The Language Situation in the Low Countries

Lecture 3. Essentials of the Dutch language | Syntax

Pavel Rudnev
University of Groningen
`p.rudnev@rug.nl`

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Last week

- phonetics and phonology
- the sounds of Dutch
    - Dutch consonants
    - Dutch vowels
        * monophthongs
        * diphthongs
- some phonetic and phonological processes
    - final devoicing
    - /n/-deletion

Course topics

11/02/2016 Introduction: the languages of the Netherlands and Belgium

18/02/2016 Essentials of the Dutch language

25/02/2016 continued from 18th February

03/03/2016 The history of Dutch

10/03/2016 continued from 3rd March

17/03/2016 Dutch orthography

14/04/2016 Purism and school grammar

21/04/2016 Dialects of Dutch; Frisian

28/04/2016 Dutch-based creole languages; Afrikaans

05/05/2016 Dutch sociolinguistics

Aims for today

- intro to syntax
    - building blocks of syntax
    - linear order *vs.* hierarchical structure
- essentials of Dutch syntax
    - notation: glosses
    - parts of speech
    - word order
        * main *vs.* embedded clauses
        * verb clusters
        * grammatical categories and processes
    - R-pronominalisation

What is syntax?

sentence structure

- words, phrases and *hierarchical* structure

- grammatical features and inflection

- syntactic processes and word order

structure en hierarchy

- structure
    - demonstrable parts of a whole
- hierarchy
    - 'ranking'

Descriptive and analytical

- scientific perspective
  - observation
  - finding generalisations and explanations
  - cross-linguistic relevance
- studies entire grammatical system

Structure

words < phrases < clauses:

(1) a.   Pete bought something.

     b.   [The man] bought [a house].

     c.   Pete said [that he was going away].

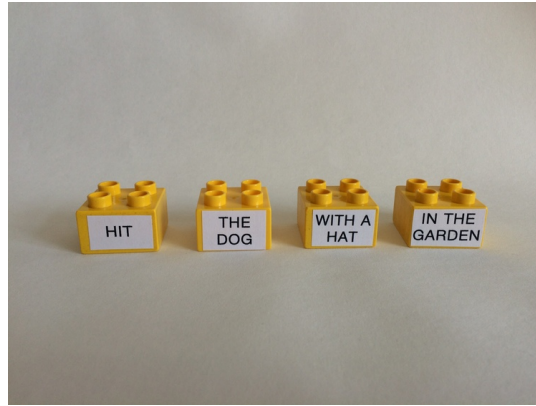(2)   [The man [who had bought [a house]]] said [that he was going away].

Meaning correlates with structure

Consider a sentence like (3) below:

(3)   John hit the dog with a hat in the garden.

- Let's represent the phrases with Lego/Duplo bricks (thanks to Jeroen van Craenenbroeck (KU Leuven))
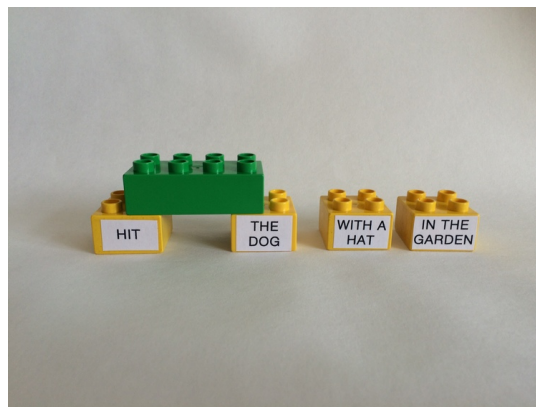
Meaning correlates with structure

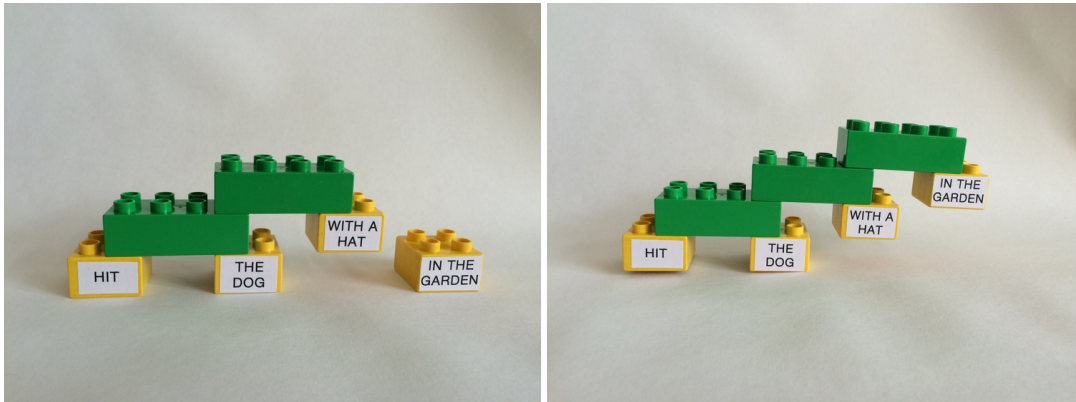- Let's represent the phrases with Lego/Duplo bricks:

NB: I'm not suggesting our language faculty actually involves Lego bricks.

Meaning correlates with structure

- What are the possible meanings for (3)?
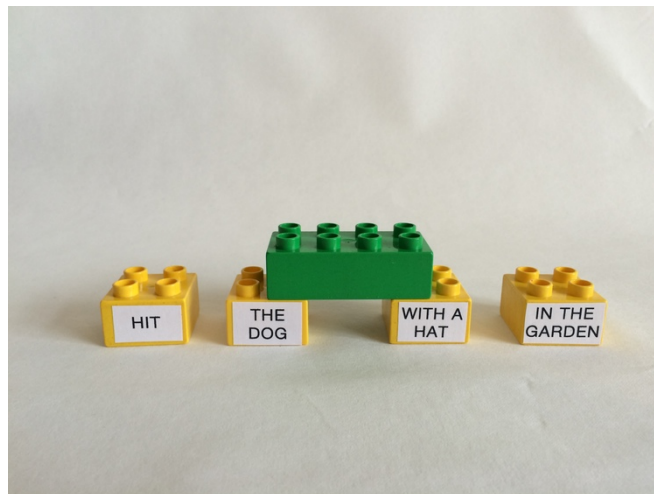   – they depend on the manner in which the resulting sentence is built:

Meaning correlates with structure

- **Reading 1:**
    - There's a dog that got hit, the hat being the instrument and the garden the location of the hitting.

Meaning correlates with structure

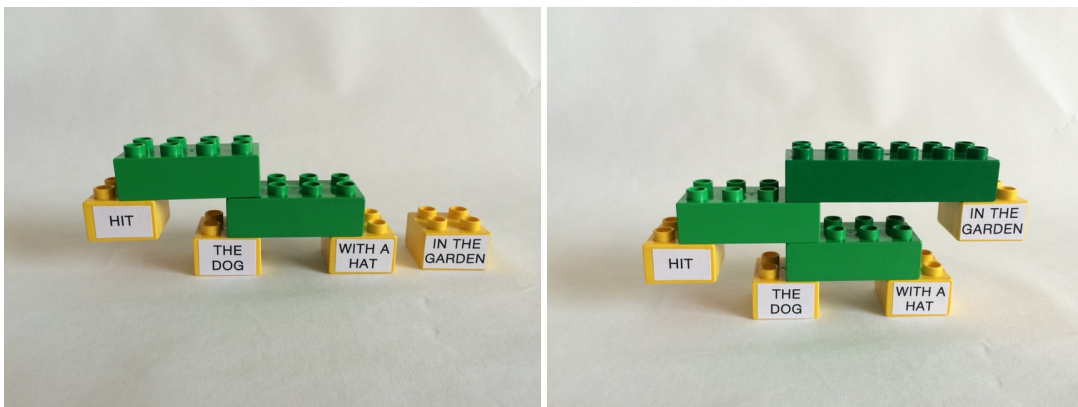- Suppose that we combine a different set of bricks first:

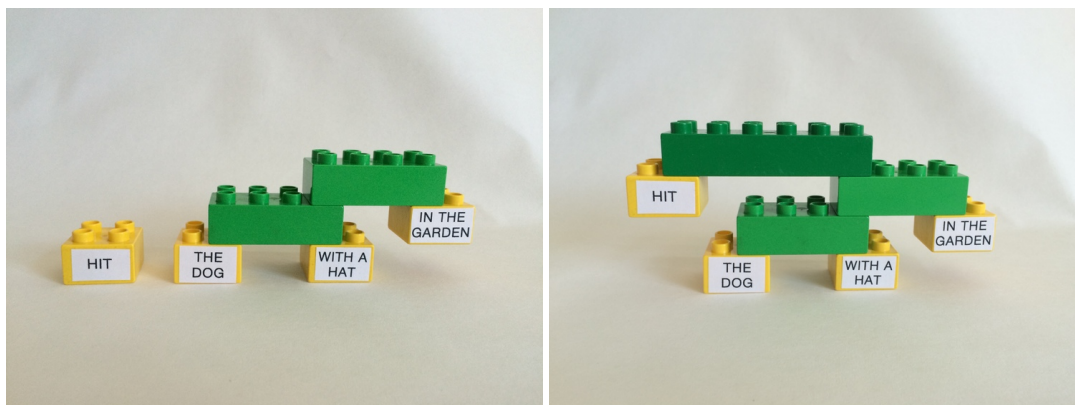## Meaning correlates with structure

- The result being

Meaning correlates with structure

- **Reading 2:**
  - There's a dog wearing a hat, and that hatted dog was hit in the garden.
  - No information as to the instrument.
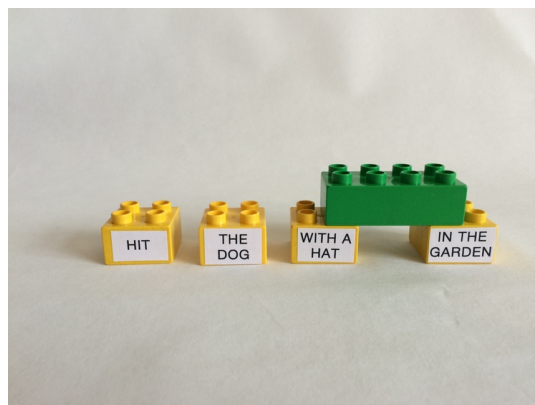
Meaning correlates with structure

- **Reading 3:**
    – The dog that gets hit wears the hat and lives in the garden.
    – No info as to the location or the instrument of the hitting event.

Meaning correlates with structure

- Suppose the first pair of bricks to get combined is the following:

- John will then mostly likely own multiple hatted dogs lying in the garden.

Meaning correlates with structure
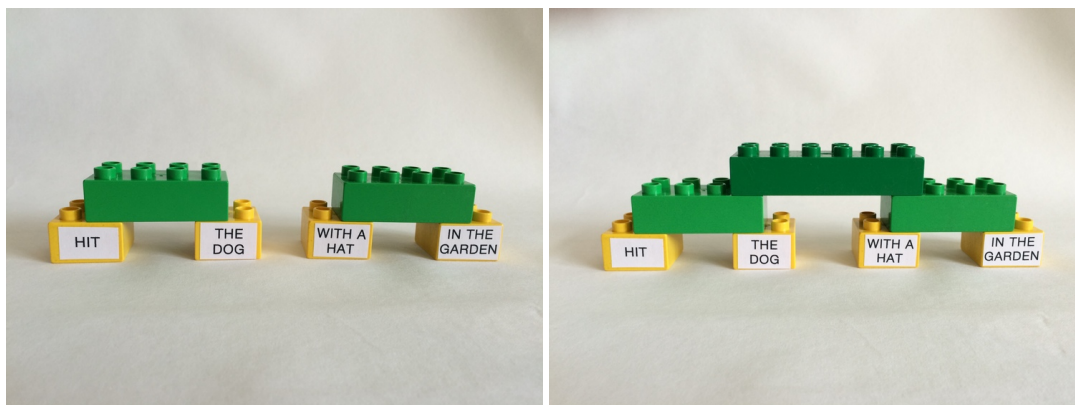
- **Reading 4:**
    – The dog gets hit with hat that's lying in the garden.
    – No information *re:* location.

Meaning correlates with structure
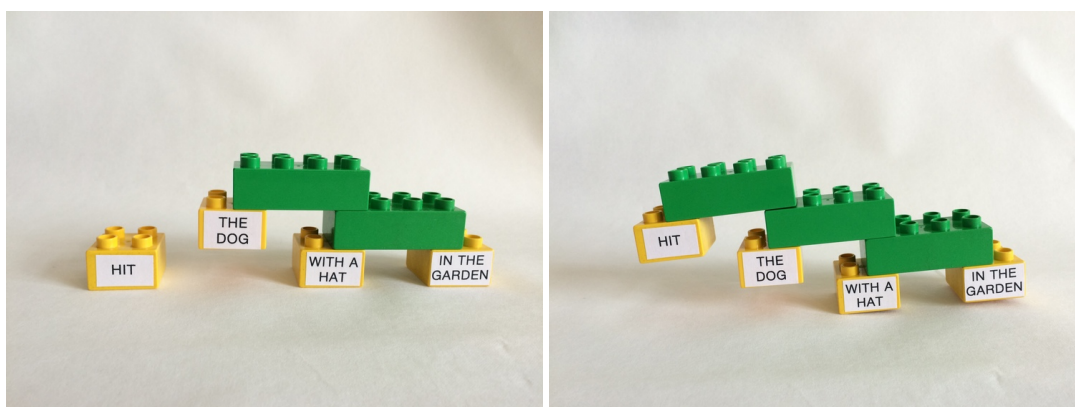
- **Reading 5:**
    – The dog wearing the hat that's lying in the garden gets hit.
    – No info *re:* instrument or location.

Meaning correlates with structure

- What if the second and fourth bricks that are combined first?

. . .
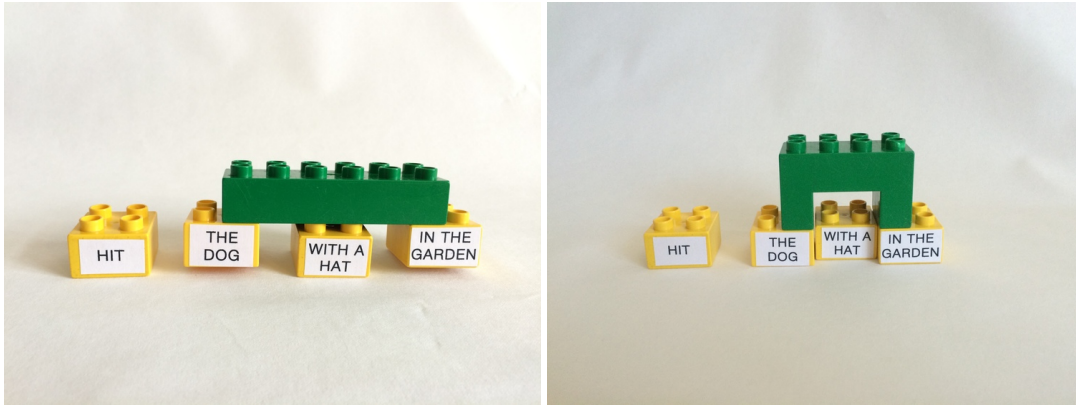
- Then we can't proceed!

Meaning correlates with structure

- That's the reason sentence (3) cannot have the following interpretation:
- **Reading 6:**
    - John hit the dog sitting in the garden using the hat.

Meaning correlates with structure

- That's the reason sentence (3) cannot have the following interpretation:
- ~~**Reading 6:**~~
    - John hit the dog sitting in the garden using the hat.

Notation: glosses

(4) *Het is niet moeilijk Nederlands te leren   spreken.*
     It is not difficult Dutch   to learn.INF speak.INF

'It is not difficult to learn to speak Dutch.'

Notation: glosses

(4) 3 *Het is niet moeilijk Nederlands te leren spreken.*
     2 It is not difficult Dutch   to learn.ᴵᴺᶠ speak.ᴵᴺᶠ

     1 'It is not difficult to learn to speak Dutch.'

Notation: glosses

- asterisk (i.e. *) before a sentence means the sentence is unacceptable:

(5) * It Dutch not difficult is to to speak learn.

Parts of speech in Dutch

- Dutch distinguishes the same parts of speech as English:
    – verbs
    – nouns
    – adjectives
    – prepositions
    – *etc.*

Word order

- more accurate to speak of *constituent order* rather than word order
- but we'll use the traditional term *word order* to mean precisely that
- Dutch word order
    – very flexible
    – depends on type of clause

Dutch word order: main clauses

- **finite verb** occupies the second position in the clause
- subject and **finite verb** undergo inversion

(6)   in Dutch

    a.   *Jan* **reist**   *morgenochtend*   *naar* *Leuven.*
        Jan travel.PRS.3SG tomorrow.morning to   Leuven

    b.   *Morgenochtend*   **reist**   *Jan* *naar* *Leuven.*
        tomorrow.morning travel.PRS.3SG Jan to   Leuven

    c.   ** Morgenochtend*   *Jan* **reist**   *naar* *Leuven.*
        tomorrow.morning Jan travel.PRS.3SG to   Leuven

Dutch word order: main clauses

- **finite verb** occupies the second position in the clause
- subject and **finite verb** undergo inversion

(7)   and in German

    a.   *Johann* **reist**   *morgen früh*   *nach* *Wien.*
        Johann travel.PRS.3SG tomorrow.morning to   Vienna

    b.   *Morgen früh*   **reist**   *Johann* *nach* *Wien.*
        tomorrow.morning travel.PRS.3SG Johann to   Vienna

    c.   ** Morgen früh*   *Johann* **reist**   *nach* *Wien.*
        tomorrow.morning Johann travel.PRS.3SG to   Vienna

Dutch word order: main clauses

- **finite verb** occupies the second position in the clause
- subject and **finite verb** undergo inversion

(8) as well as in Afrikaans

    a.   *Jan* **reis**   *môre vroeg*   *na Kaapstad.*
       Jan travel.PRS tomorrow.morning to Capetown

    b.   *Môre vroeg*   **reis**   *Jan na Kaapstad.*
       tomorrow.morning travel.PRS Jan to Capetown

    c.   * *Môre vroeg*   *Jan* **reis**   *na Kaapstad.*
       tomorrow.morning Jan travel.PRS to Capetown

Dutch word order: main clauses

- **finite verb** occupies the second position in the clause
- subject and **finite verb** undergo inversion

(9) as well as in Frisian

    a.   *Jan reizget*   *moarn*   *nei Ljouwert.*
       Jan travel.PRS.3SG tomorrow to Leeuwarden

    b.   *Moarn*   *reizget*   *Jan nei Ljouwert.*
       tomorrow travel.PRS.3SG Jan to Leeuwarden

    c.   * *Moarn*   *Jan reizget*   *nei Ljouwert.*
       tomorrow Jan travel.PRS.3SG to Leeuwarden

Dutch word order: main clauses

(10)   but not in English

    a.   John **is** going to Capetown tomorrow morning.

    b.   Tomorrow morning John **is** going to Capetown.

    c.   *Tomorrow morning **is** John going to Capetown.

Dutch word order: embedded clauses

- embedded clauses = subordinate clauses = dependent clauses
    - *I think that* [*he probably hates me*].
- **finite verb** appears around the right edge of the clause

in Dutch

(11)   *Ik denk...*
      I   think.PRS.1SG

    a.   *... dat hij mij (waarschijnlijk) **haat**.*
         that he me   probably   hate.PRS.SG

    b. *... dat hij **haat**   mij (waarschijnlijk).*
         that he hate.PRS.SG me   probably

Dutch word order: embedded clauses

- embedded clauses = subordinate clauses = dependent clauses
    - *John said that* [*he hated me*].
- **finite verb** appears around the right edge of the clause

in German

(12) *Ich glaub', …*
      I   believe

    a.   *… dass er mich wahrscheinlich **hasst**.*
        that he me   probably   hate.PRS.3SG

    b. *… *dass er **hasst**   mich wahrscheinlich.*
        that he hate.PRS.1SG me   probably

Dutch word order: embedded clauses

- embedded clauses = subordinate clauses = dependent clauses
    - *I think that* [*he probably hates me*].
- **finite verb** appears around the right edge of the clause

in Afrikaans

(13) *Ek dink…*
      I   think.PRS

    a.   *… dat hy my (waarskynlik) **haat**.*
        that he me   probably   hate.PRS

    b. *… *dat hy **haat**   my (waarskynlik).*
        that he hate.PRS me   probably

Dutch word order: apparent exceptions

Sometimes one hears sentences like (14):

(14) *Ik denk dat hij woont in Groningen.*
      I   think that he lives in Groningen

    'I think that he lives in Groningen.'

- problematic?
- let's see

Dutch word order: apparent exceptions

Poles and fields

(15) a.   *Hij **zal** naar alle waarschijnlijkheid geen Nederlands **spreken**.*
         He will to   all likelihood   no Dutch   speak

        'He will in all likelihood speak no Dutch.'

  b.   *zal* = 1st pole; *spreken* = 2nd pole

Extraposition

- prepositional phrases can optionally be pronounced following the 2nd pole

(16)   *Hij **zal** geen Nederlands **spreken** naar alle waarschijnlijkheid.*
      He will no Dutch   speak   to   all   likelihood

      'He will in all likelihood speak no Dutch.'

Dutch word order: verb clusters

main clauses

(17) a.   *Hij **heeft** het **gewild**.*
         He has   it   wanted

        'He wanted it.'

b. *Hij **heeft** het (vaak) **willen doen**.*
He has it often want do

'He (often) wanted to do it.'

c. ** Hij **heeft** het (vaak) **gewild doen**.*
He has it often wanted do

Dutch word order: verb clusters

main clauses

(18) a. *Hij **heeft** zijn verhaal (vaak) **willen komen vertellen**.*
He has his story often want come tell

'He (often) wanted to come to tell his story.'

b. ** Hij **heeft** zijn verhaal (vaak) **gewild komen vertellen**.*
He has his story often wanted come tell

Dutch word order: verb clusters

embedded clauses

Variation attested in AUX–main verb order:

(19) a. main verb > AUX

dat hij gekomen is
that he come is

b. AUX > main verb

dat hij is gekomen
that he is come

'that he has come.'

Dutch word order: verb clusters

Let's look at modal–modal–infinitive clusters (Craenenbroeck 2014):

(20) *Iedereen   moet   kunnen zwemmen.*
      Everyone must   can   swim

    'Everyone should be able to swim.'

embedded clauses: Ik vind...

(21) a. *dat iedereen   moet   kunnen zwemmen.*
          that everyone must   can   swim

      b. dat iedereen moet zwemmen kunnen.

      c. dat iedereen zwemmen moet kunnen.

      d. dat iedereen zwemmen kunnen moet.

      e. *dat iedereen kunnen zwemmen moet.

      f. *dat iedereen kunnen moet zwemmen.

Grammatical processes: Dutch passives

Dutch prepositions

R-pronominalisation

References

Craenenbroeck, Jeroen van. 2014. The signal and the noise in Dutch verb clusters: A quantitative search for parameters. ms.