The Noun Phrase: Diversity in Dutch DP Design (DiDDD)

Norbert Corver, Marjo van Koppen, Huib Kranendonk, and
Mirjam Rigterink
University of Utrecht, UiL-OTS and NWO

Abstract:

In this paper we discuss our project: Diversity in Dutch DP Design. This project investigates the variation found in the Dutch DP. Not only the variation concerning contemporary dialects is taken into account, also the variation between contemorary Dutch and older variants of the language are investigated. By looking into variation, the project aims to provide an answer to two questions: (i) what is the locus of variation, (ii) what is the structure of the DP-domain.

1. Introduction

In January 2005, the project entitled "Diversity in Dutch DP Design" (DiDDD) started at the University of Utrecht, UiL-OTS. In this project, syntactic diversity is studied from the perspective of DP-internal micro-variation in variants of Dutch, i.e. standard Dutch, Dutch dialects and older stages of Dutch. The overall goals of this project are to contribute to our understanding of i) the locus of microvariation in human language and ii) the syntax of the nominal domain.

This paper is a presentation of the project. In section 2, we discuss the research goals and questions of the project as a whole. The project consists of three subprojects. These are introduced in section 3. Section 4 is devoted to the practical side of the project.

2. The research project: goals and questions

2.1 Overall aim

The overall aim of this research program is to contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon of grammatical (more in particular, syntactic*)* diversity and the way it is encoded in human language. This will be done by taking a microcomparative approach towards syntactic variation in the nominal system. Syntactic diversity will be studied from a "single-language" perspective, *in casu* Dutch. The linguistic data that will constitute the empirical comparative basis for this study will come from contemporary-dialectal and older variants of Dutch. This project will give insight into the fine-grained aspects of syntactic diversity in the nominal system and will result in a better understanding of the theoretical notion of parameter.

2.2 Backgrounds and motivation

2.2.1 Why study linguistic diversity?

Linguistic diversity, just like linguistic sameness, is a core property of human language (cf. Greenberg 1963, Chomsky 1981, 1986). A complete answer to the question "What is the design of human language?" requires an elaborate investigation into the design properties of the variant part of human language. What makes this enterprise challenging are the strong indications that grammatical differentiation is not arbitrary, unlimited, and unpredictable, but rather non-arbitrary, bounded, and predictable. Certain imaginable patterns of linguistic variation turn out to be rare or non-existent. All of this imposes the task upon linguists to uncover the design of linguistic diversity and to address the scientifically important question of how best to characterize this variation. This research program aims at contributing to this enterprise through an in-depth study of micro-diversity in the Dutch nominal system.

2.2.2 Why study micro-diversity?

For an overall insight into the design of linguistic diversity, it is important to compare languages at different linguistic scales. Macrocomparative research typically takes as its empirical basis a variety of genetically and historically unrelated languages (e.g. Dutch, Turkish, Chinese) and provides insight into the gross (i.e. macro) range of linguistic variation. It considers variant properties which have a broad, overall and mostly very noticeable effect on language structure and this way gives insight into the 'macro-boundaries of variation.' On the meso-level, languages are compared that are members of the same language (sub)family (e.g. comparison of French and English, or comparison within the class of Germanic languages). Microcomparative linguistics, finally, considers grammatical variation as it occurs in a "single" language (e.g. Dutch). It concerns the study of differences among language systems that are very closely related (and often even mutually intelligible) and typically have many grammatical properties in common. Obviously, for a complete understanding of the design of linguistic diversity, comparative research is needed on all three levels.

In the framework of generative syntax (in particular, the Principles and Parameters model), the study of syntactic diversity has mostly taken a meso-comparative (e.g. Holmberg and Platzack 1995, Kayne 1981, Pollock 1989, Rizzi 1978, Shlonsky 1997, Vikner 1995, Zanuttini 1997) or macro-comparative perspective (cf. Baker 1995, 2001, Borer 1984, Cheng 1991, Cinque 1999, Hale 1983, Kayne 1994, Travis 1984) thus far. This research has led to the identification of various loci of variation within the human language system. In recent years, the relevance of microcomparative

research has received an increased awareness (see e.g. Black and Motapanyane 1996, Kayne 2000). A more prominent role for the microcomparative study of linguistic diversity is legitimate for several reasons: (i) it gives us insight into the UG-defined micro-bounds of variation (i.e. variant properties with finer-grained effects); (ii) it arguably leads to a more direct identification of co-varying properties (i.e. what syntactic differences are linked to each other?) due to the fact that, to a great extent, the compared language systems are grammatically similar.

The empirical basis for the study of minimal syntactic variation are language systems that are (genetically and historically) very closely related. These can be co-existing language systems at a single point in time (e.g. dialectal variants of Dutch) or language/dialect systems representing different stages in the evolution of a language (e.g. older variants of Dutch, like Middle Dutch). In order to get a detailed picture of the richness of micro-variation in the Dutch nominal system, a broad perspective is taken in this study: data will be considered from both 'types' of variants of the Dutch language system. Since the aim of this research program is to chart and explain the nature and bounds of micro-diversity in the Dutch nominal system, the compared grammatical systems will be studied from a synchronic point of view. That is, it is not our goal to explain the (diachronic) transition from one grammatical stage to another.

2.2.3 Why study micro-diversity in the nominal system?

Thus far, the comparative study of the Dutch language has mostly focused on variation with respect to phenomena in the sentential system, such as verbal clusters, sentential negation, complementizer agreement (e.g. Bennis and Haegeman 1984, Den Besten 1989, Evers 1975, Haegeman 1992, Haegeman and Van Riemsdijk 1986, Zwart 1993). An innovative aspect of our program is that it aims at a systematic, in-depth study of syntactic microvariation in the nominal domain.

It should be emphasized that from the theoretical perspective of cross-categorial parallelism, microvariation is expected to be present in the nominal system. There is no obvious reason why microvariation would be more richly expressed in the sentential system than in the nominal one. A global inspection of certain (Dutch) dialect grammars confirms the richness of variation in this phrasal system. Our study will broaden the empirical basis of the theoretical study of the functional architecture of the noun phrase. Importantly, many interesting facts and linguistic correlations observed in traditional dialectology studies will be integrated in modern syntactic theorizing (cf. e.g. Ausems 1953, Overdiep 1940, De Bont 1958, Pauwels 1958, Sassen 1953, Ter Laan 1953). Furthermore, the research that has already been performed on the structure of DP in closely related languages,

like the Scandinavian languages (cf. Delsing 1993, Holmberg and Sand-ström 1996, Vangsnes 2001, and Julien 2005), will also be studied in this project.

2.2.4 Functional categories and the design of diversity (theoretical framework)

For our investigation into the design of syntactic microvariation within the Dutch nominal system, we will make use of the theoretical framework known as the Principles and Parameters model of human language (cf. Chomsky 1981, 1986, 1995). According to this model, sameness and diversity are defined by Universal Grammar (UG). Cross-linguistic sameness (universality) is explained in terms of so-called universal principles. Cross-linguistic variation on the other hand is accounted for in terms of so-called parameters, i.e. choice points in UG that can be fixed in one of a limited number of ways. A central question in comparative-syntactic research (hence also in this project) on variation is how to best understand the notion of parameter.

A leading idea in much current comparative work on the design of syntactic diversity is that the central parameters of Universal Grammar involve properties of heads (i.e. the word-category that determines the syntactic type of the phrase in which it occurs). More specifically, parameters are believed to involve so-called *functional* heads (i.e. those elements that fulfil an essentially grammatical function in syntactic structure; e.g. determiners). (cf. Borer 1984, Chomsky 1995, Rizzi 1989, Ouhalla 1991). In recent years, research on the functional architecture of the nominal system has led to the identification of various functional layers, such as DP (specifying the reference of the noun phrase), NumP/QP (specifying number/quantitative properties), PossP (specifying properties of possession and involved in argument distribution), and FP (involved in attributive adjectival modification) (cf. Coene and D'Hulst 2003).

DiDDD will contribute to this research approach by examining the following empirical domains concerning noun phrase syntax:

- Pronominals (in particular, possessives and demonstratives); Project 1.
- Number, quantification, and negation; Project 2.
- 'Left edge phenomena': i.e. phenomena involving left peripheral elements associated with discourse properties like interrogation, exclamation, focalization/emphasis; Project 3.

The reasons for choosing these empirical domains of grammar are: (a) they belong to the core phenomena associated with the functional system of the noun phrase (i.e. the system which expresses the more grammatical meaning aspects, rather than the more descriptive meaning associated with lexi-

cal categories); (b) to a greater or lesser extent, these phenomena have been topics of discussion in modern grammatical theorizing, which means that there is a theoretical framework which this research on micro-diversity can be connected to; (c) global inspection of available reference grammars indicates that these are potentially rich domains of grammatical variation.

The intricate syntax of the nominal system with its articulated functional architecture in combination with the 'breadth' of the sample of Dutch languages to be studied — required for a proper view on the fine-grained dimensions of variation — makes a programmatic approach necessary. Another surplus-value of this programmatic approach towards micro-diversity is that through the interaction between the three projects (and consequently the researchers) a better picture will be obtained of aspects of co-variation between the functional layers.

In our attempt to come to a proper characterization of the nature and bounds of microvariation in the nominal domain, the following questions will be addressed regarding the design of diversity:

- Can cross-linguistic diversity be explained in terms of presence or absence of some functional category in the structure of the noun phrase?
- Should cross-linguistic variation be associated with sub-features of the feature make-up of functional categories?
- Can cross-linguistic diversity be explained in terms of cross-linguistic differences in the morpho-lexical realization of some functional category (and its associated positions)?
- What is the interplay of certain dimensions of variation (i.e. parametric choices)?
- What is the relationship between the functional categories of different lexical categories?

3. Subprojects

3.1 Micro-diversity in a micro-domain: the case of Dutch pronominals (Ph.D. project)

This subproject investigates grammatical variation in the formal expression of Dutch pronominal elements, focusing in particular on the morphosyntactic realization and distributional properties of possessive and demonstrative pronouns.

The research goals of project 1 are:

1. Investigating (morpho)syntactic diversity in:

- the distribution of attributive pronominals within the nominal domain
- the distribution and morphosyntactic expression of substantively used pronominals
- the interplay between articles, demonstratives and possessives
- the expression of nominal constructs featuring non-pronominal possessors in combination with definite articles/demonstrative pronouns

2. Identifying and explaining choice points (i.e. dimensions of variation) in this microsyntactic domain of the functional system of the noun phrase: what is their nature, what is their locus, and how do they interact?

One of the phenomena of diversity in this empirical domain concerns grammatical variation as displayed by so-called substantively used possessives, i.e. possessive pronominals in elliptical noun phrases: e.g. *de mijne* (the my-infl. 'mine') in standard Dutch. As is already shown by the small set of examples in (1), the range of variation within this syntactic micro-domain is quite astonishing.

(1) a. de **mien**e (de + possessor + -e)   (Aalst)
     b. **mien**nde (possessor + -n + de)   (Ruinen)
     c. de **mien**de (de + possessor + de)   (Drente)
     d. **mien**es (possessor + es)   (Zealand)

At a descriptive level, the question arises what the range of microvariation is in the morphosyntactic expression of these substantively used possessives. At the explanatory level, the following questions arise among others: how do we interpret the inflectional elements that attach to the possessive pronoun in elliptical contexts? What is the relationship between the determiner/definite article and the pronominal element? For example, should *-de* in (1b) be interpreted as a definite article that has been merged with a (raised) possessive pronoun? Or should this morpheme, which is homophonous with the definite article, be interpreted differently in view of the sequence in (1c), where we find two instances of *de*? Another question about this domain of variation concerns the nature and behavior of the empty noun (i.e. e̲, as in *de mijne e̲,* the my-inflection e̲, 'mine') in these constructions.

3.2 Micro-diversity in the expression of number, quantity, and negation (Ph.D. Project)

One of the most characteristic properties of nominals is their quantifiability: the quantity of an object or substance denoted by the noun can be specified, like in the following English examples: *many cars, three cars, much water*. In the syntax literature, the phenomenon of quantification has triggered the search for its locus in the functional system of the noun phrase (cf. Ritter 1991, Giusti 1997). Aspects of micro-linguistic diversity in this domain of nominal syntax have thus far largely been ignored. An important reason for investigating the variation is the richness of word order variation in this domain of nominal syntax. Thus far, word order in the Dutch noun phrase has mostly been looked upon as being rather rigid and invariable.

The research goals of subproject 2 are:

1. Describing the dimensions of variation in the expression of quantification and negation.

2. Explaining DP-internal variation with respect to quantification: what is the nature of these dimensions of diversity? What grammatical property is variation associated with? Where in the functional structure of the noun phrase are quantificational and negative elements located? Are there any correlations between aspects of variation?

An interesting phenomenon concerning the variation typical for this empirical domain is the position of numerals. A superficial comparison of present-day standard Dutch and older variants of Dutch already shows that there are some striking asymmetries in word order between these varieties (cf. also Stoett 1923, Duinhoven 1988):

		Present-day standard Dutch		Middle Dutch
(2)	a.	zijn *vijf* heilige wonden *his five holy wounds*	a.'	zijn heilige wonden *vive* *his holy wounds five*
	b.	*al* zijn lieden *al his people*	b.'	sinen lieden *al* *his people all*
	c.	*geen* water *no water*	c.'	water *negheen* *water no*

The question arises how to interpret these differences in word order. Should they be related to a categorial difference between numerals, which correlates with a difference in syntactic placement? Or should it be interpreted in terms of displacement of quantificational elements? At the descriptive level, the question arises whether postnominal placement of

quantificational elements is still permitted in any contemporary dialects of Dutch.

3.3 Micro-diversity in the left periphery of the Dutch noun phrase (Postdoc-project)

This subproject investigates micro-diversity in nominal constructions that arguably involve displacement of phrases to the left periphery of the noun phrase. As such, it will contribute to our understanding of the design of micro-diversity in the left periphery of the noun phrase, i.e. that part of the nominal phrasal skeleton which is associated with discourse-related properties, such as interrogation, exclamation, and focalization. Since these discourse-related properties are also syntactically expressed in the left periphery of the sentential phrasal skeleton, this project will also consider cross-categorial aspects of sameness and variation in the nominal and the sentential system.

Interrogation by means of question words is one of the properties of human language that has been most extensively studied in generative syntax. It is the standard view nowadays that the formation of *wh*-interrogative clauses involves displacement of an interrogative word to a left-peripheral position of the clause. At a purely observational level, *wh*-interrogative clauses and *wh*-interrogative nominals have an important property in common: the interrogative word occurs in the left periphery of the phrase. This parallel surface distribution has not led to an analysis of interrogative nominals (i.e. nominal expressions like *which car*) in terms of DP-internal *wh*-displacement. Interrogative (i.e. *wh*-) words are typically base-generated in the left-peripheral slot of the noun phrase. Driven by the quest for cross-categorial parallelism, one of the goals of this project will be to explore a displacement analysis for interrogative (and related) nominals as well.

Another central goal will be to investigate dimensions of micro-variation in this area of nominal syntax. As for the sentential system, both descriptive-dialectal (cf. Van Haeringen 1939) and theoretical (cf. Zwart 1993) research on the left periphery of the Dutch clause has shown that this part of the clausal configuration is a rich domain of cross-Dutch variation. For example, there is variation in the morphosyntactic realization of complementizers as well as in the co-occurrence of certain left-peripheral elements (e.g. interrogative words and complementizers). There is every reason to believe that variation in the nominal domain is just as rich.

The research goals of project 3 are:

1. Investigating syntactic diversity in nominal constructions expressing interrogation, exclamation, and focalization.

2. Identifying and explaining dimensions of variation in the left periphery of these nominal construction types: what is the nature of these choice points, what is their locus (in the functional system), and how do they interact?

3. Investigating aspects of cross-categorial parallelism between the nominal system and the sentential system.

One of the construction types that we will investigate is the so-called *wat voor*-construction (Corver 1991; Bennis 1995). Although it is traditionally assumed that the element *wat* ('what') is an element base-generated in the left periphery of the noun phrase, Bennis, Corver, and Den Dikken (1998) have claimed that *wat* originates as a predicate in a post-nominal position (*voor boeken wat* – for books what) and is moved to the left periphery of the noun phrase, yielding *wat voor boeken* (what for books, 'what kind of books'). Both from a conceptual (*wh*-displacement as a cross-categorial phenomenon) and empirical (the *wat voor*-construction) point of view, there are good reasons then for further exploring the *wh*-displacement hypothesis in the nominal system. This will, first of all, be done by considering variants of the *wat voor*-construction in different varieties of Dutch. It turns out that there is great variation in the realization of this interrogative property. Some examples (all meaning 'what type of N'): *wafferen hond* (what dog; dialect of Oerle), *watvukke keerls* (what fellows; dialect of Twente), *hokfor schoen* (how+for shoes; northern varieties), *hoeke schoenen* (how+inflection shoes: dialect of Culemborg), *huo zoo'n kalf* (how so a calf; dialect of Ruinen), *hoe(ë)n hoet* (how a hat; dialect of Culemborg). Besides describing the dimensions of variation in this domain of nominal syntax, we will account for the nature and limits (e.g. **hoeke voor schoenen*: how+inflection for shoes) of variation and the interplay of the various syntactic elements involved.

4. The practical side of the project

4.1 Databases and questionnaires

In order to obtain the data necessary for our research, the following steps are made. We have first made an inventory of the variation that is already described in dialect grammars and grammars of older stages of Dutch. This variation has been put in a database. At this point, the dialect-grammar database is ready. This database contains the data of reference grammars

concerning both older and contemporary variants of Dutch. It serves various purposes. First of all, it gives an idea of which type of constructions concerning the three subprojects are attested in variants of Dutch. Furthermore, it indicates which region or period is potentially interesting for a certain type of construction. Finally, as already noted above, it serves as input for the questionnaire. At present, the database contains 1906 chunks of data from 83 reference grammars. Apart from the data, it also contains comments of the author of the reference grammar. You can search this database by (i) looking for concrete bits of data. However, an obvious drawback of searching this way is spelling: only items that are spelled identically will pop up in the search, (ii) selecting a subproject: I - Pronouns, II - Negation and Quantification, or III - Left Periphery, (iii) using (a combination of) keywords, or (iv) selecting a certain period or region.

Furthermore, we have used the data gathered in other dialect projects, like the SAND-project and the MAND-project[1]. Both types of data have been used as input for the questionnaires. These questionnaires have two purposes: (i) to obtain information concerning the (morpho)syntax of certain constructions and (ii) to serve as input for further research. The set-up of the questionnaires will be similar to the SAND-questionnaire (cf. Cornips and Jongenburger 2001). It will contain both translation questions and judgment tasks.

The first questionnaire contains only translation tasks and has been sent out to 266 informants. At this point approximately 200 of these questionnaires have been filled out and sent back to us. The results have been put in a database. The second questionnaire we have developed is more extensive. It contains both translation tasks and judgment tasks. This questionnaire consists of four parts: (i) left periphery of the DP, (ii) negation and quantification, (iii) possessive constructions and (iv) demonstrative constructions. Each part contains approximately 30 main questions which are split up in several subquestions. This questionnaire has been used for 30 oral interviews in dialectal area's both in the Netherland and in Flanders. Furthermore, this questionnaire has been used for another 30 written interviews. The oral interviews have been performed with at least two dialect speakers in order to minimize the influence of standard Dutch (spoken by the interviewer and the written text of the questionnaire) (cf.

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[1] For information concerning the SAND-project (Syntactic Atlas of Dutch Dialects), see Barbiers et al. (2005) or the following website:
http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/projecten/sand/sand.html.
For information concerning the MAND-project (Morphological Atlas of Dutch Dialects), see De Schutter et al. (2005) or the following website:
http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/projecten/mand/MAND.html.

Cornips and Jongenburger 2001). The interviews are all recorded and the answers to the questions are directly put into a database. At this point the gathering of the data has been completed.

4.2 Intended Results

The results will be communicated by presentations at (inter)national conferences and in publications in national and international journals. The Ph.D. projects will result in doctoral dissertations. In addition, the postdoc researcher and the project leader will write a book containing the key results of this research enterprise.

Two workshops will be organized. At the end of the second year, the program's participants will present first results on the range of diversity in the Dutch nominal domain. The second workshop will take a broader comparative perspective by considering microvariation in the nominal systems of a broader range of languages (e.g. Dutch, Norwegian, German, etc.). This way, a broader perspective on microvariation will be achieved.

The output of the project, as well as announcements for conferences can be found at the project website:
http://www2.let.uu.nl/Solis/microvariation/

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