

Tin-dag, 29 januari 2005, Utrecht

Low-Saxonian possessive pronominals: syntax and phonology

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1. Introduction

Standard Dutch (and also in Dutch dialects)

- (1) a. mijn boek (attributive use of possessive pronoun)
my book
b. de mijn-e (substantive use of possessive pronoun)
the my-infl
'mine'

Substantively used possessive pronominals : Pattern A: de + PRON + -e

- (2) a. de mēn-e (masc.) (dialect of Kempenland; De Bont 1958)
b. de meen (fem.)
c. et meen (neut.)
- (3) a. det is de mien-e (dialect of Ruinen (Drente); Sassen 1953)
that is the my-e
'that's mine'
b. net zoo as 't mien-e (neutr)
just so like the my-e
'just like mine'
b. de zien-e
the his
'his''

- Dialect of Groningen (Ter Laan 1953: p. 138)

- (4) *attributive use* *substantive use: Pattern B: PRON+(e)n+t*
- | | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| a. mien | a.' mient |
| b. dien | b.' dient |
| c. zien/heur | c.' zient/heurent |
| d. ons | d.' onzent |
| e. joen | e.' joent |
| f. heur | f.' heurent |

NB: also possible *mienen, zienen, et cetera*

- Surface properties of substantively used possessive pronominals:
 - (a) the appearance of ('paragogic') [t] at the end of the word;
 - (b) the appearance of a syllabic [n] before the paragogic [t]
- Paragogic [t]: insertion of [t] or [d(e)] at the end of a word, especially after [n], [l], [r], [s] (sometimes also after [m]) (cf. Van Haeringen 1938) (cf. (5))
- Syllabic -n

- (5) ieman-d, aren-d, dubbel-d, kroos-t, genog-t (i.e. examples of paragogic -t/-d)

- (6) boeken → boekŋ (i.e. examples of syllabic -ŋ)
- The appearance of coronal [n] and [t] might be interpreted phonologically in substantively used possessives. But: obligatory absence of the definite article suggests involvement of syntax (see also (7)); paragogic [t] seems to fulfill the role of the definite article in the dialect of Groningen (see also Ter Laan 1953: p. 143)
- (7) a. *’t mienent (e.g. my horse; horse = neuter)
 the_{neut} my-en-t
- b. *de mienent (e.g. my cat; cat = non-neuter)
 the_{non-neut} my-en-t

General research question: What is the interplay between syntax and phonology in the formation of substantively used possessive pronominals?

2. Microvariation in the formation of substantive possessive pronominals

Patterns of microvariation in Low-Saxonian dialects

The following data are based on sources mentioned above as well as on data from the Goeman-Taeldeman-Van Reenen Project (GTRP, <http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/projecten/mand/>)

- | | | | |
|------|---|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| (8) | Det is de mien-e
That is the my-infl
'That's mine' | (Elburg, GTRP) | D + PRON + -e |
| (9) | Det is de mien-n
that is the my-n | (Vorden, GTRP) | D + PRON + -n |
| (10) | Dat is mien-de
that is my-de

Da's mijn-de
That-is my-de
'That's mine' | (Giethoorn, GTRP) | PRON + -de

(child language) |
| (11) | de mien-de
the my-the | (Meppel, GTRP) | D + PRON + -de |
| (12) | Is det zien-n-de?
Is that his-n-de
'Is that his?' | (Ruinen) | PRON + -n + -de |
| | mien-n-t
my -n-t | (Oude Pekela, GTRP) | |
| (13) | de mien-n-t | (Steenderen, GTRP) | D+PRON+n+de |

- (14) de mien-en-t (Sellingén, GTRP) D + PRON + -n + -de
the my-n-de
- (15) mien-n (Anloo, GTRP) PRON + -n
my-n
'Mine'

Some of the dialects in the examples above have *-t* rather than *-de*. See the appendix for cartography of the cooccurrence of the various features, based on GTRP.

Other Dutch dialects (cf. Weijnen, p. 294)

- (16) a. Dat is de mijne (Schagen; GTRP)
that is the my-*e*
b. Dat is mijn-*es*
c. *Dat is de mijn-*es*
- (17) Da's mijn/jouw/heur/ons/jollie/heulie (Katwijk; Overdiep 1937:280)
- (18) de mien-*e* (m)/ de mien (f) /'t mien-*t* (n) (Maastricht, GTRP)

2. The phonology of paragogic *t*

There is one observation to be made about the elements we have called paragogic in the previous section:

- (19) Paragogic elements in dialects of Dutch are /t, s, n, ə/

These segments do not form a natural class at first sight. However, observe that the consonants are all coronal, plus they are unspecified for [voice] under a plausible hypothesis of monovalent feature specification. Assuming that Coronal is the least marked (or unmarked) place feature (Kaun 1993), and observing that schwa is the least marked vowel, we get to the following:

- (19)' Paragogic elements are the least marked stop, fricative, sonorant and vowel of Dutch

This might tempt us to think of a phonological analysis (word-final epenthesis), since epenthetic consonants are very almost always selected from the unmarked set (cf. Uffmann 2004). Furthermore, we know that Dutch dialects display a tendency to have words end in low-sonority consonants (Swets 2004) and we can find unequivocally phonological paragoge, e.g. in Utrecht Dutch (Van Oostendorp 2002):

- (20) *brommert, gozert*

However, we have also seen that in the cases at hand, there is reason to assume a syntactic conditioning. Phonological rules which are subject to such specific syntactic contexts are suspicious.

Futhermore we can observe that with a few exceptions (*me*, '*m*', *ge-*) most functional elements in Dutch are taken from the same set as those in (18) (cf. Hoekstra 2000). A

reason for this has been proposed in Van Oostendorp (2004) and can briefly be summarised as follows:

- (21) Function words and affixes are in a phonologically adjoined position in Dutch.

While lexical words project their own phonological word, clitics, functional heads and inflectional elements have to be adjoined to the phonological word of the stem (Booij 1990). However, here they are subject to the following requirement:

- (22) Adjoined positions only license unmarked elements.

Phonologically epenthetic material and functional elements thus both are formed from the limited pool of phonologically unmarked segment. This explains their superficial formal similarity, and possibly also how one can diachronically change into the other. Only fine-grained analysis can tell us what the diachronic status of a given element is. In this case, the balance seems to tip in the direction of a syntactic analysis

3. Towards a syntactic analysis

Question 1: What is *-n*?

Question 2: What is *-t/-de* at the end of the possessive pronominal?

3.1. Syllabic *-ŋ* as an empty noun

Proposal: *-ŋ* is a reduced/weak semantically empty/grammatical noun ‘*een*’ (i.e. one) (see also Overdiep 1937: 285). It is a weak equivalent of English ‘one’

Empty nouns (cf. Panagiotidis 2003)

- *de mijne* = an elliptical noun phrase, i.e. a DP containing a *phonologically* empty noun (i.e. N without a PF-representation).
- *de mien-n* = a noun phrase containing a *descriptively* empty noun, i.e. a noun with minimal semantic content. Compare English: *one* (cf. Jackendoff 1977: p. 58-60)

Phrasal structure of possessive constructions (cf. e.g. Szabolcsi 1994, Schoorlemmer 1998, Van de Craats, Corver & Van Hout 2000)

(23) [DP Spec [D' D [_{PosP} PRON [_{Pos'} Pos [_{NP} N]]]]]

(24) a. de mien-e (Ruinen)
 b. [DP [D' de [_{PosP} mien-e [_{Pos'} Pos [_{NP} *pro*]]]]]

- *-e* is an inflection ; arguably a dummy affix in the sense of Kester 1992, i.e. a bound morpheme, which has a restricted appearance (e.g. not in predicative position) and whose presence is generally triggered by definiteness features in D.
- DPs without an overt N contain an empty N/*pro*. Kester 1996 (based on Lobeck 1995), *pro* needs to be licensed by proper government by strong inflection. Kester: *pro* moves to a higher functional head whose specifier

contains strong inflection for licensing. Strong inflection is: ‘the overt expression of agreement with phi-features.’ (See also Schoorlemmer 1998).

b.’ [DP [D’ de [_{PosP} mien-e [_{Pos’} pro_i+Pos [_{NP} t_i]]]]]

- (25) a. de mien-n
 b. [DP [D’ de [_{PosP} mien [_{Pos’} Pos [_{NP} -n]]]]] (‘base structure’)
 c. [DP [D’ de [_{PosP} mien [_{Pos’} -n_i+Pos [_{NP} t_i]]]]] (derived structure)

English ‘one’

- (26) a. John bought [two small ones] (ones = e.g. cars)
 b. I like this one better than [that one] (one = e.g. pencil)

NB: *tall* is not inflected in Dutch → appearance of ‘one’

Reduced ‘one’ in English dialects:

- (27) That’s my car, where’s yourn? (data drawn from Internet; R. Hudson)
 That’s my car, where’s hisn?
 That’s my car, where is hern?
 This is my book. Whosen is that?

Dialect of Groningen: ‘ain’ (= one; cf. Barbiers, to appear)

- *Ain* (= someone/one) has a reduced variant *n* (cf. Ter Laan 1953: 59)
- (28) a. ’t Komt aaltied oet, al zel **n** ’t zulf ook oetbringen
 b. Hai is ain van dat soort, doar **n** aaltied bedrogen mit wegkomt
- Gain ain = (no one); reduced form: gainent
- (29) Gainent zol dat doun (p. 139)
 Noone will that do
- zonent
- (29) a. Ik wil wel gern **zo ain** hebben (Ter Laan 1953: 52)
 b. Ik wil wel gern **zonent** hebben
- (30) Gaaist doe mit **zonent** om?
 (Ga-je met zo iemand om?)
- (31) a. **Wat veeur ain** hest ’t laiste? (Ter Laan 1953: 54)
 b. **Watveurent** mout ’t wezen?
- (32) **welkent** (Reker, p.c.)
 which-en-t
- Occurrence with substantively used adjectives: In the dialect of Groningen, *-en* is attached to the adjective when the pronominalized noun (i.e. N) has a plural interpretation. (Ter Laan 1953: 39)
- (33) a. zuit-e appels
 sweet-e apples
 b. Bin dat zoere appels of **zuiten**?
 Are those sour apples or sweet-en (= sweet ones)
- (34) Olle wieven lus ik nait, Jongen bin de **besten**

- Substantively used adjectives in dialects spoken in Zeeland (het Zeeuws) and Flanders carry -n (cf. Overdiep 1937: 285)

- (35) a. Da's den **ouwsten** van Sanne
 b. Da' kan den **blauwen** nie trekke

3.2. Paragogic -t/-de as a (doubling) enclitic determiner

Proposal: -t/-de is a bound morpheme article. It is the equivalent of the enclitic definite determiner familiar from Scandinavian languages.

- (36) a. bil-en -en = enclitic article (Swedish)
 car-the
 b. den stora bil-en den = pre-nominal determiner
 the big car-the

- Double definiteness/Double determination (cf. e.g. Delsing 1993, Kester 1996, Santelmann 1992): the appearance of two determiner-like elements in the extended nominal projection. When? (i) presence of an attributive AP; (ii) when the noun phrase has an emphatic or demonstrative meaning, and intonation and context require the noun to be contrasted with something else (cf. Santelmann 1992)

- (37) a. den stora bil-en (Swedish)
 b. *den stora bil
 c. *stora bil-en

- (38) a. Den film-en var rolig (men den här film-en var tråkig)
 the film-the was funny (but this here film-the was dull)
 b. *Den film var rolig
 The film was funny
 ‘That film was funny’

- (39) a. den här bil-en
 the here car-the
 ‘this car’
 b. den där bil-en
 the there car-the
 ‘that car’

- (40) a. denna bil-en (Swedish dialects)
 that car-the
 b. denna bil (Standard Swedish)
 that car

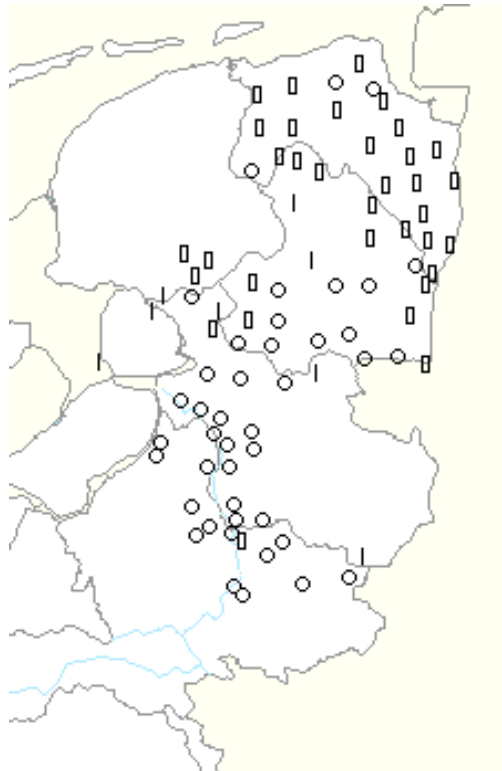
- (41) a. [DP [D den] [FP stora [F' [F -en] [NP bil]]]]
 b. [DP [D den] [FP stora [F' [F bil_i -en] [NP t_i]]]]

- (42) a. de mien-n-de (Steenderen, GTRP)
 b. [DP [D' de [PosP mien [Pos' -de [NP -n]]]]] (‘base structure’)
 c. [DP [D' de [PosP mien [Pos' -n_i+ -de [NP t_i]]]]] (derived structure)

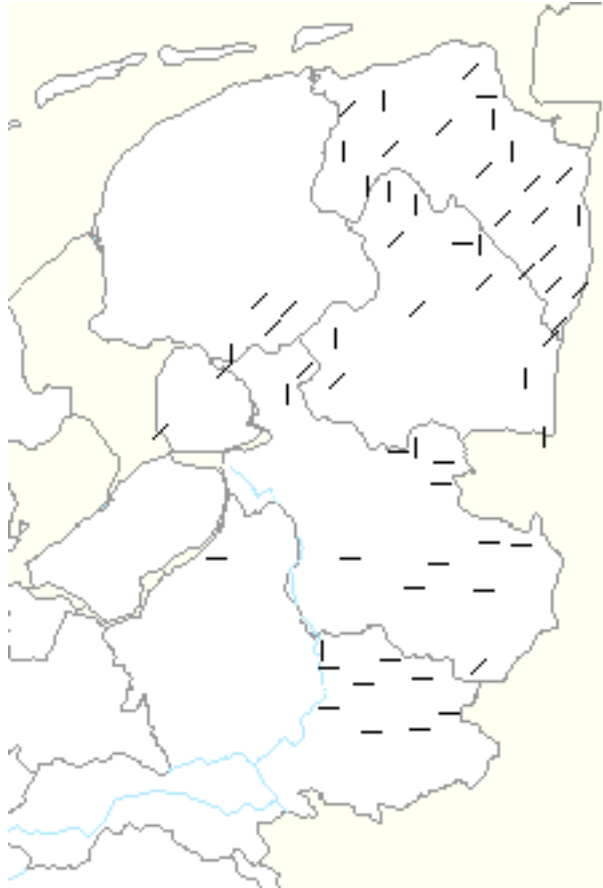
- (43) a. de mien-de (cf. (11))
 b. [DP [D' de [PosP mien [Pos' -de [NP *pro*]]]]] ('base structure')
 c. [DP [D' de [PosP mien [Pos' *pro*_i+de [NP *t*_i]]]]] (derived structure)
- (44) a. mien-n-de (cf. (12))
 b. [DP [D' [D *e*] [PosP mien [Pos' -de [NP -n]]]]] ('base structure')
 c. [DP [D' [D *e*] [PosP mien [Pos' -n_i+de [NP *t*_i]]]]] (derived structure)
- (45) a. mien-de (cf. (10))
 b. [DP [D' [D *e*] [PosP mien [Pos' -de [NP *pro*]]]]] ('base structure')
 c. [DP [D' [D *e*] [PosP mien [Pos' *pro*_i+de [NP *t*_i]]]]] (derived structure)
- (46) a. mien-n (cf. (15))
 b. [DP [D' [D *e*] [PosP mien [Pos' Pos [NP -n]]]]] ('base structure')
 c. [DP [D' [D *e*] [PosP mien [Pos' -n_i+Pos [NP *t*_i]]]]] (derived structure)
- (47) mien-e ? (does not seem to occur → only licensed if D present)
- (48) a. Da's mijn (cf. Katwijks)
 b. [DP [D' [D *e*] [PosP mijn [Pos' Pos [NP *pro*]]]]] ('base structure')
 c. [DP [D' [D *e*] [PosP mijn [Pos' *pro*_i+Pos [NP *t*_i]]]]] (derived structure)

Appendix: Cartography.

We present an overview of the cooccurrence of the most important features discussed on this handout. The data are selected from the GTRP database (Klooke regions B, C, F, G, but except the Frisian-speaking areas) and drawn with Meertens Mapper.



On the first map, squares represent dialects which have ‘that is the my-*de*’ (where *de* can be represented by any coronal stop, optionally followed by a vowel); vertical lines dialects which have ‘that is my’ or ‘that is my-*en*’; rectangles dialects which have ‘that is my-*de*’. Observe that there are two interconnected regions with ‘my-*de*’, one in the northeast (provinces Groningen and Drenthe), and one on the borders of the river IJssel. Using my-*de* without preceding determiner seems typical of the northernmost part (Groningen).



On the second map, horizontal dialects represent dialects which have ‘the my-*en*’ (where *-en* can be realized as a syllabic nasal or a sequence schwa+n), and slanted lines represent dialects with ‘my-*en*’ without a determiner (vertical lines again represent dialects without an article and a different form of the possessive). It can be seen that again the version without determiner is concentrated in the northernmost part of the language area. This is thus the region in which we find ‘that is my-*en-de*’.