gehoord . Sja , **het is wat** met die drank.

Serius !! Het bestaat !! Tweede ontzaglijk onthulling : die landen blijven gewoon bestaan . De samenleving stort niet in . De gezondheidszorg functioneert er . Ook storten daar de opleidingen niet in onder de stormloop van studenten . **Het is wat** ! !

" Oktober 1987 , het tentamen dogmatiek zat er bijna op . Jan Veenhof , hoogleraar dogmatiek , zweeg even , zei toen : " **Het is wat** . " Uit niets bleek dat hij geschokt was , terwijl de hoogdravende en platvloerse , hilarische en provocatieve teksten die hij had voorgelezen een generatie gelovigen hadden ontzet .

De gepassioneerde liefde , ja , **het is wat** . Ontroerend en begrijpelijk , wanhopig en heftig .

Het was wat met Giulio Cesare en de Nederlandse Opera . De Handel-cyclus met Marc Minkowski en zijn Musiciens du Louvre zou anderhalf jaar geleden in de Amsterdamse Stadsschouwburg beginnen met een prachtig experiment waarbij de partij van Caesar afwisselend door een mannelijke (David Daniels) en een

Ik voel de vreselijke spierpijn nu al opkomen . Met dank aan @bjonkerace . Fijn is dat . jaja , **het is wat** . Zonder zeentjes zelfs !

@giske90 Alleen een deels ingestort dak . Niettemin ernstig . **Het is wat** , een deels ingestort stadion van #FCTwente . Hopelijk komen de mensen er levend onder vandaan .

maar de erotiek die ze uitstraalde , haar loop , de manier waarop ze bij hem ging staan , hem in de ogen keek , met haar slanke vingers de sigaret uit zijn mond nam en in de hare stak : **het was wat** .

Er zijn altijd mensen die denken dat ze de baas van twitters zijn en willekeurig mensen de deur wijzen om mij onbekende redenen . **Het is wat** !

@beauvessen Haha , verkeerde trein , vast in de achtbaan , **het is wat** met jou !

En we zijn alweer bij Utrecht , terug naar huis **Het is wat** , uit logeren met twee kleine kinderen

@Nieko1985 **Het is wat** jongens

@_Intuos **Het is wat** met die man . Absurd

#komkommerenkwel **Het is wat** met de komkommers ! Belang volksgezondheid moet voorop staan en niet het economisch belang . (kom)kommer en kwel dat staat vast ! @

Het is wat met die hypotheekrente : burgers trekken hem af , banken rekken hem op ... Wat doet een politicus nu eigenlijk de hele dag ?

@ Hugo_lwd **Het is wat** Hugo , nog even , en er is een " speciale politie voor de Turken " . Kan toch niet :-)

@247vanbeusekom **Het is wat** inderdaad ;-) De dinsdagcolumn van @HanTenBroeke ,

@PieterOmtzigt en ondergetekende .. RT @tctubantia : Op naar ceremonieel koningschap ?

@eelcoeikenaar ha ha , tsja , **het is wat** als je tegen je zin voor geldverslindende projecten als tram en forum moet zijn he ; -))

@joostvankeulen precies , **het is wat** in Groningen hoor ... zucht

@Katink **het is wat** bij jullie in zeeland zeg . 2 weken opgeloten zitten daar ?

Het is wat op maandagochtend : de #godwin van de dag , gemaakt in een column over hoger onderwijs en studiekeuze

@eetschrijver eeuwig zomer ja hoor : de gordijnen dicht . **Het is wat**

@ClubFavolosa **het is wat** , een digibete moeder !

Nu eindelijk maar eens een legale upgrade gekocht van #CorelDraw 4 (1993) naar CorelDraw X 5 (2010) . **Het is wat** ! Bol.com binnen 24 uur geleverd ? #dachthetniet Het pakket blijft al een etmaal bij TNT Post hangen volgens track n trace .

Oh guttegutteguttehgut oh gutteguttegut och och guttegut , **het is wat** , dat allemaal . Sjonge jongejonge jongeh , sjeminee .

Positive

ik was óók afgevallen hoor , het was maar een pondje maar **het was wat** ; -)))

@Taalfactor dank ;-)
het is wat met de #gratis #tips vandaag ! #aanrader

Donderdag winnaars kiezen ! #GPCM **Het is wat** , een #superblogger genoemd worden door @Robert_Engel . ;) * pinkt traantje weg *

Een aantal leden waren al 65 jaar lid en kregen een aandenken . @maikelslagers Tsja , **het is wat** hè ? ;-)

zodra de uitlijning enigszins vorm aangenomen heeft , stuur ik het je . Zo bijvoorbeeld Roggeman . Zeker , **het is wat** en ik ben er verheugd om

Occurrences for *x zijn wel wat*

maar **het is wel wat** ... ik zit bijna alleen met vrouwen in de klas , alweer ...

Het was wel wat bij het #twentinediner Veel sprekers waardoor er weinig gelegenheid was om met mijn tafelgenoten te praten . #tochnuttig

@_Flugel Ja , **het was wel wat** gisteravond Om precies te zijn : " Duur "

Occurrences for *x worden nog wat*

Negative

Dat stof en die droogte (het regent bijna nooit in Peking) - dat **wordt nog wat** in de olympische zomer .

oh oh dat **wordt nog wat** als ik in leuven werk

Dat **wordt nog wat** want we moeten nog een maand of 5 .

Ik vond het zo knap van hem dat hij uit kon leggen , met zijn beperkte woordenschat , dat hij boos was laatst . Dat **wordt nog wat** als hij echt goed gaat praten . Dan zoek je vast af en toe naar het " uit " knopje .

Dus Redha begint ook al drift kuren te vertonen , hier ook hoor , als Duncan zijn zin niet krijgt is het krijsen en gooit hij zijn hoofd naar achteren . **Wordt nog wat** . Fijn dat hij wel weer wat beter eet , hoe is het met het slapen ?

Mijn zoon van nu 3 1/2 was volkomen verknocht aan zijn speen ! Ik dacht dat **wordt nog wat** het afscheid .

Volgens mij zit er ook een aardig temperament in het kindje , als iets niet bevalt laat ie zich horen , boos boos boos en duwen met die handjes tegen je dan , proberen om te draaien en weg te komen , rood koppie , dat **wordt nog wat** ; -)

Waar ik last van heb nu is een onvoorstelbare moeheid . Echt niet te geloven . En ik pas geeneen gewone bh meer . Broeken word ook al een probleem . Help , dat **wordt nog wat** .

Bepaalde dingen kan ik wel verzinnen : dat hij zelf naar de wc moet kunnen (**wordt nog wat** met de poepjes) , dat hij zelf zijn jas en schoenen moet kunnen aantrekken - dat soort dingen

Dus nu alles inpakken , dat **wordt nog wat** want we gaan met de trein en peetjeman en peetjezoon willen persé snorkels , flippers , duikbrillen en onderwatercamera mee . Tuuurlijk , kan best in die ene rugzak of anders in de weekendtas ...

Ontzettend bewegelijk maar toch zo kopig als een stier . Dat **wordt nog wat** .

Ik moest erg om Marieke lachen , inderdaad een klus om uit te leggen hoe dat zit met sinterklaas . Tjonge dat **wordt nog wat** .

Volgens het CDA zullen slechts de ambtenarensalarissen bepalend zijn , de PvdA ziet het anders . Dat **wordt nog wat** als de vakbonden niet genegen zijn tot matiging omdat ze er de ziekte over in houden dat managers à la Cees van der Hoeven (Ahold) doorgaan met hun eigen onmatigheid uit de jaren negentig .

Bolkestein erkent dat hij hoge eisen stelt . En dekt zich tot slot in : " Misschien vindt niemand dit dagboek interessant . " Valse bescheidenheid . Dat **wordt nog wat** als Bolkestein aan het eind van dit decennium zijn " magnum opus " presenteert . In het Engels . Uiteraard . Nederland is te klein voor hem .

Dat **wordt nog wat** voor de toekomst . Geen internet ? Niks mee te maken , betalen !

Dat **wordt nog wat** straks op de camping - al die landgenoten die hem er even aan willen herinneren : ' Nobody fucks with Frank de Grave . '

Dat zegt iets over wat er voor volwassenen wordt gemaakt , het pleit ook voor makers van kinderfilm en - televisie ; en voor jury"s die hun desinteresse in dat genre laten varen . Dat **wordt nog wat** na de aanstaande remake van de Zuster . Ook op de in B & W gekozen fragmenten rustte geen zegen : een refrein dat niet van Bannink bleek te zijn ; een liedversie door Paul de Leeuw

Upside is het intussen helemaal geen vanzelfsprekendheid dat de Volkskrant en NRC Handelsblad per se en alleen aparte redenen van bestaan hebben . Dat **wordt nog wat** , áls Broertjes en collega Folkert Jensma van NRC Handelsblad in de loop van dit jaar aankondigen dat ze na respectievelijk twaalf en tien jaar iets anders gaan doen .

Drie dagen daarna zou de wereld 1 mei vieren en , zonder het te weten , mijn zeventigste verjaardag . Dat **wordt nog wat** , dacht ik .

@pieter020 dat meen je niet ... nou .. dat **wordt nog wat** - heb zijn partij gevraagd afstand te nemen van de uitspraken Melding gemaakt van homofobe haatteksten <http://bit.ly/9l1nEd>

Binnenkort mogen Heusdense jongeren op de parkeerplaats van RKC rond crossen . Dat **wordt nog wat** als er een stadionpilaar om wordt gekegeld .

@michielheijmans ik zit er vrijdag om m'n ww veilig te stellen ivm al bestaand bedrijf naast WW ... dat **wordt nog wat** vrees ik

Straks ping-pong , vanavond balk . Dat **wordt nog wat** vandaag

Pieter type met een sterke eigen wil .. Dat **wordt nog wat** ..

Sinterklaas **wordt nog wat** , eerst op 4 bij remke thuis en dan 5 naar wognum .

Een dag vol cie's , grote dossiers , de NZ-lijn en het project 1012 . Die slotraad **wordt nog wat** maar ik bespeur brede steun voor het college .

Messi geel , Valdes geel , Villa geel , Pepe geel , Ronaldo geel . **Wordt nog wat** volgende helft !

@esjlie ooooooh shit . haha . dat **wordt nog wat** volgende week :) ga n marathon houden !

Klopt ik voel me nu , na 1 biertje gister , al brak en alsof ik een kater heb . Dat **wordt nog wat** , morgen

@marjonvanessen ai ik probeer taliet en mij in 1 koffer pfff **wordt nog wat** . Doe wel de handdoeken dan apart Het wordt straks puzzelinpakken

@marjonvanessen dat viel weer tegen :-(**wordt nog wat** vooral de teksten , muziek is nooit een probleem .

@esthervdstorm Morgen dus op platte schoentjes naar het werk ? Dat **wordt nog wat** met die sportdag ;) Eerst @Strangolin nu jij

Forse mensen (of iig mensen met stevige bovenbenen) kunnen niet in de nieuwste achtbaan van de Efteling (Joris en de Draak) ! Dat **wordt nog wat** !

@gerardhutten Welke zon ? Ik val bijna in slaap in college . En straks moet ik autorijden . Dat **wordt nog wat** :S

@MarkWouda Dat **wordt nog wat** als de boeken uit zijn ! Bibliotheekpasje aanvragen ? Nu we er toch zijn op vakantie , in littenseradiel !!!!

#Leers mag weer even leeglopen bij DWDD . Blijft 'n beetje hetzelfde verhaal vertellen hè . Dat hoger beroep van 'm **wordt nog wat** !

@LoesSchutte dat **wordt nog wat** als je een jaar samen bent ☺

@FabianWvE Ohjee , dat **wordt nog wat** . :-P

Mijn gezicht vandaag ingesmeerd met factor 50 en alsnog verbrand ... Dat **wordt nog wat** deze zomer .

@AnnieMaessen Ja , kan nog komen . Het is nog niet dat ze voor de deur staan . Het geldt alleen voor kinderboeken . Dat **wordt nog wat** met de sticker spaaractie van de superhelden in de bibliotheek ...

Geen zon om te werken en ben pas binnen ! **Wordt nog wat** vandaag

@toetss focx met a nigga man Yes camera probleem , morgen d - rashid filmen . **Wordt nog wat** :(

broertjelief probeert moeders uit te leggen waar ze morgen moet zijn ... Dat **wordt nog wat** =P

@DivaKatinka beterschap ! Keuzes , advies , beslissingen ? **Wordt nog wat** vandaag .

Kinderen naar huis , spulletjes opgeruimd en weer lekker thuis moe aan het zijn . School **wordt nog wat** morgen .

Jemig ... Een nachtje verkeerd liggen en meteen half invalide : - (. Dat **wordt nog wat** vanavond .
@HesterOz heeft DE HOOFDLETTOR ontdekt , dat **wordt nog wat**
Het **wordt nog wat** met die kerntakendiscussie . Bij veel raadsleden ontbreekt het lef om echte
bezuinigingen door te voeren ...

Ga nu de katebak maar weer binnen zetten voordat die insneeuwt . Nou , dat **wordt nog wat**
. We zouden vanmiddag gezellig al naar België rijden . #vakantie . Vliegen morgen pas .
rondje om Gap wordt echt een ijsbaan door de regen . Supergevaarlijk . **Wordt nog wat**
vanmiddag ..

Positive

Naomi , gefeliciteerd met je baan !!! Het **wordt nog wat** met jou hihihhi , eerst je rijbewijs en nu
een baan . Te gek meis .

Seksualiteit is zeker niet het enige overblijvende strijdpunt van het feminisme . Voor een vrouw
die mishandeld wordt , is het zelfs het laatste van haar zorgen . Maar feminisme is een
dynamisch gegeven en moet met de maatschappij mee evolueren . ' Het **wordt nog wat** met die
vrouwenbeweging .

omdat hij vandaag sigaren rookt en naar literaire verhalen luistert . Het **wordt nog wat** met die
jongen :))

@sterrechung Ik ben bang dat dat 'm niet wordt , maar hopen mag . Dat **wordt nog wat** bij PSV .
Heerlijk voetbalavondje tot nu toe . De sfeer is ook opperbest . #psvben

Nou nou ik ben nog nooit zo snel over de Diep(endaalselaan) gereden . Het **wordt nog wat** met
#Hilversum .

@arnoudboer Dat **wordt nog wat** Zojuist heeft @SophieDiepemaat mijn auto weer helemaal
heel teruggebracht .

@alexanderweiss He **wordt nog wat** met de familie . Eerst moeders al en nu zuslief wow :D
Allemaal welterusten voor straks en een heel mooi weekend .

@Roelofdevries83 zie wat je bedoelt ! nou , ik heb mijn woorden zelfs zeer zorgvuldig gekozen .
zoals altijd . dit **wordt nog wat** ...

Nou nou , dat Feyenoord is helemaal LOS ! Dat **wordt nog wat** tegen PSV :-)

Niet alleen doe ik de #tourpoule dit jaar , maar ook komt de 9e etappe vlak langs mijn vakantie
adres . Het **wordt nog wat** met mij .

Het **wordt nog wat** in #Eindhoven ;-)

De zon komt door in Schiedam ! Het **wordt nog wat** met de dag :-)

Undecided

Ik ben mild cq totaal afgemat , ik heb 7 drukke peuters over de vloer gehad (en geen overdreven
vol feestprogramma gedaan) , het **wordt nog wat** met mij ; -)

En straks gaat God zich nog mengen ook , het **wordt nog wat**

@dmace Het **wordt nog wat** ...

@MevrJonk Dat **wordt nog wat** .

" zelfgemaakte bonbons " " champagne-ijs " #oid dat **wordt nog wat**

@ femke_b dat **wordt nog wat** met ons

@heloboha dat **wordt nog wat** dan ! nog meer sneeuw ! Sneeuw !