

In search of the function of the Dutch partitive genitive: a corpus analysis

Dirk Pijpops¹ & Freek Van de Velde²

¹ Student Master of AI, Speech & Language Technology, KU Leuven

² RU Quantitative Lexicology and Variational Linguistics, KU Leuven

Outline

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Results
- Function of the partitive **-s** suffix
- Conclusions

Introduction

- Dutch partitive genitive

iets
something
'something fun'

leuk-s
fun-GEN

[_{NP} Q_i Adj_j-s] ↔ [modifier_j head-quantity_i]

- *niets bijzonder-s* 'nothing special'
- *veel interessant-s* 'a lot of interesting things'
- *weinig concreet-s* 'few concrete things'
- *wat zinnig-s* 'something sensible'
- *zoveel goed-s* 'so many good things'

Introduction

- Function of the **-s** suffix
 - Nominalisation (Van Marle 1996, Haeseryn et al. 1997)
 - N-movement (Abney 1987)
 - Empty noun (Kester 1996, Hoeksema 1998)
 - Predicative relation (Broekhuis & Strang 1996, Broekhuis 2013)
 - Construction marker (Booij 2010)
- However, variation:
 - The **-s** need not be expressed: *iets interessant(s)*

Introduction

- If the **-s** may disappear in any given context, it is unlikely to bear an important, purely grammatical function
- Useless remnant of case system? Other function?
- Research question:
 - What factors determine the presence or absence of the partitive genitive **-s**?

Methodology

- CONDIV corpus (see Grondelaers et al. 2000 for details)
- 3018 partitive genitives after manual checking
- Binary response variable: [+s] / [-s]
- Mixed models logistic regression
- Stepwise variable selection procedure

Methodology

- Fixed effects

- Variety: Flanders, the Netherlands
- Register: chat, e-mail, mass-newspaper, quality-newspaper
- Quantifier: *iets* ('something'), *niets* ('nothing'), *veel* ('a lot'), *wat* ('something'), *weinig* ('little'), *zoveel* ('so much')
- Type-Adjective: other, deviant, colour
- Length-Adjective: 1, 2, 3, 4
- Number-of-words-AP 1, 2
- Frequency: log-transformed frequency of the phrase

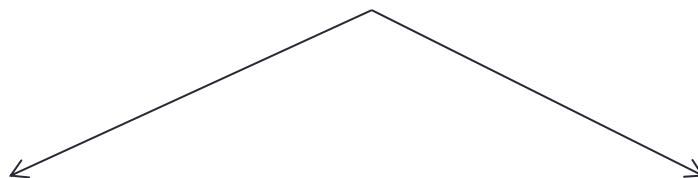
- Random effect

- Phrase *iets leuk(s)*, *iets zinnig(s)*, *weinig leuk(s)*,...

Methodology

- Deviant adjectives:
 - *Verkeerd* ('wrong'), *goed* ('good'), *beter* ('better'), *fout* ('incorrect')

Of heb ik hier iets verkeerd verstaan...
or have I here **something wrong(ly)** understand



~~*[iets verkeerd] verstaan*
[something wrong] understand~~

~~Partitive genitive
'or did I understand something wrong?'
[-s] or [+s]~~

iets [verkeerd verstaan]
Something [wrongly understand]

Adverbial construction
'or did I misunderstand something?'
always [-s]

Methodology

- Fixed effects

- Variety: Flanders, the Netherlands
- Register: chat, e-mail, mass-newspaper, quality-newspaper
- Quantifier: *iets, niets, veel, wat, weinig, zoveel*
- Type-Adjective: other, deviant, colour
- Length-Adjective: 1, 2, 3, 4
- Number-of-words-AP 1, 2
- Frequency: log-transformed frequency of the phrase

- Random effect

- Phrase iets leuk(s), niets zinnig(s), weinig concreet(s),...

Mixed effects logistic regression model

Predictors	Levels of categorical predictors	Estimates	Confidence intervals		P-values	
		success level = [-s]	2,5%	97,5%		
	intercept	0.07	-0.67	0.82	0.8482	
<i>Type-Adjective</i>	<i>other</i>	Reference level				
	<i>deviant</i>	1.96	1.45	2.46	< 0.0001	***
	<i>colour</i>	5.09	3.88	6.30	< 0.0001	***
<i>Variety</i>	<i>Flanders</i>	Reference level				
	<i>Netherlands</i>	-1.69	-2.01	-1.37	< 0.0001	***
<i>Register</i>	<i>chat</i>	Reference level				
	<i>e-mail</i>	-0.48	-0.77	-0.19	0.0013	**
	<i>mass-newspaper</i>	-1.08	-1.42	-0.74	< 0.0001	***
	<i>quality-newspaper</i>	-1.65	-2.22	-1.08	< 0.0001	***
<i>Quantifier</i>	<i>iets</i> ('something')	Reference level				
	<i>niets</i> ('nothing')	-0.05	-0.66	0.56	0.8809	
	<i>veel</i> ('a lot')	-1.14	-1.98	-0.29	0.0083	**
	<i>wat</i> ('something')	-2.00	-2.99	-1.00	< 0.0001	***
	<i>weinig</i> ('little')	-2.50	-4.12	-0.89	0.0023	**
	<i>zoveel</i> ('so much')	-2.35	-4.37	-0.34	0.0221	*
<i>Frequency</i>		-0.45	-0.79	-0.10	0.0109	*
<i>Interaction Variety – Quantifier</i>	<i>Flanders & iets</i>	Reference level				
	<i>Netherlands – niets</i>	-0.33	-1.03	0.38	0.3635	
	<i>Netherlands – veel</i>	0.98	0.02	1.94	0.0443	*
	<i>Netherlands – wat</i>	1.22	0.19	2.25	0.0208	*
	<i>Netherlands – weinig</i>	2.33	0.66	4.00	0.0062	**
	<i>Netherlands – zoveel</i>	2.10	-0.94	5.13	0.1755	

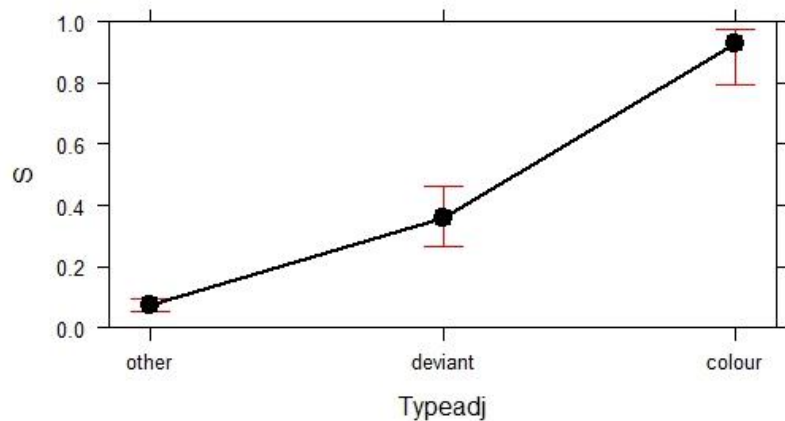
Results

- Effect plots

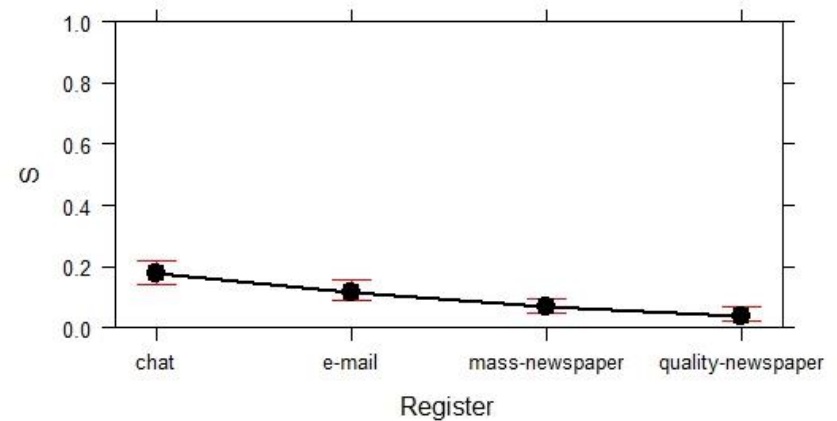
AIC: 2216

C-value: 0.872

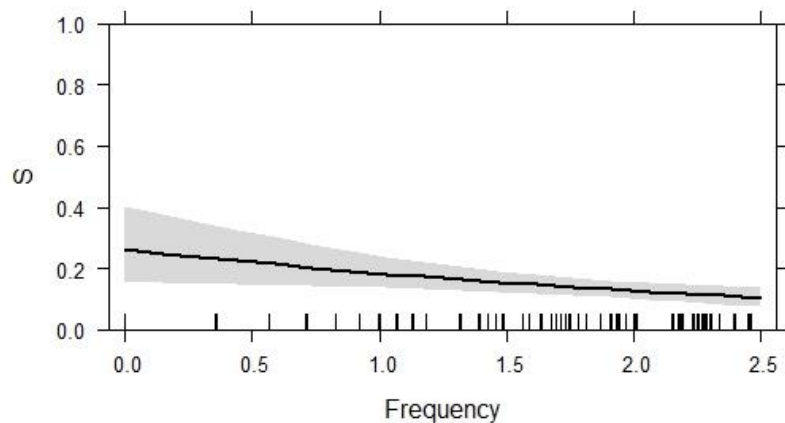
Typeadj effect plot



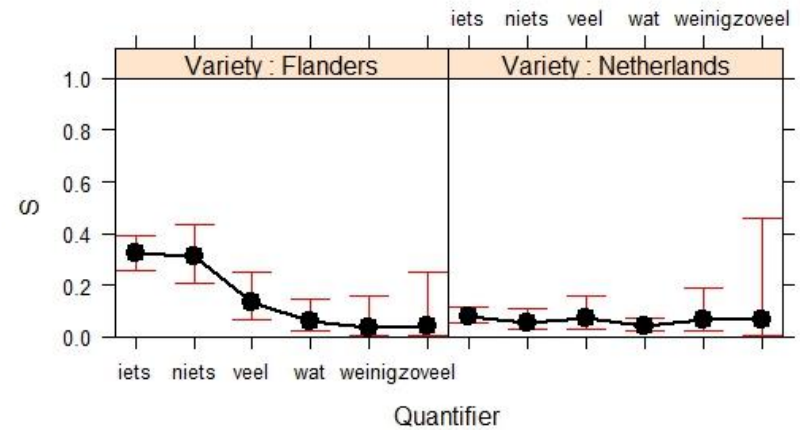
Register effect plot



Frequency effect plot



Variety*Quantifier effect plot



Results

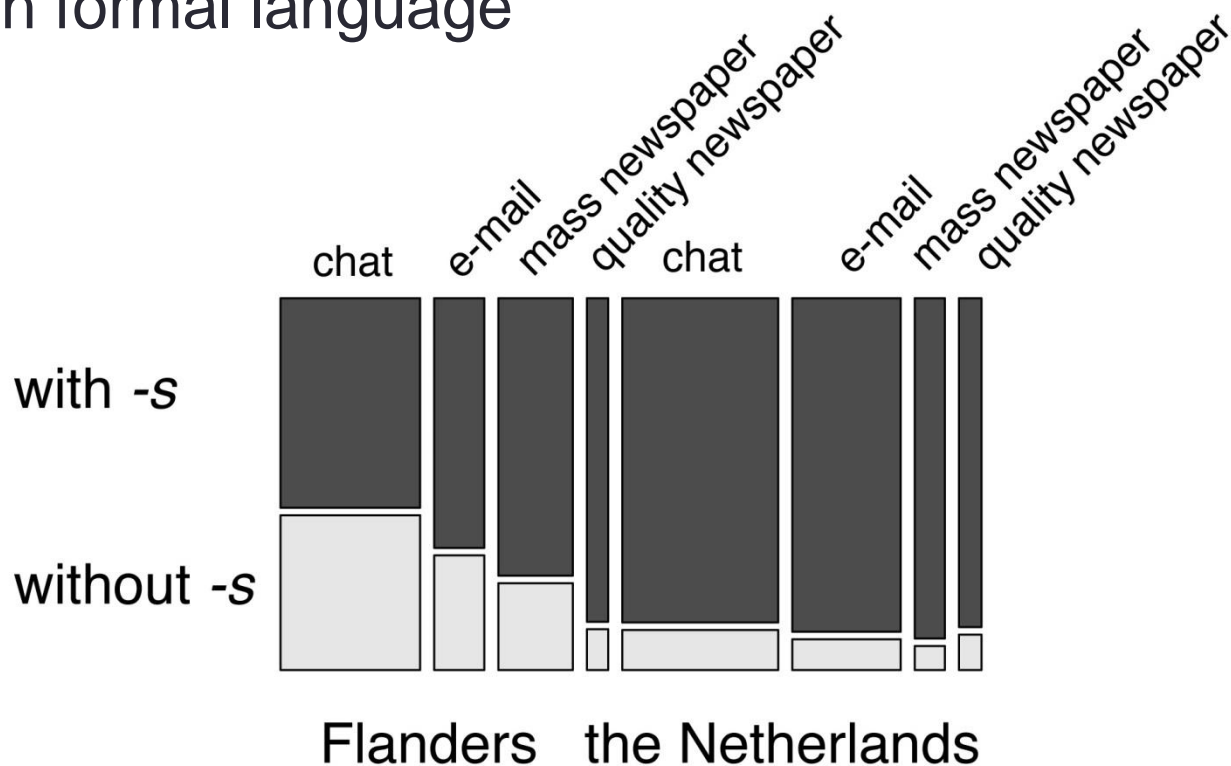
- **-s** omission is possible everywhere, but...
- We are quite capable of delimiting the contexts in which grand-scale **-s** omission is taking place
- Extralinguistic contexts:
 - Flemish informal language use

Results

- Linguistic contexts: where the influence of adjacent constructions can be pointed at
- **-s** omission
 - Deviant adjectives: adverbial constructions
 - Colour adjectives: colour nouns
- **-s** retention
 - *Veel, weinig, zoveel*: modifier-noun constructions
veel water, weinig nieuws, zoveel lekkers
'a lot of water', 'little news', 'so much candy'

Function of the partitive -s suffix

- The Netherlands: resilient **-s** retention outside of specific linguistic contexts
- Flanders: only in formal language



Function of the partitive -s suffix

- Flanders:
 - *iets, niets*: signals the use of the standard language (non-grammatical = extra-linguistic function)
 - *veel, weinig, zoveel*: reïnterpretation as nominalisation suffix (new grammatical function)
- The Netherlands:
 - reanalysis of **-s** suffix (new grammatical function)

⇒ multifunctional

Function of the partitive -s suffix

- New grammatical function in the Netherlands?
 - Nominalization
 - N-movement
 - Empty noun
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Function of the partitive -s suffix

- New grammatical function in the Netherlands?
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 - **Construction marker**
- *iets* *heel-s* *uniek* (Royen 1948)
something very-**GEN** unique
- Prototypical instances cannot be reduced to other constructions

Conclusions

- Synchronic: multifunctional **-s** suffix
- Diachronic: correspond to 2 ways to handle junk from earlier language stages (Lass 1990)
- Flanders
 - Throw it away: grand-scale **-s** omission
- The Netherlands
 - exaptation: new function shields it from waves of deflexion
→ possible expansion to adverbs

Conclusions

- Much left unexplored:
 - Diachronic dimension
 - Semantic difference between variants?
 - *iets heel-s uniek*
 - Lexical diffusion

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Thanks!

Dirk Pijpops

Student Master of AI, Speech & Language Technology, KU Leuven

pijpopsd@outlook.com

Freek Van de Velde

RU Quantitative Lexicology and Variational Linguistics, KU Leuven

freek.vandavelde@arts.kuleuven.be