

More than two infinitives in Frisian

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1 Introduction

Infinitives are non-finite verb forms, which do not carry any tense or phi-features. An example of a Dutch infinitive that is the complement of a modal verb is given in (1).

- (1) Ik kan eten.
I can eat.INF
'I can eat.' (Dutch)

Infinitives can not only be used as verbs, but they can also function as nouns. The example in (2) shows that they can combine with a determiner, which is typical for nouns.

- (2) Na het eten ben ik altijd moe.
after the eat.INF am I always tired
'I always feel satisfied after eating.' (Dutch)

In Dutch, the infinitive has the same morphological form, whether it is being used as a verb, as in (1), or as noun, as in (2). In Frisian (actually West-Frisian but Frisian for short), a minority-language spoken in the north of the Netherlands, this is different. Frisian has two morphologically distinct infinitives: one ending in *-e* (pronounced as [ə]) and one ending in *-en* (pronounced as [n]). It has been argued (cf. Visser 1989, Hoekstra 1997, Bergstra 2020) that they follow the noun-verb distinction described above and that infinitives on *-e* are verbal infinitives and infinitives on *-en* are nominal infinitives. This distribution is illustrated in (3). In (3-a), the infinitive functions as a verb as it is the complement of a modal verb. Here the verbal *-e*-infinitive is grammatical and the nominal *-en*-infinitive is not. In (3-b), the infinitive functions as a noun as it combines with a determiner. Here the nominal *-en*-infinitive is grammatical and the verbal *-e*-infinitive is not.

- (3) a. Ik kin it-*e*/*-*en*.
I can eat-INF*e*/-INF*en*
'I can eat.'

- b. Nei it it-en/*-e fiel ik my altyd foldien.
 after the eat-INF_{en}/-INF_e feel I me always satisfied
 ‘I always feel satisfied after eating.’ (Frisian)

In the examples above, the forms neatly fit their contexts: the verbal suffix *-e* appears in a verbal context and the nominal suffix *-en* appears in a nominal context. However, this is not always the case: there are infinitives on *-en* that appear in a verbal context and not in a nominal one (which has also been signaled by Hoekstra 1997). This means that a description with two infinitives does not fully capture the distribution of the infinitives. This paper argues that Frisian has at least three different types of infinitives.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, I give a systemic description of the three types of Frisian infinitives. Section 3 compares Frisian to English and shows that English largely makes the same three-way distinction as Frisian does. Section 4 concludes and provides some discussion about even more contexts that infinitives appear in and more types of infinitives.

2 Frisian infinitives

This section describes Frisian infinitives in different contexts: *-e*-infinitives in a verbal context, *-en*-infinitives in a nominal context and *-en*-infinitives in a verbal context. There are numerous different contexts in which infinitives appear (see Hoekstra 2020 for an overview), and I only discuss a small portion of them. I focus on the contexts for which judgements are clear and which illustrate my point that there are at least three types of infinitives in Frisian. Other contexts do not go against the claims I make in this paper, but they complicate the picture. I briefly return to them in the discussion.

The Frisian examples in this paper represent so-called Standard Frisian, which is the variant of Frisian that is reported on in most of the literature (cf. Visser 1989, Hoekstra 1997, Bergstra 2020, Hoekstra 2020). The examples in this paper are constructed by me as a native speaker and my judgements are confirmed by other native speakers. There is variation in infinitive selection, especially among younger speakers, or speakers of so-called interference Frisian (see De Haan 1997 about interference Frisian and Bergstra 2020 for a study about this variation), which I leave aside for now. I briefly return to the topic of change and variation in the discussion.

In this section I start by discussing situations in which the forms fit their contexts. Section 2.1 describes *-e*-infinitives that appear in verbal context and *-en*-infinitives that appear in a nominal context. I consider a context to be verbal when the infinitive can take an internal argument and I consider a context to be nominal when the infinitive can be modified by a prepositional phrase with *fan*

'of'. Section 2.2 describes situations in which forms do not fit their contexts, i.e. examples of *-en*-infinitives that appear in a verbal context. Section 2.3 summarizes and interprets the observed pattern.

2.1 Forms that fit their context

A verbal context in which the so-called verbal *-e*-infinitive appears is the one in which the infinitive is a complement of a modal verb. I repeat the example I gave in the introduction in (4). In this context, the infinitive on *-e* is grammatical and the one on *-en* is not. All modal verbs follow this pattern, so also *sille* 'will', *wolle* 'want to', *moatte* 'must' and *meie* 'may'.

- (4) Ik kin it-*e*/*-*en*.
 I can eat-*INF_e*/*INF_{en}*
 'I can eat.' (Frisian)

Evidence for this infinitive being a verb comes from the fact that the infinitive can take an internal argument. The example in (5) shows that *ite* 'eat' can take *appels* 'apples' as an internal argument.

- (5) Ik kin appels it-*e*/*-*en*.
 I can apples eat-*INF_e*/*INF_{en}*
 'I can eat apples.' (Frisian)

Evidence for this infinitive not being a noun comes from the fact that the infinitive cannot be modified by a prepositional phrase with *fan* 'of'. The example in (6) shows that *ite* 'eat' cannot be modified by the prepositional phrase *fan appels* 'of apples'.

- (6) *Ik kin it-*e*/*-en* fan appels.
 I can eat-*INF_e*/*INF_{en}* of apples
 intended: 'I can eat apples.' (Frisian)

Another verbal context in which the so-called verbal *-e*-infinitive appears is the one in which it is a complement of the verb *litte* 'to let'. The example in (7-a) shows that here the infinitive on *-e* is grammatical and the one on *-en* is not. The example in (7-b) shows that the infinitive can take an internal argument, indicating that the infinitive is a verb. The example in (7-c) shows that the infinitive cannot be modified by a prepositional phrase with *fan* 'of', indicating that it is not a noun.

- (7) a. Ik lit dy it-*e*/*-*en*.
 I let you eat-*INF_e*/*INF_{en}*
 'I let you eat.'

- b. Ik lit dy appels it-*e*/*-*en*.
 I let you apples eat-*INF_e*/*INF_{en}*
 ‘I let you eat apples.’
- c. *Ik lit dy it-*e*/*en* fan appels.
 I let you eat-*INF_e*/*INF_{en}* of apples
 intended: ‘I let you eat apples.’ (Frisian)

In sum, modal verbs and the verb *litte* ‘to let’ take verbal complements and they require the *-e*-infinitive, confirming the verbal status of the *-e*-infinitive.

I discuss one nominal context in which the so-called nominal *-en*-infinitive appears. This is the context in which the infinitive combines with a determiner. The example in (8-a) shows that here the infinitive on *-en* is grammatical and the one on *-e* is not. The example in (8-b) shows that the infinitive cannot take an internal argument, indicating that the infinitive is not a verb.¹ The example in (8-c) shows that the infinitive can be modified by a prepositional phrase with *fan* ‘of’, indicating that it is a noun.

- (8) a. Nei it it-*en*/*-*e* fiel ik my altyd foldien.
 after the eat-*INF_{en}*/*INF_e* feel I me always satisfied
 ‘I always feel satisfied after eating.’
- b. *Nei it appels it-*en*/*e* fiel ik my altyd foldien.
 after the apples eat-*INF_{en}*/*INF_e* feel I me always satisfied
 intended: ‘I always feel satisfied after eating apples.’
- c. Nei it it-*en*/*-*e* fan appels fiel ik my altyd foldien.
 after the eat-*INF_{en}*/*INF_e* of apples feel I me always satisfied
 ‘I always feel satisfied after eating apples.’ (Frisian)

In sum, determiners take nominal complements and they require the *-en*-infinitive, which confirms the nominal status of the *-en*-infinitive.

2.2 Forms that do not fit their context

In this section, I discuss examples that go against the general pattern I described so far. I give two contexts in which the *-en*-infinitive does not appear in a

¹The example in (8-b) becomes grammatical when the plural morpheme of the internal argument is left out and the noun is incorporated, as shown in (i).

- (i) Nei it appetit-*en*/*-*e* fiel ik my altyd foldien.
 after the apple eat-*INF_{en}*/*INF_e* feel I me always satisfied
 ‘I always feel satisfied after apple-eating.’ (Frisian)

This is a type of noun incorporation: the noun *appel* ‘apple’ is non-referential and it is unclear whether it is only one or more than one apples that are being eaten (see Dyk 1997). Since noun incorporation is grammatical for all examples given in this paper, it does not help with distinguishing the different types of infinitives and I leave it aside.

nominal context but in a verbal one.

One verbal context in which the so-called nominal *-en*-infinitive appears is the one in which the infinitive is a complement of a perception verb, such as *hearre* 'to hear'. The example in (9-a) shows that here the *-en*-infinitive is grammatical and the one *-e*-infinitive is not. The example in (9-b) shows that the infinitive can take an internal argument, which indicates that it is a verb. The example in (9-c) shows that the infinitive cannot be modified by a prepositional phrase with *fan* 'of', which indicates that it is not a noun. This is surprising, because the *-en*-infinitive is generally described as the nominal infinitive, but (10-b) and (10-c) show that the infinitive shows properties of a verb and not of a noun. Other perception verbs, such as *sjen* 'to see' and *fiel* 'to feel' follow this pattern too.

- (9) a. Ik hear de minsken it-en/*-e.
I hear the people eat-INF_{en}/-INF_e
'I hear the people eating.'
- b. Ik hear de minsken appels it-en/*-e.
I hear the people apples eat-INF_{en}/-INF_e
'I hear the people eating apples.'
- c. *Ik hear de minsken it-en/-e fan appels.
I hear the people eat-INF_{en}/-INF_e of apples
intended: 'I hear the people eating apples.' (Frisian)

A second verbal context in which the so-called nominal *-en*-infinitive appears is the one in which the infinitive is a complement of an aspectual verb, such as *bliuwe* 'to keep'. The example in (10-a) shows that in this context, the infinitive on *-en* is grammatical and the one on *-e* is not.² The example in (10-b) shows that the infinitive can take an internal argument, which indicates that it is a verb. The example in (10-c) shows that the infinitive cannot be modified by a prepositional phrase with *fan* 'of', which indicates that it is not a noun. Again, this is surprising, because the infinitive has the form of a nominal element but it behaves like a verbal element. Other aspectual verbs, such as *gean* 'to go', *kom* 'to come' follow this pattern too.

²Some speakers only allow posture verbs as complement of aspectual verbs. They would judge the example in (10-a) as ungrammatical, but they would accept (i).

- (i) Ik bliuw rinn-en/*-e.
I keep walk-INF_{en}/-INF_e
'I keep walking.' (Frisian)

I keep the example with non-posture verb in the main text to make the differences between the examples sentences as small as possible.

- (10) a. Ik bliuw it-en/*-e.
 I keep eat-INF_{en}/-INF_e
 'I keep eating.'
- b. Ik bliuw appels it-en/*-e.
 I keep apples eat-INF_{en}/-INF_e
 'I keep eating apples.'
- c. *Ik bliuw it-en/-e fan appels.
 I keep eat-INF_{en}/-INF_e of apples
 intended: 'I keep eating apples.' (Frisian)

Bergstra (2020) argues that infinitives that are complements of perception verbs and aspectual verbs should be analyzed as nominal infinitives. She shows that both verb types have lexical counterparts that can select for non-verbal elements, which are nouns in the case of perception verbs, as shown in (11-a), and prepositional phrases in the case of aspectual verbs, shown in (11-b).

- (11) a. Ik hear dy.
 I hear you
 'I hear you.'
- b. Ik bliuw yn Fryslân.
 I stay in Fryslân
 'I'm staying in Fryslân.' (Frisian)

Bergstra (2020) argues that although this is not direct evidence for the infinitive being nominal, the infinitive should be analyzed as such. I argue against this position. Perception verbs and aspectual verbs may have lexical counterparts that can combine with non-verbal elements as in (11), but in the versions in which they appear in (9) and (10), they require a complement which is not clearly prepositional or nominal. I analyze the infinitives in (9) and (10) as verbal elements, which is supported by the fact that the infinitives allow for internal arguments but not for *fan* 'of' prepositional phrases.

In sum, perception verbs and aspectual verbs take verbal complements but they require the *-en*-infinitive, so the infinitive behaves like a verbal element but it has the form of a nominal element.

2.3 Three types of infinitives

Table 1 summarizes Sections 2.1 and 2.2.

The left column shows the different contexts and the top row gives the two tests that distinguish nouns from verbs. The table shows three different types of infinitives: (i) infinitives that are the complement of modal verbs or the complement of *litte* 'to let' and behave like verbs because they allow for internal arguments and not like nouns because they do not allow for modification by a

	internal argument	<i>fan</i> 'of'-clause
complement of modal verb	<i>-e</i>	*
complement of <i>litte</i> 'let'	<i>-e</i>	*
combining with determiner	*	<i>-en</i>
complement of perception verb	<i>-en</i>	*
complement of aspectual verb	<i>-en</i>	*

Table 1: Frisian infinitives in five contexts

fan 'of' clause, and take the *-e* suffix, (ii), the infinitive that combines with the determiner and behaves like a noun because it allows modification by a *fan* 'of' clause and not like a verb because it does not allow for internal arguments, and takes the *-en* suffix, and (iii) infinitives that are the complement of aspectual verbs or the complement of perception verbs and behave like verbs because they allow for internal arguments and not like nouns because they do not allow for modification by a *fan* 'of' clause, and take the *-en* suffix.

In other words, the data I presented show that Frisian has three types of infinitives. I conclude from this that Frisian has three suffixes that combine with a stem: a verbal suffix *-e*, a nominal suffix *-en* and a verbal suffix *-en*.³ The first two suffixes have been distinguished in most of the literature on Frisian so far (cf. Visser 1989, Hoekstra 1997, Haan 2010, Bergstra 2020, Hoekstra 2020), the existence of a second type of *-en* infinitive has also been brought up by Hoekstra (1997). I summarize the division in three types of infinitives in Table 2.

	context	Frisian
verbal INF 1	complement of <i>let</i>	<i>-e</i>
	complement of modal verb	<i>-e</i>
verbal INF 2	complement of perception verb	<i>-en</i>
	complement of aspectual verb	<i>-en</i>
nominal INF	combining with determiner	<i>-en</i>

Table 2: Three types of infinitives in Frisian

It follows from this division that the distinction between verbal and nominal is not sufficient to describe the different infinitive types in Frisian. Both verbal INF 1 and verbal INF 2 require verbal complements that can take internal argu-

³Another possibility is that there is only a single suffix *-en*, which combines with different stems: a verbal one and a nominal one. I leave it for future research to find out which of the two possibilities is correct. For this paper I continue the reasoning assuming that there are two *-en*-suffixes.

ments, but only one of them (i.e. verbal INF 1) takes the *-e*-suffix and the other one (i.e. verbal INF 2) takes the *-en*-suffix. Sentences become ungrammatical when the other suffix is used.

In terms of formal features, one could phrase the situation as follows: Frisian distinguishes three types of suffixes that combine with a stem to form an infinitive. This means that all three suffixes have a their own feature specification. However, the three suffixes also share some properties with each other. Two of them have properties of verbs (verbal INF 1 and verbal INF 2), and one of them has properties of a noun (nominal INF). Two of them (verbal INF 2 and nominal INF) have the same morphological form, one of them has a different form (verbal INF 1). The shared properties of the suffixes should not be a coincide but they should follow from their feature specification.

3 A similar pattern in English

In the previous section I showed that Frisian distinguishes three types of infinitives, which I illustrated with examples with different contexts. In this section I discuss the same contexts for English as I did for Frisian. It turns out that English generally shows a similar pattern. It distinguishes three types of infinitives: a verbal bare infinitive, a verbal *-ing*-infinitive and a nominal *-ing* infinitive.⁴ In this paper, I only discuss the English counterparts of the Frisian examples given in the paper. Needless to say, much more has and can be said about English infinitives and *-ing*-forms (cf. Reuland 1983, Duffley 2006, 2016).

I start with the modal verbs. In this context, Frisian uses the verbal *-e*-infinitive. In (12), I give examples with the modal verb *can*. The example in (12-a) shows that the bare infinitive *eat* is grammatical and the *-ing*-infinitive *eating* is not. The infinitive behaves like a verb because it can take an internal argument (see (12-b)) and it cannot be modified by a prepositional phrase with *of* (see (12-c)).⁵

- (12) a. I can eat(*-ing)
 b. I can eat(*-ing) apples
 c. *I can eat(-ing) of apples (English)

The next context is the one in which the infinitive is the complement of the

⁴The English examples are verified by a native speaker (of southern British English), Katherine Walker, who I thank for that.

⁵The modal verbs *will*, *must* and *may* also follow the pattern as in (12). The English counterpart of the Frisian *wolle*, which is *want to* is different. As is already apparent from the translation, this verb requires *to* and can then take an internal argument. I briefly return to *to*-infinitives in the discussion.

verb *let*. Just as for modal verbs, Frisian uses the verbal *-e*-infinitive in this context and it allows for internal arguments. The example in (13-a) shows that in English the bare infinitive is again grammatical and the *-ing*-infinitive is not. The infinitive behaves like a verb because it can take an internal argument (see (13-b)) and it cannot be modified by a prepositional phrase with *of* (see (13-c)).

- (13) a. I let you eat(*-ing)
 b. I let you eat(*-ing) apples
 c. *I let you eat(-ing) of apples (English)

Summing up, in the contexts in which Frisian uses the verbal *-e*-infinitive, English uses the verbal bare infinitive.

In the next context, the determiner combines with the infinitive. Here, Frisian uses the nominal *-en*-infinitive. English does not easily allow for infinitives to combine with determiners. Examples often require contexts to make them sound acceptable. The example in (14) shows that the *-ing*-infinitive is grammatical and the bare infinitive is not.

- (14) Context: On Saturdays I always exercise and then afterwards I eat a lot. After the exercising I feel tired, but..
 after the eat*(-ing) I always feel satisfied. (English)

The infinitive behaves like a noun because it cannot take an internal argument (see (15-a)) and it can be modified by a prepositional phrase with *of* (see (15-b)).

- (15) Context: On Sundays, I always eat lots of fruit: sometimes I have bananas and sometimes I eat apples. After the eating of bananas I mostly feel very full, but..
 a. *After the apples eat(-ing) I always feel satisfied.
 b. After the eat*(-ing) of apples I always feel satisfied. (English)

To sum up, in the context in which Frisian uses the nominal *-en*-infinitive, English uses the nominal *-ing*-infinitive.

The next context is the one in which the infinitive is the complement of a perception verb. In this context, Frisian uses the verbal *-en*-infinitive. The example in (16-a) shows that in English, both the bare infinitive and the *-ing*-infinitive are grammatical. The infinitive behaves like a verb because it can take an internal argument (see (16-b)) and it cannot be modified by a prepositional phrase with *of* (see (16-c)). Other perception verbs, such as *see* and *feel* also follow this pattern.

- (16) a. I watch people eat(-ing).

- b. I watch people eat(-ing) apples.
 c. *I watch people eat(-ing) of apples. (English)

The final context to be discussed is the one in which the infinitive is the complement of an aspectual verb. Just as with perception verbs, Frisian uses the verbal *-en*-infinitive. The example in (17-a) shows that here, the *-ing*-infinitive is grammatical and the bare infinitive is not. The infinitive behaves like a verb because it can take an internal argument (see (17-b)) and it cannot be modified by a prepositional phrase with *of* (see (17-c)). The aspectual verbs *go* and *come*, which in Frisian follow the same pattern as *keep*, behave differently in English and I leave them out of the discussion.

- (17) a. I keep eating/*eat.
 b. I keep eating/*eat apples.
 c. *I keep eating/eat of apples. (English)

Summing up, in the contexts in which Frisian uses the verbal *-en*-infinitive, English uses the verbal *-ing*-infinitive. For perception verbs, English can also use the verbal bare infinitive.

Table 3 summarizes the pattern for English and compares it to the Frisian one.

infinitive	context	Frisian	English
verbal INF 1	complement of <i>let</i>	<i>-e</i>	∅
	complement of modal verb	<i>-e</i>	∅
verbal INF 2	complement of perception verb	<i>-en</i>	∅/ <i>-ing</i>
	complement of <i>keep</i>	<i>-en</i>	<i>-ing</i>
nominal INF	combining with determiner	<i>-en</i>	<i>-ing</i>

Table 3: Three types of infinitives in Frisian and English

In short, the data from English largely seem to confirm the distinctions we see in Frisian. Where Frisian uses the *-e*-infinitive, English uses the bare infinitive, and where Frisian uses the *-en*-infinitive, English uses the *-ing*-infinitive. Just as the Frisian *-en*-infinitive, the English *-ing*-infinitive comes in two flavours: one in which it behaves like a nominal element (combining with a determiner) and one in which it behaves like a verbal element (when it is the complement of perception verbs or the aspectual verb *keep*). English differs from Frisian in that perception verbs in English can take, besides the *-ing*-infinitive, also the bare infinitive as its complement. At this point, it is hard to tell whether this is true optionality or whether there is a difference between the two forms.

4 Conclusion and discussion

It has been argued that Frisian has two types of infinitives: a verbal *-e*-infinitive and a nominal *-en*-infinitive (Visser 1989, Hoekstra 1997, Bergsma 2020). In this paper I have shown that there is a third type of infinitive, which is a verbal *-en*-infinitive. This verbal *-en*-infinitive takes the *-en* suffix like the nominal *-en*-infinitive does and it can take internal arguments like the verbal *-e*-infinitive does. English largely seems to make the same distinctions: besides having a verbal bare infinitive and a nominal *-ing*-infinitive, it also has a verbal *-ing*-infinitive.

There is a lot more to say about (Frisian) infinitives, as they appear in numerous other contexts besides those described in this paper. This does not change anything about the main point of the paper, which is that there are at least three different types of infinitives in Frisian. It only shows that the picture is more complicated than I presented so far. In what follows, I discuss a few topics of interest for further research.

First, infinitives can appear bare, either as subject, as object or following a preposition. Interestingly, most speakers allow both *-e*-infinitives and *-en*-infinitives to appear in these positions. Judgement about whether infinitives allow for internal arguments or modification by *fan* 'of' phrases vary across speakers. Future research should determine the nature of these types of infinitives.

Second, there is the issue of the *te* 'to'-infinitive. The Frisian *-en*-infinitive also appears following *te* 'to', as shown in (18). This infinitive cannot take an internal argument and it cannot be modified by a *fan* 'of' prepositional phrase (see (18-a)). However, it is possible for the *to*-infinitive as a whole to take an internal argument, as shown in (18-b).

- (18) a. Ik begjin *te* (*appels) *it-en* (**fan* appels).
 I begin to apples eat-INF_{en} of apples
 'I begin to eat.'
- b. Ik begjin (appels) *te it-en*.
 I begin apples to eat-INF_{en}
 'I begin to eat apples.' (Frisian)

This suggests that *te* INF-*en* is fourth type of infinitive in Frisian, which has also been suggested by Hoekstra (1997).⁶ The English infinitive that follows *to* is the bare infinitive and not the *-ing*-infinitive, as shown in (19).

- (19) I begin to eat(*-ing) (apples). (English)

Interestingly, this is a context in which Frisian and English do not select the cor-

⁶Interesting variation regarding *to*-infinitives also exists within variants of German (see Kolmer and Weiß 2003).

responding morphological forms, i.e. English does not use the *-ing*-infinitive where Frisian uses the *-en*-infinitive.

As I final point, as I mentioned in the paper, there is variation between speakers regarding which infinitive they use in which context (see Bergstra 2020). Possibly, speakers could re-regularize infinitives in one of two different ways: (i) the verbal *-en*-infinitive changes into the *-e*-infinitive, giving speakers a single morphological form to express a verbal infinitive, or (ii) the verbal infinitive *-e* changes to *-en*, giving speakers only a single morphological form for all infinitives, like the situation currently is in e.g. Dutch. Future research should determine whether this prediction is indeed borne out.

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