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## The boundaries of alignment. Pronoun-verb merger in varieties of Dutch

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Personal pronouns in (Standard) Dutch can take a variety of shapes, among which we can often distinguish between a ‘full’ form and a ‘reduced’ form (e.g. full *het* [hɛt] vs. reduced  $\text{ʔ}[\text{ət}]$  for 3 sing. neuter). Berendsen (1986) shows that these forms cannot be linked to each other by automatic phonological vowel reduction, but function instead as different lexical items; one argument for this is that some idioms only allow the reduced form but not the full form.

However, the reduced forms themselves can assume a number of phonological shapes. For instance, the 3 sing. neuter pronoun comes in at least two reduced flavours:  $[\text{ət}]$  and  $[\text{t}]$ . There is very little literature on the distribution of these forms. In this paper we discuss the sparse observations previously made on this contrast, and complement those with data from a large database on Dutch dialects plus a survey on the acceptability of forms in Standard Dutch. We show that phonological alignment interacts with syntactic structure to give a complicated distributional pattern.

In a descriptive work on informal Dutch for the general public, de Vries (2001) claims that the consonant-only form can be found before vowel initial verbal stems as well as before stems with an underlying *h* in which the consonant is lost, and he provides the following examples (we follow De Vries’ spelling conventions):

- (1) a. *Tis nie waar* ‘It-is not true’
- b. *Tinteresseert me in hoge mate* ‘I’m very interested in it’ (It-interests me in high measure)
- c. *Thoudt niet over* ‘It’s not very well’ (It holds not over)
- d. *Theeft niks te betekenen* ‘It doesn’t mean a thing’ (It-has nothing to mean)

Without showing examples, De Vries further claims that the consonant-only form can also ‘sometimes’ occur before consonant-initial stems, except before stems starting in *d* and *t*, in which case the schwa would be necessary. Further, de Vries (2001) points out that the schwa-less form also occurs after vowel-final verbal stems and ‘in some cases’ after consonant-initial stems as well:

- (2) a. *Ik gaat nu meteen doen* ‘I’ll do it right away’ (I go-it now immediately do)
- b. *Ik doet wel effe voor je* ‘I will do it for you’ (I do-it AFFIRMATIVE quickly for you)

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- c. *Wat was't voor een man?* 'What kind of man was it?' (What was-it for a man?)

Noske (2005) offers similar facts albeit only for vowel-initial stems, but he claims that there is a difference between Northern and Southern Dutch in this respect, where Northern roughly refers to The Netherlands, and Southern to Flanders: the consonant-initial form would be much more common than in the south. He argues that this is due to the fact that more generally word-alignment constraints tend to be ranked higher in the north than in the south.

Noske (2005) and de Vries (2001) do not provide clear statements of the sources of their empirical claims. In this talk, we present the results of a database search in two large dialectological databases (the Syntactic Atlas of Dutch Dialects and the Morphological Atlas of Dutch dialects) as well as a systematic survey among a group of speakers of Standard Dutch.

One observation which needs to be made is that many speakers of Dutch have a clear contrast between (1a) and (1d) on the one hand (which are perfect) and (1b) and (1c) (which are marginal). This seems to correlate with a split between functional and lexical verbs, where the former tolerate the total cliticization more freely than the latter. This is true for the post-verbal position as well; note that all of de Vries' examples in (2) feature a non-lexical verb.

Further, Noske (2005)'s results can be partially confirmed, but the regional pattern is more complicated than just involving a north-south split. Different phonological and syntactic conditions apply in different regions.

In a theoretical interpretation of our findings, we claim that varieties of Dutch behave differently as to the division between schwa forms such as [ət] and consonant-only forms such as [t]. In some dialects, the difference is one of schwa deletion and phonological alignment in the appropriate phonological context; in others [ət] and [t] are separate lexical items, subject to a different morphosyntactic distribution, just like [hət] and [t]. Those latter dialects do not necessarily invoke phonological alignment in the description of their patterns.

## Bibliography

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