

# A Note on Micro-dimensions of Possession in Dutch and Related Languages

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## 1. Introduction

Nominal possessive constructions have played a central role in generative research on the internal structure of the noun phrase (cf. Szabolcsi 1983). It has led to the formulation of the DP-hypothesis (cf. Abney 1987) and other functional projections such as AgrP and PosP (cf. Coene en D’Hulst 2003). Furthermore, it has enriched our knowledge about the application of displacement phenomena within the nominal system, with the head (i.e. N-) movement operation in Construct State possessive constructions as a notorious example (cf. Ritter 1991). All this research on the internal syntax of nominal possessive constructions has paved the way for further unraveling the fine morphosyntax of this domain of natural language. In this article, I would like to contribute to the further exploration of this part of nominal syntax by exploring some of the micro-dimensions of morphosyntactic variation within the possessive pronominal systems of Standard Dutch and some related Germanic languages/dialects. More specifically, I will elaborate on the line of thought that DP-internal possession involves a predication relationship between a possessor-subject and a possessee-predicate (cf. Kayne 1995, Den Dikken 1998), and that possessor-initial constructions (i.e. possessor-possessee) involve DP-internal predicate displacement within the nominal domain. This process of predicate displacement involves the application of DP-internal head movement and the appearance of nominal copular elements within the DP-domain (cf. Den Dikken 1995, Bennis, Corver and Den Dikken 1998). Besides exploring the application of these movement processes, I will show that the dimensions of variation reside in the lexicalization and morphological realization of the functional heads that are involved in possessive constructions.

## 2. Possession and predication

Let us begin with a comparison of the personal pronominal object forms in (1) with their possessive pronominal equivalents (in their attributive use) in (Standard) Dutch:

(1)

	<i>object form personal pronoun</i>	<i>possessive pronoun</i>
1 sg	mij (me)	mijn jas (my coat)
2 sg	jou (you)	jou(w) jas (your coat)
3 sg masc	hem (him)	zijn jas (his coat)
3 sg fem	haar (her)	haar jas (her coat)
1 pl	ons (us)	onze jas (our coat)
2 pl	jullie (you)	jullie jas (your coat)
3 pl	hun (them)	hun jas (their coat)

Comparison of the object forms of the personal pronouns with the possessive pronouns leads to the conclusion that there is quite a large amount of sameness in formal appearance between the two types of pronominals that are traditionally distinguished. The forms *haar*, *jullie*, *hun*, and arguably also *jouw* — in view of the fact that the *w* is there just for orthographic reasons (cf. Schönfeld 1964:144) — are formally identical. It is only with the pairs *mijn-mij*, *hem-zijn*

and *ons-onze* that we find a difference in shape in present-day Standard-Dutch. Interestingly, even for some of those pairs, certain dialects do not display a formal contrast between the possessive pronoun and the personal pronoun. In many dialects, for example, we find possessive patterns like *hum waerk* (him work; ‘his work’) (cf. Boekenoogen 1897, De Bont 1958, Peters 1937). The form *ons* does occur in the context of a neuter noun in Standard-Dutch (as in *ons huis*; us house; ‘our house’), and in certain dialects (e.g. the dialect of the Zaanstreek; cf. Peters 1937) the object pronominal form is also used in possessive constructions with a non-neuter noun (i.e. the possessee): *us baes* (us boss; ‘our boss’). Finally, the weak pronominal first person, singular object form *me* (‘me’) is also used in possessive constructions in certain dialects (e.g. *me stoel*; me chair, ‘my chair’; cf. Peters 1937).

The formal similarity of the two types of pronominal pronouns (i.e. object personal pronoun, one the one hand, and possessive pronouns, on the other) may lead to the assumption that the two (homophonous) elements (e.g. the personal pronoun *haar* and the possessive pronoun *haar*) are actually one and the same element. This idea that the two identical pronominal forms are in fact one and the same element is captured quite straightforwardly under a predicate displacement analysis of possessive constructions, as proposed, for example, in Den Dikken (1998). In the spirit of Kayne’s (1994) predicate inversion analysis of clausal possessive constructions, Den Dikken assumes that pronominal possessive constructions derive from an underlying structure like (2a). In this structure, the possessor is projected as the complement of a dative preposition. This dative PP is the predicate of a DP-internal small clause configuration (XP), which has the possessum as its subject. In a language like French, this order, which has the possessor in a post-possessum position, directly surfaces as the pattern in (3a). The order in which the possessor precedes the possessum is derived by movement of the dative PP across the subject of the small clause. This displacement operation moves the possessor (PP) to Spec of some higher functional projection, e.g. [Spec,DP] or some other Spec-position in the functional domain of the noun (say [Spec,FP]). The placement of the dative possessor in the Hungarian example in (3b), for example, is the result of the application of DP-internal predicate displacement to a left-peripheral Spec-position (i.e. a pre-determiner position) within the noun phrase.

- (2) a.  $[_{DP} [_{FP} \text{Spec } [_{F'} F [_{XP} \text{possessum } [_{X'} X [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{Possessor}]]]]]]]$   
 b.  $[_{DP} [_{FP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{Possessor}]_i [_{F'} F+X_j [_{XP} \text{possessum } [_{X'} t_j t_i]]]]]]]$

- (3) a. un livre a Jean  
 a book to Jean  
 b. Jánosnak a könyve  
 Janos-DAT the book-AGR

If we adopt a predicate displacement analysis for possessive nominal constructions in Dutch, examples such as *jou(w) jas*, *haar jas*, *jullie jas*, *hun jas* are derived as follows (where I, for the sake of illustration, assume that the inverted predicate occupies the Spec-position of some intermediate projection FP):

- (4) a.  $[_{DP} [_{FP} \text{Spec } [_{F'} F [_{XP} \text{jas } [_{X'} X [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{haar}]]]]]]]$   
 b.  $[_{DP} [_{FP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{haar}]_i [_{F'} F+X_j [_{XP} \text{jas } [_{X'} t_j t_i]]]]]]]$

If we follow the idea that the possessive pronoun is in fact a (dative) object pronoun, then the question arises how to interpret those possessive forms which slightly differ from their

personal pronominal counterpart, e.g. *mijn* (versus *mij*) and *onze* (versus *ons*). Let us first consider a form like *mijn*, and within its scope: *zijn*. The possessive pronoun *mijn* differs from the object personal pronoun *mij* just in the presence of the element *-n*. Now, what is *-n*? The element *-n* has a certain formal similarity with the indefinite article 'n ('a'). At first sight, an analysis of *-n* as an indefinite article seems quite unlikely given the definite interpretation of the entire possessive noun phrase; i.e. *mijn boek* (my book) doesn't mean 'a book of mine' but 'the book of mine'. So, if *-n* is an indefinite article, why does it not contribute its indefinite meaning to the noun phrase? There is also, however, support for an indefinite interpretation of *-n*. In Peters (1937:211), for example, it is noted that in certain Dutch dialects, the pronominal forms *mijn* and *zijn* display the same morphological properties (i.e. declension) as the indefinite article (see also Weijnen 1958:302). To give an example: In the dialect of the Kempenland (cf. De Bont 1958), the (singular) indefinite article has the following formal appearances when it combines with a masculine, feminine or neuter noun:

- (5)
- a. ene stal  
a-Masc. barn
  - b. en schuuier  
a-Fem. barn
  - c. e schaop  
a-Neut. sheep

The possessive pronoun (in its attributive use) looks as follows:

- (6)
- a. mene stal (weak form: mene)  
my-Masc. barn
  - b. mēn schuuier (weak form: men)  
my-Fem. barn
  - c. mē schaop (weak form: me)  
my-Neut. sheep

And as noted in Peters ((1937: 211), there are also dialects (e.g. dialects spoken in Western and French Flanders) in which one and the same ending is used for the three genders. He points out that in those dialects this same lack of formal differentiation is found with the indefinite article. Compare, for example, the forms in (7) with those in (8):

- (7)
- a. ē man  
a man
  - b. ē vrouw  
a woman
  - c. ē kind  
a child
- (8)
- a. me stoel  
my chair
  - b. me tafel  
my table
  - c. me stoeleke  
my chair

The morphological similarity between the (attributively used) possessive pronominal and the indefinite article suggests that there is a certain ground for assuming that forms such as *mijn* (and also *zijn*) contain an indefinite article-like element: i.e. *mij*+ 'n and *zij*+ 'n. This brings us back to the question why the indefinite article does not contribute any indefinite meaning (i.e. why doesn't *mijn boek* (my book) mean 'a book of mine'). This lack of indefinite meaning suggests that 'n is not a 'normal' indefinite article (compared, for example, to the indefinite article 'n in 'n *man*; 'a man'). Another remarkable property of the 'n in *mij*'n is its placement within the noun phrase. It does not occur in a left peripheral position (as in 'n *oude man*; an old man). It rather appears in between a pronominal element (e.g. *mij*) and a noun (e.g. *man*), as in *mij*'n *man*. This deviant behavior of 'n hints at a special status of this indefinite article. I would like to propose that 'n in these possessive contexts is the so-called spurious indefinite article as identified in a variety of noun phrase contexts by Bennis, Corver & Den Dikken (1998) (henceforth: BCD (1998)). As they point out, the nominal structures in which this spurious article shows up all involve the phenomenon of predicate displacement, i.e. a DP-internal predicative phrase is moved across a (small clause) subject to a position in the left periphery of the noun phrase. Some contexts in which this spurious article appears are given in (9):

- (9) a.     *wat voor 'n boeken?*                             (*wat voor*-construction)  
           what for a books  
           'what kind of books?'  
       b.     *wat 'n idioten!*                                 (*wat-exclamative construction*)  
           what a idiots  
           'such idiots!'  
       c.     *zulke etters van 'n jongens*                 (N van N-construction)  
           such pusses of a boys  
           'those jerks of boys'

The special behavior of this spurious indefinite article concerns the fact that it does not seem to belong to any element within the noun phrase. The normal indefinite article 'n must be followed by a singular indefinite article (e.g. 'n *boek*(\*-en); a *book*(\*-s)). Notice now that the spurious indefinite article in (9) can be followed by a plural noun. Furthermore, it cannot be associated with any of the other (pro)nominal elements within the noun phrase: the wh-phrase *wat* does not combine with an indefinite article. Nor does the plural noun *eters* in (9c). In short, the indefinite article 'n can rightfully be called spurious in its behavior. The question, of course, arises in what structural position the spurious article finds its origin: BCD propose that spurious 'n is the head (X) of the small clause that configurationally defines the predicational relationship between the small clause subject and the small clause predicate. Crucially, the availability of spurious 'n is dependent on DP-internal predication, represented as a small clause headed by 'n. Abstracting away from details, a string like *zulke etters van 'n jongens* in (9c) derives from an underlying representation like (10a). The surface structure is the result of application of DP-internal predicate inversion, along the lines sketched in (10b) (For further discussion, see BCD 1998; see also below). In view of the structural environments in which Dutch spurious 'n appears, BCD (1998) argue that this 'n is unspecified for number. The property of being unspecified for number will render *een* compatible with any NP in its specifier, regardless of the latter's number specification: a clash in number features will never arise within XP (or within a derived Spec-head agreement configuration, for that matter).

- (10) a.     [[*zulke* [<sub>XP</sub> *jongens* [<sub>X'</sub> [<sub>X</sub> 'n] *eters*]]]]  
       b.     [[*zulke* [<sub>FP</sub> *eters*]<sub>j</sub> [<sub>F'</sub> [<sub>F</sub> (= *van*) +<sub>X<sub>i</sub></sub> (= 'n)] [<sub>XP</sub> *jongens* <sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> <sub>t<sub>j</sub></sub>]]]]

Suppose now that the element 'n in *mij'n boeken* (my-n books) is also the spurious indefinite article. Notice that the occurrence of this element in possessive constructions is quite in line with the observation above that this spurious article is typically found in contexts of predicate displacement. I will assume here that predicate displacement involves movement of the predicate (i.e. the dative PP) to [Spec,DP]. That is, predicate displacement in this construction is of the A-bar movement type (called Predicate Fronting in BCD (1998)). This type of DP-internal predicate movement also applies within *wat*-exclamative constructions like (11). BCD assume that this nominal construction is derived as follows:

(11) [DP wat<sub>j</sub> [D' [D [X 'n]<sub>i</sub>] [XP boeken [X' t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub>]]]]

BCD propose that the spurious indefinite article 'n is inserted and moved in order to lexicalize the head of the exclamative operator projection (DP). They interpret it as a sort of Verb-second effect within the nominal system (i.e. the finite verb moves to C when an operator-like element has been moved to [Spec,CP].). Along these lines, one might want to derive the pattern *mijn boeken* along the lines depicted in (12):

(12) [DP [PP PØ mij]<sub>j</sub> [D' [D [X 'n]<sub>i</sub>] [XP boeken [X' t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub>]]]]

The spurious nature of the indefinite article is suggested by the fact that it does not 'belong' to the (plural!) noun that follows, nor to the pronominal element *mij*, which in fact is part of a larger (dative) PP. Let us further assume that the definiteness of the entire DP is determined by the (definite) pronominal element *mij* (i.e. the inverted dative PP) that occupies the [Spec,DP] position.

Consider also the weak possessive pronominal form *m'n* as in *m'n boek* (my book). I will assume that this pattern receives exactly the same derivation, the only difference being that the dative preposition takes a weak-pronominal complement:

(13) [DP [PP PØ me]<sub>j</sub> [D' [D [X 'n]<sub>i</sub>] [XP boeken [X' t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub>]]]]

Interestingly and not unexpectedly, the pattern 'pronoun (i.e. possessor)+ 'n + possessee' is also found in certain other variants of the Dutch language (and also with possessive pronouns having person properties different from first person singular). Schönfeld's *Historische Grammatica van het Nederlands* (1964:144) mentions the use of the form *joun* (meaning: 'your'), which arguably can be decomposed into: *jou* + 'n + possessee. And Peters (1937:213) refers to the existence of dialects in Western-Flanders in which the form *jen* ('your') is found in combination with nouns (of different genders, i.e. Masc., Fem., and Neut.). If we follow our line of thought, this form, just like *joun*, may also be decomposed into the parts: *je* + 'n (+ possessee). The forms *joun* and *jen* thus receive the following derived representation (cf. also 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular possessive forms like *dien* (arguably: *die* + 'n), *oen* (*oe* + 'n), *joen* (*joe* + 'n) (cf. Peters 1937).

(14) [DP [PP PØ jou/je]<sub>j</sub> [D' [D [X 'n]<sub>i</sub>] [XP possessee [X' t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub>]]]]

At this point, it is also interesting to point out the existence of the possessive patterns in (15) in certain Dutch dialects (examples drawn from Boekenoogen's (1897) study of the "Zaanse Volkstaal"):

- (15) a. Dat is Piet-*en* boek  
That is Piet-en book  
'That is Piet's book.'
- b. Hij komt donderdag-*en*ávend thuis  
He comes thursday-en-evening home  
'He comes home on thursday evening'
- c. de hont-en ete  
the dog-en food  
'the dog's food'

Boekenoogen states that *-en* (also written as *'n* as in *Piet'n boek*) should not be interpreted as an inflectional element. Rather it behaves like an enclitic. In the line of our discussion of *mij'n jas* (my'n coat), we could assign the following derived structure to a phrase like *Piet-en boek* (alternatively representable as: *Piet 'n boek*) in (15a):

- (16)  $[_{DP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{Piet}_j [_{D'} [_{D} [X 'n]_i [_{XP} \text{boek} [X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$

Thus far, we have seen that the Standard Dutch possessive form *mij' n boeken* involves preposing of an (invariant) object-pronominal form that is part of a dative PP. The spurious indefinite article *'n* attaches to *mij* in phonology. In Standard Dutch, this spurious indefinite article is invariant. There are dialects, however, in which this spurious article has different formal appearances, which is triggered by gender agreement with the nominal possessee. This is exemplified by the structures in (17) which are taken from some (Southern) dialect of Dutch (cf. Peters 1937). I will assume that the agreement relation is established under spec-head agreement between the spurious indefinite article (or its trace) in X (i.e. the small clause head position) and the possessee in [Spec,XP]. Thus, in (17a), the masculine noun *stoel* in [Spec,XP] enters into an agreement relation with the spurious indefinite article *'ne*, the small clause head X.

- (17) a.  $[_{DP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{me}_j [_{D'} [_{D} [X 'ne]_i [_{XP} \text{stoel} [X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$  (masculine)  
me 'n chair  
'my chair'
- b.  $[_{DP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{me}_j [_{D'} [_{D} [X 'n]_i [_{XP} \text{taofel} [X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$  (feminine)  
me'n table  
'my table'
- c.  $[_{DP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{me}_j [_{D'} [_{D} [X \emptyset]_i [_{XP} \text{stoeleke} [X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$  (neuter)  
me chair-DIM  
'my little chair'

Besides those dialects featuring non-agreeing *'n* and those featuring an agreeing spurious article, we also find dialects in which the spurious indefinite article is phonetically empty. This results into a pattern in which a 'bare' object form is directly followed by the possessee. I will assume here that in those constructions an empty spurious indefinite article has undergone raising to D (cf. BCD 1998 for the existence of the phonetically empty spurious indefinite article). To draw the parallel with the *wat*-exclamative construction, these constructions featuring an empty spurious indefinite article are paralleled by (older) exclamative constructions of the type *wat boeken!* (what books!). This exclamative pattern is no longer available in present-day Standard Dutch.

- (18) a.  $[_{DP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{me}_j [_{D'} [_{D} [X \emptyset]_i [_{XP} \text{stoel} [X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$

- b. [DP [PP P $\emptyset$  me]<sub>j</sub> [D' [D [X  $\emptyset$ ]<sub>i</sub> [XP taofel [X' t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub>]]]]]
- d. [DP [PP P $\emptyset$  me]<sub>j</sub> [D' [D [X  $\emptyset$ ]<sub>i</sub> [XP stoeleke [X' t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub>]]]]]

As noted in Peters (1937:214), there are also dialects (in Holland) in which both a form with *-n* and a form without *-n* occurs (cf. e.g. Boekenoogen (1897)):

- (19) a. m'n ooge  
my-n eyes
- b. me ooge  
my eyes

He points out that *m'n* is used when the pronoun is slightly emphasized (when it carries stress we get the full form *mij'n*). This alternation between the overt spurious indefinite article and the empty one is also found with the third person form *z'n* (his; weak form). For example, in certain dialects (cf. Boekenoogen 1897), the following two forms co-exist (cf. Peters 1937).

- (20) a. z'n zeun  
his-n son
- b. ze zeun  
his son

The examples in (20) also bring us to the discussion of the third person singular form *zijn* (i.e. the strong form) as in *zijn jas* (his coat) in (1). Quite clearly, *zijn* is not directly related to an object form of the personal pronoun. In this respect it differs, for example, from *haar* ('her' as in *haar boeken*; her books), which is also found as an object pronominal form:

- (21) Ik gaf haar een boek  
I have her a book

As shown in (1), the third person masculine singular object-form is *hem*, as in:

- (22) Ik gaf hem een boek  
I gave him a book

Interestingly, the third person masculine singular object form also appears in possessive contexts. In his study of the dialect of Oud-Beierland, for example, Opprel (no year:35) mentions possessive noun phrases like *hum jas* in (23) (cf. also De Bont (1958), Ausems (1953) for the pattern 'him + noun')

- (23) Hij trok [hum jas] weer oit  
He took him coat again off  
'He took off his coat again'

*Hum* is typically used in emphatic contexts and the preferred reading of (23) is one in which *hum* refers to a person different from *hij*, the subject of the clause. If coreference with the subject is intended, the (strong) possessive form *zijn* or the (weak) form *z'n* is used.

A very interesting pattern which minimally differs from the pattern 'him + noun' is the one in (24), which is noted in Boekenoogen (1897) in his study of the 'Zaanse Volkstaal' (see also Peters 1937):

- (24) 't is [hem 'n jas]  
 it is him 'n jas  
 'It is his coat'

This pattern is similar to those in (15), where we have a non-pronominal possessor. Of course, it is also reminiscent of phrases like *mij'n jas* (my coat) and *mij'n boeken* (my books), which occur in Standard Dutch. In the line of our analysis, I propose that 'n in (24) is the spurious indefinite article. It originates as a small clause head X and is moved to D. The dative possessor is fronted to [Spec,DP]. Thus, analogously to the analysis in (13) and (15), we can assign the following derivation to the pattern in (24):

- (25) [DP [PP Pø hem]<sub>j</sub> [D' [D [X 'n]<sub>i</sub> [XP jas [X' t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub>]]]]]

As noted by Peters (1937:212), the pattern *hem 'n jas* is quite close to the pattern *hem z'n jas* (him his coat; 'his coat'), which is attested in Standard Dutch (with emphasis on *hem*, just like in *hum jas*). It does not seem implausible to analyze *n* in *z'n* as the spurious indefinite article, just like in *mijn* (i.e. *mij* + 'n) and *me* + 'n (me (weak form) + 'n). This leaves us with the element *z*. This consonant — a voiced sibilant — is quite close to the sound *s*, a voiceless sibilant. In fact, in spoken language, *z'n* (and its strong equivalent *zijn*) is often pronounced as: *s'n* and *sijn*. If *z* is equal to *s*, then it is not entirely implausible to assume that this *z/s* is the same element as the one found in Standard Dutch constructions like (26a) and dialectal patterns like (26b) (cf. also Peters 1937):

- (26) a. Jan-s jas  
 Jan-s coat  
 'Jan's coat'  
 b. joeles vòâder (dialect of Goeree, Den Eerzamen 1937)  
 you-2p.pl. father  
 'your (2p.pl.) father'

In Den Dikken (1998), it is argued that the English equivalent of (25), i.e. *John's coat*, involves predicate inversion (i.e. predicate movement of the A-movement type) and that *-s* should be interpreted as a nominal copula (see also Corver 2003). This element is the bound-morphemic equivalent of the nominal copula *of/van* that is found in contexts of predicate inversion (e.g. N of N-constructions (cf. (10b))). Den Dikken proposes that the nominal copulas *of* and *-s* obligatorily appear in contexts of DP-internal predicate displacement of the A-movement type. What characterizes this type of predicate displacement operation is that the inverted nominal predicate skips an intermediate A-position, viz. that of the small clause subject (i.e. XP) and lands in a A-position (i.e. non-operator position). Hence, the movement of the nominal predicate appears to be a non-local A-movement. As Den Dikken points out, however, the predicate movement is local if one adopts Chomsky's (1993) locality theory in terms of equidistance. Under this theoretical proposal, the moved predicate can cross the subject as long as the two nominals are technically equally far away from the predicate's extraction site. Under Chomsky's assumptions, this situation is obtained by the application of a domain-extending head movement operation that creates a minimal domain that contains both the raised predicate and the small clause subject. Den Dikken argues that in the case of DP-internal predicate inversion, the requisite domain extending head-movement operation consists of raising of the functional head (X) of the small clause to a higher functional head (labeled here as 'F'). He further claims that the element *of/s* is a nominal copula, which



surfaces at PF as a result of X-to-F raising; in fact, this nominal copula is the (nominal) equivalent of the verbal copula *to be*, which obligatorily appears in predicate inversion structures in the clausal domain (e.g. *I consider the best candidate \*(to be) John*); cf. also Moro (1991)).

Under the assumption now that possessive constructions featuring 's involve DP-internal predicate displacement of the A-movement type, let us now see what the structure of a possessive construction like (26) looks like:

(27)  $[_{DP} D [_{FP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{Jan}]_j [_F' F (-s)+X_i [_{XP} \text{jas} [_X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$

Now what about the derivation of the possessive construction *Jan z'n jas* (John his coat; 'John's coat')? We have identified 'n as the spurious indefinite article that originates as the DP-internal small clause head that structurally mediates the predication relationship between the possessee and the possessor. This X ('n) raises to a higher functional head (F) for reasons of domain extension. As a result of this X-to-F raising, the nominal copula *s* (orthographically also *z*) gets spelled out. The complex head [F+X] is realized as *z + 'n*, i.e. *z'n*. The entire structure thus looks as follows:

(28)  $[_{DP} D [_{FP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{Jan}]_j [_F' F (= -s/-z)+X_i (= 'n) [_{XP} \text{jas} [_X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$

Having derived the form *z'n*, let us next turn to the strong possessive pronominal form *zijn*. The question arises how to interpret the element *ij* in *zijn*. One possibility might be that the sound *ij* appears in phonetic Spell-Out on analogy with the form *mij'n*. As an alternative, one might start from the observation that the *ij*-sound not only appears in strong pronominal object forms like *mij* (me) but also in strong pronominal subject (i.e. nominative) forms like *zij* ('she' or 'they'), *jij* (you) and *hij* (he). In view of the interpretation of *zijn*, i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, one might then want to explore the hypothesis that *zijn* is decomposed into *z + hij + 'n*. If *z* and *n* constitute the complex head [F(=z)+X(=n)] and if predicate inversion in possessive construction involves movement to [Spec,FP], one gets the derived order in (29). Note that this pattern is structurally the same as the pattern *hem z'n jas* (him his coat, 'his coat') in (30). (29) and (30) only differ from each other in the morphological form (i.e. case) of the pronoun (subject form (i.e. nominative case) versus object form (i.e. dative case)):

(29)  $[_{DP} D [_{FP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{hij}]_j [_F' F (= z)+X_i (= 'n) [_{XP} \text{jas} [_X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$

(30)  $[_{DP} D [_{FP} [_{PP} P\emptyset \text{hem}]_j [_F' F (= z)+X_i (= 'n) [_{XP} \text{jas} [_X' t_i t_j]]]]]]]$

The order *z+hij+'n* can be derived by movement of the nominal copula (i.e. F) to D. This operation would involve excorporation of the nominal copula from the complex head [F+X]. It is often assumed, however, that excorporation should be blocked. This might be a reason for rejecting the admittedly very tentative analysis depicted in (29).

Of the possessive pronouns in (1), we have thus far considered the pattern featuring spurious 'n (i.e. *mij'n*) and the bare possessor pattern (i.e. the one featuring a phonetically empty spurious article), e.g. *mij/jou/haar/jullie/hun + possessee*. There is one pattern which we haven't discussed so far, namely: *onze*. Historically, *onze* finds its origin in the form *unsar*, where we have the (possibly comparative) suffix *-ar* attached to the pronominal form *uns* (cf. Gothic *unsar* and German *unsar*); cf. Schönfeld 1964:144, Peters 1937:218. In present-day Dutch, *onze* seems to be an inflected pronominal form. The inflectional element *-e* appears

when *ons* precedes a non-neuter singular noun, i.e. a noun that combines with the definite article *de* (e.g. *onze tuin*, us-*e* garden, ‘our garden’). The inflection *-e* must be absent, if the pronoun precedes a neuter singular noun, i.e. a noun that combines with the definite article *het* (e.g. *ons huis*, us house; ‘our house’). If the noun is plural, the form *onze* is required in Standard Dutch.

Even though in Standard Dutch, the inflection *-e* (i.e. pronoun + *-e*) only appears on the first person plural pronoun (i.e. *ons* + *-e*), there are dialects in which this inflected possessor-pattern is much more common and also appears with pronouns representing second or third person. Peters (1937:211), for example, notes that in Northern-Brabantish dialects we find examples as in (31):

- (31) a. humme vogel  
 him-e bird<sub>non-neuter</sub>  
 ‘his bird’  
 b. hum kindje  
 him child<sub>neuter</sub>  
 ‘his child’

As Peters (1937:212) notes, this possessive pattern is quite closely related to the pattern featuring *'n* as in *hem 'n jas* (cf. (24)). In view of the superficial parallelism, one might want to assume that *-e* fulfils the same mediating role as the spurious indefinite article *'n*, i.e. *-e* mediates between the subject and the predicate of the DP-internal predication relationship. This would entail that the inflection *-e*, just like the spurious indefinite article *'n* is a small clause head X that projects the DP-internal small clause configuration XP. Such an analysis would bring us to the following underlying structure for a phrase like *humme vogel* (or the Standard Dutch example: *onze jas*) (cf. Corver (forthcoming) for some thoughts on the possibility that adjectival agreement (i.e. *-e*) constitutes the DP-internal small clause head X)

- (32) a. [DP [D' D [XP vogel [X' [X -e] [PP Pø hum]]]]]  
 b. [DP [PP Pø hum]<sub>i</sub> [D' [D [X -e]<sub>j</sub> [XP vogel [X' t<sub>j</sub> t<sub>i</sub>]]]]]

In its base position, the inflection marker *-e* enters into an agreement relationship with the (masculine) subject *vogel*. In (32b), the small clause head (i.e. *-e*) has been raised to D (a sort of Verb Second-like effect, i.e. X-to-C), and the predicative PP has been fronted to [Spec,DP].

Consider now also the pattern in (33), drawn from the (Northern-Brabantish) dialect of Helmond (cf. Weijnen 1958:312), where we have the sequence: *possessor* + *s* + *-e(n)* + *possessee* (cf. also the dialects of Antwerp and Oud-Beierland for this pattern). As noted by Weijnen, these so-called inflected genitives are characterized by the fact that the possessor ending on *-s* displays number and gender agreement with the possessee.

- (33) a. wieze stoewl (dialect of Helmond)  
 who-s-e chair  
 b. wies pert  
 who-s horse  
 a. vadersen hond  
 father-s-en dog  
 b. vaders koe  
 father's cow

Under the assumption that the marker *-s* on the possessor is a nominal copula (whose presence is triggered by the application of DP-internal predicate inversion, i.e. an A-movement operation), we can assign the following derived representation to a possessive pattern like *wieze stoewl* (cf. also Corver (2003) for discussion of those inflected genitives).

(34) [DP D [FP [PP P $\emptyset$  wie]<sub>j</sub> [F' F (= -s/-z)+X<sub>i</sub> (= -e) [XP stoewl [X' t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub>]]]]]

The possessive pattern in (34) minimally differs from the one in (28) (see also Hans den Besten's recent work on the possessive construction *Jan se boek* (John se book; 'John's book') in Afrikaans). In the latter, the small clause head that raises to F is a (spurious) indefinite article 'n, in the former the raised small clause head is the inflectional marker *-e*. At an abstract level, the patterns are the same: a possessor is followed by a nominal copula which has a raised small clause head ('n/-e) adjoined to it.

### 3. Conclusion

In this article, I have explored the formal appearances of the possessor-possessee pattern in Dutch and some related languages/dialects. I started from the assumption that this possessive pattern is derived by the application of a DP-internal predicate displacement process (either involving Predicate Inversion to [Spec,FP] — triggering the presence of the nominal copula *s-z* — or Predicate Fronting to [Spec,DP]). An important dimension of variation concerns the formal realization of the small clause head X that undergoes DP-internal head raising in contexts of DP-internal Possessor (i.e. Predicate) movement. This in combination with the nature of the predicate movement process (i.e. Predicate Fronting (A-bar movement) versus Predicate Inversion (A-movement)) yields an interesting variety of minimally different possessive patterns in Dutch and its related languages.

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