The ditransitive constructions of Dutch

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Dative alternation

(1) *De man heeft zijn broer een boek gegeven /*
the man has his brother a book given
overhandigd / verkocht / beloofd / aangeboden / …
handed sold promised offered
'The man has given/handed/sold/… his brother a book'

(2) *De man heeft een boek aan zijn broer gegeven /*
the man has a book to his brother given
overhandigd / verkocht / beloofd / aangeboden / …
handed sold promised offered
'The man has given/handed/sold/… a book to his brother'

- exists in about 6% of the world's languages according to Siewierska (1998)

Parallelism Dutch-English (1)

- Cf. glosses on previous slide: English exhibits variation between a double object construction and a "prepositional dative" construction as well
- In terms of Haspelmath (2005a,b), the alternation involves:

  (a) a "neutral alignment" construction: both theme and recipient encoded like the monotransitive patient

  (b) an "indirective alignment" construction: theme encoded like the monotransitive patient but recipient treated differently (viz. introduced by a "spatial" preposition)

Parallelism Dutch-English (2)

- The English dative alternation has been looked at from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives
  - many hypotheses about the syntax and semantics of the constructions involved
- However, the relevant facts of Dutch and English are not identical:
  - cxs fall into the same broad typological categories
  - but on a more fine-grained level of analysis, there are relevant formal and semantic *differences*
- Some widespread hypotheses inspired by English data can less easily be extended to Dutch than might be expected

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Two areas of formal/semantic contrast

I. the (alleged) hierarchy of the theme and recipient objects in the resp. double object constructions

II. the semantics of *to* and *aan*

   (i.e., the semantic ranges of the resp. indirective constructions)

I. A hierarchy of theme and recipient objects?

The "real" object of the DOC?

- Cf. Newman (1996), Malchukov et al. (2007), etc: in double object constructions, each of the objects shares certain behavioural properties with the single object of monotransitive clauses
- On the basis of such properties, studies of individual languages often posit a *hierarchy* of objects:
  - either the theme object or the recipient object is the "real" object of the DOC
  - either the theme or the recipient is treated most like the monotransitive patient

Recipient vs. Theme in English (1)

- Many analyses of the English DOC consider the recipient phrase to be "more object-like" than the theme phrase:
  - recipient NP: direct, first, primary object
  - theme NP: secondary object or zero-marked oblique
  (e.g. Dryer 1986, Pinker 1989, Goldberg 1995, Pesetsky 1995, Wechsler 1995, Harley 2003, Kay 2005, etc., …)
- This is argued mainly on the basis of passivization properties:
- (3) a. *The woman was given some books by the man.*
  b. ?? *Some books were given the woman by the man.*

Recipient vs. Theme in English (2)

- Several authors have argued against this view: with regard to other behavioural properties (relativization, *wh*-question formation, …), it is the *theme phrase* which behaves most like the single object in monotransitive clauses
  (e.g. Ziv & Sheintuch 1979, Hudson 1992, Baker 1997, Haspelmath 2007)
- Analyses which hold the recipient NP to be the "real" object overestimate the value of passivization as the single objecthood criterion

The dative alternation as a matter of object choice (1)

- Despite this criticism, the (English) dative alternation is often analysed as a matter of object choice:
  - prepositional dative: Theme = object
  - DOC   : Recipient = object
- e.g. explicitly so in the Functional Grammar treatment of dative alternation (Dik 1997, Siewierska 1998):
  - (4) a. *The man gave a book   to the boy.*
    AgSubj   ThemeObj   Rec
    b. *The man gave the boy   a book.*
    AgSubj   RecObj   Theme

The dative alternation as a matter of object choice (2)

- The same basic idea underlies other hypotheses which suggest that the prepositional dative and the DOC differ in *which* of the two non-agentive participants is singled out for special semantic/pragmatic prominence, the theme OR the recipient
- e.g. Wierzbicka (1988):
  - Prepositional dative: action seen in terms of its effect on the theme
  - DOC: action seen in terms of its effect on the recipient
- e.g. Langacker (1991a: 326):
  I mailed the notice to Zelda vs. *I mailed Zelda the notice* instantiate "co-existing constructions involving different selections of secondary figure"

The dative alternation as a matter of object choice (3)

- e.g. Tuggy (1997):
  - prepositional dative instantiates 'Manipulation' scenario: giver does something to gift
  - DOC instantiates 'Human interaction' scenario: giver does something to receiver
- e.g. Van Valin & LaPolla (1997): theme or recipient argument linked to the UNDERGOER macrorole
- …
- All these hypotheses rest on the assumption that in the (English) double object construction, the recipient object is the true counterpart of the monotransitive object

Recipient vs. Theme in Dutch (1)

- Passivization in the Dutch DOC:
- (5) a. *De man heeft de vrouw twee boeken overhandigd.*
  'The man has handed the woman two books'
  b. *Twee boeken werden de vrouw overhandigd.*
  two books were the woman handed
  c. ?* *De vrouw werd twee boeken overhandigd*
  the woman was two books handed
- The construction with a theme subject in (5b) is the unmarked passive variant of (5a)
- The construction with a recipient subject exemplified by (5c) is a very marked alternative (unacceptable to many speakers)

Recipient vs. Theme in Dutch (2)

- Cf. database of 9017 double object examples from the newspaper component of the CONDIV-corpus of written Dutch:
  - ○ 695 theme-subject passives
  - ○ 22 recipient-subject passives
- Recipient-passive is less awkward in certain circumstances, e.g. with idioms such as *iemand de deur wijzen* (lit. to show sb the door, 'to order sb to leave')
- (6) *De manier waarop wij de deur worden gewezen, is niet correct.* [CONDIV]
  'The way we are shown the door, is not right'
- (cf. Van Langendonck 2000, Colleman 2006)

DOC ≠ secundative (1)

- ➢ In Dutch, there is (even) less ground for considering the recipient phrase as "more object-like" than the theme phrase than in English
- Haspelmath (2005a,b), *inter alia*: many languages have ditransitive constructions which *do* single out the recipient as the most patient-like argument
  = "secundative alignment"
- Even English and Dutch have such a construction, with limited lexical possibilities:
  - (7) *They provided/supplied the soldiers with blankets.*
  - (8) *De koning begiftigde/vereerde hem met een adellijke titel.*
    'The king gifted/honoured him with a title of nobility'

DOC ≠ secundative (2)

- This secundative construction = the true mirror image of the prepositional dative in terms of object assignment
- "Object choice" analyses of the dative alternation put the DOC on a par with these secundative constructions, which is an oversimplification
- Cf. also Newman (1996): it is equally natural to construe the theme or the recipient as the "patient of the interaction" and encode it accordingly, and some languages have constructions which do both

II. The semantics of of *to* and *aan*

Recipients and Goals (1)

- In many languages, allative markers double up as recipient markers (i.e., many markers cover a region in semantic space which includes both recipient and spatial goal functions)
- English *to* is a case in point:
  John gave a book <u>to Peter</u>.
  John flew <u>to London</u>.
- Cf. also French *à*, Hebrew *le-*, Mundurukú *pe³*, Iban *ŋagay;* allative case in Finnish, Sahaptin, Kalkatung, etc.
- See Blansitt (1988), Newman (1996), Margetts & Austin (2007), *inter alia*, for examples and discussion

Recipients and Goals (2)

- Newman (1996: 88-93): this 'recipient as goal' coding strategy is motivated by the spatio-temporal properties of the 'give' scene
- prototypical act of giving involves a concrete entity which moves along a path in physical space as it changes ownership
- recipient ~ goal at the end of the path traversed by the theme

The allative semantics of *to* (1)

- Studies of the dative alternation in English often attribute a crucial role to the allative semantic import of *to*
- e.g. Langacker (1991b: 13-14) on (a) *Bill sent a walrus to Joyce versus* (b) *Bill sent Joyce a walrus*

  "In [a] the morpheme *to* specifically designates the path followed by the walrus, thereby rendering this aspect of the conceptualization more prominent than it would otherwise be [...] In [b] on the other hand, *to* is absent, but the juxtaposition of two unmarked nominals after the verb symbolizes a possessive relationship between the first nominal and the second."

The allative semantics of *to* (2)

- e.g. Goldberg (1995):
  - *John gave Mary an apple*: 'X causes Y to receive Z' (3-participant event with agent, theme, <u>recipient</u>)
  - *John gave an apple to Mary:* 'X causes Y to move Z' (3-participant event with agent, theme, <u>goal</u>)
- two examples of the widespread view that the (English) double object construction has a 'caused possession' meaning while the (English) prepositional dative has a 'caused motion' meaning

  (also see Pinker 1989, Panther 1997, Harley 2003, Krifka 2004, and many others)

The allative semantics of *to* (3)

- Rappaport Hovav & Levin (2006)'s verb-sensitive approach:

	DOC-variant	to-variant
give-type verbs	caused possession	caused possession
throw-type verbs	caused possession	caused motion or caused possession
send-type verbs	caused possession	caused motion or caused possession

- The *to*-variant is not uniformly associated with a 'caused motion' scenario
- *Throw*- and *send*-type verbs are inherently 'caused motion', but can also be associated with a 'caused possession' meaning: the *to*-variant is compatible with both

The locative semantics of *aan* (1)

- Just like English *to*, Dutch *aan* has a variety of spatial functions
- But unlike *to*, *aan* (cognate with Engl. *on*, German *an*) is a *locative* rather than an *allative* preposition
- Previous studies of the spatial prepositions of Dutch agree that *aan* basically denotes a relation of spatial 'contact' between two stationary entities

  (cf. Cuyckens 1991, Schermer-Vermeer 2001, Beliën 2002, *inter alia*)

The locative semantics of *aan* (2)

Some typical examples:
(9) a. *Het schilderij hangt aan de muur*
       'The painting is hanging on the wall.'
   b. *Ze hield zich vast aan het touw*.
       'She held onto the rope.'
   c. *De spaghettislierten plakken aan het plafond*.
       'The spaghetti strands stick to the ceiling.'
   d. *Er zit bloed aan zijn handen*.
       'There's blood on his hands.'
Spatial contact > spatial proximity:
(10)   *Hij woont aan de kerk*.
       'He lives near the church'

The locative semantics of *aan* (3)

- But no allative uses:
- (11) a. *John vliegt naar / * aan Parijs.*
  'John flies to Paris'
  - b. *Ze gooiden stenen naar / *aan de politie .*
    'They were throwing rocks at/to the police'
- For the goal at the end of a spatiotemporal path, the unmarked preposition is *naar* 'to, towards' in Dutch
- Dutch prepositional-dative with *aan* does not instantiate 'recipient as goal'
- Dutch *aan* is a counterexample to one of Blansitt's (1988) generalizations: if a marker combines locative and dative functions, it also marks the allative (cf. also Newman 1996: 93-95)

The semantic ranges of the indirective constructions

- The different spatial semantics of *to* and *aan* has an impact on the semantic ranges of the resp. prepositional dative constructions
- Application of RH & L's verb-sensitive approach to Dutch: with regard to certain verb classes, the Dutch *aan*-construction behaves markedly differently from the English *to*-construction

Give-type verbs

- = a broad class which also includes verbs of future transfer, verbs of enablement, communication verbs, verbs of refusal, *etc*.
- *geven* 'give', *bieden* 'offer', *beloven* 'promise', etc. have no 'caused motion' meaning:
  - ○ DOC: caused possession
  - ○ *Aan*-constr.: caused possession
  - ○ construction with the goal preposition *naar* is impossible

Send-type verbs (1)

- Cf. English:
- (12) a. *I sent a package to the border.*
  - b.* *I sent the border a package.*
- (13) a. *I sent a package to the boarder*
  - b. *I sent the boarder a package*
- ➤ DOC requires a prospective possessor as the theme's endpoint, *to*-construction can also be combined with inanimate goals

Send-type verbs (2)

- Dutch:
- (14) a. *Ik stuurde een pakje naar de grens.*
  - b. * *Ik stuurde een pakje aan de grens.*
  - c. * *Ik stuurde de grens een pakje.*
    'I sent a package to the border'
- (15) a. *Ik stuurde een pakje naar de gast.*
  - b. *Ik stuurde een pakje aan de gast.*
  - c. *Ik stuurde de gast een pakje.*
    'I sent a package to the boarder/the boarder a package'
- ➤ The DOC and the *aan*-constr. *both* require a prospective possessor as the theme's endpoint.
- ➤ Only the construction with *naar* can encode a pure 'caused motion' event

Throw-type verbs (1)

- RH & L (2006): the extent to which 'caused motion' verbs can also be associated with a 'caused possession' event schema differs across languages
- Dutch is more constrained than English in this respect: with verbs such as *gooien* 'throw', *schoppen* 'kick', *slingeren* 'fling', etc., the DOC is at best marginally possible

  (which shows that such *throw*-type verbs can hardly be associated with 'caused possession')

Throw-type verbs (2)

- e.g. *gooien* 'throw' + DOC is labeled ungrammatical by several authors (e.g. Vandeweghe 1995, Schermer-Vermeer 1991)
- Indeed, in the abovementioned 9M word newspaper corpus: not a single instance of *gooien* + DOC (662 occurrences of *gooien*)
- But Google queries produce a small number of hits from informal texts on the WWW, e.g.:
  - (16) *Even wennen, een plastic flesje, maar wel erg handig als je staat te dansen... Gooi mij er nog 1!!*
    - 'Takes some getting used to, a plastic bottle, but very handy when you're dancing... Throw me another one'
    - <www.zomerdrankjes.nl>

Throw-type verbs (3)

- *gooien* 'throw' etc. + *naar* is of course fine, irrespective of the animacy of the goal:
- (17) *Hij gooide het pijltje naar Piet / de schijf.*
  - 'He threw the dart to Pete / the target'
- (18) *Hij schopte de bal naar de keeper / de cornervlag.*
  - 'He kicked the ball to the keeper/the corner flag
- *aan* could not substitute for *naar* here: just like the DOC, the *aan*-construction cannot encode pure 'caused motion'

Carry/slide-type verbs (1)

- In English, there are two more classes of 'caused motion' verbs which can (at least for some speakers) also be associated with a caused possession schema:
  - ○ 'carry' verbs (*carry*, *drag*, *lower*, …)
  - e.g. (19) Early in the morning, when he carried her the first food, he found that she was on the edge of the nest, dropping bits of shell outside
    - <worldwideschool.org/library/books/youth/…>
  - ○ 'slide' verbs (*slide*, *roll*, …)
  - e.g. (20) He's just gotten his credit card back and the woman at the desk slid him a pair of room keys in a paper folder.
    - <mindbodyblog.blogspot.com/2007/02/wary-stepson.html

Carry/slide-type verbs (2)

- With Dutch verbs such as *dragen* 'carry', *schuiven* 'slide', *sleuren* 'drag', *duwen* 'push', etc., the DOC is not even marginally possible (nor is the *aan*-constr.)
- The only possibility is *naar*:
- (21) a. * *Ik schoof Peter de sleutel.*
    - 'I slid Peter the key'
  - b. * *Ik schoof de sleutel aan Peter.*
  - c.   *Ik schoof de sleutel naar Peter.*
    - 'I slid the key to Peter'

Verbs of dispossession (1)

- Cf. Newman (1996), Malchukov et al (2007), etc.: many ditransitive constructions accomodate verbs of taking away as well as verbs giving
- Though the lexical possibilities of this use are restricted, both the Dutch DOC and the *aan*-construction can encode dispossession events
- e.g. with *ontnemen* 'take away', *ontstelen* 'steal away from', *ontfutselen* 'fish out of', etc.
- (22) *Het Amerikaanse anti-communisme begon op 7 november 1917, de dag dat de bolsjewieken in Rusland de macht ontnamen aan de sociaal-democraten.* [CONDIV]
  - 'American anti-communism began on November 7th 1917, the day when the Bolshevists took the power from the social democrats in Russia'

Verbs of dispossession (2)

- also with *kosten* 'cost':
- (23) *De Agusta-crisis kostte het ministerschap aan de drie Guy's (Spitaels, Mathot en Coëme).* [CONDIV]
  - 'The Agusta-crisis cost the three Guy's their Ministry' (i.e., three Belgian ministers, all with the first name *Guy*, had to resign because of the Agusta-crisis)
- ➢ In both (22) and (23), *aan* marks the possessor who loses control of the theme
- The DOC is possible as well, e.g.:
- (24) *Hij heeft het gevaar gezien maar hij wist er geen oplossing voor. Dat heeft hem zijn burgemeesterschap gekost.* [CONDIV]
  - 'He saw the danger but he couldn't think of a solution. That cost him his mayorship'

Verbs of dispossession (3)

- There is a small set of verbs which can be used in the English DOC to encode events of dis-possession as well, including *cost* and *lose*:

(25) *Health plans may cost Tories 1.5m votes* [BNC]

(26) *His main weakness was his obsession with finding and revealing the Illuminati Society, an obsession which lost him his first job.*
<www.dracandros.com/Jebgarg/tge/mattblue.htm>

- The *to*-construction, however, is incompatible with such verbs: * *A mistake which cost/lost his job to him*

Overview (1)

	DOC	*to*
Give-type verbs	caused possession	caused possession
Send-type verbs	caused possession	caused motion or caused possession
Throw-type verbs	caused possession	caused motion or caused possession
Slide/carry-type verbs	caused possession	caused motion or caused possession
Dispossession verbs	caused loss of possession	___

Overview (2)

	DOC	*aan*	*naar*
Give-type verbs	caused possession	caused possession	caused motion
Send-type verbs	caused possession	caused possession	caused motion
Throw-type verbs	(caused possession)	___	caused motion
Slide/carry-type verbs	___	___	caused motion
Dispossession verbs	caused loss of poss.	caused loss of poss.	___

Overview (3)

- The Dutch double object construction is uniformly associated with a 'possession' scheme, just like in English
- But unlike in English, it can hardly be combined with *throw*-type verbs, and not at all with *carry/slide*-type verbs
- In terms of Malchukov *et al.* (2007): the English double object construction extends further into the allative domain than its Dutch counterpart

Overview (4)

- While the English *to*-construction can denote 'caused motion' as well as 'caused possession', Dutch has:
  - a truly allative *naar*-construction which is restricted to 'caused motion' events (~ Russian *k*, Hebrew *el*, cf. RH & L 2006)
  - a prepositional dative construction with *aan* which, just like the DOC, is restricted to events involving a (projected) possessor
- If there is a semantic contrast between the Dutch DOC and the prepositional dative with *aan*, it cannot be described in terms of 'caused possession' versus 'caused motion'

Overview (5)

- Unlike the English *to*-construction, the Dutch *aan*-construction can encode 'caused loss of pos-session' (albeit with limited lexical possibilities)
- = another semantic difference that can be related to the locative vs. allative basic spatial semantics of *aan* and *to*:
  - as a locative marker, *aan* could be extended to include both recipient and source functions
  - as an allative marker, *to* could easily be extended towards recipient function, but not towards source marker

Conclusion

- Both English and Dutch exhibit a ditransitive construction alternation between a double object and an indirective construction, but:
- On a more fine-grained level of analysis, there are a number of interesting formal/semantic contrasts: the *aan-* and *to-*constructions, especially, are less similar as they would appear at first sight
- The Dutch dative alternation is not a matter of object choice, nor of 'caused possession' vs. 'caused motion'

Thank you!

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