I

INTRODUCTION

This part contains three chapters preparatory to the more substantive parts II and III. These chapters introduce the Dutch language (chapter 1) and its basic morphosyntax (chapter 2), and present the major perspectives through which the language has been approached since the nineteenth century.

1

Dutch: the language, its history, its dialects

Dutch (ISO 639–3: NLD) is a West Germanic Indo-European language spoken in the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders), as well as in Suriname, on Aruba, and on the Netherlands Antilles, by a total of over 21 million speakers (Lewis 2009).

Dutch is an English-language exonym, a cognate of the archaic endonym *duits/diets* and also of German *deutsch* 'German.' The current endonym in the Netherlands is *Nederlands*; in Belgium we also find endonymic *Vlaams* 'Flemish' and exonymic (French) *flamand*. Next to *Dutch* and *Nederlands* (German *Niederländisch*), a third name one may encounter is *Hollands* (French *hollandais*) deriving from the name of the western part of the Netherlands. This name is also used by speakers of Dutch dialects when referring to the Dutch standard language (a testimony to the linguistic and cultural dominance of the western provinces of the Netherlands, Noordholland and Zuidholland).

The two languages most closely related to Dutch are Afrikaans (AFR, a seventeenth-century offspring of Dutch spoken in South Africa) and Low German (Low Saxon/Niederdeutsch, NDS), the German of North Germany, which has given way to High German (Standard German, DEU) as the German standard language. Somewhat further removed, but still quite similar to Dutch, are High German and Frisian (also known as Western Frisian, FRY). The two remaining West Germanic languages, Yiddish and English, are historically close to High German and Frisian, respectively, but have developed in such a way that their syntax is now quite different, and hence also quite different from the syntax of Dutch.

The Dutch language as it is known today emerged in the seventeenth century as the result of conscious efforts to promote a standard variety, derived from the Hollandic variant spoken in the urban centers in the west of what is now the Netherlands. These cities flourished partly because of a large and prestigious southern Dutch immigrant community, which must have affected the cultured speech considerably (see Van der Wal 1992). What also played a role was the prominence of printing in the southern parts (e.g. Antwerp), providing a written model for the developing official language. At the same time, the standard

language emerging in the west was heavily influenced by the speech of lower-class immigrants from the east (Van der Sijs 2004:46 f, Howell 2006). The standard Dutch language, then, is not the direct descendant of a single dialect, but the result of language change through dialect contact in combination with language reform.

The dialects spoken in the Dutch-language area, which have so far proved remarkably resilient, can be divided into two large groups: the Low Saxon dialects spoken in the north-east, and the Low Franconian dialects spoken in the south, center, and west. In addition, there is the dialect of the south-eastern provinces of (Dutch and Belgian) Limburg (Limburgish, LIM), which is a Rhine-Franconian variety somewhat closer to the High German dialects. The Low Franconian dialects include Brabantish, East Flemish, West Flemish, Zeeuws, Hollands-Utrechts, and the dialect of North-Noordholland and the North Sea Coast (an area originally inhabited by Frisian speaking people; the North-Noordholland dialect is confusingly called *Westfries* 'West Frisian'). Low Saxon dialects (Gronings, Drents, Stellingwerfs, Sallands, Veluws, Twents, Achterhoeks) are also spoken across the border in Germany (Eastern Frisian, Eemsländisch, Low German) and therefore cannot strictly speaking be called dialects of Dutch.

Information on many aspects of the syntax of these dialects has recently become available in Barbiers *et al*. (2005, 2009). An older, but thorough, survey is Weijnen (1966). Individual syntax-oriented dialect descriptions include Overdiep (1940), Vanacker (1948), and De Bont (1962) for Low Franconian dialects, and Sassen (1953) and Van der Haar (1967) for Low Saxon dialects. Haegeman (1992) is a monograph in syntactic theory based on the Low Franconian dialect of West Flemish.

Since Dutch is the result of a process of standardization starting in the seventeenth century (what we might call the Early Modern Dutch period), the denominations for the earlier periods (Old Dutch, until 1100, and Middle Dutch, 1100–1500) are misleading. The texts we have from these periods are written in earlier stages of various Low Franconian and Low Saxon dialects. Of 'Old Dutch' we have very little; most significant is a small collection of psalm translations, the *Wachtendonckse Psalmen*, written in what appears to have been an Old Eastern Low Franconian dialect. Of the earliest stage of the Low Saxon dialects (called Old Saxon or Old Low German) we have considerably more (see Holthausen 1921, which includes thirty pages on its syntax). Of 'Middle Dutch' we have a great many texts, mostly from Low Franconian Flemish and Brabantish, later also Hollandic, but also from Low Saxon North-East Netherlandic varieties and from the Limburg dialect. The syntax is treated in Stoett (1923), Weijnen (1971), Heersche (1991), Duinhoven (1988, 1997), and Van der Horst (2008). On the syntax of Early Modern Dutch, see Overdiep (1931–1935), Vanacker (1963), Koelmans

(2001), and again Van der Horst (2008). The history of twentieth-century Dutch syntax is described in Van der Horst and Van der Horst (1999).

This book presents an introduction to the syntax of the current spoken standard Dutch language, with only occasional reference to data from earlier stages or dialects.

Written Dutch in general presents a faithful reflection of the syntax of the spoken language, although it must be kept in mind that the standard orthography was designed as a compromise among various regionally tainted varieties of standard Dutch. For example, the plural and infinitive ending written as *-en* (/ən/) combines the ending *-ə* heard in Low Franconian speaking areas with the syllabic nasal ending *-n̩* characterizing Low Saxon speech.

Another factor affecting written Dutch has been the nineteenth-century tendency to embellish the grammar of Dutch by introducing in the orthography grammatical categories known from related Germanic languages, mostly High German, but absent from Dutch. This can still be seen in the artificial distinction made between the 3PL pronouns *hen* and *hun*, intended to reflect an accusative–dative distinction which Dutch lacks. The desire to resurrect long-gone case distinctions affected the spelling system considerably, introducing a determiner paradigm of masculine *de/den* 'the-NOM/ACC' vs. feminine *de/de* 'the-NOM/ACC,' whereas the relevant case and gender distinctions were nonexistent outside the area of personal pronouns.

These and other discrepancies between the spoken and written language gave rise to a late nineteenth-century spelling reform movement with sympathizers directing their attention at the syntax of the spoken language. As a result, the study of Dutch syntax has been enriched early on by valuable treatments of colloquial Dutch, such as W. de Vries (1910–1911) and Overdiep (1937), a tradition carried on by Paardekooper (1986) and J. de Vries (2001).

Today, the two most remarkable features of written Dutch absent from the spoken variety are (to my mind): (a) the tendency to use feminine anaphoric pronouns to refer to inanimate entities (due to the illusion that Dutch distinguishes masculine and feminine nouns, combined with uncertainty about which noun has which gender), and (b) the tendency to avoid final finite auxiliaries in embedded clauses (yielding the order AUXILIARY–PARTICIPLE instead of PARTICIPLE–AUXILIARY, apparently not to betray any influence from German; see Haeseryn 1990: 40 and references cited there).

2

Basic morphosyntax

2.1 General typological characteristics

Dutch is an SO language, with the subject preceding the object in the unmarked word order, and the verb occupying all three possible positions, depending on the clause type: SOV in embedded and nonfinite clauses, SVO in unmarked declarative clauses, and VSO in finite clauses with a constituent preceding the subject.

Independent clauses show a verb-second effect, where as a rule the finite verb is preceded by a single constituent. Where a clause has more than one verb, the additional verbs are chained together in the final verb position, creating SVOV in main clauses and SOVV in embedded clauses.

Embedded clauses follow the final verb position ('extraposition'). Relative clauses follow the head noun and are introduced by a relative pronoun; they, too, may appear in extraposition. Nonfinite embedded clauses show transparency effects, sometimes to the extent that all material associated with the embedded clause, except the verb, is realized inside the matrix clause.

The area between the subject and the final verb position shows some freedom in the arrangement of objects and adjuncts, but nonspecific objects, secondary predicates and verbal particles need to be left adjacent to the final verb(s). The indirect object noun phrase precedes the direct object.

Dutch morphology is of the inflectional suffixing type; Dutch has very limited case-marking (only in the personal pronoun system), showing nominative–accusative alignment where it exists, and consistent (person/number) subject agreement on the finite verb. In the nominal domain, gender, number, and definiteness are marked on the determiner and attributive adjective, which precedes the noun, but only number is marked on the head noun itself.

Focus and contrastive topicalization are expressed in situ using pitch accent, but discourse topics are preferably fronted and occasionally dropped, yielding a verb-first word order. Interrogative phrases ('wh-phrases') must be fronted, though not more than one per clause. These frontings can also apply across finite clause boundaries.

Heads precede their complements, with the exception of the highly mobile verb, and specifiers precede the head–complement combination.

2.2 Word classes

The lexical classes V (verb), N (noun), A (adjective/adverb), and P (adposition) can all be clearly identified in Dutch, using distributional and formal tests.

The **verb** stands out as the only element occupying radically different positions in main and embedded clauses:

(2.1) a. *Main clause*
Tasman **ontdek-te** Nieuw Zeeland
Tasman discover-PAST.SG New Zealand

b. *Embedded clause*
…dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland **ontdek-te**
C Tasman New Zealand discover-PAST.SG
'…that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

This test applies to finite verbs only:

(2.2) a. *Main clause*
Tasman **heeft** Nieuw Zeeland **ontdek-t**
Tasman have:3SG New Zealand GE:discover-D
'Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

b. *Embedded clause*
…dat Tasman Nieuw Zeeland **ontdek-t** **heeft**
C Tasman New Zealand GE:discover-D have:3SG
'…that Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

In (2.2a), only the finite auxiliary moves to the second position in the clause. This also shows that the pattern in (2.1) is not caused by mobility of the object: in (2.2a/b) the position of the object *Nieuw Zeeland* 'New Zealand' with respect to the participle *ontdekt* 'discovered' remains constant.

The verb is also the only element undergoing inversion with the subject after fronting of a nonsubject:

(2.3) In 1642 **ontdek-te** Tasman Nieuw Zeeland
in 1642 discover-PAST:SG Tasman New Zealand
'In 1642 Tasman discovered New Zealand.'

Formally, the verb is the only element adjusting its morphology to express the tense properties of the clause. Thus, in (2.3) the past tense form *ontdekte*

'discovered' replaces the present tense form *ontdek-t* [discover-3SG] 'discovers' to express cotemporaneity with the reference time indicated by *in 1642*.

The major distributional characteristic of **nouns** is that they may function as subjects triggering person/number agreement on the verb, either directly, as with pronouns and proper names (2.4), or through combination with determiners, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, possessive pronouns, numerals, quantifiers, and/or attributive adjectives (2.5).

(2.4) a. **Tasman/hij** ontdek-t-e Nieuw Zeeland
Tasman/3SG.M.NOM discover-PAST-SG New Zealand
'Tasman/he discovered New Zealand.'

b. **Tasman c.s./zij** ontdek-t-en Nieuw Zeeland
Tasman and associates/3PL.NOM discover-PAST-PL New Zealand
'Tasman and associates/they discovered New Zealand.'

(2.5) **De twee prachtig-e eiland-en** werd-en ontdek-t
DEF:PL two gorgeous-PL island-PL PASS.AUX:PAST-PL GE:discover-D
'The two gorgeous islands were discovered.'

Formally, nouns stand out in that they express only number (SG/PL), not tense. Gender and definiteness are not overtly expressed on the noun, but in the shape of the determiner, pronouns, and adjectives preceding the noun. (Diminutive marking is not a formal characteristic of nouns, as the diminutive in Dutch functions as a nominalizer converting verbs, adjectives, and prepositions into nouns, e.g. *moet-je* 'inevitability' from the verbal root *moet* 'must,' *wit-je* 'white one' from the adjective *wit* 'white,' *uit-je* 'excursion' from the preposition *uit* 'out.')

Adjectives generally enter into a predicative/attributive alternation:

(2.6) a. *Predicative*
Het schip is snel
DEF:N.SG ship is fast
'The ship is fast.'

b. *Attributive*
het snel-le schip
DEF:N.SG fast-SG.DEF ship
'the fast ship'

Formally, adjectives show comparative/superlative morphology:

(2.7) a. snel-ler
fast-CMP
'faster'

b. snel-st
fast-SUP
'fastest'

Attributive (prenominal) adjectives in addition show gender/number/definiteness marking (see (2.6b)).

Adverbs are not formally marked, so that most adverbs are uninflected adjectives appearing in a position modifying the verb phrase or the clause:

(2.8) Het schip vaar-t snel
DEF:N.SG ship sail-3SG fast
'The ship is sailing fast.'

Adpositions in Dutch are generally prepositions, appearing in front of a noun phrase. They show no inflectional morphology, and trigger objective case on the personal pronoun in their complement. Remarkably, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, and quantifiers in the complement of a preposition take on a locative form and shift to the position preceding the adposition:

(2.9) a. *uit dit > hier uit
out DEM.N.PROX:SG DEM.LOC.PROX out
'out of this [thing]'

b. *van wat > waar van
of Q:INAN Q:LOC of
'of what [thing]'

c. *met alles > overal mee
with everything everywhere with
'with everything'

(As (2.9c) shows, some adpositions have a special form when construed postpositionally.)

A subclass of the class of adpositions also functions as verbal particles, appearing left adjacent to the clause-final verb position. The verb and the particle are separated in main clauses, when the verb appears in the second position of the clause:

(2.10) a. …dat Tasman weer **uit** voer
C Tasman again out sail:PAST.SG
'…that Tasman sailed out again.'

b. Tasman voer weer **uit**
Tasman sail:PAST.SG again out
'Tasman sailed out again.'

See Appendix 2 for a list of adpositions and their properties.

The functional word classes C (complementizer) and D (determiner) are represented by lexical items in Dutch, but T (tense) is not.

The **complementizers** are all clause-initial, except in embedded wh-questions, where they are either absent, or, in colloquial Dutch, may show up in second position after the fronted wh-phrase. Finite declarative clauses are introduced by *dat* 'that,' finite interrogative clauses by *of* 'whether,' and finite conditional clauses by *als* 'if.' In colloquial Dutch, these complementizers may be combined, yielding formations like *alsdat* 'that' and *ofdat* 'whether'; *alsof* is a standard-language combination meaning 'as if.' The combinatorial possibilities suggest the ordering template in (2.11) (cf. De Rooy 1965):

(2.11) *Finite complementizers*
als – of – dat

Nonfinite embedded clauses may be introduced by the complementizer *om*; this never happens when the infinitive is not marked by the infinitival marker *te* (i.e. in the complement of modal verbs, causative verbs, and perception verbs). When *te* is present, *om* appears optionally in complement infinitivals appearing as a whole to the right of the clause-final verb position (i.e. in 'extraposition'). In other cases where *te* appears, *om* is absent (in adjunct infinitivals, *om* is one of several prepositions introducing the infinitival clause, but since it cannot be combined with any of the other prepositions, it does not function as a complementizer here). These generalizations are illustrated below:

(2.12)

a. *Infinitival complement of a modal verb*
… dat Tasman het Zuidland wil (*om) (*te) vind-en
C Tasman DEF:N.SG South Land want:SG find-INF
'…that Tasman wants to find the South Land.'

b. *Infinitival complement of a causative verb*
… dat Tasman op de trompet laat (*om) (*te) blaz-en
C Tasman on DEF:SG trumpet let:SG blow-INF
'…that Tasman lets the trumpet sound.'

c. *Infinitival complement of a perception verb*
… dat Tasman de Maori-s zie-t (*om) (*te) nader-en
C Tasman DEF:PL Maori-PL see-3SG approach-INF
'…that Tasman sees the Maoris approaching.'

d. *Infinitival complement to a control verb, with extraposition*
… dat Tasman probeer-t (om) de Maori-s *(te) ontvlucht-en
C Tasman try-3SG DEF:PL Maori-PL flee_from-INF
'… that Tasman tries to get away from the Maoris.'