

The Language Situation in the Low Countries

Lecture 3. Essentials of the Dutch language | Syntax

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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 (time permitting)

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

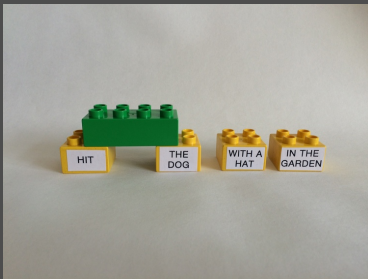
- ▶ Let's represent the phrases with Lego/Duplo bricks:



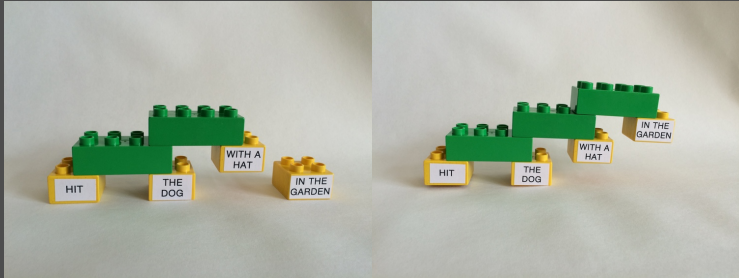
NB: I'm not suggesting our language faculty actually involves Lego bricks.

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

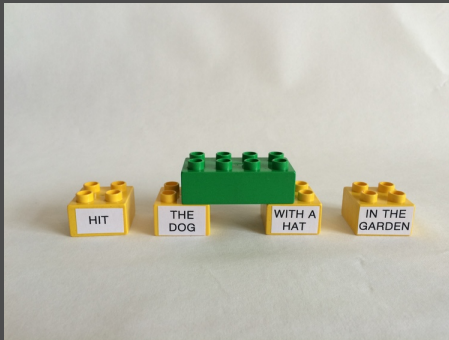


► Reading 1:

- 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:

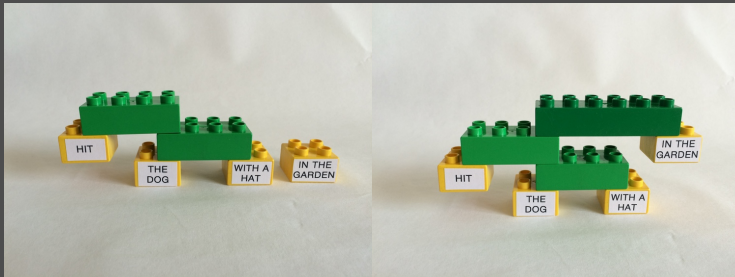


Meaning correlates with structure

- ▶ The result being



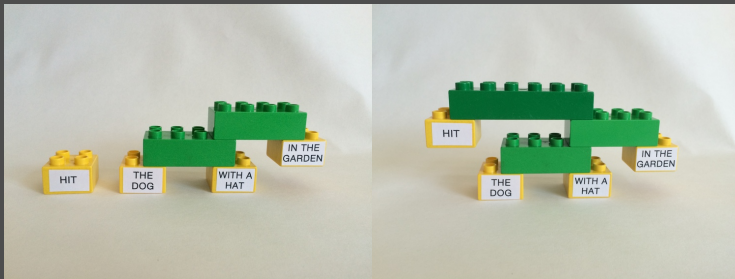
Meaning correlates with structure



► 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.

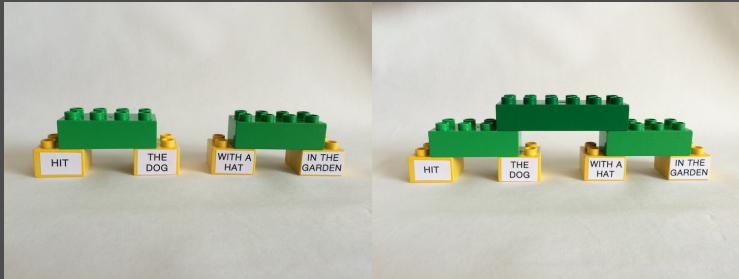
Meaning correlates with structure

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



- ▶ John will then mostly likely own multiple hats, one of which has the habit of being located in the garden.

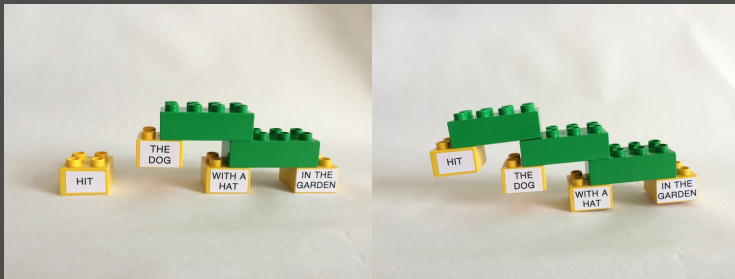
Meaning correlates with structure



► 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?



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 môreoggend na Kaapstad.*
Jan travel.PRS tomorrow.morning to Capetown
- b. *Môreoggend reis Jan na Kaapstad.*
tomorrow.morning travel.PRS Jan to Capetown
- c. **Môreoggend 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

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

(10) but not in English

- John **is** going to Capetown tomorrow morning.
- Tomorrow morning John **is** going to Capetown.
- *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 (van 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

Subjects and objects

- ▶ *John gave Mary a book.*
 - ▶ *John* is the **subject**
 - ▶ *Mary* and *a book* are **objects**:
 - ▶ *Mary* is the **indirect** object, and
 - ▶ *a book* is the **direct** object

Passive

- ▶ *A book was given to Mary (by John).*
 - ▶ *a book* is now the subject
 - ▶ old subject → prepositional phrase
 - ▶ no direct object
 - ▶ indirect object → prepositional phrase
 - ▶ transitive verb becomes intransitive

Grammatical processes: Dutch passives

Pseudo-passive

- ▶ *Mary was given a book (by John).*
 - ▶ *Mary* is now the subject
 - ▶ *a book* remains the direct object
 - ▶ old subject → prepositional phrase

Grammatical processes: Dutch passives

- ▶ similar to English except for the auxiliary verb (*worden* 'become')

(22) a. *Jan leest jouw boeken.*

Jan reads your books

'Jan reads your books.'

b. *Jouw boeken worden gelezen.*

your books AUX.PRS.PL read

'Your books are read.'

Grammatical processes: Dutch passives

Impersonal passive

- (23) a. *Men werkt hier hard.*
one works here hard
'People work hard here.'
- b. *Er wordt hier hard gewerkt.*
Here AUX.PRS.3SG here hard worked
'People work hard here.'

► what's going on here?

Next time

- ▶ history of Dutch

References

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