

Foreword

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This collection of papers celebrates the impact and influence of the linguistic work of Frans Zwarts. When Frans came to the University of Groningen in 1975, he was first and foremost a syntactician, arriving straight from that hub of syntactic activity, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and his first publications were squarely within the field of generative syntax. Frans Zwarts belonged to the first wave of generative linguists in the Netherlands, together with Jan Koster, Pieter Seuren, Henk van Riemsdijk, Alied Blom, Saskia Daalder, Henk Verkuyl and Wim Klooster, among others. Soon, he ventured into the newly emerging field of formal semantics, or Montague grammar, as it was often referred to, and published a series of papers on negative polarity items and quantifiers that are still being studied, as various of the papers in this volume attest to. Most characteristic of his approach to linguistics is a search for formal elegance and mathematical abstraction, without losing sight of empirical data.

At the University of Groningen, Frans Zwarts became full professor in Dutch Linguistics in 1986, and was responsible for the introduction of computational linguistics, psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics, in a time when many linguists were not even sure that these fields had any role to play in a linguistic curriculum. At the moment, these fields are more important than theoretical linguistics, in terms of the number of graduate students and research funding. Frans was also one of the founding members of BCN, the Groningen research center for Behavioral & Cognitive Neurosciences, and of ESSLLI, the European Summer School in Logic, Language and Information, first held at the University of Groningen in 1989.

When Frans Zwarts became full time director of BCN, and in 2003, the Rector Magnificus of the University, his linguistic activities had to take a backseat to his administrative duties. Nonetheless, in this period he also set up a major national research program in dyslexia. After his retirement as rector, he was involved in setting up a new university campus in Leeuwarden.

As students, colleagues and friends of Frans, we are pleased to offer this collection of papers as a testimony to his stimulating presence, upbeat personality and fruitful ideas. We noted with gratification the immediate and enthusiastic response to our call for papers. Many of these papers reflect Frans' longstanding interest in negation and quantification, others represent by their diversity his many other interests, such as psycholinguistics and language acquisition.