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978-0-521-64521-8 - A Reference Grammar of Dutch: With Exercises and Key

Carol Fehringer

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A Reference Grammar of Dutch

A Reference Grammar of Dutch is aimed at English-speaking students of Dutch at beginner/intermediate level. It is designed to be practical and user-friendly: grammatical information is presented in short entries arranged in alphabetical order, allowing students to gain easy access to specific points of grammar or problematic points of vocabulary as they encounter them in practice. Each grammatical rule is illustrated by simple, everyday Dutch examples of the kind likely to be encountered and used by the learner. Specialised linguistic terminology is kept to a minimum, with a glossary of essential terms provided, and charts and tables are included to help the student focus on the main points. Each entry is linked to a set of exercises which are graded according to complexity, and there is a key to the exercises at the back of the book. A comprehensive index is also provided.

Carol Fehringer is Lecturer in German Linguistics and Dutch at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. She has published articles on theoretical morphology and German and English dialects in a number of journals.

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Foreword

The purpose and style of this book

The purpose of this book is to provide an accessible reference grammar of the Dutch language for English-speaking students of Dutch and to help consolidate their knowledge through practical exercises on a whole range of grammatical topics. It is intended both for beginners and for students at an intermediate level. In addition, advanced learners wishing to revise particular grammatical points may also benefit from this book. As the grammar is designed for practical use, linguistic terminology is kept to a minimum and only traditional grammatical terms are used. The book is divided into two main parts: Part 1: a reference grammar of Dutch; Part 2: a set of exercises relating to the grammatical problems dealt with in Part 1.

Part 1 Dutch reference grammar

The reference grammar is specifically designed to be practical and user-friendly. Grammatical points are explained in short separate entries arranged in alphabetical order. This allows the student to gain quick and easy access to a particular grammatical problem and to concentrate entirely on that problem without being confused by other related issues. In this way, the layout of the reference grammar is more like that of a dictionary than that of a traditional grammar.¹ In addition, for students preferring a 'basic-to-complex' progression, a didactic guide has been included at the beginning of the book which sets out the most important grammatical topics for a beginner (or intermediate student) to learn and suggests a possible order in which these should be tackled.

Although most of the points covered are grammatical, some entries deal with specific questions of vocabulary which cause difficulties when translating Dutch into English or vice versa. Each point is explained as concisely as possible and illustrated by the use of simple, everyday Dutch examples of the kind likely to be encountered and used by the learner. Some of the larger sections contain charts and tables to help the student focus on the main points in question. Unpredictable exceptions to rules and more complicated issues, which may be of interest to intermediate or more advanced learners, are dealt with at the end of each section and introduced by the symbol . At the end of the reference grammar there is a comprehensive index containing references to the entries and to more specific grammatical problems covered in the reference grammar.

Part 2 Exercises

Each entry is linked to an exercise or set of exercises specifically designed to practise a particular grammatical problem. In sections with more than one exercise, the first one

¹ Compare M. Swan, *Practical English Usage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) which has a similar layout

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(**A**) concentrates on the recognition and understanding of particular Dutch forms. Students are required to explain the use of a specific form or construction and/or translate Dutch words and sentences into English. The second exercise (**B**) focuses on the application of the rules learned in the reference grammar. This involves filling in gaps, giving the correct forms of individual Dutch words, reformulating Dutch sentences etc. Exercise (**C**) consists of a free composition in which students are required to write short texts in Dutch.² There may also be a dialogue at the end of the section which serves as a basis for a reformulation or gap-fill exercise.

In the larger sections, each exercise is graded according to complexity. Exercises marked **1** are designed for beginners to intermediate students and deal with the straightforward application of rules. Those marked **2** are aimed at intermediate to advanced students and include more complex constructions and exceptions to rules.

The exercise section is followed by a key to the exercises and an alphabetical list of common irregular verbs.³

² Note that the instructions are deliberately general so that teachers can adapt (C) to the requirements of their students.

³ I also recommend the following Dutch grammars for English-speaking students: B. C. Donaldson, *Dutch: A Comprehensive Grammar* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); W. Z. Shetter, *Dutch: An Essential Grammar* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) and the accompanying exercise book by J. Delap and E. Stronks, *Beginning Dutch Workbook* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1993). Advanced students and teachers of Dutch may also wish to consult the following grammars written in the Dutch language: A. F. Florijn et al., *De regels van het Nederlands. Grammatica voor anderstaligen* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1994); A. M. Fontein and A. Pescher-ter Meer, *Nederlandse grammatica voor anderstaligen* (Utrecht: Nederlands Centrum Buitenlanders, 1993).

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Grammatical terms

- ABSTRACT NOUN** A noun referring to an idea rather than to something concrete which one can see or touch, e.g. E. *beauty, honour*, D. *vrijheid*.
- ACCENT** In writing, a mark such as ´ or ` placed over a letter to indicate stress or differentiate one word from another, e.g. D. *één*.
- ADJECTIVE** A word used to describe a noun or pronoun, e.g. E. *a pretty woman, she is clever*, D. *een mooie vrouw*.
- ADVERB** A word used to describe a verb or an adjective, e.g. E. *he speaks quickly, he is surprisingly good*, D. *hij spreekt snel*.
- AGENT** The person or thing that carries out the action described by the verb, e.g. E. *the boy played tennis, I was arrested by the police*, D. *ik schreef een brief*.
- ARTICLE** A word, such as *a* or *the* used before a noun (see **DEFINITE ARTICLE** and **INDEFINITE ARTICLE**).
- AUXILIARY VERB** A verb, such as *have* or *be*, which is used with other verbs to make different tenses, e.g. E. *I have worked*, D. *ik heb gewerkt, ik ben gegaan*.
- BARE INFINITIVE** In Dutch, the infinitive without *om* or *te*, e.g. D. *ik moet gaan*.
- CLAUSE** The part of the sentence containing the finite verb (usually with a subject), e.g. E. [*John came round*_{Clause 1}] and [*I made some tea*_{Clause 2}], D. [*de student werkt hard*_{Clause 1}] maar [*hij krijgt steeds slechte cijfers*_{Clause 2}].
- COLLECTIVE NOUN** A singular noun which is used to refer to a whole group of people or things, e.g. E. *a herd (of cattle), the police*, D. *de familie*.
- COMPARATIVE** The form of the adjective used when comparing one person or thing to another, e.g. E. *John is taller than Peter*, D. *Jan is groter dan Piet*.
- COMPOUND (WORD)** A word made up of two or more other words which can also occur independently, e.g. E. *post + man = postman*, D. *appel + boom = appelboom*.
- CONDITIONAL** A tense used to refer to hypothetical situations in the future, e.g. E. *I would go*, D. *ik zou gaan*.
- CONDITIONAL PERFECT** A tense used to refer to hypothetical situations in the past, e.g. E. *I would have done it*, D. *ik zou het gedaan hebben / ik had het gedaan*.
- CONJUNCTION** A word, such as *and, but, because, while* etc., which links clauses together, e.g. E. *John studies French and his friend studies German*, D. *ik studeer Duits maar ik vind het moeilijk*.
- CONSONANT** A speech sound, such as *p, t, g, d, s, f, l* etc. which is not a vowel or diphthong.
- CO-ORDINATING CONJUNCTION** A conjunction, such as D. *en, maar, want* etc., which does not affect word order (contrast **SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION**).
- DEFINITE ARTICLE** A word (i.e. *the* in English) placed before a noun to make it definite or specific, e.g. E. *the man*, D. *de man, het huis* (contrast **INDEFINITE ARTICLE**).
- DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN** A word, such as *this, that, these* etc., which points out a specific person or thing, differentiating it from other similar members of its class, e.g. E. *this person*, D. *deze man, dat huis*.
- DIMINUTIVE** A word with a special ending used chiefly to indicate smallness, although it may also be used to express endearment or contempt, e.g. E. *piglet, daddy*, D. *kindje*.

List of grammatical terms

- DIPHTHONG** Two different vowel sounds occurring within the same syllable, e.g. E. *ai* in *wai*, *ou* in *house*, D. *ij* in *mijn*, *ui* in *huis*.
- DIRECT OBJECT** The direct recipient of the action described by the verb, e.g. E. *I read **the book***, *I saw **my friend***, D. *hij schreef **een brief*** (contrast **INDIRECT OBJECT**).
- FINITE VERB** The part of the verb which may change its form to show person, number and tense. It usually occurs with a subject, e.g. E. *John **lives** abroad, he **went** to work*, D. *ik **ga** als jullie **gaan*** (contrast **INFINITIVE**).
- FIRST PERSON** The grammatical category of pronouns or verbs used by the speaker/writer to refer to himself/herself either alone or with others, e.g. E. ***I am, we are***, D. ***ik ben, wij zijn*** (contrast **SECOND PERSON, THIRD PERSON**).
- FUTURE PERFECT** A tense used to refer to completed actions in the future, e.g. E. ***I will have done** it by next week*, D. *ik **zal het gedaan hebben***.
- FUTURE TENSE** A tense used usually to refer to future time, e.g. E. ***I will do** it soon*, D. *ik **zal het doen***, or to express an assumption, e.g. E. *he **will be** there by now*.
- GENDER (GRAMMATICAL GENDER)** In Dutch, the use of special grammatical forms (e.g. different definite articles) to differentiate common gender nouns (i.e. old masculines and feminines) from neuter nouns, e.g. D. ***de** man, **de** vrouw, **het** kind*.
- IMPERATIVE** The form of the verb used to give an order or command, e.g. E. ***come here!***, D. ***ga weg!***
- INDEFINITE ARTICLE** A word (i.e. *a* in English) used to indicate that the following noun is not specific, e.g. E. ***a** man*, D. ***een** man* (contrast **DEFINITE ARTICLE**).
- INDEFINITE PRONOUN** A word, such as *some, somebody, any, every* etc., which refers to things that are not specific, e.g. E. ***some** people like jazz*, D. ***veel** studenten hebben geen geld*.
- INDIRECT OBJECT** (Usually a person.) The recipient of the direct object, e.g. E. *I gave the book to **the teacher***, *I introduced my friend to **my parents***, D. *hij schreef een brief aan **zijn vriendin*** (contrast **DIRECT OBJECT**).
- INFINITIVE** The part of the verb which is always given in dictionaries and does not change its form to show person, number and tense, e.g. E. *to work, to go, to come*, D. *werken, gaan, komen*.
- INSEPARABLE VERBS** A set of Dutch verbs with the prefixes *be-, her-, ont-, ver-, ge-* and *er-*. These prefixes are never separated from the verb, e.g. D. *ik **begrijp** het, ik heb het **vertaald*** (contrast **SEPARABLE VERBS**).
- INTRANSITIVE VERB** A verb not taking a direct object, e.g. E. *he **died***, D. *ik **lachte*** (contrast **TRANSITIVE VERB**).
- IRREGULAR** Not following the normal rules, e.g. E. not **X** *I teach*ed but *I **taught***, D. *ik **ging**, hij **zong*** (not **X** *ik ga*ade, **X** *hij zing*de).
- MAIN CLAUSE** In Dutch, a clause which does not begin with a subordinating conjunction, e.g. D. ***ik heb gehoord** dat hij ziek is* (contrast **SUBORDINATE CLAUSE**).
- MANNER** An expression of manner describes *how* something happens, e.g. E. *he came **quickly***, *I arrived **in a bad mood***, D. *hij gaat **met de trein***.
- MODAL VERBS** A set of verbs used, together with the infinitive form of other verbs, to express a range of moods such as volition, obligation, ability etc., e.g. E. ***I want** to go, he **can** do it*, D. *ik **wil** gaan, ik **moet** het doen*.
- NOUN** A word used to name a person, thing or concept. In English and Dutch, it may occur after an article and may be either singular or plural, e.g. E. *a **man**, the **boys**, **happiness***. D. *een **hond**, het **huis**, de **kinderen***.
- NUMBER** A term used to refer to the grammatical categories of singular and plural (see **SINGULAR** and **PLURAL**).
- OBJECT (Obj.)** (See **DIRECT OBJECT** and **INDIRECT OBJECT**.)

List of grammatical terms

PARTICIPLE (See PRESENT PARTICIPLE and PAST PARTICIPLE.)

PASSIVE A grammatical construction used to shift the emphasis from the **agent** of the verb (i.e. the doer) to the **recipient** of the action described by the verb, e.g. E. ***I was praised by the teacher*** (as opposed to *the teacher praised me*). Often, the agent is left unspecified, e.g. ***the thief was arrested***, D. ***het wordt nooit gedaan***.

PAST PARTICIPLE The part of the verb used in the perfect, pluperfect and passive which does not change its form to show person and number, e.g. E. *they have **done** it, it was **written** yesterday*, D. *ik heb hard **gewerkt**, wij hebben niets **gezegd***.

PAST TENSE (SIMPLE PAST) A tense used to refer to past events, e.g. E. *I **worked**, he **went***, D. *hij **werkte**, hij **ging***.

PERFECT TENSE A tense used to refer to actions in the past which are still relevant to the present, e.g. *I **have cleaned** the kitchen (and it is still clean)*, D. *ik **heb** de hele dag **gewerkt**, ik **ben** nooit in Amsterdam **geweest*** (contrast PLUPERFECT TENSE).

PERSON (See FIRST PERSON, SECOND PERSON and THIRD PERSON.)

PERSONAL PRONOUN A pronoun referring to one or more persons, e.g. E. ***I, you, he, they, me, him, them***, D. ***ik, jij, hij, wij, mij, hem, ons*** etc., or to inanimate objects, e.g. ***it, they, them***, D. ***het, hij, hem, ze*** etc.

PLUPERFECT TENSE A tense used to refer to events in the past which are no longer relevant to the present, e.g. *I **had cleaned** the kitchen (but it is now dirty again)*, D. *ik **had** de hele dag **gewerkt**, ik **was** nooit in Amsterdam **geweest*** (contrast PERFECT TENSE).

PLURAL (pl.) The grammatical form used to refer to more than one person, thing or concept, e.g. E. *the **tables**, **we were***, D. ***twee mannen**, **wij werken*** (contrast SINGULAR).

POSSESSIVE PRONOUN A pronoun used to denote possession, e.g. E. ***my house, your cat, his dog***, E. ***mijn man, jouw vriend, hun kinderen***.

PREFIX Something that is attached to the beginning of a word, e.g. E. ***unhappy***, D. ***uitgaan***.

PREPOSITION A word, such as *in, on, over, under* etc. used before a noun or pronoun to relate it to other words in the sentence, e.g. E. *the book is **on** the table, he went **with** his wife*, D. *zijn auto stond **voor** het huis*.

PREPOSITIONAL PREFIX A preposition attached to the beginning of a word, e.g. D. ***opbellen, uitgaan, voorkomen***.

PRESENT PARTICIPLE In English, the form of the verb ending in ‘-ing’ which is used in a number of different grammatical constructions, e.g. *I am **working**, he was still **sleeping***. Dutch present participles end in *-d(e)* and are used as adjectives and adverbs, e.g. D. ***het huilende kind***.

PRESENT TENSE A tense used primarily to refer to present time, general time and habitual actions e.g. E. *John **feels** ill, the world **is** round, they **meet** once a week*, D. *Jan **werkt** te hard, de kinderen **blijven** thuis*.

PROGRESSIVE FORMS In English, verbal constructions using *to be* plus a present participle, e.g. *I **am going**, he **was reading**, **have you been crying?***

PRONOUN A word, such as *I, he, it, they, this, that, who* etc., used to refer to a noun (see DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN, INDEFINITE PRONOUN, PERSONAL PRONOUN, POSSESSIVE PRONOUN, RELATIVE PRONOUN).

REFLEXIVE VERB A verb whose object refers back to its subject, e.g. *I [Subj.] wash **myself** [Obj.]*. The objects of reflexive verbs are known as **reflexive pronouns**, e.g. E. ***myself, yourself, himself, themselves*** etc., D. ***me, je, zich*** etc.

RELATIVE CLAUSE A clause beginning with a relative pronoun, e.g. E. *the girl **who came to dinner***, D. *de man **die met mijn vrouw werkt***.

RELATIVE PRONOUN A pronoun that refers back to a noun already mentioned in the sentence,

List of grammatical terms

e.g. E. *the man **who** lost his job, the problem **which** must be solved*, D. *de vrouw **die** om de hoek woont, het huis **dat** verkocht wordt*.

SECOND PERSON The grammatical category of pronouns or verbs used by the speaker/writer to refer to the person(s) whom s/he is addressing, e.g. E. ***you are***, D. ***jj bent, u bent, julie zijn*** (contrast **FIRST PERSON**, **THIRD PERSON**).

SENTENCE A group of words containing one or more clauses. In writing, it begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, e.g. E. ***That man works with my wife***. D. ***Die man werkt met mijn vrouw maar zij vindt hem niet aardig***.

SEPARABLE VERBS A set of Dutch verbs with prepositional prefixes such as *aan-*, *in-*, *uit-*, *door-*, *om-*, *op-* etc. These prefixes are separated from the verb in certain grammatical constructions, e.g. D. *ik **belde** hem **op**, hij is **aangekomen*** (contrast **INSEPARABLE VERBS**).

SINGULAR (sg.) The grammatical form used to refer to one person, thing or concept, e.g. E. ***a table, I was***, D. ***een man, hij werkt*** (contrast **PLURAL**).

STEM (See **VERB STEM**.)

STRESS In speaking, emphasis placed on a particular syllable of a word, e.g. E. ***father, pretend***, D. ***moeder, tafel***.

STRONG VERB A verb that forms its past tense and past participle by changing a vowel, e.g. E. ***sing – sang – sung***, D. ***rijden – reed – gereden***.

SUBJECT (subj.) A noun or pronoun which carries out the action described by the verb, e.g. E. ***the dog** chases the cat*, D. ***hij** leest het boek*. The subject may also experience the state described by the verb, e.g. E. ***he** feels unwell*, D. ***die man** is heel dik*.

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE In Dutch, a clause beginning with a subordinating conjunction, e.g. D. *ik ben niet naar de bioscoop gegaan **omdat ik geen geld had***.

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION In Dutch, a conjunction, such as ***als, dat, omdat, terwijl*** etc., which sends the finite verb to the end of the following clause, e.g. D. *ik weet **dat** hij geen geld heeft*.

SUPERLATIVE The form of the adjective used to denote an extreme or unsurpassed level, e.g. E. *the **biggest** house, I am the **cleverest***, D. *de **intelligentste** man*.

SYLLABLE That part of a word which usually contains a vowel, e.g. E. ***man***, D. ***vrouw*** consist of one syllable, E. ***woman***, D. ***moeder*** consist of two and E. ***computer***, D. ***opbellen*** consist of three.

TENSE A category of the verb, such as present tense, past tense, future tense etc., which expresses relations of time.

THIRD PERSON The grammatical category of pronouns or verbs used by the speaker/writer to refer not to himself/herself nor to the addressee but to some third party or something else, e.g. E. ***he is, they are***, D. ***het is, zij zijn*** (contrast **FIRST PERSON**, **SECOND PERSON**).

TRANSITIVE VERB A verb taking a direct object, e.g. E. ***he kicked** the cat, I **found** some money*, D. *ik **stuur** twee brieven*.

VERB A word which indicates the performance or occurrence of an action or the existence of a condition. In English and Dutch, it usually occurs with a subject and may change its form to show person, number and tense, e.g. E. ***he works, I felt** unwell*, D. ***het groeit, wij waren** ziek*.

VERB STEM In Dutch, the infinitive minus *-en*, with the appropriate spelling changes, e.g. D. ***werk, woon, zit, leef*** (infinitives *werken, wonen, zitten, leven*).


VOICELESS (of a consonant) Produced without vibration of the vocal chords. Some voiceless consonants in English and Dutch are ***p, t, k, f, s, ch***.

VOWEL The speech sounds ***a, e, i, o, u*** (and ***y*** at the end of words), e.g. E. ***bed, baby***, D. ***bad, boom***.

How to use this book

The reference grammar

When first looking for a particular grammatical topic it is advisable to refer to the alphabetical index at the end of the book. If there is more than one section number listed for a particular topic, the number given in bold highlights the section which deals with that topic in the most detail. Students are advised to refer to that section first. As they become more familiar with the book, students will soon recognise which (more general) grammatical topics comprise a whole section, and the alphabetical listing of these will allow for quick and easy access without the need for an index.

Most sections are divided into numbered subsections with bold headings. These usually deal with the main rules of Dutch grammar which beginners and intermediate students should learn. Exceptions to rules, less common forms and observations on style and usage which may be of more interest to advanced learners are usually given in the paragraphs marked  at the end of the section or, alternatively, in footnotes.




Exercises

Each section of the reference grammar corresponds to a set of exercises which enable students to work on the topic covered in that particular section. They are organised according to type and level.

- Type A** Recognition and understanding of Dutch forms
B Application of rules
C Free composition
- Level 1** Beginners to intermediate
2 Intermediate to advanced

The answers to the exercises are given in the key at the end of the whole exercise section.

EXAMPLE If you want information on the past tense, do the following

ACTION TO TAKE	WHAT YOU WILL FIND
STEP 1 → Go to Index, look under 'p'	Past tense: 27.1, 47 , 50  
STEP 2 → Go to Section 47 of the reference grammar	47 Past tense 47.1 ... 47.2 ...
STEP 3 → • Read 47.1 and 47.2 for formation of past tense • Read 47.3 for usage • Read  if interested in further information	etc.

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[More information](#)*How to use this book*

If you also want to do exercises on the **past tense**, do the following

ACTION TO TAKE	WHAT YOU WILL FIND
STEP 1 → Go to 47 past tense in the exercises section	47 Past tense A1 ... 2 ... B1 ... 2 ... C1 ... 2 ... etc.
STEP 2 → Choose exercises appropriate to your level	
STEP 3 → Go to Key to check answers	47 A1 ... etc. (answers)

Didactic guide for beginners

The grammatical topics dealt with in this book have been arranged alphabetically for quick and easy access. However, some students, particularly beginners, may also feel the need for a ‘didactic guide’ suggesting which topics they should tackle first in order to attain at least a basic level of Dutch. In this way, the learner can gradually build up his/her knowledge of Dutch grammar on a ‘basic-to-complex’ basis, in addition to focusing on specific topics when needed. The charts below set out the main areas of Dutch grammar covered in this book and suggest a possible order in which to tackle each one, beginning with those needed to produce simple sentences in Dutch and then moving on to more complex forms and constructions.

A Sounds and letters

Grammatical topic	Section(s)
Pronunciation	58
Spelling	65
Punctuation – capital letters	11
commas	13
apostrophes	7

B How to form a simple sentence in Dutch

Grammatical topic	Section(s)
Present tense: I WORK , HE WORKS etc.	55
Forms of <i>zijn</i> ‘to be’	33.1(c)
Forms of <i>hebben</i> ‘to have’	33.1(b)
Personal pronouns – subject: I, YOU, HE etc.	49.1 (Table 24)
object: ME, HIM, US etc.	49.1 (Table 25)
difficulties	49.2, 49.3
Direct and indirect objects: I see THE MAN I give it TO THE MAN	45
Word order in simple sentences	78.1(a)
Conjunctions not affecting word order: AND , BUT etc.	17.1

*Didactic guide for beginners***H Special types of verb**

Grammatical topic	Section(s)
Inseparable verbs: begrijpen , ontmoeten etc.	32
Separable verbs: opbellen , uitgaan etc.	64
Reflexive verbs: zich wassen etc.	61

I How to form longer and more complex sentences

Grammatical topic	Section(s)
Conjunctions affecting word order: IF, BECAUSE etc.	17.2
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