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Looking at adjectival constructions (and degree words!) through an adpositional lens

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Looking at language through a non-construction-specific lense

“The notion of grammatical construction is eliminated, and with it, construction-particular rules. Constructions such as verb phrases, relative clause, and passive remain only as taxonomic artifacts, collections of phenomena explained through the interaction of the principles of UG, with the values of parameters fixed.”

(Chomsky 1993, *A Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory*)

Looking at passives through a construction-specific lense

- (1) a. John ate an apple. (active sentence)
b. The apple was eaten by John. (passive sentence)

- (2) Passive transformation (Van Riemsdijk & Williams 1986)

	X	–	NP	–	AUX	–	V	–	NP	–	Y	–	by	–	Z	
SD	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	→
SC	1		5		3+be		4+en		∅		6		7+2		8	

Passives: a collection of non-construction-specific phenomena

- (1) a. All these pictures were painted **by van Gogh**.
 b. a painting **by Van Gogh**.

- (2) a. The car was **fixed** (by Mary).
 b. Mary has just **fixed** the car.

- (3) a. **John** was welcomed ~~John~~ (by the committee).
 b. **John** arrived ~~John~~ a few minutes ago.
 c. **John** seems ~~John~~ to be unhappy.

Passives: a collection of phenomena explained through the interaction of principles of UG.

(1) John was welcomed ~~John~~ [_{PP} by the committee].

- Theta theory
- Case theory
- Movement theory
- Theory about merger of adjuncts (*by*-phrase)

Baker et al (1989); Collins (2005); Bruening (2012)

The quest for cross-categorial parallelism

- “Constructions” (e.g. clauses, noun phrases) have the same “inner build” (i.e. organizational structure).

- (1) a. The enemy destroyed the city.
b. The enemy’s destruction of the city.
- (2) a. The city was destroyed by the enemy.
b. The city’s destruction by the enemy.

- The quest for cross-categorial parallelism: Chomsky (1970), Jackendoff (1977), Szabolcsi (1983), Abney (1987), Ritter (1988), Longobardi (1994), etc.

Cross-categorical parallelism and defamiliarization

- The cross-categorical perspective has the effect of defamiliarization: we move away from the “familiar and obvious surface” of a construction and start to see new things (at a more abstract level) from a cross-constructional perspective.
- For example: head-movement phenomena in the clausal domain (e.g. V_{fin} -to-C) led to the identification of head-movement phenomena in the nominal domain, e.g. in Construct State “constructions” (Ritter 1988)

- (1) a. beyt ha-mora ha-gadol (Modern Hebrew)
 house the-teacher the-big
 the teacher’s big house
- b. [_{DP} **beyt** [_{PosP} ha-mora [_{NP} ha-gadol [_{NP} ~~beyt~~]]]] (N-to-D-movt.)

Looking at the world through an equine lense

“Phenomena can be so familiar that we really do not see them at all, a matter that has been much discussed by literary theorists and philosophers. For example, Viktor Shklovskij in the early 1920s developed the idea that the function of poetic art is that of “making strange” the object depicted. People living at the seashore grow so accustomed to the murmur of the waves that they never hear it. [...] Our perception of the world has withered away; what has remained is mere recognition. Thus, **the goal of the artist is to transfer what is depicted to the “sphere of new perception**; as an example, Shklovskij cites a story by Tolstoy in which social customs and institutions are “made strange” by the device of presenting them **from the viewpoint of a narrator who happens to be a horse.**”

(Chomsky 1968, *Language in Mind*)



Kholstomer /Engl. Transl.: Strider

Aim of this talk

- to study the nature and behavior of degree-related phenomena in Dutch adjectival “constructions” by taking seriously (i) the non-existence of construction-particular rules, (ii) the existence of cross-categorical parallelism, and also (iii) the importance of decomposition.
- Defamiliarization: I will examine degree expressions in adjectival environments “through an adpositional lense”.
- Claim: there is a lot of hidden adpositional/adposition-like material in adjectival degree constructions.
- Question: what is this adpositional material doing?

Outline: Case Studies

- Case study 1: The comparative marker *-er*
- Case study 2: The standard marker *dan/als* 'than/as'
- Case study 3: The superlative marker *'t* and superlative *-st*.
- Case study 4: The degree word *bijna* 'almost'
- Case study 5: The degree word *door en door* 'completely'
- Case study 6: The degree word *te* 'too'
- Case study 7: The degree word *genoeg* 'enough'

- Conclusion



Case study 1:

Comparative constructions through an adpositional lense

- (1) a. Peter is [2 cm langer dan Marie]. (Dutch)
b. Peter is [2 cm taller than Mary].

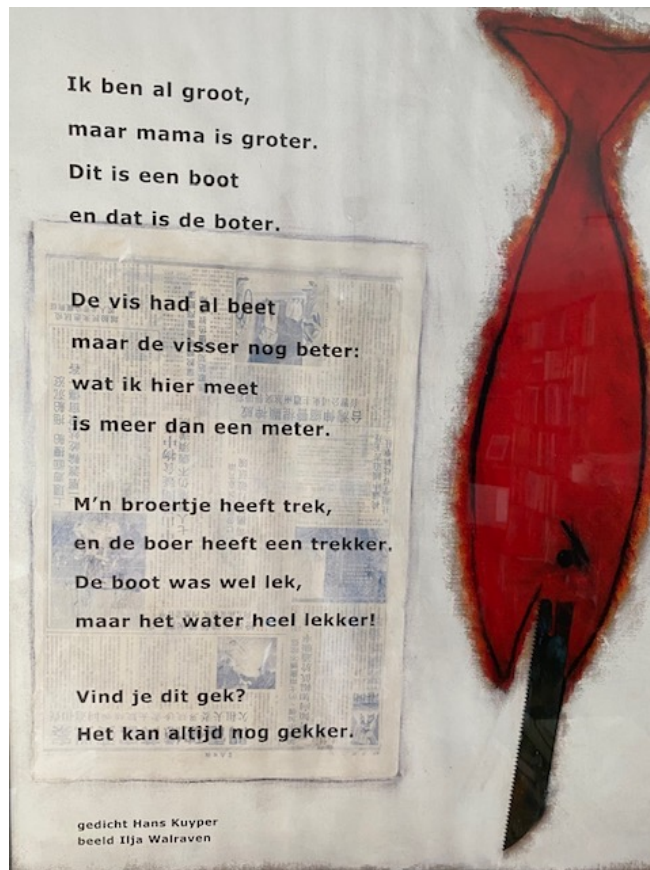
<i>Peter</i>	→	target of comparison
<i>lang</i>	→	gradable adjective
<i>-er</i>	→	comparative morpheme: <i>-er</i>
<i>dan</i>	→	standard marker
<i>Marie</i>	→	standard of comparison
<i>2 cm</i>	→	Measure Phrase

- From a surface perspective: Not much prepositional going on here!

Looking at comparative *-er* through an adpositional lense

- **Question:** What is the nature of *-er*?
- **Traditional answer:** *-er* is a bound-morphemic comparative marker . Thus, *-er* is a construction-specific property.
- **Question:** Are comparative constructions the only syntactic environments featuring *-er*?
- **Answer:** No, “comparative” *-er* is also attested in other structural environments.

But what are these structural environments? Where else does the language learning child encounter “comparative” –er?



I'm already tall,

but mom is **taller**.

This is a boat

and that's the **butter**.

The fish already had a bite,

but the fisherman even **better**:

what I measure here

is more than a **meter**.

My little brother is hungry,

and the farmer has a **tractor**.

The boat was leaking,

but the water was very **nice**!

Do you think this is crazy?

It can always get **crazier**.

The baby, assailed by
eyes, ears, nose, skin, and
entrails at once, feels it
all as one great blooming,
buzzing confusion.

William James

WonderfulQuote

An adpositional perspective on comparative *-er*

- Observation: Many Dutch spatial adpositions have *-er* at the end.

(1)
 - a. Het boek lag [_{pp} acht-**er** de kast].
the book lay behind the cupboard
 - b. Het boek lag [_{pp} ond-**er** de kast].
the book lay under the cupboard
 - c. **over** 'over', **voor** 'before', **door** 'through', **naar** 'to', ..
- Question: Could adpositional *-er* and comparative *-er* be the same thing?
- Jespersen (1924/1977) *The Philosophy of Grammar*

Related meaning: an ordering relation

- The comparative construction establishes an ordering relation (on a scale) between two entities x (target of comparison) and y (standard of comparison) with respect to gradable property g using morphology (*more/-er*) whose conventional meaning has the consequence that the degree to which x is g exceeds the degree to which y is g. (based on Kennedy 2005)

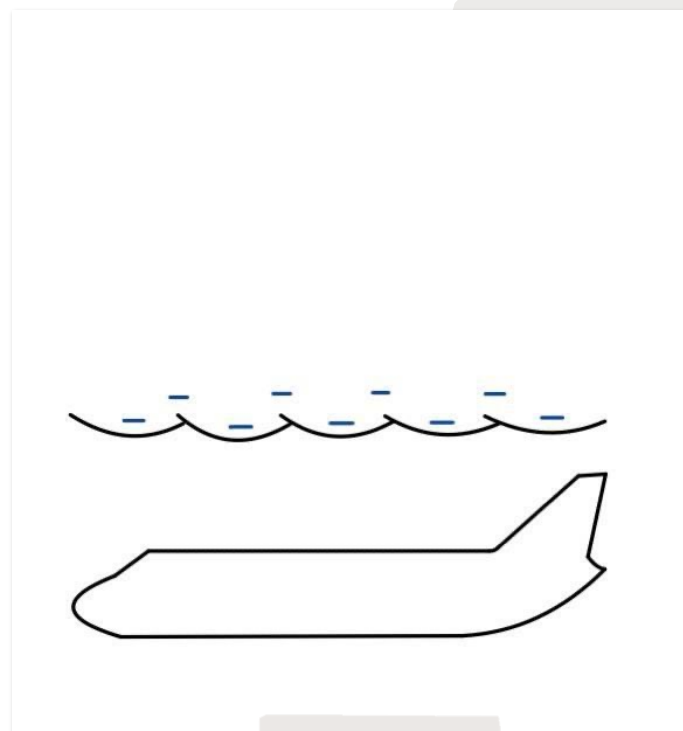
(1) [target of comparison Het vliegtuig] is **lager** dan [standard of comparison de wolk].

- The locative-adpositional construction establishes a (spatial-)ordering relation between two entities x and y. The 'located object' (FIGURE) is situated in space with respect to the 'reference object' (GROUND). The precise nature of the spatial relation is determined by the lexical meaning of the locative adposition. (Talmy 1978, Jackendoff 1983, Zwarts 2003)

(2) [located object/figure Het vliegtuig] is **onder** [reference object/ground de wolk].

Modification by a measure phrase

- (1) Het vliegtuig is [**2 meter** lager dan de wolk].
the airplane is 2 meters lower than the cloud
- (2) Het vliegtuig is [**2 meter** onder de wolk].
the airplane is 2 meters under the cloud



Related meaning: above a norm/standard or below a norm/standard

- (1) a. Jan voelt zich de laatste tijd [**minder** gewaardeerd].
Jan feels REFL the latest time less appreciated
'Jan feels less appreciated recently.'
- b. Jan voelt zich de laatste tijd [**onder**gewaardeerd].
Jan feels REFL the latest time under-appreciated
'Jan feels appreciated less/too little recently.'
- (2) a. Jan voelt zich de laatste tijd [**meer** gewaardeerd]. 'more'
- b. Jan voelt zich de laatste tijd [**over**gewaardeerd]. 'over'

Not exactly the same, but still....

- (1) Jan voelt zich [**minder ondergewaardeerd** dan Els].
Jan feels REFL less under-appreciated than Els
'Jan feels less under-appreciated than Els does.'
- (2) The Economist stelt vast dat de euro veel **minder ondergewaardeerd** is ten opzichte van de dollar als algemeen wordt aangenomen.
- (3) Big Mac: euro [**maar 5 procent** ondergewaardeerd].
Big Mac: euro only 5 percent under-valued
<https://www.tijd.be/algemeen/algemeen/big-mac-euro-maar-5-procent-ondergewaardeerd/5326266.html>

On the nature of *-er*

- Question: Suppose *-er* is not a comparative morpheme but something “more general”, the following question arises: What could it be?
- Proposal: *-er* is a suffix that designates an opposition between two elements. In other words, it is a marker of polarity (i.e. opposition).

- (1)
- a. Het vliegtuig is **lager** dan de wolk.
‘The plane is lower than the cloud’
(opposition as regards a degree to which a gradable property holds)
 - b. Het vliegtuig is **onder** de wolk.
‘The plane is under the cloud.’
(opposition as regards a spatial location)

A view from Germanic: polarity *-er* in English

- (1)
- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------|
| a. | I wonder whether <u>er</u> he will come. | 'yes or no' |
| b. | Come on Tuesday or Friday. Either <u>er</u> day is OK. | 'one or the other' |
| c. | His birthplace was either <u>er</u> New York or Boston. | 'one or the other' |
| d. | John is smart. Bill, however <u>er</u> , is not. | 'on the other hand' |
- (2) John is **taller**er than Bill.
- (3)
- | | |
|----|--|
| a. | John is under <u>er</u> the tree. |
| b. | Look yonder <u>er</u> and you'll see the skyline of the city. |

A view from Germanic: Polarity *-er* in German

- (1) a. Kommst du **oder** kommst du nicht?
come you or come you not
'Will you come with me or won't you?'
- b. **Entweder** es funktioniert oder nicht.
either it functions or not
- (2) a. Er war arm **aber** glücklich.
he was poor but happy
- b. Nicht Karl, **sondern** Irene gewann den ersten Preis.
Not Karl but Irene won the first prize

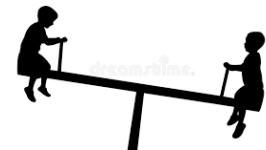
A view from Germanic: Polarity *-er* in German

- (3) a. Er steht nicht **vor** dem Baum, sondern **hinter** dem Baum.
he stands not before the tree but behind the tree
- b. Jan ist [**größer** als Piet].

A view from Germanic: polarity *-er* in Dutch

- (1) Els is groot. Marie is **echt-er** klein.
Lit.: Els is tall. Marie is however small.

- (2) a. De wip gaat **op en nee-r**. (NB: *ne-der*)
the see-saw goes up and down
b. De schommel gaat **heen en wee-r**. (NB: *we-der*)
the swing goes back and forth
c. Er werd **ov-er en wee-r** gepraat.
there was forth and back spoken
'They spoke back and forth.'



- (3) Mijn **link-er** buurman is aardig, mijn **recht-er** buurman is onaardig.
my left neighbor is kind, my right neighbor is unkind

Dutch -er in the “pronominal system”

- (1)
- a. De twee meisjes kregen **ieder** een ijsje. 'each of two/all'
the two girls got each an ice-cream
'Each of the two girls got an ice-cream'
 - b. **Iedereen** is **overal** geweest.
everyone has everywhere been
'Everyone has been everywhere.'
 - c. Ze gaven **elkaar/elkander** een kus.
they gave each-other a kiss
 - d. Jan woont **hier**, Marie woont **daar** en Piet woont **ginder**.
Jan lives here, Marie lives there and Piet lives yonder.
 - e. Jan gedroeg zich **elders** altijd **anders**.
Jan behaved REFL elsewhere always otherwise

Tentative conclusion

- Possibly, *-er* is a “deep” formal property of West Germanic languages such as Dutch, English, German, etc.; that is, its appearance is not restricted to adjectival comparatives.
- Tentative proposal: *-er* is a marker of polarity (i.e. ‘opposition’)
- There is a cross-categorial configuration marking polarity (uniformity of structure):

(1) $[_{PolP} \text{ Spec } [_{Pol'} \text{ Pol}^o \text{ XP}]]$

Instantiations of the polarity configuration

- (1)
- | | | |
|----|--|-----------------------|
| a. | I wonder [_{PolP} wheth [_{Pol'} -er [_{TP} John is ill]]]. | whether |
| b. | [_{PolP} Eith [_{Pol'} -er [_{TP} I should go]]] ..or you should go. either | |
| c. | Did they leave [_{LocP} be [_{PolP} fo- + -er [_{PP} fo- [the party]]]]
or [_{LocP} P [_{PolP} af- + -ter [_{PP} af- [the party]]]] ? | before
after |
| d. | [_{DP} no [_{PolP} whe + -er [_{NP} whe-]]]
[_{DP} each [_{PolP} oth + -er [_{NP} oth-]]] | nowhere
each other |
| e. | John is [much [_{PolP} young + -er [_{NP} young]]] | younger |

NB: Recall the (Dutch/English/German) child who is trying to make sense of the “great blooming, buzzing confusion”.

Some consequences:

1. Comparative doubling: doubly filled PolP

- If “comparative” –er does not encode comparison but rather polarity, then the existence of comparative doubling constructions is maybe not unexpected. (Corver 2005)

- (1) a. Vrouwen zijn in deze tijd meer vooruitstrevender [...].
women are in this time **more progressive-ER**
'These days, women are more progressive.'

<https://www.zwangerschapspagina.nl/threads/kunnen-wij-moeders-van-nu-minder-aan-dan-vroeger.613554/page-4>

- b. Er worden wel minder duurdere huizen gebouwd [...].
there are PRT **less expensive-COMPAR-INFL** houses built
'Less expensive houses are being built...'

<https://www.nu.nl/economie/6258331/grootste-daling-huizenprijzen-in-tien-jaar-aanbod-verdubbeld.html>

Structural analysis & Symmetry

- Structural analysis

- (1) a. $[_{POLP} \text{meer } [_{POL'} \text{vooruitstrevend} + \text{--er } [_{AP} \text{vooruitstrevend}]]]$
'meer vooruitstrevender' (doubling pattern)
- b. $[_{POLP} \text{MORE } [_{POL'} \text{--er } [_{AP} \text{vooruitstrevend}]]]$
'vooruitstrevender' (non-doubling pattern)

- Cross-categorical parallelism

- (2) a. $[_{POLP} \text{Spec } [_{POL'} \text{--er } [_{PP} \text{on- } [_{DP} \text{dat}]]]]$ base structure
- b. $[_{POLP} \text{daar } [_{POL'} \text{on} + \text{--der } [_{PP} \text{on- } [_{DP} \text{dat}]]]]$ derived structure

Some consequences: 2. Polarity licensing

- (1) I wonder **whether** anyone will come to the party.
- (2) The majority of Modern Languages students take two languages, but it is also common to study just one: **either** in **any** of the six Joint Schools [..] or on its own.
<https://www.queens.ox.ac.uk/subjects/modern-languages-and-joint-schools/>
- (3) Think **before** you say **anything**.
- (4) Snow accumulations of 1 to 3 inches are possible for parts of western Kentucky and West Virginia, but snow that does fall **here** and **anywhere else** will melt quickly.
<https://abc30.com/news/spring-delayed-winter-weather-unseasonable-cold-continue-across-much-of-the-country/3310411/>
- (5) John is **taller** than **anyone** in this room.

Some consequences 3: “polarity concord”

- In Southern Dutch dialects, we find the standard marker *of* ‘if/whether’ instead of *dan* ‘than’. Recall that *of* can also have the grammatical function of disjunctive conjunction (‘or’) or interrogative subordinator (‘whether/if’). (See also Lena Heynen’s work on comparatives in Dutch dialects)

(1) Ze wās chrooter *ōf* chiije. (Tegelen Dutch)
she was taller if/whether you
‘She was taller than you.’

- See Alrenga et al (2012) for the idea that English *-er* and the *than*-phrase are in a (Spec-head) agreement relationship.

Case study 2: Looking at the standard marker *dan* through an adpositional lense

- **Question 1:** What is the grammatical nature of the standard marker *dan*?
- **Traditional answer:** *dan* is a conjunction, or maybe an adposition, that typically appears in comparative constructions. Thus, *dan* is often treated as a construction-specific property.
- **Question 2:** Are comparative constructions the only syntactic environments featuring *dan*?
- **Answer:** No, “comparative” *dan* is also attested in other structural environments.

What is the categorial nature of the standard marker *dan*?

- Maybe it is an adposition (P), but it does not behave like P in all respects.
- Properties of Dutch adpositions: (i) R-pronominalization; (ii) P-stranding; (iii) pre-adjectival PP with attributive APs

- (1) a. De hond is bang [**van die slang**].
 the dog is afraid of that snake
- b. De hond is bang [**daar van**]. R-pronominalization
 the dog is afraid there of
 ‘The dog is afraid of it/that.’

What is the categorial nature of the standard marker *dan*?

- (1) c. **Waar** is deze hond bang [~~waar~~ van]? P-stranding
where is this dog afraid of
'What is this dog afraid of?'
- d. een [_{AP} **daarvan** bange] hond pre-adjectival PP
a there-of afraid dog
'a dog which is afraid of that'

Dan does not display P-like behavior

(1) a. Deze slang is langer [**dan die slang**].
this snake is long-er than that snake
'This snake is longer than that snake.'

b. *Deze slang is langer [**daar dan**].
this snake is long-er there than
'This snake is longer than that one.'

No R-pronominalization

Dan does not display P-like behavior

- (1) c. ***Waar** is deze slang langer [-- **dan**]? No *dan*-stranding
where is this snake long-er than
'What is this snake longer than?'
- d. *een [**dan deze slang** langere krokodil] No pre-adjectival *dan*-phrase
a than this snake longer crocodile
'a crocodile which is longer than this snake'

- One might conclude that the *dan*-phrase is not a PP, but

..let's not jump to conclusions!

- Do not conclude too quickly that *dan XP* is not a PP! There are other adposition-like phrases that display deviant behavior.

- (1) a. Jan sprak [**namens** de regering].
Jan spoke name-en-s the government
'Jan spoke on behalf of the government'
- b. *Jan sprak [daar **namens**]. (No R-pronominalization)
- (2) a. De baby huilde [**tijdens** de storm].
the baby cried during the storm
- b. *De baby huilde [daar **tijdens**]. (No R-pronominalization)

Towards a Construct State analysis of certain adpositions

- Proposal: Adpositions” such as *namens*, *tijdens* have a nominal “base”. See the “Free State pattern” in (1).

(1) Jan sprak [_{PP} in [_{Noun Phrase} **naam** van de regering]].

Jan spoke in name of the government

‘Jan spoke on behalf of the government.’

- The complement of the preposition *van* can undergo R-pronominalization

(2) Jan sprak [_{PP} in [_{Noun Phrase} naam [_{PP} **daar** [_{P'} van ~~dat~~]]]]. (Compare: **daar namens*)

Jan spoke in name there of

‘Jan spoke on behalf of it.’ (e.g. the government)

A construct state analysis of *namens* + DP: a hidden adpositional structure (Corver 2021)

- Movement from base position to [Spec,DP], and subsequently to [Spec,PP]

- (1) a. $[_{PP} \text{Spec } [_{P'} P_{\emptyset} [_{DP} \text{Spec } [_{D'} D [_{PosP} \text{de regering } [_{Pos'} \text{Pos } [_{nP} \text{namens}]]]]]]]$
 b. $[_{PP} [_{nP} \text{namens}] [_{P'} P_{\emptyset} [_{DP} \text{namens } [_{D'} D [_{PosP} \text{de regering } [_{Pos'} \text{Pos-namens}]]]]]]]$

- Complementary distribution: If *namens* occupies [Spec,PP] as a result of displacement, the pro-form *dat* 'that' can no longer move to [Spec,PP] and undergo R-pronominalization. In other words, the pattern *daar namens* can't be derived.

- (2) $[_{PP} [_{nP} \text{namens}] [_{P'} P_{\emptyset} [_{DP} \text{namens } [_{D'} D [_{PosP} \text{dat } [_{Pos'} \text{Pos-namens}]]]]]]]$

(NB: See Longobardi's (2001) analysis of French *chez Marie*)

Another Construct State pattern: the displaced pro-form *des*

- Claim: there are also pro-forms that display the movement behavior of *namens*, viz. from base position to [Spec,DP], and onwards to [Spec,PP].

- (1) Jan gaat [**des** / 's ochtend's] naar school.
Jan goes **-s morning-s** to school
'Jan goes to school in the morning.'

- (2) $[_{PP} [_{nP} \textbf{des}] [_{P'} P_{\emptyset} [_{DP} \text{des} [_{D'} D [_{POS_P} \text{ochtends} [_{POS'} \text{Pos-} \text{des}]]]]]$ (Corver 2021)

From **daar namens* to **daar dan*

- Question: Could the ill-formedness of *daar dan*, as in *langer daar dan* ‘longer than that’ also be due to complementary distribution, just like the ill-formed pattern *daar namens*? Specifically: could it be that *dan* occupies [Spec,PP]?
- Answer: Yes, “comparative” *dan* is a nominal pro-form (just like *daar*) that occupies the specifier position of a silent P. The elements *daar* and *dan* are in competition with each other, whence **daar dan*.
- This approach is in line with Katz & Postal 1964, who take adverbial pro-forms such as *there* (Dutch: *daar*), *then* (Dutch *dan_{future}/toen_{past}*) and *thus* (Dutch *dus*) to be nominal expressions that are accompanied by a silent preposition (see also Kayne 2005, Collins 2005).

Adverbial pro-forms: movement to Spec,PP

- (1) a. Jan stond **daar**. 'Jan stood there'
b. Jan stond [_{PP} **daar** [_{P'} P_{LOC} ~~dat~~]]
- (2) a. Jan zal **dan** vertrekken. 'Jan will leave then.'
b. Jan zal [_{PP} **dan** [_{P'} P_{TEMP} ~~dat~~]]

- Evidence in support of PP-internal movement of adverbial pro-forms → word order: *toen* typically precedes PP-internal modifiers (Corver 2022).

- (3) a. De baby huilde [_{PP} Spec [_{P'} **net** [_{P'} na de donderslag]]]. *[na de donderslag **net**]
the baby cried just after the thunderclap
- b. De baby huilde [_{PP} **toen** [_{P'} **net** [_{P'} P_{toen}]]]. *[**net** toen]
the baby cried then just
'The baby cried a minute ago.'

The standard marker *dan*: movement to Spec,PP

- Uniformity: suppose the standard marker *dan*, just like temporal *dan*, is a pro-form ending up in [Spec,PP]. In other words, the sequence *dan* + *XP* is a movement-derived structure:

(1) $[_{PP} [_{DP} \textbf{dan}] [_{P'} P_\emptyset [_{XP} \text{Marie} [_{X'} \text{dan}]]]]$ (SC-configuration; possibly an XP-YP structure)

- I assume that the pattern in (1) is at the basis of *dan*-phrases such as *dan mij* (than me), which feature an oblique/accusative case form.

(2) a. Jan is groter dan **mij**. 'Jan is taller than **me**.'

b. $[_{PP} [_{nP} \textbf{dan}] [_{P'} P_\emptyset [_{XP} \text{mij} [_{X'} \text{dan}]]]]$

From *dan mij* 'than me' to *dan ik* 'than I'

- Question: What about comparative constructions featuring *dan ik*?

(1) Jan is groter *dan ik*_{NOM} (ben).
Jan is taller than I (am)

- Answer: *dan* is still a nominal pro-form raising to [Spec,PP]. It is a pro-form that combines with a clause (see Rosenbaum 1967; Kayne 2003).

(2) They said [_{NP} it [_{Clause} that I had to sit down]] (Rosenbaum 1967)

(3) a. ...[_{PP} Spec [_{P'} P [_{DP} [_{DP} *dan*] [_{CP} *ik* (ben)]]]]
b. ...[_{PP} **dan** [_{P'} P [_{DP} [_{DP} ~~*dan*~~] [_{CP} *ik* (ben)]]]]

Surface manifestations of the standard marker

- So far, “comparative” *dan* is a pro-nominal that is moved to the Spec-position of a silent P.
- Question: Does P ever surface?
- Answer: Suppose *of* is a realization of P

(1) Moar ‘k was rapper [**of** zezij] (Overdiep 1937: 596)
but I was faster *of* she_{weak}-she_{strong}
‘But I was faster than she was.’

(2) [_{PP} **DAN** [_{P'} of [_{DP} [_{DP} ~~dan~~] [_{CP} zezij (was)]]]] (DAN = silent pro-form)

The standard marker *als* ‘as’

- Besides *dan* ‘than’ and *of* ‘if/whether’, we also find *als* ‘as’ as the standard marker of comparison:

- (1) Jan is groter als mij_{OBL} / als ik_{NOM}
Jan is taller as me / as I
‘Jan is taller than me.’

- Question: what is *als*?
- Historically, *als* derives from *al+zo* (all+so); see Weijnen (1958), Massaia (2023).
- Proposal: *als* is a low nominal expression within the extended DP. Specifically, it has the following decomposed structure, with –s being a realization of little n (See Corver 2021):

- (2) [_{QP} al [_{NP} n (= -s) [_{NP} pro]]]

Al(s) in complex adverbial pro-forms

- Claim: *als* is part of a more complex adverbial pro-form (DP).
- Just like argumental pro-forms (e.g. Cardinaletti & Starke 1999, Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002), adverbial pro-forms have a complex inner structure.
- Evidence in support of a complex inner structure:
 - (1) **aldaar** (all-there, 'there'), **aldus** (all-thus, 'thus'), **alzo** (all-so, 'thus'), **alstoen** (all-s-then, 'then'), **alsdan** (all-s-then, 'then'), **alsnu** (all-s-now, 'now')

The temporal adverbial *alsdan*

- Temporal *alsdan* (as+then, 'then'), typically in formal language.

- (1) De werkgever mag extra vakantiedagen toewijzen indien de werknemer
the employer may extra vacation-days assign if the employer

alsdan 58 jaar of ouder is.

as-then 58 year or older is

'The employer may allow extra days off if the employer, at that moment, is 58 years old or older than that.'

- (2) [_{PP} **alsdan** [_P P ~~alsdan~~]] 'then'

DP-internal displacement of *als*

- The nominal expression *als* (QP) starts out low in the pronominal structure and moves DP-internally to [Spec,DP].

- (1) a. $[_{DP} \text{Spec } [_{D'} D [_{FP} \text{dan } [_{F'} F [_{QP} \text{al } [_{NP} n (= -s) [_{NP} \text{pro }]]]]]]]]$ base pattern
 b. $[_{DP} \text{als } [_{D'} D [_{FP} \text{dan } [_{F'} F [_{QP} \text{als }]]]]]]$ derived pattern

- Tentative proposal: the standard marker *als* is a complex adverbial pro-form containing a silent (i.e. unpronounced) *DAN* 'than'.

- (2) $[_{PP} \text{alsDAN } [_{P'} P (= \text{OF}) [_{XP} \text{mij } [_{X'} X \text{alsDAN}]]]]]]$ DAN / OF = silent

On the inner structure of doubling pronouns

- The DP-internal displacement of the low nominal expression *a/s* is reminiscent of the DP-internal displacement of the definite pro-form *de* in demonstrative doubling constructions (see Corver & Van Koppen 2018)

(1) a. **De dieje** gaat naar huis. (Southern Dutch dialects)

the that goes to home

‘That one goes home.’

b. $[_{DP} \text{Spec } [_{D'} D [_{FP} \text{dieje } [_{F'} F [_{NP} \text{de}]]]]] \rightarrow [_{DP} \text{de } [_{D'} D [_{FP} \text{dieje } [_{F'} F [_{NP} \text{-de}]]]]]]$

The *dan*-phrase: a construction-specific phenomenon?

- Recall the passive *by*-phrase. It does not only occur in passive clauses but also in noun phrases, as in *a symphony by Beethoven*.
- Question: Is the *dan*-phrase a construction-specific phenomenon? That is, is its appearance restricted to comparative clauses?
- Answer: No, it can be found in other structural environments as well; that is, in environments that do not feature any comparative morphology (*-er/meer*).

Dan as an opposing comparative element (Overdiep 1937: 546)

- (1) A: Jij kunt goed zingen!
you can well sing
'You can sing well!'
B: Nee, **dan** mijn zus! Die kan pas mooi zingen!
no, than my sister. That.one can PRT beautifully sing
'Well, my sister, she really can sing very beautifully!'
- (2) De brief moet ondertekend worden door [moeder **dan** wel vader].
the letter must signed be by mother than PRT father
'The letter must be signed either by the mother or by the father.'
- (3) Hij heeft niemand op de wereld **dan** zijn vader. ('except for')
he has noone in the world than (= 'but') his father

Case study 3: Looking at superlative *het/'t* through an adpositional lense

- **Question:** What is the nature of *het/'t*?
- **Traditional answer:** *het/'t* is a neuter pronoun

(1) Deze auto is 't duur-st.
 this car is the expensive-SUP
 'This car is the most expensive.'

- **An alternative view:** *het/'t* is an adposition

Den Hertog: (1903-1904) 't is a preposition

- (1) 's Winters is hij 't **vlugst**.
-s winter-s is he 't fastest
- (2) Hij loopt 't **vlugst**.
he walks 't fastest

“Het voorafgaande 't is in beide gevallen als een rudimentair **voorzetsel** te beschouwen (vgl. § 37, *Opm.*), dat later voor een lidwoord is gehouden en in schrift door *het* werd voorgesteld.”

(boldface, NC).



A note on adpositional *a*- in English

- Compare: *a* in *alike*. From a surface perspective, it looks like an indefinite article. From a more abstract (analytical) perspective, it behaves like an affixal preposition.

- (1)
- a. They behave a-like
 - b. a-fresh / a-new / a-live / a-loud / a-far / a-low

- These so-called *a*-adjectives can only occur in predicative position, not in attributive position

- (2)
- a. her husband was still alive
 - b. *her alive husband

Support for an adpositional analysis of superlative 't

- Superlative 't cannot cooccur with *Adjective+-st*, when the adjectival phrase is in attributive position.

- (1)
- | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------|
| a. | de (*'t) aardig-st-e man | |
| | the _[-neuter] 't kind-SUP-INFL man | 'the kindest man' |
| b. | Jan's (*'t) oud-st-e zus | |
| | Jan's 't old-SUP-INFL sister | 'Jan's oldest sister' |

- Even if there is intervening material separating the determiner of the noun phrase and superlative 't, the pattern is ill-formed.

- (2)
- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | 't [mijns inziens (*'t) kleinste] meisje in mijn klas (.. is Marie.) |
| | the _[+neuter] in my opinion ('t) smallest girl in my class (.. is Marie) |
| b. | 't [zowel (*'t) slimste als (*'t) aardigste meisje van mijn klas] (... was Marie.) |
| | the both ('t) smartest but also ('t) kindest girl of my class (... was Marie) |

Why can't 't combine with superlative attributive adjectives?

- Head Final Filter (Williams 1982), Right Recursion Constraint (Emonds 1976), FOFC (Biberauer, Holmberg, Roberts 2007)

(1) de [_{AP} <op mij> trotse <*op mij>] man
the <of me> proud <of me> man

(2) a. *Jans [_{PP} 't [_{XP} oudste]] zus (Compare: **her* [_{PP} *alive*] *husband*)
Jan's 't oldest sister
b. Jans [oudste] zus

- But maybe more importantly, PPs typically do not occur as left branch modifiers:

(3) een <*uit Frankrijk> zus <uit Frankrijk> 'a sister from France'

Question: Is “superlative” *'t* a construction specific property?

- Answer: Maybe not! The (adpositional) element *'t* is attested also in other structural environments.
- Manner-adverbial *'t zelfde* ‘(in) the same way’:

- (1) Zij lopen **'t zelfde**.
they walk *'t.same.de*
‘They walk (in) the same way.’





Zij eten 't zelfde.
they eat 't same
'They eat the same thing (a herring).'



Zij eten 't zelfde.
they eat 't same
'They eat (in) the same way.'

*Hetzelfde*_{direct object} and *hetzelfde*_{manner} are not the same!

(1) a. Jan en Marie hebben 't **zelfde** besteld. (Direct Object reading)

Jan and Marie have 't same ordered

'Jan and Marie ordered the same thing (e.g. a herring).'

b.**datzelfde** / **zo'n** zelfde / **een** zelfde....

....that-same / such-a same / a same...

'that same thing / a similar thing / something similar'

(2) a. Jan en Marie lopen 't **zelfde**. (Manner reading)

Jan and Marie walk 't same

'Jan and Marie walk the same way.'

b. *Jan en Marie lopen **datzelfde** / **zo'n** zelfde / **een** zelfde.

- Observation: In DO 't *zelfde*, *het* can be replaced by other determiners. With manner 't *zelfde*, this is impossible, even though semantically it would make sense ('in such a way / in a similar way' etc.)

If 't = P, then what is the complement of 't?

- Answer: the complement is a nominal expression (NB: the most typical complement of P)
- Tentative proposal: superlative *–ste* is a nominal expression with the inner structure $[_{nP} n (= -s) [_{NP} -t(e)]]$. (NB: see Kayne 2022 for a compositional analysis of English *–est* (-e + -st)).

(1) Zij lopen $[_{PP} 't [_{nP} vlug [_{nP} n (= -s) [te]]]]$
 they walk 't fast -s te

- This analysis may be extended to manner-adverbial 't *zelfde* (the same, 'the same way')

(2) a. Zij lopen $[_{PP} 't [_{nP} zelf [_{nP} n [de]]]]$ (Standard Dutch)
 b. $[_{PP} 't [_{nP} zelf [_{nP} n (= -s) [te]]]]$ (Aarschot Dutch)

- Conclusion: Dutch superlatives are actually nominal expressions (see also Matushansky (2008))

Case study 4: P+P sequences

- (1)
- a. een [**bijna** lege] fles
a at+to empty bottle
'an almost empty bottle'
- b. [_{PathP} na(ar) [_{LocP} bij [_{nP} PLACE]]] (base structure)
- c. [_{PathP} **bij**+na [_{LocP} ~~bij~~ [_{nP} PLACE]]] (derived structure)
- (2)
- a. Ik vind die vaas [ronduit lelijk].
I find that vase round-out ugly
'I think this vase is downright/very ugly.'
- b. [_{PathP} uit [_{LocP} rond [_{nP} PLACE]]] (base structure)
- c. [_{PathP} **rond**+uit [_{LocP} ~~rond~~ [_{nP} PLACE]]] (derived structure)

Case study 5: P *en* P patterns (P and P)

- (1) a. Zijn kleren waren [**door en door** nat].
his clothes were through and through wet
'His clothes were completely wet.'
- b. Deze man is [**in en in** slecht].
this man is in and in bad
'This is a very bad person.'
- c. Tina was zijn [**op en top** favoriete] zangeres.
Tina was his up and *t*-up favorite singer
'Tina was his absolutely favorite singer.'

P *en* P patterns

- Kayne (1994): heads can never be coordinated. This suggests that the conjuncts **door/in/op** are phrases.
- **Tentative proposal:** these patterns are hidden complex PPs:

- (1) a. $[[_{\text{PathP}} \text{door } [_{\text{LocP}} P_{\text{Loc}} [_{\text{nP}} \text{PLACE}]]] \text{ en } [_{\text{PathP}} \text{door } [_{\text{LocP}} P_{\text{Loc}} [_{\text{nP}} \text{PLACE}]]]]$
- b. $[[_{\text{PathP}} P [_{\text{LocP}} \text{op}_{\text{Loc}} [_{\text{nP}} \text{PLACE}]]] \text{ en } [_{\text{PathP}} t(e) [_{\text{LocP}} \text{op}_{\text{Loc}} [_{\text{nP}} \text{PLACE}]]]]$

Case study 6: More hidden PPs: *genoeg*

- The “degree word” *genoeg* ‘enough’ is a hidden PP headed by *ge-* ‘with’). One might further explore an analysis in which *genoeg* is treated on a par with so-called participia praeverbialia (Van Haeringen 1949).

- (1) a. Deze oude fiets [_{XAP} goed **genoeg**] voor mij.
 this old bike is good enough for me
- b. Deze jongen is [_{XAP} goed **gebekt**].
 this boy is good beak/mouth –*t*
 ‘This boy is a smooth-spoken person’

- (2) [_{PP} *ge-* [_{NP} *noeg*]]

More hidden PPs: *genoeg*

- Possible analyses

- | | | | |
|-----|----|---|--------------------|
| (1) | a. | $[_{AP} [_{AP} \text{goed}] [_{PP} \text{ge-} [_{NP} \text{noeg}]]]$ | (right adjunction) |
| | b. | $[_{PP} \textbf{goed} [_{P'} \text{ge-} [_{XP} \text{noeg} [_{X'} \text{goed}]]]]$ | (displacement) |
| (2) | a. | $[_{AP} [_{AP} \text{goed}] [_{PP} \text{ge-} [_{DP} \text{bekt}]]]$ | (right adjunction) |
| | b. | $[_{PP} \textbf{goed} [_{P'} \text{ge-} [_{XP} \text{bekt} [_{X'} \text{groot}]]]]$ | (displacement) |

Case study 7 Excessive *te*: a hidden PP

- Claim: English *too*, Dutch *te*, and German *zu* are not degree words but rather adpositions.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|----|---|-----|----|---|
| (1) | a. | John is [too tall]. | (2) | a. | John went [to New York]. |
| | b. | Jan is [te lang] | | b. | De auto raakte [te water].
the car fell into the water |
| | c. | Johann ist [zu groß].
J. is too tall | | c. | Ich bleibe [zu Hause].
I stay at home |

- **Question:** What is the complement of the “degree word” *te* in Dutch?

The pro-form *-en* as Ground

- Normally, adpositions take a nominal complement (1a). So-called intransitive Ps are actually transitive: P combines with a silent nominal expression.

- (1)
- a. De auto staat [_{PP-LOC} achter [**het huis**]].
the car is behind the house
- b. De auto staat [_{PP} achter [**pro**_{Ground}]].
the car stands behind (= at the back of the house)

- In certain contexts, the complement of P surfaces as the minimal proform *-en*, which I take to be an equivalent of English 'one'

- (2)
- De auto reed [_{PP-Path} naar [_{PP-LOC} achter [_{NP} **-en**]]]
the car drove to behind *-en*
'The car drove backwards.'

The adposition *te* can combine with P+*-en*

- (1) a. Ik hoorde het [_{XPP} een maand [_{PP-Path} te [_{PP-Loc} vor [_{NP} **en**]]]]
I heard it a month to before-en
'I heard it a month earlier.'
- b. Dit gaat mijn begrip [_{XPP} ver [_{PP-Path} te [_{PP-Loc} bov- [_{NP} **en**]]]].
this goes my understanding far to above
'This is far too difficult for me to understand/ This far exceeds my knowledge'

A remarkable pattern: *te* + ‘een’ + Adjective + Noun

- The “inflected” degree word *te*

- (1) a. Die hoed is [veel **te** groot]. (Standard Dutch)
that hat is much too big
- b. diən ūt is fø:l **tə** gruet. (Aarschot Dutch: Pauwels 1965)
- (2) a. Ik heb [een [_{XAP} veel **te** grote] hoed]
I have a much too big hat
- b. kem [[_{XAP} vø:l **təno** gruten] ūt]. (Aarschot Dutch)
I-have much too-a_{Masc.Sg} big hat

Analysis

- Aarschot Dutch *vø:/ tənə* as a modifying PP featuring the pro-form *nə*.

(1) [_{DP} D_∅ [_{XAP} [_{PP} *vø:/* [_{P'} *tə* [_{NP} *nə*]]] *gruten*] *ūt*].

Conclusion: looking through an adpositional lense

- Defamiliarization: looking at adjectival constructions and degree words through an adpositional lense
- (Dutch) adjectival constructions have various “hidden” adpositional phenomena (e.g. *dan*-phrase, the degree “adverb” *bijna*, superlative *'t*) or display properties shared with adpositional phrases (e.g. *-er* in the comparative form *lager* ‘lower’ and the adpositional form *onder* ‘under’).
- We tried to give evidence in support of these adpositional properties within the extended adjectival projection by looking at the syntactic behavior of the various morphemes (*dan*, *'t*, etc.).
- If the adpositional analysis of (some of) these phenomena is on the right track, the question arises as to what this implies for the semantic analysis of these constructions. Specifically, do adpositional notions such as ‘Location’, ‘Path’ etc. play a role in the expression of ‘Degree’.