

Recycling morphology: case endings as markers of constructions

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Case endings are markers of constructions

1. Determiner-s construction: Jan-s boek
2. Partitive construction: iets mooi-s
3. Constructional idioms: tot sterven-s toe, des vrouw-s
4. Collective constructions: met zijn vier-en

Construction-dependent morphology

Necessity of constructions for account of the distribution of suffixes

Determiner –s construction

- Jan-s hoed ‘John’s hat’
- ieder-s huis ‘everybody’s house’
- Prins Bernhard-s brief ‘Prince B.’s letter’
- Mijn moeder-s naaidoos ‘my mother’s sewing box’
- de professor-s opvatting ‘the professor’s view’

The –s transforms the NP into a determiner

The –s is phrase-final

Jan en Piet-s vader ‘John and Pete’s father’

Pa, Ma en de kinderen’s verjaardag
‘Dad, Mum, and the children’s birthday’

De kinderen’s belangen ‘the children’s interest’ (Google search)

Phrasal affix in English and Swedish

English

The man that I saw's friend

Swedish

En vän till mig's företag
[a friend to me]s company
'a friend of mine's company'

Structure of the NP

- [[Jan]_X [-s]_D]_D Weerman & de Wit 1998
- [xxxxxxxx s]_{NP[+poss]} Börjars 2003
- In Dutch it is always a noun that carries -s

Determiner –s construction

$[[\dots[X -s]_N]_{NP_i} N_j]_{NP}$ 'the N_j of NP_i

Conditions: NP_i is

- (i) Proper name, or
- (ii) Human (pro)noun, or
- (iii) Coordination of i and ii

- s is mentioned directly as part of the construction

Partitive –s construction

- niet veel soep-s ‘not much soup-s = without quality’
- niet veel soep ‘not much soup’
- Middle Dutch:
- een lepel honich-s ‘a spoon of honey’
- iet lief-s ‘something sweet’

Quantifier Adjective –s

- iets groen-s ‘something green’
- wat leuk-s ‘something nice’
- een heleboel liefs ‘a lot of sweet things’
- Wat voor mooi-s heb je gezien ‘What kind of beautiful things did you see?’

A must be a qualifying adjective:

*iets Groninger-s

-s is marker of this construction

- iets heel lastig-s 'sthg very difficult-s'
- iets volgens mij ongeloofelijk-s 'stgh according to me unbelievable-s'
- niets in het oog vallend-s 'nothing that catches the eye'
- iets op ons doel afgestemd-s 'smth tuned to our goal'
- * iets afgestemd-s op ons doel

-s is right edge phrasal affix

Analysis as contextual inflection of adjective before empty noun?

[[iets]_D [[lastig-s]_{AP} [e]_N]_{NP}]_{DP}

Hoeksema 1998, Kester 1999

Problems:

- -s is normally not a suffix of contextual inflection;
- not all Qs can occur before nouns: *iets geld, *niets geld

Partitive –s construction

$[\text{NP} [\dots [\text{x-s}]_A]_{\text{AP}}]_{\text{NP}}$ ‘an indefinite quantity with the property A’

Where NP = an expression of indefinite quantity, and A is a qualifying adjective.

The suffix –s licenses the occurrence of AP after a head noun denoting Q.

Constructional idioms with -s

tot sterv-en-s toe 'to die-inf-s, in such a manner that it leads to dying'

tot braken-s toe, tot schreeuw-en-s toe

[tot (AP) [V-inf-s]_N]_{NP} (aan) toe]_{PP} 'in such a manner that it leads to (AP) V-ing'

tot gek word-en-s toe

*tot het walgen-s toe

*tot walging-s toe

Construction des N-s ‘characteristic of N’

Dit is niet des Geert-s

This not the-s Geert-s

‘This is not Geert-like’

Agressie is niet des vrouw-s

Agression is not the-s woman-s

‘Agression is not characteristic of women’

Collective constructions

Appositive collective

wij / ons drie-en ‘the three of us’

Collective adverbial I

Met ons/ jullie /hun drie-en

‘the three of us, you, them together’

Collective adverbial II

Met zijn [zən] drie-en ‘the three of us together’

Middle Dutch

Wi waren vier-e

We were four-nom.pl

Dat gi ons vier-en hebt ghesien

That you us four-acc.pl have seen

Alexander ginc inwaert met hem drie-en

‘A. went in together with the three of them’

Reinterpretation

Prep Personal pronoun Cardinal > Prep
Possessive Pronoun Cardinal

ons 'us, our'

U 'you, your'

hun 'them, their'

haar 'them. their'

met zijn twee-n > met zijn twee-en

Evidence for plural reinterpretation

Wij beid-je-s

Wij saam-pje-s

Met z'n beid-je-s

Met z'n twee-tje-s

Reference to suffix –en is necessary

zevens / met zijn zeven-en
negen-s / met zijn negen-en

Not always semantic plurality

Het is bij en-en ‘It is almost one o’clock’

Hij kocht het in en-en ‘He bought it as one piece’

Conclusion: various sub-construction with –en, and a sub-construction with plural diminutives

Consequence for Lexical Integrity

- Distinction between access and manipulation of word-internal structure is necessary (Booij 2009)
- Syntax may have access to the internal morphological structure of words, but cannot manipulate word-internal morphological structure

Theoretical conclusions

- Languages may exhibit *bricolage* (Lass 1997): pieces of an old morphological system are put to new uses
- Morphological markers of constructions may be preserved in restricted form, thus adding to the linguistic complexity of languages (Dahl 2004)
- The notion 'construction' is essential to account for the distribution of certain bound morphemes: construction-dependent morphology

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