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CHAPTER 3

An experimental approach to the role of the context

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we take an experimental approach to the general question of what determines how people interpret a specific instance of *ergens*. In the previous chapter, we have already seen that many interpretations of *ergens* have a metaphorical relation to each other and that some interpretations show an overlap in their uses. This raises the question as to what extent people actually agree on an interpretation. For overall communicative purposes there is not always a difference between, for instance, a scale interpretation and a temporal interpretation, or between the three modal interpretations. Therefore, the first theoretical question to be answered is the following:

1. Are native speakers as a group consistent in their interpretations?

As we will see below, there is clearly a preferred interpretation among language users, although in some cases there is some variation.

The next step is to find out what features of the context made that the subjects choose that preferred interpretation. The notion *context* is vague and can both refer to actual linguistic elements in the direct environment of *ergens* as well as larger dependencies or even non-linguistic information. Here, we will focus on the linguistic features of the context, although other information probably plays an important role as well. We will adopt a conservative approach in the sense that we will use the direct linguistic context of *ergens* (i.e. two words before and after it) to see to what extent we can account for the interpretation of *ergens* on the basis of this minimal context alone. This way we will try to find an answer to the following question:

2. How much context do language users need to be consistent in an interpretation?

Answering this question will automatically provide us with the data to start answering another question:

3. What linguistic cues guide the choice of an interpretation?

If we really know which features of the context determine which interpretation is chosen by language users, we should also be able to change the context in such a way that the interpretation of *ergens* changes. Therefore, the last question to be answered in this chapter is:

4. Can we influence the interpretation of a language user by manipulating the context?

However, if we succeed in answering these questions, we have only answered them for the experimental sentences that were used. It may be that for other sentences, other features play a role. Therefore, the results of the surveys that are discussed in this chapter will be tested against corpus data in the following chapter.

3.2 The experimental setup

In order to test the questions that were posed in section 3.1, I designed three questionnaires. All three questionnaires ask the subjects what *ergens* means in 43 sentences. The subjects were offered the following eight multiple choice options in random order¹ and an option *Other, i.e.*² The reason that these options were offered as possible interpretations of *ergens* will be given in the following section.

- at some place
- at some moment
- at some point (on a scale)
- on something, about something, towards something, in something
- in someone's own feelings or thoughts
- from a certain point of view

¹The answers are offered in a random order because the pilot participants showed an inclination to stop looking for the best answer as soon as they found an option they could live with. This could be seen by the movements of their mouse. The options lower in the list were also chosen less frequently. Therefore each participant was randomly assigned a questionnaire, and the answers to the questions were offered in a different order, assigned at random.

²From the spatial markers in the modal paraphrases such as *in, point (of view), around* it is clear how widespread the mental space metaphor is. For a more elaborate discussion see chapter 5.

- about/around
- Other, i.e.:

The last option (Other: i.e.) was added to find out whether the participants agreed with the multiple choice options that were offered. This last point is crucial in this experimental setup. One of our questions is how much variation there is within the population of Dutch speakers in their interpretation of *ergens*. However, we run the risk that variation in the answers is not due to variation in the interpretation of participants, but to the lack of the right description to fit their intuition. Therefore, the first thing we need to test is whether the participants agree with the choices they were offered. One way to do that is to give them the option of adding an interpretation, another one is to see whether for every paraphrase there is at least one sentence for which a large majority of the subjects agrees on that specific paraphrase. If there are few additions and the subjects agree that there is at least one sentence for which that paraphrase is almost perfect, we can conclude that a) the subjects do not object to the formulation and b) the interpretation filled a need.

Another thing that could influence our results is the choice of the test sentences. If there is something unnatural about the sentences, our results will not be generalizable. Therefore, I chose to base the sentences on actual corpus data. The sentences had to be modified a bit in order to be suited for a written questionnaire and to make the length of the sentences somewhat comparable. Restarts, which are typical for spoken language, but look very weird on paper were taken out, as well as agreement mistakes. In survey 1, each example of *ergens* was presented in a context of complete sentences of between 9 and 15 words before and after *ergens*. The sentences of survey 1 were the basis of the other surveys. The questionnaires were filled in online and for every sentence an answer had to be provided.

The participants (113 in total, 36 for survey 1, 37 for survey 2 and 40 for survey 3) were all native Dutch speakers and recruited from four main sources. The members of a dancing school in Amsterdam were asked to fill out a questionnaire online. In addition, volunteer teachers of Dutch as a second language were asked to participate. A third group were the members of an allotment garden community in the neighborhood of Amsterdam and the last group were members of the classics department at Leiden university. This way of recruiting subjects made sure there were various ages and (educational) backgrounds represented. However, a majority of the subjects were female and had a higher education diploma. Six participants (out of a total of 113) did not have access to a computer and filled in the questionnaire on paper. The questionnaires themselves can be found in appendix A. Each individual was assigned one of the three surveys at random. They did not receive any remuneration.

We will now turn to the exact goals and hypotheses per survey.

3.2.1 Survey 1

As was described in the previous section, survey 1 consists of minimally modified corpus sentences. Beforehand, I hypothesized on the basis of native speaker intuition which interpretation would probably be the preferred interpretation. Of each

of the eight interpretations offered, five examples were presented in the survey. In addition, it was noted for each sentence whether a high degree of variation between the participants was expected. At least three of the five cases per category were of the type where little variation was expected. Apart from the five instances per category, three extra instances of *ergens* were added. Two because there was more than one instance of *ergens* in the same sentence and one option to balance the number of instances from the three corpora.

Survey 1 is supposed to answer the following questions that were discussed above. I will repeat them here:

1. Do subjects agree with the classification of interpretations made?
2. Are interpretations consistent across language users?

In addition, the results of survey 1 will be used as the 'gold standard' for the other surveys. That is, in order to answer the questions about the effect of the context, we will need to compare the manipulated contexts of surveys 2 and 3 with a standard. The results of survey 1 function as this standard.

Question 1 will be answered by checking whether many participants added options, whether they did so for the same sentences and whether they added comparable options. In addition we will see whether all multiple choice options had a high agreement level between the participants at least once. In addition, it will be tested whether the participants agreed with the option that was hypothesized to be the best description of the sentence.

Question 2 will be answered by looking at the variation in the answers of the participants, both quantitatively and qualitatively. We will see how much variation there is between participants and between which interpretations there is variation. We will also try to explain why this is the case on the basis of the properties of the context.

3.2.2 Survey 2

This survey seeks to answer questions 3 and 4, which are reprinted below. The three surveys were filled out by different participants to avoid interference or recognition of the examples.

3. What context makes language users decide on a specific interpretation?
4. How much context do language users need to be consistent in an interpretation?

These questions will be answered in the following way. In survey 2, the context of the sentences in survey 1 was reduced to two words before and two words after *ergens* to see whether the participants interpret the sentences in the same way they did in survey 1, even though they have far less context. We will try to explain why the interpretations changed or did not change, using the context that remained. In addition, the participants were asked how certain they were of their interpretation.

This may give us insight in whether people become uncertain when they have little context and whether uncertainty correlates with variation.

It was expected that in the cases where the direct trigger (i.e. words or recognizable parts of constructions) of a specific interpretation was cut, the interpretation would change more frequently to a locative interpretation than to other interpretations, because the locative interpretation is the most frequent and concrete interpretation and might therefore function as a default option.

3.2.3 Survey 3

This survey will try to find an answer to question 5 below.

5. Can we influence the interpretation of a language user by manipulating the context?

In survey 3 the sentences of survey 1 were changed in such a way that with minimal adjustments we expected the interpretations to change. This was done mainly on the basis of my intuition, but there were clear patterns in what needed to be changed, such as predicates, temporal and locative phrases and in some cases the whole construction. Words were only replaced if the result would otherwise be nonsense or would give the original interpretation to *ergens*. An example is given in (1). The words in italics were added and the words that are crossed out were deleted. The replacement of *het gevoel* ‘the feeling’ by *read* makes the statement less subjective and introduces the possibility of a locative addition to the verb.

- (1) Steven knikte. Daar heb ik ook al aan gedacht. Maar ergens heb Steven nodded. There have I also already to thought. But ERGENS have

ik *gelezen* ~~het gevoel~~ dat er meer achter steekt.
I *read* ~~the feeling~~ that there more behind is.

Steven nodded. I also thought about that. But *ergens* I have read/ the feeling that there is something behind it.³

The results of this survey will be compared to the results of survey 1 both in whether changes in interpretation occurred and what the direction of these changes was. This will be linked both to the expectation beforehand and to the specific changes that were made.

3.3 A preliminary corpus study: Which interpretations does *ergens* get?

In this section, I will propose a categorization for the main interpretations of *ergens* on the basis of corpus data and native speaker intuition.

³Adapted from: CGN comp-o/vl/fv800158.

The goal of the categories that are distinguished in this section, is to give the subjects enough options to make an intuitive choice, but not so many that for every sentence there is a unique description. I argue that the three or four uses that are mentioned in the dictionaries are not enough for this purpose. Therefore, I propose some additional categories and split up the modal category into three. Some of these new categories are clearly extensions of other uses, but they are common and different enough to make it impossible to set up a survey without them.

The categories at some place and on something, about something, towards something, in something

Two of the interpretations of *ergens* that were mentioned in the Van Dale dictionary are relatively straightforward and clear. These two interpretations are the locative interpretation *at some place* and the prepositional object interpretation *something*. In example (2) and (3) two examples are given.

- (2) Ik realiseerde me ineens dat ik het mes niet zomaar ergens neer kon
I realized me suddenly that I the knife not just ERGENS down could
leggen. (De grijpgrage handjes van mijn dochttertje kennende voorzag
put. The grabby hands of my little daughter knowing foresaw
ik onaangename gevolgen.)
I unpleasant consequences.

Suddenly, I realized that I could not just put the knife down anywhere. (I knew the grabby little fingers of my daughter too well, not to foresee unpleasant consequences.)⁴

- (3) Maar hebben jullie niks meegemaakt vandaag? Ik bedoel we moeten 't
But have you nothing experienced today? I mean we must it
toch wel ergens (1) over kunnen hebben wat echt ergens (2) over
PTCL PTCL ERGENS (1) about can have what really ERGENS (2) about
gaat toch of niet?
goes PTCL or not?

But did nothing happen to you today? I mean, we should be able to find something (*ergens*) to talk about that is really about *ergens*, shouldn't we?⁵

The category at some moment

The WNT also mentions a temporal use, which in their example is comparable to *ever*. However, in the synchronic corpora there were no temporal instances with an *ever* interpretation. The cases of temporal *ergens* that were found, were much more

⁴From: CGN comp-o/nl/fn001047.

⁵Adapted from: Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn000555.

comparable to a metaphorical extension from *place* to *time* as in (4). Although *at some point in time* is a very common metaphor, the paraphrase that is used in the dictionaries for locative *ergens*, *at some place* cannot be used in this context. For that reason, we need a new category.

- (4) Speaker 1: Wanneer heeft ze toen ook alweer haar rijbewijs gehaald?
When has she then also again her drivers license got?
Weet je dat nog? Speaker 2: Ergens in 't najaar. Speaker 1: Oktober of
Know you that still? ERGENS in the fall. October or
zo hè? Speaker 2: Ja, oktober, november dacht ik ook.
so PTCL? Yes, October, November thought I also.
Speaker 1: When did she pass her drivers license exam back then? Do you still remember? Speaker 2: *Ergens* in the fall. Speaker 1: October or something, isn't it? Speaker 2: Yes, I also thought something like October, November.⁶

The category at some point on a scale

The locative interpretation was not only metaphorically extended to a temporal one, but also to invoke a scale as in example (5).

- (5) Enkele gevallen zei minister Van Boxtel en daarmee bedoelt ie ergens
Several cases said minister Van Boxtel and with that means he ERGENS
tussen de vijf en de tien gevallen van illegaal namaken.
between the five and the ten cases of illegal reproduction.
Several cases minister Van Boxtel said and by several cases he means *ergens*
between five and ten cases of illegal reproduction.⁷

The category about/around

This last use denotes that the speaker is not very precise. This implication seems to be used for its own sake as well, although generally a scale is still present at the background as in example (6).

- (6) Ik speel orgel vanaf mijn tiende ergens, ik heb tot mijn achttiende
I play organ from my tenth ERGENS, I have until my eighteenth
veel les gehad, hoewel met twee - drie jaar onderbreking.
many lesson had, although with two - three years interruption.
I have been playing the organ from about ten years old *ergens*, until my eighteenth birthday, I took many lessons, though with a break of two three years in between.⁸

⁶Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn000393.

⁷Adapted from: CGN comp-f/nl/fn007187.

⁸From: <http://s12.invisionfree.com/organist/ar/t2314.htm>.

The reason I consider this a category on its own is that it has become impossible to replace *ergens* by some locative or temporal phrase. Thus, in order to give the participants a reasonable choice, a new category *about/around* must be added.

The category in someone's feelings or thoughts

The modal instances of *ergens* are harder to categorize. The phrase that is used by Van Dale, *in enig opzicht*, apart from being a register specific phrase which makes it problematic to use in a questionnaire, cannot always be used. For instance in example (7), the point is not that the character only believed that her mother's story was a fairy-tale in some respect but that she did not believe that the story was real in some part of her mind. In another part of her mind she knew that something was different about this story as is shown by the phrase *only without 'and they lived happily ever after'*. However, the conviction that the story was a fairy-tale prevailed as is shown by the sentence that follows this example in the original text *Only when I was six years old, did I coincidentally find out that it was all real.*

- (7) Maar toch, toch had ik vroeger ergens óók altijd geloofd dat
 But still, still had I when I was a child ERGENS also always believed that
 mijn moeders verhaal maar een verzinsel was, een
 my mother's story only a figment of her imagination was, a
 sprookje zoals alle andere die ze me had verteld, alleen zonder
 fairy-tale like all others that she me had told, only without
 "zij leefden nog lang en gelukkig."
 'they lived ever after long and happily'.

But still, when I was a child I had *ergens* also believed that my mother's story was only a figment of her imagination, a fairy-tale like all the other ones she had told me, only without 'and they lived happily ever after'.⁹

What happens here is that *ergens* evokes the image of a mental space. A locative metaphor is used to build an image of a mind as a space in which some beliefs are in some place and other beliefs or information are in another place.

Another reason to believe that this kind of metaphorical place sometimes plays a role in modal *ergens* is the fact that people explicitly talk about places in their thoughts and feelings as in example (8), and sometimes use other expressions that use the same image directly after *ergens* as in example (9). To cover these cases, I have created a category *in someone's feelings or thoughts*.

- (8) Ergens in z'n hoofd groeit 't antwoord. Dat 't boos worden niet kwam
 ERGENS in his head grows the answer. That the angry become not came
 door 't museum maar door de plotselinge verandering.
 because of the museum but because of the sudden change.

⁹From: Dorrestein (2003).

Somewhere in his head grows the answer. The answer that the anger was not brought about by the museum but by the sudden change.¹⁰

- (9) Maar ergens heb ik het gevoel dat er meer achter steekt. Ik kan
But ERGENS have I the feeling that there more behind is. I can

vooral die zaak met die tango niet uit mijn hoofd zetten.
especially that case with that tango not out my head put.

But *ergens* I have the feeling that there is more to it. I especially can't get rid of that case with that tango.¹¹

The category somehow

Another type of modal use seems to be covered by the phrase *op een of andere manier* 'somehow'. This use is considered modal because its main function seems to be to express an attitude of the speaker towards the proposition. This phrase covers most instances in which the paraphrase from the Van Dale dictionary, *in enig opzicht* 'in some respect', is a good option, but, in addition, this formulation covers examples like (10).

- (10) Speaker 1: 't lijkt me ook wel heel raar want als ze die neiging
it seems me also PTCL very strange for if they that urge

hadden dan zou dat uh ergens wel uh ... Speaker 2: ja.
had than would that ehm ERGENS PTCL ehm ... Yes.

Speaker 1: zouden ze ergens wel uitgestorven zijn.
would they ERGENS PTCL died out be.

That seems very strange, because if they would have had that inclination, that would *ergens* ehm... Speaker 2: Yes. Speaker 1: they would *ergens* have died out.¹²

The category from a certain point of view

The last modal category I distinguish is the category *from a certain point of view*. This category is needed for those cases in which there is a clear contrast between two views that are not always shared by the speaker. That last characteristic means that these cases do not fit into the category *in someone's feelings or thoughts*. An example is given in (11).

- (11) Daar staat tegenover dat het ergens niet fair is om bepaalde
There stands opposite that it ERGENS not fair is to specific

¹⁰From: CGN comp-o/nl/fn001555.

¹¹From: CGN comp-o/vl/fv800158.

¹²From: CGN comp-a/nl/fn000610.

kennis te hebben jij als individu en die dan niet vrij te geven
 knowledge to have you as individual and that PTCI not free to give

in bepaalde omstandigheden.

in certain situations.

On the other hand it is *ergens* not fair if you as an individual have specific knowledge and you do not release that in certain situations.¹³

An indication that people see *ergens* as a marker of viewpoint, is the following translation from the Leiden University website. In example (12) we see that English *we would call* is translated with *ergens*, indicating that the translator saw *ergens* as a marker of viewpoint.

- (12) a. A special shape we would call rather bizarre is a ewer in the shape of a crayfish.¹⁴
 b. Een speciale, doch *ergens* vrij bizarre, vorm is een lampetkan in de vorm van een rivierkreeft.

As far as I could see, most examples in the corpora were covered by these categories. The only exceptions were examples I could not interpret or in which I did not have enough information to make a choice. Most of these examples were either from the Belgian part of the corpus or contained many restarts. Together with the fact that there is a specific collocation that is restricted to the Belgian part of the corpus, which will be discussed in our more elaborate corpus study below, this suggests that there may be dialect differences in the use of *ergens*. An example is given in (13). This example suggests that in Belgian Dutch *ergens* can be used as *some* as in *some professor from the KUB*. However, in Netherlandic Dutch the only interpretation would be locative, which is blocked by the fact that this is about a specific event of which the location is known. The affiliation of the two professors is also known to the speaker, which means that there is no location to which *ergens* may refer in this sentence.¹⁵ However, it goes beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate these dialectal differences further.

- (13) Ja dus dat waren uhm allemaal Iraanse films en dat werd dan
 Yes, so that were ehm all Iranian films and that was then
 begeleid door ... dat was ne prof uh filmgeschiedenis uit Rotterdam.
 led by ... that was a prof ehm film history from Rotterdam.

¹³From: CGN comp-a/vl/fv400086.

¹⁴<http://research.leiden.edu/research-profiles/amt/news/15-februari-2012.html>.

¹⁵These conclusions were checked with several speakers of Netherlandic Dutch and Flemish. Most speakers of Netherlandic Dutch (N=10) tried to come up with some scenario in which a locative interpretation would be possible. Some said that they really could not interpret it. All speakers of Netherlandic Dutch said they would not call it normal use of *ergens*. Most speakers of Flemish (N=30), however, accept this use and say that it expresses that the speaker does not have more information about the person he is describing. One speaker of Flemish specifically said: *This use is typically found with nouns and it is indicating that someone/something does not need to be specified or is unknown to the speaker*. This indicates that *ergens* may be part of some sort of modifier construction in Flemish.

uh en dan ook nog ergens ene prof vanuit de KUB.
Ehm and then also PTCL ERGENS a prof from the KUB.

Yes, so those films were all Iranian and that was led by ... that was a professor
ehm film history from Rotterdam. Ehm and also a professor from the KUB.¹⁶

Summarizing, we distinguished eight uses of *ergens*. Paraphrases of *ergens* for each of these uses are: *at some place, at some moment, at some point (on a scale), somehow, prepositional object, i.e.: on something, about something, towards something, in something, in someone's own feelings or thoughts, from a certain point of view and about/around*. The main criterion for distinguishing a new category was whether a subject would intuitively be able to choose an option for the examples in the corpus. This categorization will be tested in survey 1, which will be described in the next section.

3.4 Results of survey 1: The interpretation of original corpus data

3.4.1 Introduction

Survey 1 has the following goals as was described in section 3.2.1.

1. To check whether the experimental setup and semantic categories are accepted by the participants
2. To see whether the categorization which was made on the basis of native speaker intuition is shared by a larger group of speakers
3. To see how much variation exists between the semantic interpretations of native speakers in context and which categories seem to be closely related
4. To create a 'gold standard' in order to be able to compare the interpretations of the same sentences in different contexts

These goals are not all of the same nature. Goals 1, 2 and 4 pertain to the working of the experimental setup itself, goal 3 is of a more conceptual nature. In addition, some questions are mainly quantitative and others also need a qualitative evaluation. The discussion of the results is organized by goal and it starts with an overview of the quantitative aspects of the question at hand and the larger tendencies which are found in the data. Step by step these larger tendencies are refined and studied qualitatively by means of examples. Since all conclusions in the end depend on the validity of the experimental setup, we will start by investigating whether the survey worked as expected. That is, did the participants accept the options offered or did they feel the need to add descriptions? If there are no problems in this respect, we can continue to the question of whether a majority of the participants agreed with the expected interpretation.

¹⁶From: CGN comp-c/vl/fv701295.

3.4.2 The acceptance of the multiple choice options

In this survey, it was expected that the subjects would generally find a good description of their interpretation of *ergens* in one of the options given. However, they were given the option of formulating another interpretation. If the participants chose this option frequently and consistently, we must conclude that they did not accept the choices that were offered. However, there are also other ways of finding out whether people agree with the options given, such as the amount of variation in their choices and the agreement-rate with respect to sentences that were hypothesized to belong to a specific category.

If the subjects disagree with (the formulation of) one of the options given, we would expect that this option is chosen only rarely. As can be seen from table 3.1, all options that were predefined have a highest agreement rate above 60% (i.e. in at least 1 example at least 22 of the 36 subjects chose this option). If we take into account that the subjects had nine options to choose from and an equal distribution would result in only four people agreeing on each option, agreement rates above 60% suggest that the subjects probably did not have a fundamental problem with the description and did not fundamentally reject one of the categories as non-existent.

Category	Highest agreement rate
Place	91-100%
Prep. Obj.	91-100%
Time	81-90%
Manner	81-90%
About/around	71-80%
In someone's feelings or thoughts	61-70%
Scale	61-70%
Point of view	61-70%
Other	11- 21%

Table 3.1: Highest agreement rate per category. Number of subjects: 36

However, it may be that the subjects missed an option that in their view would cover the example better. For that reason the option *Other, i.e.:* was available. In general the subjects used this option only rarely. The sentences with the highest number of subjects that wanted to add something had four comments (11%). This is the number of instances that would have been expected if the answers were chosen randomly. Most of these comments paraphrase the sentence or give a description of one of the options that is more in line with the sentence (e.g. *ergens anders* 'somewhere else' has been described not as the option *at some place* (the option that was given) but as *at some other place*). Still, there are some recurring comments that may point into the direction of a missing option. Six of the subjects mention the interpretation *eigenlijk* 'in fact, actually, really' ten times in total. However, there is only one sentence in which two subjects have added this option for the same sentence. This makes it hard to draw conclusions. Apparently, six subjects thought this interpretation important

enough to add it, but they did not do so for the same sentences.

The only sentence in which two subjects added this interpretation was example (14).

- (14) Ik bewonder mensen wel die de moed hebben om dat te doen. Ik
I admire people PTCL that the courage have so as to that to do. I
zou dat ergens wel willen maar ja we maken keuzes in het leven
would that ERGENS PTCL want but PTCL we make choices in the life
hè?
PTCL?

I do admire people that have the courage to do such a thing. I would *ergens* want to do that, but we make choices in life, don't we? ¹⁷

All the examples for which the addition *eigenlijk* is suggested, contain some sort of adversativity. Since *eigenlijk* is commonly used in this type of context (Bergen et al., 2011), the presence of adversativity may be a reason for subjects to add this option. What is difficult to assess though, is whether the subjects really wanted to say that *ergens* should in adversative contexts be interpreted as *eigenlijk* or that they would prefer the use of *eigenlijk* over the use of *ergens* in these situations. Because of the lack of agreement on which sentences need to be interpreted as *eigenlijk*, I hesitate to conclude the former and I am inclined to think the latter, but it is impossible to make that decision on the basis of these data. This problem is inherent in the addition of an *Other* field to a questionnaire, without the possibility to ask people in person what they meant. What we can conclude is that, given the right adversative context, the interpretation of *ergens* and *eigenlijk* probably is quite similar. However, I do not consider this enough evidence for the presence of another use of *ergens* meaning *eigenlijk*.

There are two cases in which a participant felt that the presence of *ergens* in the sentence was incorrect. Although the other subjects did not add anything, these sentences were among the ones with the lowest agreement rates (both sentences 47% for respectively 'from a certain point of view' and 'somehow'). Interestingly, as can be seen from (15) and (16), both examples have *ergens* in clause final position and a modal majority interpretation. It may be that not all speakers accept that position in the clause completely.

- (15) Zij kan niet fulltime werken. En huishouden is in principe een
She can not full-time work. And housekeeping is in principle a
fulltime baan ergens. Zeker in haar tempo omdat zij
full-time job ERGENS. Especially in her tempo because she
last heeft van reuma.
bother has of rheumatism.

¹⁷ Adapted from: CGN comp-b/vl/fv400101.

She can't work full-time. And housekeeping is in principle a full-time job *ergens*. Especially at her pace, because she has rheumatism.¹⁸

- (16) Hoe nu die elementen eruit komen, is een kwestie van je
How now those elements out come, is a matter of your
persoonlijkheid toch ergens, dat kun je niet wegdrücken.
personality PTCL ERGENS, that can you not push away.
En die persoonlijkheid die heb je zelf.
And that personality that have you self.
How those elements are expressed is a matter of your own personality *ergens*, you can't suppress that. And your personality that is yours.¹⁹

Summarizing, we may conclude that there is no reason to think that the subjects disagreed with the options given or needed other options to choose from. This means that we can use this classification for the other surveys as well.

3.4.3 The results with respect to the expectations

Before survey 1 was carried out, I categorized all instances of *ergens* in the CGN, the Eindhoven corpus and my corpus of novels on the basis of my own intuitions. I also wrote down what I expected the subjects would answer in the surveys and how much variation I expected for each sentence. One of the questions that always arises when annotating corpus data, is whether other native speakers would agree with the categorizations made. This survey is a possibility to test my categorization of a small set of sentences against 36 other Dutch speakers. The results of this test will be presented below.

In 36 of the 43 sentences (84%) the majority of the subjects chose the expected answer, which is a significant result²⁰. All other sentences had the expected answer as the second or third most frequent answer. Five of the seven examples that did not follow the hypothesis were expected beforehand to show variation because of overlapping categories. The only two examples in which the variation was not expected, were hypothesized to be interpreted as points on a scale but were described as *about* and *at some moment* by the subjects. The first example is shown in (17) below, the second one in example (18).

- (17) Ik zag dat ze goed verzorgd haar had. Geen grijs haartje,
I saw that she well-cared-for cared hair had. No grey little hair,
begrijp je wel. Ergens in de veertig dacht ik. Maar ze gedroeg
understand you PTCL. ERGENS in the forties thought I. But she behaved

¹⁸ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn007972.

¹⁹ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus ec\corpus\CGTLE.IH.

²⁰ A binomial test with a test proportion of 0.11 was significant with $p < 0.0001$.

zich nog steeds als een verwend kind.
herself still like a spoiled child.

I saw her hair was well-cared-for. Not a grey hair anywhere, you know the type. *Ergens* in her forties, I thought. But she behaved like a spoiled child.²¹

In example (17), 15 votes (of 36 in total) were for *about* and 13 for *at some point on a scale*. This suggests that the subjects had a hard time choosing between those two options. This may be explained by the fact that the expression *ergens in de* [number] is a common way to express *about*. Literally this expression evokes the image of a point on a scale on which the position is unclear. The communicative effect, however, is that this sentence expresses that the speaker is not very precise. So this may be seen as an example in which the subjects have to choose between the overall effect of a construction (expressing that the speaker is not very precise) and the form of the construction (an indefinite point on a scale). Some of the subjects seem to have chosen for the overall effect and have chosen the option *about*, while others have chosen on the basis of the form of the construction, a point on a scale.

- (18) De Pueblo-indianen gebruikten bakstenen om hun dorpen
The Pueblo Indians used bricks in order to their villages

en stadjes te bouwen. Ergens tussen twaalfhonderd en
and towns to build. ERGENS between twelve hundred and

veertienhonderd na Christus kwamen de Navaho de streek
fourteen hundred after Christ came the Navaho Indians the area

binnen.
in.

The Pueblo Indians used bricks to build their villages and towns. *Ergens* between twelve hundred and fourteen hundred AD the Navaho arrived in the area.²²

In example (18) we have a comparable situation. The whole phrase starting with *ergens* expresses a time period, which is presented as a scale. The subjects chose for the overall interpretation of the phrase, temporal, instead of the scalar form of the expression.

We may conclude that, generally, the results fitted the expectations very well. This allows us to continue with survey 2 and 3, which use survey 1 as their basis and which were constructed under the assumption that the results of survey 1 would support most of the analyses. First, however, we will continue our discussion of survey 1 with the questions on variation between subjects.

²¹ Adapted from: CGN comp-o/nl/fn001142.

²² Adapted from: CGN comp-o/nl/fn001490.

3.4.4 Agreement and confusion: Does ‘the correct interpretation’ exist?

In the previous section, the incidence of agreement between the subjects was already mentioned several times in passing. In this section, I will discuss the extent to which there is a generally accepted interpretation for specific instances of *ergens*.

A quantitative overview

In this survey, the 36 subjects had 9 options to choose from. Eight of those options were multiple choice options and in one option the subjects were offered the possibility to add an interpretation themselves. This means that if the participants had no idea what to choose and therefore chose a random option, each option would be expected to be equally distributed and thus have 4 votes. A distribution like this was found for none of the examples of *ergens*. In fact, every sentence had options that were not checked by any of the participants. This shows that there is a clear direction in the data. Even if we only take into account those options the participants actually checked, in all sentences except one the differences between the options that were checked are statistically significant in a χ^2 test²³. The exceptional example will be discussed below in example (23).

The agreement rate among the subjects is moderate according to the traditional use of Fleiss’ kappa ($\kappa = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$ ²⁴). Fleiss’ kappa is used to measure the agreement between raters of nominal data and has a range of 0-1, in which 0 is an agreement level that is complete chance and 1 is complete agreement between the raters.²⁵

The categories for which kappa is highest are the *at some place* category and the prepositional object category. For those categories κ is respectively 0.69 and 0.71, which is generally considered to be a substantial agreement. The *at some moment*-category has a moderate agreement level of $\kappa = 0.51$ and the other predefined options had a fair agreement level with a κ 0.2-0.4. The *Other*-option had a poor agreement level and a κ of 0.02. This last value of κ shows that the *Other*-option was not chosen more frequently than chance, as we already concluded in the previous subsection. Generally we can conclude that there is more agreement among the subjects on the place and prepositional object categories than on the other categories, but nevertheless the subjects had a moderate agreement level.

If we now zoom in to the level of the sentences, we find that there is no sentence where the option that gets the most votes drops below 36% (13 out of 36) of the votes, whereas the chance level lies at 4 votes for every option. As can be seen from table 3.2, in 70% of the sentences more than 50% of the subjects have checked the same

²³For the individual test results of all 43 sentences see appendix B.

²⁴Since kappa has been shown to be influenced by prevalence in the data, that is, by the distributions of data across the categories (Lantz and Nebenzahl, 1996; Cicchetti and Feinstein, 1990; Feinstein and Cicchetti, 1990), the interpretation of kappa given above may be too conservative.

²⁵An overview of the interpretations that are traditionally given of Fleiss’ kappa as given by Viera and Garrett (2005):

	Slight	Fair	Moderate	Substantial	Almost perfect
Kappa	0.01-0.20	0.21-0.40	0.41-0.60	0.61-0.80	0.81-0.99

option. Therefore we can conclude that in general there is a clear direction in the data in favor of one particular option.

% of agreement between the subjects	% of the sentences in this category
91-100	9.3 (4)
81-90	16.3 (7)
71-80	11.6 (5)
61-70	18.6 (8)
51-60	14.0 (6)
41-50	25.6 (11)
31-40	4.7 (2)
21-30	0.0 (0)
1-30	0.0 (0)
Total	100.0 (43)

Table 3.2: Percentage of agreement of the subjects (N =36) as it is divided over the sentences (N=43). The numbers between brackets are the raw number of sentences.

However, there are always cases in which only very few subjects checked a specific interpretation. It may be that subjects sometimes made a mistake. In some cases, they even wrote at the end of the survey in the *comments* box that they made mistakes but were unable to correct them because they were not allowed to go back. That is why I have decided to take only those cases that have more than 4 votes as potentially meaningful variation. That is, more than the number we would expect if the subjects had chosen an option at random.

If we now zoom in on the potentially meaningful variation, table 3.3 shows that the votes that were given to interpretations other than the most frequent one, were given to a maximum of two other options per sentence. In 33% of the cases (14 of the 43 sentences) there is no doubt at all. That is, all other options received fewer than five votes. In 49% of the cases (21 sentences) there was only one other option that received more than 4 votes and in 19% of the sentences (8 cases) there were two options apart from the preferred one that received more than 4 votes. There were no cases in which there were more than three meaningful options involved.

Variation	%	raw numbers
No doubt	32.6%	14
A second option	48.8%	21
A third option	18.6%	8
More than three options	0%	0
Total	100%	43

Table 3.3: The amount of variation above chance level in percentage of sentences

The existence of a second potentially meaningful option raises the question of how these options relate to each other. Do the subjects choose for both options equally often, or is there also a clear preference between these two options? In 62% (18) of the sentences with a second option (29 sentences) the difference in votes between the preferred option and the second option is more than 5 votes, which shows that the existence of a second option does not automatically imply that there is no preference in the data.

The next step is to find out which options there is variation between and why this is the case. Closer inspection reveals that there are some clear regularities in this respect. There are four groups of options that are found as each other's second or third choices. There is a group of modal interpretations that show some variation between *in someone's feelings or thoughts*, *from a certain point of view*, and *somehow*. The second group varies between *about*, *at some moment* and *at some point on a scale*. The third group consists of cases that have *at some place* as their first choice and the prepositional object as their second choice. The last group consists of one case in which the second option for *at some moment* is *at some place*. An overview of the groups can be seen in table 3.4 below.

Group	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	% of sentences
1: feelings, point of view, somehow	feelings	somehow		7% (3)
	feelings	somehow	point of view	5% (2)
	feelings	point of view		2% (1)
	point of view	somehow		9% (4)
	point of view	feelings	somehow	2% (1)
	somehow	point of view		5% (2)
	somehow	point of view	feelings	2% (1)
	somehow	feelings	point of view	2% (1)
Total				35% (15)
2: about, time, scale	about	time		9% (4)
	about	time	scale	2%(1)
	about	scale		2% (1)
	time	scale	about	2% (1)
	time	scale		2% (1)
	scale	about		7% (3)
	Total			
3: place, prep. obj.	place	prep. obj.		5% (2)
4: time, place	time	place		2% (1)
Total				67 % (29)

Table 3.4: The four groups within which there is variation. N =43. Between brackets are the raw numbers.

The modal options *in someone's feelings or thoughts, from a certain point of view*, and *somehow* show the largest degree of mutual exchangeability. However, this does not mean that the subjects never have clear preferences with respect to these options. The difference in votes between the first and the second option within these modal categories varies from 0 to 24 votes out of a total of 36 votes. Table 3.5 shows the average difference between the preferred and second choice of the subject. Because the first and second choices cover a large majority of the total number of cases, this seems a good way to measure variation. This way of measuring means that the higher the number the smaller variation in the category.

Category	Variation
PrepObj	27,2
Place	23,2
Time	18,6
Somehow	14,8
About/around	12,3
Feelings	8,7
Scale	7
Point Of View	5,2

Table 3.5: The variation per category. The numbers are the average differences in votes between the first and second choices. This means that the higher the difference the less variation there was in the responses of the subjects (N =36).

A closer look at the individual examples

The cases in which the subjects checked the two or even three modal options mentioned above more than four times contain both cases in which there is a lot of variation and cases that show a clear preference for one of the options. I will now discuss examples of both types and from all groups and I will suggest an explanation as to why some of these sentences may be regarded as very clear whereas others show much more variation.

In example (19), for instance, there is a lot of variation. Two options, *from a certain point of view* and *somehow*, were both checked 15 times, suggesting that subjects were not sure which one to choose. The reason for this division may be that *somehow* seems to be the best option in its own clause, but the phrase *aan de andere kant* 'on the other hand' in the second clause suggests that the first clause contained a point of view with which *on the other hand* is contrasted. The interpretation *from a certain point of view* may fit better in such a contrastive environment. A possible explanation for the variation is therefore that some of the subjects have decided to let their clause internal preferences prevail, whereas the others may have thought the overall structure of the two sentences together more important.

- (19) Krakau vond 'k eigenlijk ook heel erg mooi. Warschau viel ergens
Cracow found I PTCL also very really pretty. Warschau fell ERGENS

tegen omdat 't nagebouwd is, maar aan de andere kant was 't leuk om te
short because it rebuilt is, but on the other hand was it nice to to

zien.
see.

Cracow I found also very pretty. Warsaw was *ergens* disappointing, because
it was rebuilt, but on the other hand it was nice to see.²⁶

The votes of example (20) show very little variation. A preponderance of 81% of the participants (29) interpreted this sentence as *somehow*. Only five subjects (14%) voted for *from a certain point of view*.

- (20) In bijna alle talen bestaan woorden voor die emoties. Dat duidt
In almost all languages exist words for these emotions. That shows

toch ergens aan dat inderdaad die verschillende soorten emoties
PTCL ERGENS on that PTCL these different sorts emotions

dus ook universeel zijn.
thus also universal are.

In almost all languages there are words for these emotions. That shows *ergens*
that all these emotions are also universal.²⁷

In example (20) all non-modal interpretations would be nonsensical. Therefore people are forced to assume a modal interpretation. In addition, the main verb in the *ergens* clause is an impersonal epistemic verb. This limits the interpretation of *ergens* to options that can be seen as outside of the speaker's influence. The only modal option that does not refer to someone's personal state of mind is the option *somehow*, which makes this interpretation the most likely. The interpretation *from a certain point of view* would be the least subjective option after that, since it does not refer directly to a person's thoughts or feelings. The lack of variation may therefore be explained by the combination of the impossibility of a non-modal interpretation and the use of an impersonal epistemic verb.

Even though the incidence of agreement varies widely within the modal category, there is only one sentence with a modal interpretation that does not have a second option at all. The other six sentences that show no meaningful variation are all cases of non-modal *ergens*. The only modal example with such a high agreement rate is shown in example (21). Its only possible interpretation is, according to the subjects, 'somehow'.

²⁶ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn000678.

²⁷ Adapted from: CGN comp-n/vl/fv400576.

- (21) Zaterdag is er weer een demonstratie en dan gaat ze naar 't
Saturday is there again a demonstration and then goes she to the

eindpunt om toch ergens, ja, mee te tellen.
end point in order to PTCL ERGENS, PTCL, with to count.

Kijk d'r vallen onderweg weer mensen af.
Look there drop underway again people out.

Saturday there is another demonstration and then she will go to the end point in order to *ergens* count. Look, people are dropping out on the way again.²⁸

A possible explanation for the lack of variation in (21) is that the use of *om* 'in order to' already signals that we are seeing the situation from within the thoughts of the person described. To mark something as your own feeling, thought or point of view within your own thoughts is superfluous. Therefore, it seems that the reason for the lack of variation is that the other interpretations are excluded by the implications of the word *om* in the direct environment of *ergens*. Theoretically, however, the subjects could have chosen a locative interpretation as well.

The second group of options that are frequently found as each other's second options is *about*, *at some moment* and *at some point (on a scale)*. The fact that these three options are often each other's second option may be explained as follows. The function of putting something in a non-specified position on a scale is often to denote vagueness of expression, which can also be expressed by (*about*) and time is often portrayed as a scale. In other words, there is some overlap between the categories. However, just as in the example above, this does not mean that the subjects do not have very specific preferences for only one of these options in some sentences. Especially *at some moment* is very frequently chosen without any second options and with the highest percentages of agreement. Example (22), for instance, has very little variation.

- (22) Speaker 1: En wanneer vertrekt ie naar Roemenië?
and when departs he to Romania?

Speaker 2: Ik weet het niet. Ergens in juli.
I know it not. ERGENS in July.

Speaker 1: was 't niet de zesde of zo?
was it not the sixth or so?

Speaker 2: Ik weet het niet.
I know it not.

Speaker 1: And when does he depart to Romania?
Speaker 2: I don't know. *Ergens* in July.

²⁸ Adapted from: comp-a/nl/fn008437.

Speaker 1: The sixth isn't it?

Speaker 2: I don't know.²⁹

Example (22) is said to express *at some moment* by 27 of the 36 subjects. Only five subjects voted in favor of *at some point (on a scale)*.³⁰ The reason for the lack of variation is probably the temporal prepositional phrase *in juli* which follows *ergens* directly.

Example (23), on the other hand, shows a lot of confusion. The temporal interpretation has 16 votes, the scale interpretation 11 and the *about* interpretation has been chosen by 9 of the 36 subjects.

- (23) De Pueblo-indianen gebruikten bakstenen om hun dorpen
The Pueblo Indians used bricks in order to their villages

en stadjes te bouwen. Ergens tussen twaalfhonderd en
and towns to build. ERGENS between twelve hundred and

veertienhonderd na Christus kwamen de Navaho de streek binnen.
fourteen hundred after Christ came the Navahos the area in.

The Pueblo Indians used bricks to build their villages and towns. *Ergens* between twelve hundred and fourteen hundred AD the Navaho arrived in the area.³¹

The confusion in this example might be explained by the fact that the temporal information is presented as a very rough scale, which makes the statement very imprecise. This imprecision points into the direction of the interpretation *about*. This means that there are good reasons to choose either one of the three options. The *ergens* phrase is about time, which would point in the direction of *at some moment*, it is presented as a scale (*at some point on a scale*) and that scale is so rough that it implies that the boundaries may not be very precise (*about/around*).

The third group of options that shows some variation is *at some place* and the prepositional object. Especially when the prepositional object denotes a place or something that implies a place, the choice between a place and a prepositional object becomes a choice between semantics and grammatical function. For instance in example (24) most people (23 out of 36, i.e. 64%) choose for 'at some place' and a smaller group (8 subjects, 22%) chooses for the *prepositional object* option, which was paraphrased as *Over iets, in iets, met iets, aan iets, voor iets, naar iets toe* 'about something, in something, with something, to something, before something, towards something'. Both options belong to the most homogeneously chosen options, so normally there is no doubt about these categories.

- (24) Carola vroeg of ze Anais even terug mocht geven aan Isabelle, want ze
Carola asked if she Anais a while back could give to Isabelle, for she

²⁹Adapted from: CGN comp-a/vl/fv400500.

³⁰The remaining four subjects voted for *about/around*. However, this number is below our limit for potentially meaningful variation.

³¹Adapted from: CGN comp-o/nl/fn001490.

moest ergens naartoe, maar dat kon niet volgens Isabelle.
had to ERGENS towards, but that was possible not according to Isabelle.

Belachelijk, het is haar eigen kind!
Ridiculous, it is her own child!

Carola asked if she could give back Anais to Isabelle for a while, because she had to go *ergens*, but that was impossible according to Isabelle. Ridiculous, it is her own child!³²

In example (24) the complex preposition/adverb on which *ergens* depends has a strong directional meaning.³³ This is probably also the reason the verb *moeten* does not need a verb expressing ‘to go’ in this construction, while in other constructions *moeten* ‘must, have to’ is an auxiliary that requires a main verb.³⁴ This directional meaning implies a place towards which the direction is headed. This place is, if it is indefinite, expressed by *ergens*. This way, *ergens* is used both as a prepositional object and as a marker of place. Therefore, it is not surprising that there was no complete agreement between the subjects. However, they seem to have a preference for the overall interpretation of the locative option over the option with the preposition, as we saw above, even though *naar iets toe* was mentioned in the options presented to them.

The last example of a second option that has more than 4 votes, occurs only once. In this case, the preferred option is ‘at some moment’ and the second option is ‘at some place’. In example (25) the first clause specifically mentions a time, but the second occurrence of *ergens* is combined with *anders* and *zich afspelen* ‘take place’. Both words are normally used in combination with places when they are combined with *ergens*, but they also allow for a temporal interpretation. The difference between the options *at some time* and *at some place* is only 2 votes (16 votes for the locative option, 14 for the temporal one out of 36). This suggests that the subjects were confused. This confusion would be explained if we assume that two strategies used to determine the interpretation of this form, collocational information/knowledge of conventional use and the expectations raised by the direct context give conflicting information.

(25) De regisseur heeft de actie overgeplaatst zoals u waarschijnlijk
The director has the scene relocated as you probably

al heeft gezien naar ergens (1) in de negentiende eeuw alsof het
already have seen to ERGENS (1) in the nineteenth century as if it

zich nooit ergens (2) anders heeft afgespeeld.
itself never ERGENS (2) else has taken place.

³² Adapted from: CGN comp-a/vl/fv400262.

³³ The adverbial use of forms like *naartoe* is historically the source of the prepositional object use of *ergens*. This use still shows adverbial features although it also requires an argument. Therefore, this may be seen as a construction in which *ergens* still has locative features.

³⁴ For more on this construction see Barbiers (1996, chapter 5) and Zwart (2002).

The director has changed the scene of action, as you probably have seen already, to *ergens* (1) in the nineteenth century as if it never has taken place *ergens* (2) else.³⁵

Summary and conclusion

The goal of this subsection was to find out to what extent language users agree on the interpretation of *ergens* in a natural context. We found that the agreement on which option fits the sentence best, is generally high, although this does not mean that there is no variation at all. In 70% of the sentences more than 50% of the speakers agree on one option, although they were offered a choice of 9 options. Cases in which other options get more votes than would be expected on the basis of chance, generally contain an overlap of categories or conflicting contextual cues. There are some categories that show some mutual exchangeability, especially in the modal domain. However, this does not mean that the subcategories should be abandoned in favor of one large category *modal*, since there are also examples that show a clear preference for one of the modal categories. This suggests that the subjects agree on the classification of the subcategories. We may conclude that the assumption that normally there is agreement between language users on the interpretation of *ergens* seems largely correct, although there is some variation within the population.

3.4.5 Conclusion

In section 3.4.2 we found that there is no reason to assume that the subjects disagreed with the paraphrases they were given. In those cases in which other suggestions were made more than once, this was either an attempt to fit the paraphrase into the sentence or the suggestions were not given for the same sentences.

In section 3.4.3 it was shown that in 84% of the sentences the majority of participants voted in accordance with expectation, which allows us to expect that the other surveys, which were also based on my native speaker intuition will also yield consistent results.

The goal of the last section was to see how much consistency there is between the subjects in their interpretations of *ergens*. Generally, the subjects show clear preferences for one of the options, although in about 23 % of the cases the difference between the first and the second option is very small. It was argued that this may be due to overlapping categories or conflicting contextual cues.

Therefore, the overall conclusion is that the results of survey 1 can be used as a reliable basis for the comparison of the effects of diminished or altered context on interpretation.

³⁵ Adapted from: CGN comp-1/v1/fv600855.

3.5 Results of survey 2: The effect of a marginalized context

3.5.1 Introduction

The main goal of survey 2 is to find out what the effect of a marginalized context is on the interpretation of *ergens*. The subquestions are the following.

1. Do the majority interpretations change?
2. If the majority interpretations change, is that towards a default?
3. Can we explain from the shreds of context that have remained, why the interpretation has changed or remained the same?
4. Does the variation increase with the marginalization of context?
5. Does variation correlate with the perceived uncertainty of the subjects?

The same sentences as in survey 1 were presented to a new group of subjects, but this time all but two words before and after *ergens* were cut off. If the sentence ended directly before or after *ergens* even less context was provided. In addition, the subjects were asked to mark how certain they were about their answers on a Likert-scale. This was done to see whether uncertainty was reflected in the variation in the answers. In this section, I will start with an overview of how many majority interpretations have remained the same and how many have changed. Second, this will be compared to the hypothesis. Third, we will try to explain why some interpretations have remained the same and others have changed. The last point to be discussed is the relation between variation in the data and the certainty of the subjects.

3.5.2 Survey 1 and 2 compared

In 64% (27 out of 42³⁶) of the sentences, the majority interpretation of the sentences did not change between survey 1 and survey 2. In 36% (15) of the cases the majority interpretation did change. The direction of the change can be seen in table 3.6. (A comparison between the interpretations in survey 1 and survey 2 will be made in the next section.)

As can be seen from table 3.6, there is a tendency towards reinterpretation in the direction of place.³⁷ This may point into the direction of a default as was hypothesized, but since there are also cases in which the change is not in this direction, we will need to take a closer look at the individual sentences.

³⁶One sentence had to be discarded, due to an extra word that had remained in the context.

³⁷The sources of these changes will be discussed in the next section.

Direction of the change between survey 1 and 2	number	%
Place	6	40.0
Moment	1	6.7
Scale	1	6.7
Somehow	3	20.0
Prep. Obj.	2	13.3
Feelings	0	0.0
Point of View	2	13.3
About/around	0	0.0
Other, i.e.:	0	0.0
Total	15	100.0

Table 3.6: The interpretations of survey 2 which changed with respect to survey 1.

Why did some sentences change their majority interpretation while others didn't?

The sentences in this survey can be divided in two groups. The first is the group in which the majority interpretation did not change between survey 1 and 2, the second is the group in which the majority interpretation did change.

To explain this behavior, I have distinguished four types of possible explanations. The first type consists of those cases in which the trigger for the interpretation of a form was part of the window of two words before and two words after *ergens*. For those cases nothing really changed from survey 1 to survey 2.

In the second type all triggers were lost. In the third type the original, main trigger was cut off, but the absence of this trigger made it possible for other words that had remained in the context to become a new trigger. Another way of describing this type is to say that a higher order contextual cue originally either blocked or reinforced the standard interpretation of the lower order contextual cue. When this higher order cue was taken away, the lower order cue could be interpreted according to its standard interpretation. An example is a phrase like *somewhere in the spring*. In this case *spring* as a temporal marker is a higher order trigger. However, the default interpretation of *in* is locative, so when the temporal trigger is not present anymore, the preposition *in* will become a (lower order) locative trigger. If the same had happened with a higher order locative trigger, the lower order trigger would have directed the interpretation in the same direction as the higher order trigger. This means that the new trigger (or lower order contextual cue) can both direct the interpretation in the same and in a different direction.

The fourth and last type can in my view only be explained by the assumption that the subjects did not accept the examples with so little context. The categorization of these examples is problematic because there is much variation and little coherence in the answers.

Many of these explanations make use of the concept *trigger*. This concept was used for words that seem to be responsible for the interpretation of *ergens* in that sentence. They were determined before the survey was carried out on the basis of

intuition and a prediction was made as to what would happen if the triggers were cut off or remained in place. In 83% of the cases³⁸ these predictions were confirmed by the survey. One of the interesting questions that remains, is whether we can find any regularities in these triggers. This will also be one of the goals of survey 3 and the more elaborate corpus study.

Although there is a great variety in the triggers that seem to play a role, some regularities are very clear. In those cases in which the trigger remained and the original interpretation was locative, the triggers were locative adverbs or prepositions and in one case a part of a fixed phrase which contained the verb *to go*. The triggers for a locative interpretation seem to be locative phrases and other expressions with a locative component. The same thing can be said for temporal interpretations. Temporal phrases and expressions typically trigger temporal interpretations. There are some exceptions, though, which will be discussed below. Most instances of a scale interpretation contained a scale preposition like *tussen* 'between'. The prepositional object interpretation of course needed a preposition that had scope over *ergens*. In all cases in which option *about/around* was chosen, the numbers were retained. This suggests that one of the triggers for the *about/around* interpretation is numbers.

The modal interpretations will be discussed more elaborately below. Here, I will give only a short overview. The *feelings*-interpretation was almost always accompanied by a first person pronoun. In some cases there were clear features of fixed expressions in the clause. The cases in which the preferred option was *point of view* contained only impersonal fixed expressions. The option *somehow* was rarely accompanied by pronouns, but these sentences did contain other particles like *toch* and *wel*. Although these generalizations are pointing in certain directions, this was too small a number of instances to draw definite conclusions. Survey 3 and the larger corpus study will show whether these generalizations hold. Now we will return to the examples and try to explain the changes by means of the triggers mentioned above.

The first group of examples, that is, the group of sentences that did not change their majority interpretation between survey 1 and survey 2, can for a large part (26 out of 28 examples) be explained by the first explanation type (i.e. the trigger remained in the context). Many of the examples in this group contain prepositions (as in example (26)) or particle verbs (as in example (27)) that show clearly how *ergens* is to be interpreted. The two remaining examples and the variation in the type of triggers will be discussed below.

- (26) ...als ie ergens mee bezig...
 ...when he ERGENS with busy...
 ...when he was busy [...] something³⁹

³⁸ 35 of 42 sentences.

³⁹ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn000399.

- (27) ...niet zomaar ergens neer kon...
 ...not just ERGENS down could...
 ...could not down just there...⁴⁰

The second group of examples, which contained the examples of which the majority interpretation did change, can be explained best by means of explanation type 3. Three quarters of the examples in this group (10 out of 15) can be explained by the fact that although the original trigger has been chopped of, another part of the remaining context has taken over its function as a trigger.

- (28) Ergens in het...
 ERGENS in the...
 Ergens in the...⁴¹

In example (28) the temporal marker *voorjaar* 'spring' has been cut off. The absence of the temporal anchoring allows both the preposition *in* and *ergens* itself to be interpreted as locative. The presence of the normally locative preposition *in* can be seen as a trigger for a locative interpretation, even though it can be used metaphorically by a temporal marker as in the original sentence. Another explanation is that the absence of the temporal marker results in a default interpretation of *ergens*, that is, as locative. However, there are other examples of this type in which the lower level trigger is not geared towards the default. This is the case for instance in example (29), in which the absence of the temporal trigger *and fourteenthundred A.D.* resulted in a change from a temporal interpretation into a scale interpretation which was triggered by the remaining preposition *tussen* 'between'.

- (29) Ergens tussen twaalfhonderd...
 ERGENS between twelvehundred...
 Ergens in between twelvehundred...⁴²

However, there are two instances in the remaining examples in which a default interpretation seems a good explanation. In example (30), for instance, the main reason the original was interpreted as modal was that the subject was *housekeeping* in a copular construction. Housekeeping inherently takes place at someone's home, which would make *ergens* superfluous if it was interpreted in a locative sense. In the shortened version, this subject as well as the copular construction are removed and there is no other direct trigger. A full-time job is generally at some place, but a modal interpretation would also be possible. However, 34 of the 38 subjects choose a locative interpretation for this example. What also may have played a role is that, as we saw already above, many subjects do not seem to accept modal *ergens* at the end of a sentence.

⁴⁰ Adapted from: CGN comp-o/nl/fn001047.

⁴¹ Adapted from: CGN comp-g/nl/fn000220.

⁴² Adapted from: CGN comp-o/nl/fn001490.

- (30) ...fulltime baan ergens.
 ...full-time job ERGENS.
 ...full-time job *ergens*⁴³

The same type of effect can be seen from example (31). The original modal interpretation (*point of view*) was chosen by 53% of the subjects in survey 1, whereas only 2 subjects (6%) chose for a locative interpretation.⁴⁴ The modal interpretation was triggered by the fact that the subject of this clause is *the history of Israel*. This subject cannot really be combined with a locative form and a nominal predicate at the same time. In survey 2, however, the subject was absent, which resulted in 38% of the subjects⁴⁵ choosing the locative interpretation. However, the difference between the options *place* and *point of view* was very small (1 vote). What is clear though, is that in survey 2 the number of votes for a locative interpretation is much higher than in survey 1.

- (31) ...Israël is ergens een beschrijving...
 ...Israel is ERGENS a description...
 ...Israel is *ergens* a description...⁴⁶

The remaining four instances do not fit the explanations given above. There are two types of problems with these examples. Their interpretation changed even though a clear trigger remained or vice versa and in one case the majority option changed in the second survey by means of syntactic reinterpretation. That is, the option *prepositional object* is chosen although there is another prepositional object in the fragment, apart from *ergens*. In survey 1, the presence of this adverb blocked a prepositional object interpretation, but in survey 2 the adverb is apparently reinterpreted as not dependent on the preposition. We will start the discussion with example (32).

- (32) ...werk moet ergens gebeuren, in...
 ...work must ERGENS happen in...
 ...the work must be done *ergens*, in...⁴⁷

In example (32) the word *in* was followed in survey 1 by all kinds of periods in which the homework could be done, such as homework periods and free periods. This way the interpretation was steered in a temporal direction, which is clear from the fact that in survey 1 81% of the subjects voted for a temporal interpretation and 3 % for a locative interpretation. However, in survey 2, in which there were no temporal references anymore, there were still 58% of the votes for a temporal interpretation and

⁴³ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn007972.

⁴⁴ The remainder of the votes was for the interpretation 'somehow'.

⁴⁵ 14 out of 37 subjects.

⁴⁶ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CGTL.EIH: a.

⁴⁷ Adapted from: CGN comp-h/nl/fn009223.

only 18% for a locative interpretation. This last interpretation was the interpretation that was expected beforehand. One of the directions in which I thought the answer might be found, was that this phrase is frequently used with a temporal interpretation. However, google searches on "moet ergens gebeuren" or "werk moet" + *ergens gebeuren* all showed mainly locative readings. This makes it hard to understand why the subjects had a temporal preference in this case, especially because *in* is also a locative marker.

In the following two examples the problem is the other way around. The trigger has remained in place, but the interpretation has changed anyway.

- (33) ...januari, daar ergens.
 ...January, there ERGENS.
 ...January *daar ergens*.⁴⁸

In example (33), the temporal marker has remained in place, yet in survey 1 the majority (53%) voted in favor of an *about/around* interpretation and 33% in favor of a temporal interpretation, whereas in survey 2 61% preferred a temporal interpretation and only 26% chose the *about/around* option. The only reason for this change I can think of, is that the absence of any other context except for the temporal marker steered the subjects towards a temporal interpretation. In survey 1, there was also an animate subject whose intentions (i.e. showing that he was not very precise) may have been more important for the respondents than the actual reference to time.

The following example shows a comparable problem. The context that makes *ergens* modal seems to be a combination of a subjective predicate and the combination with the particle *toch*, as will be argued more extensively in the section on the corpus data. Since the noun *persoonlijkheid* maintains the subjectivity in the clause and the particle also falls within the boundaries of the two words of context, we would expect the interpretation to remain the same. And in general this is the case in the sense that we stay within the modal domain. However, the type of modal interpretation changes. In survey 1, 47% of the subjects (36 in total) voted for the *somehow* option and only 25% for *point of view*. In survey 2, the numbers have turned around: 42% out of 37 subjects voted for *point of view* and only 18% for *somehow*.

- (34) ...persoonlijkheid toch ergens, dat kun...
 ...personality PTCL ERGENS, that can...
 ...personality *ergens*, that can...⁴⁹

This change may be explained by the addition of *Dat kun je niet wegdrücken* 'One cannot suppress that' in survey 1. This addition shows that from the point of view of the speaker we are still on relatively certain, factual ground. This means that there is less room for his personal beliefs. Since *ergens* is clearly to be interpreted as modal in this sentence, the most fitting option is *somehow*, for this interpretation is the least subjective.

⁴⁸<http://forum.gamez.nl/index.php?s=4cfe65dfce1ca616a22e4096d6765ef4&showtopic=5072&st=90&p=277833&#entry277833>.

⁴⁹Adapted from: Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CGTL.EIH.

The last example is problematic because there is a clear prepositional object in *daar*. However, the majority interpretation has changed from *somehow* in survey 1 (64% of the votes, i.e. 23 subjects) into *prepositional object* in survey 2 (45% of the votes, which is 17 subjects). In survey 1, the prepositional object option got only 6% of the votes (i.e. 2 people chose this option). In survey 2, 29% (11 people) chose the option *somehow*. What may have happened is that the subjects concentrated on *ergens* and the predicate and thought *daar* was a locative adverb which depended on some predicate in the missing part of the sentence.

- (35) ...daar dan ergens verantwoordelijk voor.
 ...there then ERGENS responsible for.
 ...actually they are *ergens* responsible.⁵⁰

A closer look at the triggers of the modal interpretations

The triggers of the non-modal interpretations are fairly straightforward. The triggers of the modal interpretations, however, are more diverse and less easy to recognize. Therefore, I will discuss the modal categories *feelings*, *point of view* and *somehow* more elaborately.

a) The feelings interpretation

In all cases in which the participants chose the *feelings*-option in survey 2, the original choice was also *feelings*. That is, all instances with a *feelings* interpretation in survey 2 belong to the group of instances that did not change its majority interpretation. This raises the question of what made these interpretations so stable. We will start by looking at the examples. The examples under a) are the examples as used in survey 1, the fragments under b) are the parts of the sentences shown in survey 2.

- (36) a. Steven knikte. Daar heb ik ook al aan gedacht. Maar ergens
 Steven nodded. There have I also already to thought. But ERGENS
 heb ik het gevoel dat er meer achter steekt.
 have I the feeling that there more behind is.
 Steven nodded. I also thought about that. But *ergens* I have the feeling
 that there is something behind it.
- b. Maar ergens heb ik...
 But ERGENS have I ...
 But *ergens* I have⁵¹
- (37) a. Volgend jaar geef ik nog maar één klas les en dat
 Next year give I only one class lesson and that
 vind ik toch ergens wel jammer. Hoewel ik
 am of the opinion I PTCL ERGENS PTCL a pity. Although I

⁵⁰ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/vl/fv400789.

⁵¹ Adapted from: CGN comp-o/vl/fv800158.

regelmatig door de druk vergeet om les te geven.
regularly because of the pressure forget to lesson to give.

Next year I will teach only one class and I think that is a pity. Although I regularly forget to teach because of the stress.

- b. ...ik toch ergens wel jammer.
...I PTCL ERGENS PTCL a pity.
...I do *ergens* [find] it a pity⁵²

- (38) a. Ik kon al liegen voordat ik kon praten. Maar toch had ik
I could already lie before I could talk. But still had I
vroeger ergens óók altijd geloofd dat mijn moeders
when I was a child ERGENS also always believed that my mother's
verhaal maar een verzinsel was.
story but a figment of her imagination was.

I could already lie before I could talk. But still, I had, when I was a child, *ergens* also believed that my mother's story was only a figment of her imagination.

- b. ...ik vroeger ergens óók altijd...
...I when I was a child *ergens* also always...
...when I was a child I always⁵³

- (39) a. Ik bewonder mensen wel die de moed hebben om dat te
I admire people PTCL that the courage have so as to that to
doen. Ik zou dat ergens wel willen maar ja we maken
do. I would that ERGENS PTCL want but PTCL we make
keuzes in het leven hè?
choices in the life PTCL?

I do admire people that have the courage to do such a thing. I would *ergens* want to do that, but we make choices in life, don't we?

- b. ...zou dat ergens wel willen...
would that ERGENS PTCL want...
..would *ergens* want that...⁵⁴

What we can see from examples (36) to (39), is that three out of the four examples have the first person pronoun *ik* 'I' in their 2 word window. The last example does not contain a pronoun, but it does contain a verb form which is used for all singular

⁵² Adapted from: CGN comp-b/nl/fn000119.

⁵³ Adapted from: Dorrestein (2003).

⁵⁴ Adapted from: CGN comp-b/vl/fv400101.

subjects and therefore compatible with a first person pronoun as well. In addition, two of the examples contain strongly subjective forms like an evaluative adjective *jammer* ‘a shame’ and a mental state predicate *willen* ‘want’.

A third factor seems to be word order and knowledge of (the frequency of use of) fixed constructions. Although it is possible to make a sentence with the fragment of example (36) and a locative interpretation, this is a left dislocation. If we type in “*ergens heb ik*” in Google, the results show two large groups. One is of the type *ergens heb ik* [*the feeling, idea, done it wrong*] which has a modal meaning, the other one is *ergens heb ik gelezen* ‘*ergens* have I read’ with a locative meaning. While in general locative interpretations of *ergens* are much more frequent than modal interpretations, the chance that the phrase *ergens heb ik* is part of a modal phrase, is relatively high. This type of constructional knowledge might therefore be an explanation for the modal interpretation of (36).

From these examples we may conclude that first person pronouns, subjective adjectives and verbs and knowledge of (the frequency of) fixed constructions may be triggers for the interpretation *in someone’s feelings or thoughts*.

There are two cases in which the *feelings* interpretation was the majority interpretation in survey 1, while in survey 2 it changed to *somehow*.

- (40) a. Ze misten haar. Baba Baloeek voelde zich vreemd,
They missed her. Baba Baloeek felt himself strange,
ietwat lusteloos, maar ergens ook opgewekt en dan
somewhat listless, but ERGENS also cheerful and then
weer huilerig. Zijn maag was op slot en grendel.
again tearful. His stomach was on lock and bolt.
They missed her. Baba Baloeek felt awkward, somewhat listless but *ergens*
also cheerful and then again tearful. His stomach was locked.
- b. ...lusteloos, maar ergens ook opgewekt...
...listless but *ergens* also cheerful...
...listless, but *ergens* also cheerful...⁵⁵
- (41) a. Na veertien dagen ben ik nog eens om dat ontslagbewijs
After fourteen days am I PTCL PTCL for that notice of dismissal
gaan vragen, want ergens zat het me toch dwars. Maar ik heb
go ask, for ERGENS rankled it me PTCL across. But I have
het nooit gekregen.
it never got.
After fourteen days I went to ask for that notice of dismissal, because it
rankled in my mind. But I never got it.

⁵⁵ Adapted from: Bouazza (2003).

- b. ...vragen, want ergens zat het...
 ...ask, for *ergens* sat it...
 ...ask, for *ergens* it was...⁵⁶

The most likely explanation for the change in meaning in example (40) seems to be that the evaluative adjectives are less directly connected to the experiencer himself, because the reflexive form of the verb *to feel* has been deleted. In (41) the first person pronoun *me* was deleted, producing the same effect.

What these examples suggest, is that in order for an instance of *ergens* to be interpreted as *in someone's feelings or thoughts*, the context must have a direct connection to the experiencer, preferably in the form of a first person pronoun. In addition, a predicate with a subjective content, that is, expressing a feeling, or opinion is often present. In some cases the constructional characteristics of the context may be so closely connected to subjective constructions, that language users choose such an interpretation even though the actual subjective markers are deleted.

b) Point of view

The second modal interpretation that was used in this survey was *from a certain point of view*. Five examples have this interpretation as their majority interpretation in survey 2. The most common characteristics of the examples with a majority interpretation *in someone's feelings or thoughts* were first person pronouns and subjective adjectives and predicates. In the examples (42) to (46) that are interpreted as *from a certain point of view* in survey 2, however, we do not find any first person pronoun and only one subjective predicate. Especially in the examples (42) and (44), of which the interpretation did not change between survey 1 and survey 2, the modal interpretation *point of view* seems to be based mainly on constructional properties. The words that are left within the context are mainly functional and carry very little semantic content. However, their configuration together is very specific. It is, for instance, very hard to find any examples in corpora or on the internet that start with *ergens is dat* which do not have a modal function. In other words, this combination of words, in this order, is part of a fixed construction. The reason that the interpretation is *point of view* and not *feelings* is probably the lack of personal markers in the construction as well as the frequent use of this construction in adversative contexts.

- (42) a. Mijn vrienden zeggen: "dat je dat volhoudt" en "ik zou dat
 My friends say: "that you that keep up" and "I would that
 nooit kunnen." Ergens is dat natuurlijk ook wel lekker om te
 never be able." ERGENS is that of course also PTCL nice to to
 horen, aan de andere kant ook niet.
 hear, on the other side also not.
 My friends say: "the way you manage that" and "I would not be able to
 do that". *Ergens* that feels good of course, on the other hand it doesn't.

⁵⁶ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CGBLE.IH.

- b. Ergens is dat...
 ERGENS is that
 Ergens is that...⁵⁷
- (43) a. Stenen voorwerpen uit een periode die men het mesolithicum
 Stone objects from a period that one the mesolithicum
 noemt. Dat is ergens ja pff laten we zeggen zesduizend,
 calls. That is ERGENS yeah pff let us say six-thousand,
 vijfduizend voor Christus.
 five-thousand before Christ.
 Stone objects from a period that is called the mesolithicum. That is *er-*
gens yeah pff let's say six-thousand, five-thousand before Christ.
- b. Dat is ergens, ja pff...
 That is ERGENS, yeah pff...
 That is *ergens*, yeah pff⁵⁸

Example (43) is different from the previous example in that there are many interpretations other than this modal one that start with these few words. The original interpretation was *about/around*, but this changed in survey 2 into a *point of view* interpretation. The reason for the participants' choice for *point of view* may have been that the expression *ja pff* suggests some hesitation that may be seen as a way to buy time in order to make up your mind about something. However, this is one of the examples with a lot of variation in the answers of the participants. Although most votes are for the modal options, it is clear that the participants were not very certain about this example.

- (44) a. Speaker 1: Daarvoor steunen ze je wel maar daarna niet
 Before support they you PTCL but afterwards not
 meer. Speaker 2: Daar zit ergens wel weer wat in.
 anymore. There sits ERGENS PTCL PTCL something in.
 Ze kunnen aan de andere kant ook bezig blijven.
 They can on the other side also busy remain.
 Speaker 1: Before they support you but afterwards not anymore. Speaker
 2: You *ergens* have a point. On the other hand, there is no end to it.
- b. Daar zit ergens wel weer...
 There sits ERGENS PTCL PTCL...
 That contains *ergens* a bit of...⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Adapted from: CGN comp-b/nl/fn000128.

⁵⁸ Adapted from: CGN comp-f/vl/fv600846.

⁵⁹ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn000441.

Example (44) is again of a more constructional nature, which can also be seen from the fact that the interpretation of this example did not change between survey 1 and survey 2. This combination and order of words is part of the common expression *daar zit ergens wel weer wat in* which means 'you/he/they have (has) a point'. The lack of a first person pronoun in combination with the contrast between a new way of looking at something and previous points of view makes *from a certain point of view* the best option.

- (45) a. Hoe nu die elementen eruit komen, is een kwestie van je
How now those elements out come, is a matter of your
persoonlijkheid toch ergens, dat kun je niet wegdrukken.
personality PTCL ERGENS, that can you not push away.
En die persoonlijkheid die heb je zelf.
And that personality that have you self.
How those elements are expressed is a matter of your own personality
ergens, you can't suppress that. And your personality that is yours.
- b. ...persoonlijkheid toch ergens.
...personality PTCL ERGENS.
...personality *ergens*.⁶⁰

What may also play a role in the choice for a modal interpretation is interpretation by exclusion. That is, sometimes other interpretations simply seem to make little sense. In example (45), which changed its interpretation from *somehow* to *point of view*, the fact that a statement about a personality is not a part of a frame that is about place, time or scale, in combination with the position of *ergens* in the clause suggests that a locative, temporal or scalar option is not very likely. This leaves the addressee with a choice in modal interpretations. Since this fragment does not follow the common characteristics of a *feeling* interpretation and the particle *toch* suggest some contrast the *point of view* interpretation seems the most likely. This is also what the division of the votes suggests. Most people (16 out of 37 (43%)) voted for *point of view*, *feelings* came second and *somehow* is the third option that is seriously considered by the participants. The non-modal options are almost never chosen.

- (46) a. Krakau vond 'k eigenlijk ook heel erg mooi. Warschau viel
Cracow found I PTCL also very really pretty. Warschau fell
ergens tegen omdat 't nagebouwd is, maar aan de andere kant
ERGENS short because it rebuilt is, but on the other hand
was 't leuk om te zien.
was it nice to to see.
Cracow I found also very pretty. Warsaw was *ergens* disappointing, be-
cause it was rebuilt, but on the other hand it was nice to see.

⁶⁰ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CGTLE.IH.

- b. Warschau viel ergens tegen omdat...
 Warsaw fell ERGENS short because...
 Warschau was *ergens* disappointing because...⁶¹

In example (46), which did not change its interpretation, there is a subjective verb, but the personal pronoun is left out. Together with the non-animate subject Warschau this makes the *feelings* option less fitting, because there is no direct connection to the experiencer.

There were two examples in which the original interpretation was *point of view*, which changed into a locative interpretation in survey 2. These examples were already discussed above.

c) Somehow

The last modal interpretation is *somehow*. Two of the examples with this interpretation were already discussed above in (40) and (41), because they originally had a *feelings* interpretation, which changed to a *somehow* interpretation.

- (47) a. Dat was vroeger. Als je 'n man hebt ga je toch ergens
 That was in those days. If you a husband have go you PTCL ERGENS
 niet alleen zitten. Dan denken ze dat je sjans zit te zoeken.
 not alone sit. Then think they that you a hit sit to search
 That is how it was in those days. If you had a husband, you were not
 supposed to go somewhere alone. They would think you would be flirt-
 ing.
- b. ...je toch ergens niet alleen...
 ...you PTCL ERGENS not alone...
 ...you *ergens* not alone...⁶²

In example (47) the interpretation of the original version in survey 1 was locative, but in survey 2 this changed to *somehow*. Although all modal options were chosen relatively frequently, the *somehow* option was chosen in 43% of the cases (16 out of 37 votes). The other modal options were chosen 8 and 7 times which is 21% and 19% respectively. One of the factors in the change from locative to modal is the deletion of the verb *zitten* 'sit'. Removing this verb removes the trigger for a locative interpretation. What remains is what looks like a generic you, the particle *toch* and the combination *niet alleen*. There are no direct subjective markers, which makes the *feelings* option less likely. The use of *toch* might be seen as an indication for a contrastive situation, but this particle is also frequently found with other interpretations of *ergens* than a *point of view* interpretation. The *somehow* option is the least subjective modal option, which might be an explanation for the preference for this option.

⁶¹ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn000678.

⁶² Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus.

In example (48) the interpretation remained the same between survey 1 and 2. This is probably due to the recognizability of the predicate *aanduiden* ‘indicate’ which is clearly an epistemic modal expression when used in the third person. The epistemic modal function of this expression excludes the *feelings* and *point of view* interpretations, because their subjective implications do not fit the impersonal use of an epistemic expression. The *somehow* interpretation lacks this connection to personal views, which makes it suitable for use in this kind of situation.

- (48) a. In bijna alle talen bestaan woorden voor die emoties. Dat
In almost all languages exist words for these emotions. That
duidt toch ergens aan dat inderdaad die verschillende soorten
shows PTCL ERGENS on that indeed those different sorts
emoties dus ook universeel zijn.
emotions thus also universal are.
In almost all languages there are words for those emotions. This shows
ergens that these emotions of various sorts are also universal.
- b. ...duidt toch ergens aan dat...
...shows PTCL ERGENS on that...
...shows *ergens* that...⁶³

We find a comparable situation in example (49), which did not change its *somehow* interpretation in survey 2. In this example we find a passive construction, which shows that there is little connection to the experiencer. Even though the verb is a mental state predicate, the connection between this predicate and a personal view is weak because of the passive. This makes the *feelings* and *point of view* interpretations less likely. A locative interpretation is possible as well, which can also be seen from the votes of the participants. However, *somehow* gets significantly⁶⁴ more votes than the other options. This may be because it is difficult to comprehend that a lie is believed completely, so it is stressed that the reason people may do so is unknown.

- (49) a. Huldigde ook Hitler niet de zienswijze, dat ook leugens wel
Had also Hitler not the view, that also lies PTCL
ergens worden geloofd? Of wat zij zeggen wáár is, doet
ERGENS are believed? Whether what they say true is, does
er dus niet toe.
there therefore not PTCL.
Didn't Hitler also have the idea that even lies *ergens* are believed? So
whether what they say is true does not matter.

⁶³ Adapted from: CGN comp-n/vl/fv400576.

⁶⁴ $\chi^2(3) = 11.32$ $p < 0.05$.

- b. ...leugens wel ergens worden geloofd.
 ...lies PTCL ERGENS are believed.
 ...lies *ergens* are believed.⁶⁵

What seems to be the recurring pattern in the cases of *somehow* is that there is a lack of non-general personal pronouns and there are many agentive subjects. Contrary to the *point of view* interpretations, there are no contrastive views involved. This survey alone does not allow us to draw more conclusions as to the triggers of a *somehow* interpretation, but survey 3 and the more elaborate corpus study in chapter 4 will provide some more information.

In conclusion, we can say that the modal interpretations seem to be characterized and distinguished from each other by means of the following characteristics:

- *In someone's feelings or thoughts*: First person pronouns, subjective predicates, adjectives and specific fixed constructions, such as *Ergens heb ik*.
- *From a certain point of view*: No first person pronouns, some subjective markers, contrastive elements and some fixed constructions, such as *Ergens is dat*.
- *Somehow*: No agentive subjects, no contrastive markers.

Whether these generalizations hold for other examples as well will be investigated further in the discussion of survey 3 and the more elaborate corpus study in chapter 4.

Conclusion and summary

The main question in this section was what would happen to the interpretation of the sentences from survey 1 if we restricted the amount of context to two words before and two words after *ergens*. We found that the interpretation only changes in about one third of the sentences. The reason most sentences do not change their interpretation seems to be that the trigger of their particular interpretation is part of the 2 words before and 2 words after-window. In most cases in which the interpretation did change, the original trigger was cut off, but another word took over the function of trigger. In those cases in which the secondary trigger was place-oriented, however, it is hard to decide whether we see the effects of this secondary trigger or of a default interpretation, because both processes would reinforce each other.

However, there are two cases in which a default function of the place interpretation seemed the most likely explanation for the change in interpretation, suggesting that this factor might play a role. Although two examples is a rather meager basis from which to draw that conclusion, the fact that in 6 out of 15 cases in which the majority interpretations changed, this was in the direction of a place interpretation, also suggests that a default option may play a role. We might also ask ourselves whether we need to choose between a trigger oriented approach and a default based

⁶⁵ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CPWE.EIH.

one, since both explanations can also be true at the same time. On the basis of this survey it is not possible to draw final conclusions. To do that more extensive surveys we would need more surveys. Lastly, we were left with 4 examples (out of 43) which were difficult to explain. These examples were discussed elaborately.

3.5.3 Variation and certainty

If the context plays an important role in interpretation, this raises the question of whether lack of context results in doubt in the participants. One way to study this question is to look at the variation in the answers and see whether there is a difference between the amount of variation found in survey 1, which had more context and in survey 2, with very little context. However, this assumes that variation in the answers is connected to doubts in the subjects. In order to find out whether the lack of context results in doubt in the participants, we also need to test whether doubt in the participants is correlated with variation in the data. We will start with the question of how much difference there is between the variation in survey 1 and survey 2. As can be seen from table 3.7 the variation in survey 1 and survey 2 are strongly correlated⁶⁶ to variance in survey 1.

% of agreement between the subjects	Survey 1	Survey 2
	% of the sentences in this category	% of the sentences in this category
91-100	9.3 (4)	11.9 (5)
81-90	16.3 (7)	7.1 (3)
71-80	11.6 (5)	19.0 (8)
61-70	18.6 (8)	7.1 (3)
51-60	14.0 (6)	14.3 (6)
41-50	25.6 (11)	26.2 (11)
31-40	4.7 (2)	14.4 (6)
21-30	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
11-20	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
0-10	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Total	100.0 (43)	100 (42)

Table 3.7: Percentage of agreement of the subjects (N =36 for survey 1 and 37 for survey 2) as it is divided over the sentences (N=43 for survey 1 and 42 for survey 2). The numbers between brackets are the raw numbers.

This shows that variation does not increase when subjects are confronted with very little context. This is surprising, since three participants wrote at the end of the questionnaire that they felt they did not always have enough context and one even had to be excluded because he had written that he did not have enough context in

⁶⁶There was a strong correlation between survey 1 and survey 2, $\gamma = 1$ $p < 0.001$.

many cases, instead of answering the question. On average the subjects graded their certainty as 2.2 on a scale from 1 to 5, in which 1 was *very certain* and 5 was *very uncertain*.

Now we are left with the question of whether uncertainty is related to variation. We would expect that if the subjects chose many different options they might be in doubt. As a measurement of the variation in the data I have taken the difference between the preferred option and the second option. If that difference is high there is little variation, if that difference is low the variation is considerable. According to a Spearman Rank test and a Pearson correlation there is a significant correlation between the feeling of certainty of the subjects (mean of the score on the Likert scale) and the amount of variation in the data ($r_s = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$, which is a strong correlation). This means that the variation in the votes of the subjects is a good indicator of their degree of certainty.

If the variation in the votes of the subjects is a good indicator of their degree of certainty and the degree of variation in survey 1 and 2 is comparable, this suggests that language users do not become more uncertain when the amount of context is reduced. A possible explanation for this unexpected outcome is that speakers change their strategy of interpretation. What might be happening is that they rely more on their general knowledge of the conventions of their language and less on actual information about the context.

We can conclude that the existence of a large variation in the data is a good indicator of how certain the subjects were with respect to their answer. In addition, there was a strong correlation between the variation in survey 1 and survey 2. These two results together suggest that the certainty of the subjects does not decrease when the amount of context decreases.

3.5.4 Conclusion

We can conclude that in about one third of the sentences (36%) the removal of the context changed the interpretation of *ergens*. This can be explained by the fact that many triggers were in the four word window around *ergens*. In those cases in which the interpretation did change, the change can generally be explained by the fact that the original trigger was part of the removed context. However, in many cases another word that was still present seems to have taken over the role of trigger, which makes it possible for the interpretation to go in a completely different direction from the original example.

This does not mean that the original hypothesis that the locative interpretation is a default interpretation can be completely dismissed. In some cases new triggers steer the new interpretation in a locative direction, but there are also two cases in which a default interpretation seems the most likely interpretation.

Contrary to expectation, removal of context did not increase the variation in the answers of the participants significantly. However, there was a correlation between the certainty of the participants and the variation in their answers, showing that uncertainty and variation are correlated. This suggests that participants did not

become less certain when they were given less context. This is surprising since several participants complained that they sometimes had too little context to decide on an interpretation in survey 2.

3.6 Results of survey 3: Changing the interpretation

3.6.1 Introduction

Survey 3 was designed to see whether it is possible to change language users' interpretations of *ergens* by changing a minimal number of words in the sentences used in survey 1. The changed words generally were the hypothesized triggers of the original interpretation and the forms dependent on those triggers, since the new sentences had to be grammatical and understandable. This means that not in all sentences the same grammatical elements were changed. In addition, in some sentences more words had to be changed than in others. For instance, in the cases in which a grammatical construction seemed to be the trigger for the interpretation of modal *ergens*, the whole grammatical construction needed to be replaced. In other cases, it was enough to add a temporal or a locative phrase or to change the predicate. This is understandable from a constructionist perspective of language. If words are not (always) the basic building blocks of language, it is to be expected that more than a word needs to be changed in order to change an interpretation. The direction of the change was dependent on what fitted the overall context of the sentence best, since it was our goal to change the interpretation with minimal adjustments to the context. The average number of words deleted while changing the sentences was 3.5 and the average number of words added was 4.4. The average number of words in the original sentences of survey 1 was 25.4, excluding *ergens* itself. This means that on average 31%⁶⁷ of the words in the sentences had to be changed to change the interpretation of *ergens*.

3.6.2 Survey 1 and 3 compared

The result of the comparison between survey 1 and 3 is that in 80%⁶⁸ of the sentences the majority interpretation changed with respect to survey 1. This is a significant result in a binomial test (test value 0.11, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, we can conclude that it is possible to change the interpretation of *ergens* by changing just a few words in the context.

A question that has not been answered yet is what exactly had to change in order to change the interpretation. I will start with some examples of how the sentences were changed. In example (50) there was a replacement in the predicate, in example (60), a temporal phrase was added. In the examples (52) and (53) more extensive

⁶⁷That is, the deleted words + the added words divided by the total number of words of the original sentence * 100. That means that the more words were added the higher the percentage of words that had to be changed, because the total number of words in the original sentences remains the same.

⁶⁸That is, 33 out of 41 sentences.

changes were needed, because the changes that would have effect on *ergens* also had important effects on other parts of the sentence, due to the constructional nature of language. In the following examples, the text that was deleted is crossed out. The text that was added is in italics.

In example (50) the only thing that was changed was the predicate. The subjective noun *het gevoel* 'the feeling' was replaced by *gelezen* 'read'. This is only possible because the verb *to have* is polyfunctional in nature (i.e. it is both an auxiliary and a full verb with an object). This adjustment was enough to change the majority interpretation from modal to locative. The reason this interpretation changed is that *ik heb het gevoel* 'I have the feeling' is a fixed expression with a subjective meaning and a first person pronoun, whereas *reading* is not subjective and allows for a locative adjunct.

- (50) Steven knikte. Daar heb ik ook al ~~aan~~ gedacht. Maar ergens heb Steven nodded. There have I also already to thought. But ERGENS have *ik gelezen* ~~het gevoel~~ dat er meer achter steekt. I read the feeling that there more behind is. Steven nodded. I also thought about that. But *ergens* I have read/ the feeling that there is something behind it.⁶⁹

In the following example the only thing that was changed is the addition of a temporal phrase. This was possible because the verb *eten* 'to eat' accepts both a locative complement and an implicit location. The change from a locative to a point in time is brought about by the scalar preposition *tussen* in combination with a time.

- (51) Andrew zou me om half zes opwachten en dan zouden we ergens Andrew would me at half six wait for and then would we ERGENS *tussen zes en zeven* gaan eten en daarna zouden we gezellig naar *between six and seven* go eat and afterwards would we enjoyably to een theater. a theater. Andrew would wait for me at five thirty and then we would go and eat somewhere *ergens* between six and seven and afterwards we enjoyably would go to a theater.⁷⁰

In (52) the predicate and the adpositions have been changed. The locative postposition *naartoe* 'towards' has been replaced by *mee* 'with'. This made it possible for *ergens* to become a prepositional object. The verb was implicit in the first version of the sentence, which illustrates the constructional properties of *moeten* and the adverb *naartoe* in this type of clause as was already mentioned above. Therefore the verb *to help* was added.

⁶⁹ Adapted from: CGN comp-o/vl/fv800158.

⁷⁰ Adapted from: Eindhoven corpus gezinsbladen.

- (52) Carola vroeg of ze Anais even terug mocht geven aan Isabelle, want ze Carola asked if she Anais a while back could give to Isabelle, for she moest haar oma ergens mee helpen naartoe, maar dat kon had to her grandmother ERGENS with help towards, but that was possible niet volgens Isabelle. Belachelijk, het is haar eigen kind! not according to Isabelle. Rediculous, it is her own child!
- Carola asked if she could give back Anais to Isabelle for a while, because she had to go help her grandmother/ ergens, but that was impossible according to Isabelle. Rediculous, it is her own child!⁷¹

These examples show that there are many cases in which just a few words determine the interpretation of *ergens*. It also shows that there is no standard recipe that can be used to change the interpretation of *ergens*. In order for the result to make sense it is sometimes required to change parts that do not trigger a specific interpretation, but are dependent on another part that does fulfill the role of trigger. An extreme example of such a case is example (53).

- (53) Mijn vrienden zeggen: “dat je dat volhoudt” en “ik zou dat nooit kunnen.” Ergens is dat natuurlijk ook wel lekker om te horen, aan de andere kant ook niet. heb ik zelfs wel eens te horen gekregen dat iemand liever werkloos zou zijn dan voor de klas te gaan staan.
- My friends say: “that you that keep up” and “I would that never be able.” ERGENS is that of course also PTCL nice to to hear, on the other side also not. have I even PTCL once to hear got that someone rather unemployed would be than in front of the class to go stand.
- My friends say “how you manage that” and “I would never be able to do that”. *Ergens* is that of course nice to hear, on the other hand it is not./ I have been told by someone that he would rather be unemployed than to have a teaching job.⁷²

In this example we see that the combination of *ergens* in the beginning of the clause with the the subjective content of the rest of the clause makes it really hard to change the meaning of *ergens* with just a few words. The whole structure of the sentence seems to be dependent on the construction *ergens is dat*.

A google search shows that *ergens is dat* is a fixed construction that is only used with a modal sense. This means that to change the interpretation of *ergens* in this sentence, the whole construction needs to be changed. From a constructionist perspective, this was expected, since the size of the construction in which *ergens* is used, determines how easily the interpretation of *ergens* can be changed.

⁷¹Adapted from: CGN comp-a/vl/fv400262.

⁷²Adapted from: CGN comp-b/nl/fn000128.

However, the majority interpretation did not change for all sentences and those instances that did change, did not all change in the expected direction. Only 49%⁷³ of the sentences changed exactly in the way that was expected. Therefore, we will now study in detail those cases that did not change at all and the cases that changed in an unexpected direction.

Why did some interpretations not change?

About 20% of the sentences in survey 3 (i.e. 8 out of 41 sentences) did not change in their majority interpretation. Within this group there are two types of sentences. In the first type, which consists of 3 cases, the variation is so large that the difference between the majority interpretation and the other major interpretations is not significant anymore when outliers with fewer than 5 votes are excluded.⁷⁴ The second group of five cases has far less variation. We will start the discussion of why examples have not changed their majority interpretation with the first group.

Examples (54) and (55) are hard to explain, since the interpretations that received a (small) majority seem impossible to me. In (54) the majority interpretation is *at some point on a scale*. However, *ergens* is not placed in the same clause as the scalar phrase *tussen de vijf en de tien gevallen* ‘between five and ten cases’.

- (54) Enkele gevallen zei minister Van Boxtel en daarmee ~~bedoelt~~ zegt ie
 Several cases said minister Van Boxtel and with that ~~means~~ says he
 ergens dat er tussen de vijf en de tien gevallen van illegaal
 ERGENS that there between the five and the ten cases of illegal
 namaken zijn.
 reproduction are.

Several cases said minister Van Boxtel and with that he says *ergens* that there are between five and ten cases of illegal reproduction.⁷⁵

In example (55) we have a comparable problem in that the majority interpretation is *prepositional object*.⁷⁶ However, grammatically *ergens* is not the object of a preposition and cannot be paraphrased as *om iets*. Therefore, the only explanation for this outcome seems to be to assume that this example is not accepted by the participants. A possible explanation could be that this position of *ergens* in the clause is not very common in written language.

- (55) Dan ga ik me netjes aankleden. Het is heel wat gemakkelijker
 Then go I myself neatly dress. It is much what easier

⁷³That is: 20 out of 41.

⁷⁴ Sentence 7: χ^2 (3, N = 40) = 2.14 p = 0.54; Sentence 42: χ^2 (4, N = 40) = 1.47, p = 0.83; Sentence 43: χ^2 (3, N = 40) = 6.35, p = 0.10.

⁷⁵Adapted from: comp-f/nl/fn007187.

⁷⁶The term *prepositional object* was not mentioned in the survey, the participants were offered the option *on something, about something, towards something, in something*.

ergens ~~over~~ om te praten dan ~~er~~ over om te schrijven, daar kunnen we
 ERGENS ~~about~~ to to speak than ~~about~~ it to to write, there can we
 het over eens zijn.
 it about agree be.

Then I will go and dress up. It is much easier *ergens* to speak than to write,
 we can agree about that.⁷⁷

Since both examples above also show a high degree of variation, the only conclusion I can draw from these data is that according to the subjects these sentences are not correct.

In example (56) the number of votes in favor of the hypothesized interpretation *somehow* and the interpretation *prepositional object* are the same, but they are also the highest agreement rates for this sentence. Since *ergens* is clearly not a prepositional object, this sentence is apparently also not correct in the eyes of the participants.

- (56) Het zal wel in het Guinness Book of Records komen. Lopen we toch nog
 It will PTCL in the Guinness Book of Records come. Run we PTCL PTCL

ergens *het hardst in voorop*, want dat voetballen wordt bij ons
 ERGENS the fastest in lead, for that playing soccer becomes for us
 nooit meer iets.
 never more anything.

This will probably get into the Guinness Book of Records. At least we run *the fastest* ergens ~~in the lead~~, since playing soccer will never get us anywhere anymore.⁷⁸

The second group is far less difficult to explain. The subjects seem to agree in their interpretations, but they are different from what was expected. The interpretations chosen by the subjects are also possible and apart from the fact that the subjects agreed more than expected on this possible interpretation, these examples are not problematic.

In example (57), the expectation was that it would be read as *at some point in time or on a scale*. However, the subjects read it as *somehow*. This interpretation is also possible. This example would typically be a possible switch context (Heine, 2002), because both a metaphorical reading and a modal reading are possible. However, there is relatively little variation in the data. A majority of 60% (24 of the 40 votes) voted for *somehow*, and the second option *prepositional object* has only 5 votes (12.5%). This shows that even though theoretically a temporal or locative interpretation was also possible, the subjects seem to agree on the modal option.

⁷⁷ Adapted from: Reve *Op weg naar het einde*.

⁷⁸ Adapted from: Grunberg (2003).

- (57) Dat heb ik opgedaan in het ziekenhuis zelf. En eigenlijk zijn zij
 That have I contracted in the hospital itself. And PTCL are they
 daar dan ergens *in de fout gegaan* verantwoordelijk voor. Daarom
 there then ERGENS *in the mistake gone* responsible for. That is why
 zeggen ze niet wat er aan de hand is.
 say they not what there at the hand is.
 I contracted that in the hospital itself. And basically they are *ergens* thus *the ones who made a mistake* there responsible for that. That is why they won't say what is going on.⁷⁹

The next example is also ambiguous in the sense that if we take the metaphor seriously we would say *ergens* is used in its sense of *at some place*. However, this is clearly about a metaphorical place in someone's mind, so the participants have chosen for the option *in someone's feelings or thoughts*.

- (58) Ik kon al liegen voordat ik kon praten. Maar toch had ik
 I could already lie before I could talk. But PTCL had I
 vroeger ergens *van binnen* óók altijd geloofd dat mijn
 when I was a child ERGENS from inside also always believed that my
 moeders verhaal maar een verzinsel was.
 mother's story but a figment of her imagination was,
 I could tell lies before I could talk. But still, when I was a child I had *ergens* *inside* always believed that my mother's story was just a figment of her imagination.⁸⁰

What we can conclude is that apart from three examples that may have been badly chosen, even ambiguous examples do not result in a high variation. Three of the four ambiguous cases were originally modal and remained modal, even though they were modified to make a non-modal interpretation possible and non-modal interpretations generally are more frequent.⁸¹ This suggests that the subjects have a preference for a modal interpretation in the case of ambiguity. Apparently, an ambiguous context triggers a different reaction from a lack of context, since in survey 2 we found a preference for a locative interpretation if there were no cues in the context.

As will be discussed more elaborately in chapter 6, the preference for a modal interpretation in an ambiguous context is especially interesting from a historical point of view. An explanation for the tendency to choose a modal interpretation if there is a choice between modal and non-modal may be found in Grice's maxim of quantity (Grice, 1989), which is phrased as follows by Traugott and Dasher (2002)

⁷⁹ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/vl/fv400789.

⁸⁰ Adapted from: Dorrestein (2003).

⁸¹ The fourth example originally was locative and remained locative, due to the continuous presence of locative markers.

‘say no more than you must and mean more thereby’. On the basis of this maxim, addressees would try to infer as much information about the attitude of the speaker as possible. This means that if there is a choice between a literal interpretation that does not add much to the information given in the sentence and an attitudinal (i.e. modal) interpretation, the last interpretation is more informative and thus the one that will be chosen.

If processes like this one really are the background of the tendency we just found, this suggests that this is a more general process. Such a general process would be a very strong pressure towards subjectification in the sense of Traugott (1989) and an explanation for the strongly directional changes we see in grammaticalization processes. However, this experimental setup is too small to draw any definite conclusions.

Why did some interpretations change in an unexpected direction?

The 11 examples that changed in an unexpected direction are very comparable to the examples we just discussed. Most of these examples can be interpreted both as non-modal and as modal, but the subjects choose the modal option in all cases. An example of such a case can be found in (59). In some other cases, a scale that has a temporal reference was considered temporal as in (60).

In example (59) the expected interpretation was locative, since this sentence is about finding a solution in a (metaphorical) place. However, the subjects interpreted this example as *somehow*. A possible explanation is that the overall interpretation that if something happens in an unknown place it will also happen in unknown circumstances (i.e. *somehow*) is thought to be more relevant than the interpretation of an unknown location.

- (59) Ze misten haar. Baba Baloek voelde zich vreemd, ietwat
They missed her. Baba Baloek felt himself strange, somewhat

lusteloos, maar ergens zou hij wel een oplossing vinden ook opgewekt
listless, but ERGENS would he PTCL a solution find also cheerful

en dan weer huilerig. Zijn maag was op slot en grendel.
and then again tearful. His stomach was on lock and bolt.

They missed her. Baba Baloek felt awkward, somewhat listless but *ergens* he would find a solution also cheerful and then again tearful. His stomach was locked.⁸²

We find a non-modal example in (60). The expectation was that this example would be interpreted as scalar, because of the preposition *tussen*. However, since this is about a time, the participants chose for the more overall interpretation of a temporal expression.

⁸² Adapted from: Bouazza (2003).

- (60) Andrew zou me om half zes opwachten en dan zouden we ergens
 Andrew would me at half six wait for and then would we ERGENS
 tussen zes en zeven gaan eten en daarna zouden we gezellig naar
 between six and seven go eat and afterwards would we enjoyably to
 een theater.
 a theater.
 Andrew would wait for me at five thirty and then we would go and eat some-
 where *ergens* between six and seven and afterwards we enjoyably would go
 to a theater.⁸³

What we can conclude from this category of examples is that the overall interpretation is preferred over the original metaphorical basis. For instance, a scalar example that refers to time will generally be categorized by the subjects as temporal, even though a scalar interpretation is also possible. If an instance of *ergens* can be read as modal it will be interpreted that way, even if it is also possible to give the example a more concrete interpretation. This was not what would be expected if the locative interpretation was somehow the primary or default interpretation of *ergens*, which was suggested by the results of survey 2. It may be, therefore, that an almost context-less example is not interpreted in the same way as an ambiguous example. However, this is for future research.

The features of modal ergens

In the previous section, we said that survey 3 might give some more insight into the triggers that lead to a modal interpretation and that distinguish between the various modal interpretations. There are two ways in which the results of this survey may provide some insight into the relation between context and a modal interpretation. On the one hand we have the group of examples in which a modal interpretation was the original interpretation, on the other hand we have the cases in which the interpretation changed into a modal interpretation.

The feelings interpretation

We will start with those cases that had a *feelings* interpretation in survey 1. There are six examples that fall into this category. Five of these examples changed their majority interpretation in survey 3. In three of these cases the majority interpretation was changed by replacing the predicate and its arguments. The original predicates were subjective predicates. In order to change the meaning of *ergens*, they were replaced by less subjective predicates as can be seen in examples (61) to (63).

- (61) Steven knikte. Daar heb ik ook al aan gedacht. Maar ergens heb
 Steven nodded. There have I also already to thought. But ERGENS have

⁸³ Adapted from: Eindhoven corpus gezinsbladen.

ik gelezen ~~het gevoel~~ dat er meer achter steekt.
I read ~~the feeling~~ that there more behind is.

Steven nodded. I also thought about that. But *ergens* I have read/ the feeling that there is something behind it.⁸⁴

- (62) Ze misten haar. Baba Baloeek voelde zich vreemd, ietwat
They missed her. Baba Baloeek felt himself strange, somewhat

lusteloos, maar ergens zou hij wel een oplossing vinden ook opgewekt
listless, but ERGENS would he PTCL a solution find also cheerful

en dan weer southuilerig. Zijn maag was op slot en grendel.
and then again tearful. His stomach was on lock and bolt.

They missed her. Baba Baloeek felt awkward, somewhat listless but *ergens* he would find a solution also cheerful and then again tearful. His stomach was locked.⁸⁵

- (63) Na veertien dagen ben ik nog eens om dat ontslagbewijs gaan
After fourteen days am I PTCL PTCL for that notice of dismissal go

vragen, want ergens bij een instantie vroegen ze erom zat het me toch
ask, for ERGENS at an agency asked they for it rankled it me PTCL

dwars. Maar ik heb het nooit gekregen.
across. But I have it never got.

After fourteen days I went to ask for that notice of dismissal, because *at some agency they asked for it it rankled in my mind*. But I never got it.⁸⁶

Example (61) was already discussed under (50). As we saw above, it was enough to change the predicate from subjective to locative in this example. However, as can be seen from example (58), in which a locative phrase was added but the subjective interpretation did not change, the replacements must unambiguously block the interpretation *in someone's mind or feelings* and they must be about a situation in the world in order for an example to change its interpretation from *feelings* to locative.⁸⁷

We find a comparable situation in example (62), which was already discussed under (59). In this example, the original interpretation, *feelings*, changed into *somehow* even though a locative marker was added and the predicate is also locative. The fact that *finding a solution* does not need to happen at a specific place in the world, but

⁸⁴ Adapted from: CGN comp-o/vl/fv800158.

⁸⁵ Adapted from: Bouazza (2003).

⁸⁶ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CGBL.EIH.

⁸⁷ This could also be phrased as: The replacements have to make sure that the focus of a proposition is not in someone's epistemic space anymore, but in a base space (i.e. in some real or imaginary physical world) in order for an example to change its interpretation from *feelings* to locative.

is mainly a cognitive action, probably makes the subjects choose for a modal instead of a locative interpretation.

The last example that originally had a *feelings* interpretation which changed into a locative interpretation by means of substituting the predicate is example (63). In this example, the subjective construction *dwars zitten* ‘to bother’ was replaced by a locative phrase and a predicate *to ask for*. Again the focus was changed from the subjective view of the speaker towards the physical world.

From these examples we may conclude that the requirements for a *feelings* interpretation which we found in survey 2 (a connection with the speaker and a subjective predicate), seem to overrule other triggers only when they make sure the focus of the sentence is on the subjective view of the speaker instead of on the physical world.

In the cases in which the interpretation *in someone’s feelings or thoughts* was chosen most frequently in survey 3, there are two clear characteristics. The first characteristic we already saw above: a first person pronoun and a subjective verb. The second group consists of cases in which a place within people’s minds was used metaphorically, as in examples (64) to (66). This last example was already discussed under (58).

- (64) Hoe nu die elementen eruit komen, is een kwestie van je
How now those elements out come, is a matter of your

persoonlijkheid *die* toch ergens *in je zit*, dat kun je niet
personality *which* PTCL ERGENS *in you sits*, that can you not

wegdrukken. En die persoonlijkheid die heb je zelf.
push away. And that personality that have you self.

How those elements are expressed is a matter of your own personality *which*
is ergens *within you*, you can’t suppress that. And your personality that is
yours.⁸⁸
- (65) Huldigde ook Hitler niet de zienswijze, dat ook leugens wel ergens *in*
Had also Hitler not the view, that also lies PTCL ERGENS *in*

mensen hun achterhoofd blijven hangen, worden geloofd?
people their back of their head remain dangling, are believed?

Of wat zij zeggen *wáár* is, doet er dus niet toe.
Whether what they say true is, does there therefore not PTCL.

Didn’t Hitler also have the idea that even lies *ergens* are believed? So whether
what they say is true does not matter.⁸⁹
- (66) Ik kon al liegen voordat ik kon praten. Maar toch had ik
I could already lie before I could talk. But PTCL had I

⁸⁸ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CGTL.EIH.

⁸⁹ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CPWE.EIH.

vroeger ergens van binnen óók altijd geloofd dat
 when I was a child ERGENS from inside also always believed that

mijn moeders verhaal maar een verzinsel was,
 my mother's story but a figment of her imagination was,

een sprookje zoals alle andere die ze me had verteld, alleen zonder
 a fairy-tale like all others that she me had told, only without,

“zij leefden nog lang en gelukkig.”
 ‘they lived ever after long and happily’.

But still, when I was a child I had *ergens* also believed that my mother's story was only a figment of her imagination, a fairy-tale like all the other ones she had told me, only without ‘and they lived happily ever after’.⁹⁰

For examples (64) to (66), most subjects in survey 3 chose the option *in someone's feelings or thoughts*. However, in all cases there was also a large group that preferred *somehow*. The reason for this confusion is probably a mechanism we have seen before. A majority of the subjects chose the option that came closest to the overall interpretation of the phrase in which *ergens* was found. However, strictly speaking, the meaning of *ergens* itself is either metaphorically locative or modifying the locative phrase as in *somehow*. This is exactly what we find in the responses. Most votes are in favor of a *feelings* interpretation, closely followed by *somehow* and as a strong third option *place*. This means that although a large majority of the subjects interpret this kind of example as a metaphorical place, (both the *feelings* option and the option *at some place* are indications for an interpretation as a metaphorical place) there is a relatively large minority that prefers the interpretation *somehow*. This shows that there may be a connection between the use of *ergens* as a metaphorical locative marker and the use of the phrase as *somehow*. Whether this connection is also the historical source of the interpretation will be discussed in chapter 6

From a certain point of view

In survey 1, the modal category *from a certain point of view* was chosen by the majority of the participants for six of the sentences. All of those six sentences have changed their interpretation in survey 3. In example (67), it was enough to make sure that the other locative expression, *huishouden*, was not connected to *ergens* anymore for the interpretation of *ergens* to change from *point of view* to locative.

- (67) Zij kan niet fulltime werken. En voor haar is huishouden is
 She can not full-time work. And for her is housekeeping is
- ~~in principle~~ vergelijkbaar met een fulltime baan ergens.
~~in principle~~ comparable to a full-time job ERGENS.

⁹⁰ Adapted from: Dorrestein (2003).

Zeker in haar tempo omdat zij last heeft van reuma.
Especially in her tempo because she bother has of rheumatism.

She cannot work full-time. And *for her* is housekeeping is ~~in principle comparable~~ to a full-time job *ergens*. Especially at her pace because she has rheumatism.⁹¹

This suggests that the presence of a locative marker blocked a locative interpretation for *ergens* in survey 1. In other words, since there was no possibility to interpret *ergens* within the physical world, it was interpreted within the speaker's subjective views. However, there are no other indicators that *ergens* is to be interpreted as modal, so when the possibility was given in survey 3 by removing the locative marker which was blocking the locative interpretation to interpret *ergens* within a base space (i.e. a real or imaginary physical world), there was no ambiguity anymore.

The *point of view* interpretation changed to *somehow* in the following example (68).

(68) Speaker 1: Daarvoor steunen ze je wel maar daarna niet meer.
Before support they you PTCL but afterwards not anymore.

Speaker 2: Daar zit ergens wel een probleem weer wat in.
There sits ERGENS PTCL a problem PTCL something in.

Ze kunnen aan de andere kant ook bezig blijven.
They can on the other side also busy remain.

Speaker 1: Before they support you but afterwards not anymore. Speaker 2:
You *ergens* have a point. On the other hand, there is no end to it.⁹²

In example (68) a subjective construction *daar zit wat in* 'they have a point' was replaced by *a problem*. The interpretation *point of view* still got a relatively high number of votes (14 out of 40) in comparison to *somehow*, which had 18 out of 40 votes. The main reason for a choice for a modal interpretation is that there is no physical place in which this problem is found. Since there is no direct connection to someone's mental space, the choice is between the modal options that do not directly refer to a mental space: *somehow* and *point of view*. The slight preference for *somehow* may be explained by the fact that the statement is an analysis of a situation, which is only partly dependent on a point of view, whereas in the original context the statement really was an evaluation of the validity of someone's line of thought and thus more subjective. The fact that a high number of votes did not change may be the use of the phrase *aan de andere kant* 'on the other hand'.

If we now turn to the cases in which another interpretation changed to a *point of view* interpretation in survey 3, we find that there is only one example of such a case.

⁹¹ Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn007972.

⁹² Adapted from: CGN comp-a/nl/fn000441.

- (69) Ik zag dat ze goed verzorgd haar had. Geen grijs haartje,
 I saw that she well-cared-for cared hair had. No grey hair,
 begrijp je wel. Ergens een sterke vrouw in de veertig dacht ik.
 understand you PTCL. ERGENS a strong woman in the forties thought I.
 Maar ze gedroeg zich nog steeds als een verwend kind.
 But she behaved herself still like a spoiled child.
 I saw her hair was well-cared-for. Not a grey hair anywhere, you know the
 type. *Ergens* in her forties, I thought. But she behaved like a spoiled child.⁹³

In this example the original interpretation *about/around* was replaced by a *point of view* interpretation. This is due to the fact that the numbers were deleted. The replacement by a subjective phrase made it possible for this example to be interpreted as modal. The preference for the *point of view* interpretation was probably triggered by the contrastive element marked by the adversative conjunction *maar* 'but'.

What we can conclude from these examples is that the interpretation *point of view* is generally less connected to the subjective view of the speaker. It is therefore less subjective than the *feelings* interpretation, but more subjective than the *somehow* interpretation. The *point of view* interpretation seems to occur mainly in sentences with a third person subject and adversative markers.

Somehow

Many of the examples with the interpretation *somehow* were already discussed above, since their source interpretation or their goal interpretation was of one of the types already covered. This was for instance the case in examples (70), (71) and (72) below.

- (70) Ze misten haar. Baba Baloek voelde zich vreemd, ietwat
 They missed her. Baba Baloek felt himself strange, somewhat
 lusteloos, maar ergens zou hij wel een oplossing vinden ook opgewekt
 listless, but ERGENS would he PTCL a solution find also cheerful
 en dan weer huilerig. Zijn maag was op slot en grendel.
 and then again tearful. His stomach was on lock and bolt.
 They missed her. Baba Baloek felt awkward, somewhat listless but *ergens* he
 would find a solution also cheerful and then again tearful. His stomach was
 locked.⁹⁴

There are several features that seem to play a role in the interpretation of an example as *somehow*. Most of the examples have third person action verbs, as in example (70). That is, the predicates of these sentences often describe actions or events. In many of

⁹³ Adapted from: CGN comp-o/nl/fn001142.

⁹⁴ Adapted from: Bouazza (2003).

these cases, an interpretation of *ergens* as describing a metaphorical place of action would be possible, but *ergens* is not needed to fill an argument position. This is for instance the case in (71).

- (71) Huldigde ook Hitler niet de zienswijze, dat ook leugens wel ergens in
 Had also Hitler not the view, that also lies PTCL ERGENS in
mensen hun achterhoofd blijven hangen, worden geloofd?
 people their back of their head remain dangling, are believed?
 Of wat zij zeggen wáár is, doet er dus niet toe.
 Whether what they say true is, does it therefore not PTCL.
 Didn't Hitler also have the idea that even lies *get stuck* ergens *in people's minds*
 are believed? So whether what they say is true does not matter.⁹⁵
- (72) Hoe nu die elementen eruit komen is een kwestie van je persoonlijkheid die
 toch ergens *in je zit*, dat kun je niet wegdrukken. En die persoonlijkheid die
 heb je zelf.
 Hoe nu die elementen eruit komen, is een kwestie van je
 How now those elements out come, is a matter of your
 persoonlijkheid die toch ergens *in je zit*, dat kun je niet
 personality which PTCL ERGENS *in you sits*, that can you not
 wegdrukken. En die persoonlijkheid die heb je zelf.
 push away. And that personality that have you self.
 How those elements are expressed is a matter of your own personality *which*
 is ergens *within you*, you can't suppress that. And your personality that is
 yours.⁹⁶

In addition, examples with as their majority interpretation *somehow* are frequently (8 out of 12 cases) combined with the particles *toch* and/or *wel* (e.g. examples (72) and (71)). Both particles are focal particles. The particle *toch* expresses that although there are reasons not to think something is the case, it is the case anyway.⁹⁷ The particle *wel* expresses a confirmation of something. In many of these cases, *ergens* seems to express that although the statement is the case, the precise background of the situation described remains unclear. This is also illustrated by example (71).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the following characteristics play a role in the modal interpretations of *ergens*. The *feelings* category seems to be characterized by first person pronouns, mental state predicates and other subjective predicates. However, the

⁹⁵ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CPWE.EIH.

⁹⁶ Adapted from: the Eindhoven corpus \ec\corpus\CGTL.EIH.

⁹⁷ For more on this particle see Snel (2012).

most important feature of these characteristics is that they change the focus from the physical world to the subjective view of the speaker or, in some cases, the character. The *point of view* interpretation is found with subjective third person predicates and often combined with a contrastive marker. The main point seems to be that there is no direct connection made between the (viewpoint of the) speaker and the metaphor that is triggered by *ergens*. This allows the speaker to suggest that there is more than one subjective point of view involved.

The option *somehow* seems to be characterized generally by third person action verbs and in many cases a metaphorical place would be a possible, but less relevant interpretation.

3.6.3 Conclusion

In survey 3, we found that it is indeed possible to change the interpretation of *ergens* by changing around 30% of the words in the context. Sometimes it was only necessary to delete a word that blocked an interpretation, in other cases a whole construction needed to be replaced. In other words, the number of words that need to be replaced is dependent on the number of words that are dependent on a construction. In order to find out what parts of the context are responsible for changes in meaning, both the cases in which the meaning did change and those cases in which it unexpectedly did not change were discussed. What we found was that in order to trigger a locative interpretation there need to be verbs that allow for a locative complement and locative markers like adpositions and adverbs. In addition, it should not be possible to interpret *ergens* as modal, because in case of ambiguity language users seem to have a preference for modal options.

Temporal interpretations require temporal markers. For scalar interpretations scalar constructions are needed and the overall function of the scale should not fall in the temporal or *about/around* categories, because speakers seem to have a preference for an overall interpretation above formal characteristics like whether something is presented as a point on a scale. The *about/around* is often categorized by the same markers as the scale category, but in this case the scale is generally very rough and vague. Sometimes there are other markers of vagueness present.

The modal options had very different characteristics. The *feelings* category seemed to be characterized by first person pronouns, mental state predicates and other subjective predicates. However, the most important feature of these characteristics is that they change the focus from the physical world to the subjective view of the speaker or, in some cases, the character. The *point of view* interpretation is found with subjective third person predicates and often combined with a contrastive marker. The main point seems to be that there is no direct connection between the (mental space of the) speaker and subjective view expressed. This creates the suggestion that there is more than one subjective point of view involved. The option *somehow* seems generally to be characterized by third person action verbs and in many cases a metaphorical place would be a possible, but less relevant interpretation. A more general pattern was that in ambiguous cases, subjects seemed to prefer a modal interpretation over a locative one. This suggests that the default interpretation that

was found if people have no context at all or have only little context as in survey 2, does not seem to fulfill a function in resolving ambiguity in survey 3.

3.7 Conclusions

The goal of the surveys was to find an answer to the question of what determines a language user's interpretation of the poly-interpretable form *ergens*. We specifically tried to answer the following subquestions:

1. Are native speakers as a group consistent in their interpretations?
2. How much context do language users need to be consistent in an interpretation?
3. What linguistic cues guide the choice of an interpretation?
4. Can we influence the interpretation of a language user by manipulating the context?

We will start with question 1. We found in survey 1 that speakers generally do clearly agree on a preferred interpretation, although there is some variation. In 70% of the cases more than 50% of the subjects chose one single interpretation out of nine options.

With respect to question 2, it was shown in survey 2 that the amount of context needed to arrive at the original interpretation generally does not exceed two words before and after *ergens*, although there are cases in which a trigger outside of this window has a strong influence on the interpretation of that sentence. In addition, it was found that the absence of a more important trigger may clear the way for other forms to fulfill the function of a trigger, sometimes changing the interpretation of *ergens* radically. These triggers seem to be the cues guiding the choice of an interpretation and therefore they are the answer to question 3. Most of these triggers are fairly straightforward: locative markers trigger a locative interpretation, temporal markers trigger a temporal interpretation and scalar prepositions trigger an interpretation as points on a scale. The prepositional object interpretation of course needed a preposition that had scope over *ergens*. The last non-modal option was *about/around*. The trigger of this option seemed to be numbers. In all cases in which this option was chosen, numbers were retained.

The modal interpretation *somehow* was not accompanied by clear triggers, but these sentences did contain other particles like *toch* and *wel*. The *feelings*-interpretation was almost always accompanied by a first person pronoun and other particles. In some cases there were clear features of fixed expressions in the clause. The cases in which the preferred option was *point of view* contained only impersonal fixed expressions.

This is not to say that the default hypothesis is completely refuted. In two examples the hypothesis that *ergens* is by default interpreted as locative seemed the only

reasonable explanation for the change in meaning and in several cases in which there was a secondary locative trigger the default effect may have played a role as well.

Another result of survey 2 was that there was a significant correlation in the variation in the interpretation chosen for particular examples between the participants in survey 1 and 2. That is, the overall amount of variation in the answers did not change between survey 1 and survey 2, although both meaning and the amount of variation for individual sentences did change. This is surprising since some of the subjects in survey 2 complained that they did not have enough context to interpret *ergens* properly.

The certainty of the participants correlated with the amount of variation in survey 2. This means that the variation may be seen as a measure for the certainty of the participants. If we take the variation to be a measurement of the uncertainty we have to conclude that the certainty of speakers is not influenced by the amount of context.

In survey 3, we tried to answer question 4. We found that it is possible to change the interpretation of *ergens* by changing just a few words, depending on what kind of trigger is involved. In addition, we found that if for one sentence there is theoretically a modal and a non-modal interpretation, the participants seem to prefer the modal option. Participants also tend to choose the option that best fits the overall interpretation of the phrase in which *ergens* is found. This means that participants do not see most metaphorical uses as metaphorical. For instance, a point on a scale will not be interpreted as such when the scale is a temporal one. In such a case the participants prefer the interpretation *at some moment* and if a prepositional object expresses a place they will choose the locative option in survey 3. The characteristics of the modal interpretations were made more specific with respect to survey 2. The *feelings* interpretation seemed to be triggered by first person pronouns and mental state predicates/subjective predicates. The *point of view* option was chosen if the predicate was impersonal but subjective and if there were adversative markers in the context. The *somehow* interpretation was found most with third person action verbs in situations in which a (metaphorical) place would also be possible.

If we now go back to question 3.7, we can conclude that in most cases triggers that are in the direct environment of *ergens* play an important role in its interpretation. If triggers are not present in the context, a default interpretation may play a role. However, some triggers may overrule other triggers. If the higher order trigger is deleted, the lower order may become a new trigger, sometimes changing the interpretation of *ergens* radically. In addition, the relevance of an interpretation for the communicative value of the sentence may play a role. If, for instance, the direct context does not contain an element of which locative *ergens* may be an argument, this may be an indication that *ergens* is to be interpreted as modal. A default interpretation may play a role if there is a lack of context, but in cases of ambiguity there seems to be a preference for the modal interpretations.