

## Adjectival agreement and NP-ellipsis in Dutch and Scandinavian

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1. Standard Dutch adjectival inflection has two surprising properties from the Scandinavian point of view: (a) As modifying common singular gender NPs take an *-e* even in indefinite DPs, apparently exactly as in definite DPs, and (b) although NP-ellipsis is fine in indefinite DPs, the Dutch counterpart of *one* (*een*) is disallowed. In the Scandinavian standard varieties, singular common gender (non-neuter) attributive As have no inflection in indefinite DPs vs *-e* in the definite ones, and both “pure” NP-ellipsis and *one* are possible. The latter fact is particularly striking in view of attempts to attribute Dutch \*A-*e een* to the gender-marking property of the adjectival inflection, since Scandinavian m/f.sg.  $-\emptyset$  vs n.sg. *-t* would appear to mark gender the same way as Dutch m/f.sg. *-e* vs n.sg.  $-\emptyset$ .

2. However, there are two dialects of Norwegian in which adjectival inflection seems to mimic the Standard Dutch pattern. Certain South-Western varieties as well as the Northern dialect of Senja have *-e* on m/f.sg. in indefinite DPs as well (in Senja only optionally), but not on n.sg. As, and this *-e* is ok with NP-ellipsis, but not with *one*, just as in Dutch. But unlike (Standard) Dutch, these Norwegian dialects inflect *one* for gender, e.g. m.sg. *ein*, f.sg. *ei* and n.sg. *eit* in Senja, bringing them outside the purview of the account proposed for Standard Dutch in Barbiers (2005).

3. The relevant Norwegian dialects have additional properties which we will claim ultimately also throw new light on the Dutch system. First, whereas the *-e* on As in definite DPs (common to all of Norwegian) forms a prosodic unit with a monosyllabic A inducing “tone 2”, the *-e* seen in indefinite DPs doesn’t. We will take this to mean that the syntactic relation between the A and the *-e* is not the same in the two cases. In particular, we will argue that the indefinite *-e* is structurally more distant from the A than the definite one, and take this to be true of Dutch too, except that Dutch has no prosodic process that would reveal the distinction. Ultimately, we will use the specific structural locus of the indefinite *-e* to account for its incompatibility with *one*, both in Dutch and in the Norwegian dialects.

4. Another property concerns the indefinite article. In Senja, this can iterate across adnominal As, giving things like *ei snill ei jenta* ‘a nice a girl’, to express that the property denoted by the A holds to a high degree. Iteration of the indefinite article is compatible with both “pure” NP-ellipsis and *one*, e.g. *ei snill ei (ei)*. But the indefinite article cannot be iterated across an A bearing *-e* (optional in Senja): \**ei snille ei jenta*.

This too has an exact counterpart in varieties of Dutch. In particular, Frisian and the Groningen dialects, as described by Barbiers (2005) have an alternation between singular common gender A-*e* and bare A followed by *en*, the latter expressing that the property denoted by the A holds to a high degree, e.g. *in dreg en baas* ‘a very tough boss’. As in Senja, *-e* and *en* cannot cooccur, and only *en* is compatible with *one* under NP-ellipsis, e.g. *in donker en (ien)* – a dark *en* (one).

Barbiers (op.cit.) analyzes *en* as an inflectional suffix unmarked for gender (in contrast to *-e* vs n.sg.  $-\emptyset$ ). Instead, we propose that it is actually more closely related to the iterated indefinite article seen in Senja, which will both allow the account of the incompatibility between *-e* and iteration of the indefinite article in Senja to carry over, and also immediately account for the lack of gender marking on *en*, since the indefinite article is not marked for gender in Frisian/Groningen.

Barbiers also attributes the compatibility of the Frisian/Groningen *en* with *one* to *en* being unmarked for gender, but the parallelism with the Senja pattern now throws doubt on this line of analysis, since the Senja iterated indefinite, like any indefinite article in this dialect, is in fact marked for gender. Hence, the comparison of Frisian/Groningen with the Senja dialect leads us to develop an alternative analysis for both as regards compatibility with *one*.

5. Starting with the question why the indefinite *-e* disallows *one* under NP-ellipsis, both in Dutch and in Norwegian dialects, it seems that this falls under a broader generalization: This *-e*, as already noted, is also incompatible with iteration of the indefinite article, even in the absence of NP-ellipsis, a fact easily accounted for by the “doubly filled nothing” conjecture if we analyze indefinite *-e* not as AP-internal inflection, but as a head H on the DP spine, as independently suggested by its prosodic properties in Norwegian, and if an iterated indefinite article must occur as a Spec of this H. Thus, H attracts an indefinite article, either by external or internal Merge, and spells out as  $\emptyset$  if an indefinite article remains in its Spec at the end of the day, but otherwise as *-e*. The structure of a DP containing attributive As in Dutch and the relevant Norwegian dialects will schematically be *indefinite article H [ AP [ Spec H ... AP [ Spec H [ ... NP*. This is the first step of our analysis.

The second step consists of taking the Dutch/Scandinavian *one* as a low indefinite article optionally stranded under NP-ellipsis. In varieties with the H head just posited, there are two possible outcomes. Either *one* is successively attracted by Hs till it ends up as an indefinite article preceding all As, or the Specs of these Hs are filled by external Merge (iteration of the indefinite article in Senja or Frisian/Groningen), and *one* stays to the right of all the As. In the first case, every H (except the topmost one preceding all As) spells out as *-e*, i.e. the indefinite *-e*. In the second scenario, the indefinite *-e* is “replaced” by iterated indefinite articles.

The decision to view the *one* occurring under NP-ellipsis in Dutch and Scandinavian as related to the indefinite article, will be supported by contrasting it the English *one* and the “nominalizing” *-e* of Afrikaans, which, unlike Dutch/Scandinavian *one*, combines with the plural *-s*.

6. Dialects which, like the standard varieties of Scandinavian, lack indefinite *-e* and iteration of indefinite articles, will not project the Hs, on this view, raising the question how H fits into theories that would view the functional spine of a DP as a projection of a universally fixed functional hierarchy. Also, our assumption that H recurs within the DP doesn't fit the “fseq” view. As a final conjecture, we speculate that our H is related to the *izafe* vowels of Iranian languages, a “linker” category that likewise shows cross-linguistic variability and recursion within DPs.

References:

Barbiers, S. (2005), Variation in the morphosyntax of ONE, *Journal of Comparative Germanic Syntax* 8, 159-183