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THE HISTORY OF THE GENITIVE IN DUTCH: AN EVIDENCE OF THE INTERFERENCE BETWEEN LANGUAGE STANDARDISATION AND SPONTANEOUS DRIFT

The syntactic and morphological system of a language is commonly equated with its standard and written form by linguists and especially historical linguists. Standards however are not the outcome of the spontaneous language change, but the result of language engineering by grammarians, who aimed to order and polish the fuzziness and the idiosyncrasies of the spoken language according to the model of the prestigious language par excellence, i.e. Latin. The history of the Dutch genitive is a explanatory example of it. A quantistic analysis of different types of texts ranging from the 12th to the 19th century reveals quite fuzzy a development of the morphosyntactic devices to express genitival functions in Dutch: till the 15th century the direction of change is undoubtedly towards analicity, but after that time there seems to be a turnover towards syntheticity again. This anomaly of development, together with the grammarians' neglecting the pattern *Jan z'n boek* (in any time), as well as and the present situation of almost diaglossy, cannot be explained but considering historical and literary elements, namely the effect of language standardization and the interference between the spontaneous drift and language standardization.

0. Introduction

The syntax of a language is commonly equated with the syntax of its written form or even with the norms writers conform to; and the same often happens as to morphological features. That is particularly true in the case of historical

research that is compelled by its nature to deal with older stages of a language, if not with dead languages, and to rely mostly on written texts, i.e. on the written standard.

Languages are on the contrary characterised by a multifaceted reality, the written standard being one side of it, and can be more efficaciously represented as as a continuum with the written prose at one end and the spoken dialect at the other, with a range of colloquial or non-standard morphosyntactic and syntactic forms and structures in between the two poles. Standards are in fact the result of an explicit attempt by grammarians to order the inherent fuzzyness and indeterminacy of spoken patterns, and to avoid the idiosyncrasies of the spontaneous use of the language. Therefore, what can be inferred exclusively from the diachronic analysis of the written standard does not necessarily correspond to the actual change the language has been subject to.

Since language change must be discussed in terms of phenomena such as convergence or divergence, it is impossible to establish historical continuities within the language as a whole without taking dialects and non-standard forms into account. This is true for both macro- and micro-structures: in our case for the morphosyntactic strategies of Dutch genitive.

My aim was to trace the possible paths of the development of morpho-syntactic devices to express the genitival functions in Dutch over a period ranging from the 12th to the 19th century. In other words, I wanted to individuate the different strategies adopted by the Dutch language, switching from a synthetic inflectional SOV stage to an analytic SVO one. To my surprise, the data do not show an homogeneous development at all, but depict a quite confusing diachronic situation, which cannot be possibly explained, but as the outcome of formal register and language standardisation interference and the spontaneous drift of Dutch.

Firstly, in the present paper, I will give a brief outline of the situation in Modern Dutch (section 1), and then I will go back to the Middle Age (section 2). Secondly (section 3) I will introduce and comment on the data collected from a literary corpus (see bibliography), paying attention to the way the different genitival functions[1] were encoded. For sake of clarity, I will establish a terminology of our own, which might not be theoretically rigorous, but turns out to be effective for our purpose. The inflected genitives will be distinguished in preposed genitive (see A) in scheme 1) and postposed genitive (see B) in scheme 1) according to their position, neglecting their formal difference. The analytic genitives are distinguished on the basis of their structure into prepositional genitive (see C) in scheme 1) and possessive linked

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[1] I will use the traditional terminology to identify the different functions assigned to the genitive case: namely, possessive, objective, subjective, partitive, of origin, of locative or temporal determination.

genitive (see D) in scheme 1). As regards the two noun phrases, I will refer to the noun phrase which occurs first in the postponed and prepositional genitive and follows in the preposed and possessive linked genitive as head NP, whereas I will refer to the other NP as dependent NP, which occurs in preposed and possessive linked genitive and follows in the postponed and prepositional genitive (see scheme 1).

Scheme 1

Head NP	Dependent NP
B) het huis	mijner moeder
C) het huis	Van de moeder
Dependent NP	**Head NP**
A) mijn vaders	huis
D) mijn moeder	d'r huis

Thirdly, (section 4) I will try to give an explanation to the unexpected and typologically aberrant development of the genitive structures in terms of language standardisation. As a conclusion, I will briefly hint at what in my opinion could have been the spontaneous drift of Dutch with regard to the genitive.

1. Modern Dutch and its morphosyntactic genitival devices

In any Dutch grammar, under the label "genitive" four different patterns are listed: A) preposed genitive in -s (ex. 1a-b and 2a), B) postposed genitive (ex. 2b), C) prepositional genitive (van-PP) (ex. 3), D) the analytic possessive linked genitive (NP+Poss+NP)[2] (ex. 4a-g). Thus, Dutch has two morphological genitives (type A) and B)) and two periphrastic-analytic ones (type C) and D)).

(1)   a. Jans huis
      John's house

      b. Maries verhalen
      Mary's tales

(2)   a. des konings vaandels
      the-GEN king's colours

      b. de vaandels des konings
      the colours the-GEN king's

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[2] The term "NP-internal Left Dislocation" is used by Hans de Besten (Amsterdam Creole Studies 1978), referring to Jan z'n boek.

(3)   de appel van de boom
      The apple of the tree

(4)   a. Jan z'n huis
          John his house

      b. Marie d'r verhalen
          Mary her tales

      c. de kinderen hun tekeningen
          the children their drawings

      d. de burgemeester van Amsterdam zijn ambtsketen
          the mayor of Amsterdam his office

      e. de jongen die gisteren kwam zijn fiets
          the young man that yesterday came, his bike

      f. wie d'r kinderen zijn dat?
          who her children are it?

      g. die jongen, wie zijn vader directeur van de AMRO-Bank is
          the young man who his father director of the AMBO-Bank is

      h. die jonghen, die zijn zuster is terug uit Singapore
          the young man the his sister is back from Singapore

Functions and usage of these four strategies overlap only in part and are not always interchangeable, as emerges both form the grammatical descriptions and the present spoken usage. According to grammars (see Donaldson 1981:), both the postposed genitive and the prepositional one cover the entire functional spectrum of the genitive. The preposed genitive is strongly constrained and exclusively occurs with proper names and relative/family names such as moeder "mother", vader "father", oma "granny" and so on, and encodes tight and possessive relationships. Whereas the types A), B) and C) are not identified with any particular register, the possessive linked genitive is unanimously attributed to the colloquial style to express the possessive genitive either within noun phrase or with relative clusters.

Scheme 2

Standard Dutch	
→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	
+ formal/written	**+ colloquial/informal**
mijn broers auto / de auto van mijn broer	mijn broer z'n auto
mijn moeders huis / het huis van mijn moeder	mijn moeder d'r huis
De kleren van die mensen	die mensen d'r kleren / die mensen hun kleren
zijn vriend / haar man	die z'n vriend / die d'r man
wiens-wier-welks / van wie - waarvan	wie z'n - wie d'r / die z'n - die d'r

According to Paardekooper (1952) this pattern, censured in written style and regarded as "een kinderachtige stijl' te schrijven" "a childish written style" (34), is restricted to human beings (see examples 4a-g) and can be extended to inanimates only in "personifications" or in "figurative language" (see ex. 6a-b), as in children's language, and to animals only in the case of prototypical possessive relationship (see ex. 7a-b).

(5)   a.* de boom z'n takken
          the tree its branches
    b.* het boek z'n kaft
          the book its cover

(6)   a.? de wind z'n schuld
          the wind its guilt
    b.? de regen z'n schuld
          the rain its blame

(7)   a. de hond z'n mand
          the dog its basket
    b. de kat z'n bak
          the cat its bowl

Whoever has spent some time in the Netherlands will surely have noticed that grammatical prescriptions correspond only in part to how people actually speak. The first divergence concerns the currency of the four constructions. Contrary to the grammatical description, both the postposed and the preposed genitive of a complex NP are obsolete and will hardly be used by a native speaker, whereas the prepositional genitive is undoubtedly the most frequent form in all functions and the least constrained[3]. Moreover, the preposed genitive is not only used for possessive relationships, but can encode other functions such as the subjective one as in example 8.

(8)   Peters opmerking
        Peter's observation

The only strict constraint concerns the dependent NP that has to and can only be a proper name, as in the above example, or an addressing form. According to Seuren[4], in Dutch there is a formal distinction between the preposed genitive which can only have a subjective interpretation, and the prepositional genitive whose interpretation can be disambiguated merely on a lexical basis or by means of contextual and extracontextual knowledge.

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[3] Some native speakers recognize the prepositional form as the unmarked one in order to encode all the genitival functions in the spoken register and relegate even the -s form to the written language, with the only exception of proper names.

[4] Personal communication.

The most evident divergence of the written standard language from the spoken register concerns the usage of the possessive-linked genitive. Its usage is not peripheral at all; on the contrary, it is so common in spoken Dutch that even some writers – although very few – (among them, Reve) have started to use it in their works, and not simply to give a more realistic effect. Moreover, while even the most recent grammars acknowledge its usage as a "very colloquial" variant and only for possessive relationships, the possessive-linked genitive has actually extended its domain of application to the objective (see example 9.) and subjective genitive. For instance, example 9. can be paraphrased as Peter z'n opmerking.

(9)   Peter z'n lering / verbijstering
         Peter's instruction / bewilderment

In short, while the written language makes use of both inflected genitive and prepositional genitive in the same way, the spoken language prefers analytic strategies so that the only alternative of van-PP is represented by the possessive-linked genitive, except for a very restricted usage of the preposed genitive of proper names and proper-name-like nouns.

Scheme 3

written language	spoken language
Pappa's brieven / de brieven van Pappa	Papa's brieven / brieven van Papa / Papa z'n brieven "Dad's letters"
de naam des rectoirs / des rectoirs name	de name van de rector / de rector z'n name "the headmaster's name"
Peters opmerking / de opmerking van Peter	Peters opmerking / de opmerking van Peter / Peter z'n opemrking "Peter's observation"
de opmerking mijner moeder mijn moeders opmerking	de opmerking van mijn moeder / mijn moeder d'r opmerking "my mother's observation"
de dood der kinderen / de dood van der kinderen / der kinderen dood	de dood van de kinderen / de kinderen d'r dood "the children's death"
een uwer afgevaardigden	een van uw afgevaardigden
een vriend mijner moeder	een vriend van mijn moeder "one of my mother's friends"

2. Middle Dutch genitive structures

Middle Dutch was still an inflectional language, although case-marking had already undergone a drastic simplification and reduction. The main device to express genitival functions was the inflected genitive case.

In comparison with other Germanic languages, in Middle Dutch (which still had a weak and a strong noun declension) the analogical spread of the -s̱ has already affected either weak nouns (here > des herens instead of des heren) or consonant-rooted nouns (vater > des vaters instead of des vater, man > des mans instead of des mannen). Only the feminine declension appears to be more conservative.

Scheme 4

Nominal Inflection	masc., neutr.	fem.
gen. sg.	-es -s	-en -n
gen. pl.	-en -e	-en -e

In the adjective-inflectional system, grammars distinguish between weak and strong case-marking dependent on the presence of other determiners (i.e. definite article).

Scheme 5

Adjective Inflection	masc. neutr.	fem.	pl.
strong declension	-s	-er -ere	-er -ere
weak declension	-en	-en	-en

This description is not always supported by textual evidence, since strong endings are findable in definite NPs and weak endings in indefinite NPs, there are ambiguous endings (-e̱), as well as cases where endings are totally absent.

Scheme 6

weak ending	ambiguous ending	strong ending	Ø ending
des goeden ridders	des goete ridders	des goets ridders	des goet ridder
	sijns lieve kints	eens wijs conix	eens valsc kerstijn
der helschen straten	der edele vrouwen	der scoonre vrouwen	
	der edele vrouwe	der scoonre joncfrouwe	
		der goeder vrouwe	

Such variability in adjectival inflection can be related on the one hand to the tendency of Middle Dutch to avoid redundant case marking by having only one

element of the complex NP case-marked (grave Arnouts sone), on the other hand to the trend to the analogical extension of one and the same form throughout all both adjectival and nominal declensions:

> Während die jüngeren hd. Dialekte die Neigung zeigen, beim Zusammentreffen eines Pronomens mit einem Adjektiv die Flexion des letzteren von der des ersteren zu differenzieren, assimiliert sich in Mnl. umgekehrt die Endung des Adjektivs an die des voraufgehenden Pronomens. Das schw. Adjektiv steht aber in der Regel nach dem Artikel oder einem anderen Pron., und so im Mnl. durch jene Assimilation die Adjektivform mit der starken, die ja auch auf pronominaler Flexion beruht, übereinstimmend. Diese Assimilation tritt auch schon im Althd. hervor und hat bei den Formen mit r eine größere Verbreitung erlangt (...) In Mnl ist sie vielleicht durch eine Neigung des n abzufallen noch gefördert worden (Franck, 1910:169).

In the case of complex NPs with appositions or complements, Middle Dutch had the so-called "split genitive", where the modifier is separated from its head.

(10)   Ende was des hertogen dochter van Sassen (Gysseling)
        and was the-GEN duke's daughter of Saxony
(11)   Des keysers dochter van Griekenland (Gysseling)
        the-GEN emperor's daughter of Greece

According to grammatical descriptions, the inflected genitive could occur both post-nominally (post-posed genitive) and prenominally (preposed genitive), without a clear semantic and functional difference. Moreover, Middle Dutch already displayed the alternative analytic construction with the preposition van. Grammars merely hint at this last pattern, and often with exclusive reference to partitive genitive and genitive of origin. Textual data, though, give enough evidence to prove the inadequacy of grammatical descriptions, since already in Middle Dutch the different genitival functions were encoded by the prepositional genitive too (compare the examples of inflected genitive 12-21 with those of prepositional genitive 20-23).

(12)   op des zeewes baren (poss) (Bonebakker)
        on the-GEN sea's billows
(13)   die engel Gods hem toe sprak (poss) (Bonebakker)
        the angel of-God them to spoke
(14)   na sijns herten wille (subj/poss) (Aken)
        according to his-GEN heart's will
(15)   na de ghewoente syns ambachts (orig/specification) (Kern)
        according to the customs his-GEN Office
(16)   in Gods name / in den name svaters (Braakman)
        in God's name / in the name the-GEN-father's

(17) <u>Jans soene, Pieters soens, mijns broeders kinde</u> (poss) (Pauw)
      John's son, Peter's son's, my-GEN brother's child

(18) <u>Een schoen mirakel van een maldere</u> (spec) (Vooys)
      one beautiful miracle of one kind

(19) <u>Om te hebben minne van enen wive</u> (subj/poss) (Braakman)
      in order to have love of one woman

(20) <u>al de juden van der stat</u> (part) (Diegerick)
      all the Jews of the town

(21) <u>alle der sieker deder</u> (part) (Gysseling)
      all the-GEN evil deeds

Middle Dutch texts also prove the existence and the usage of the possessive-linked genitive that first appeared in the possessive function. At that time, three patterns occured depending on the case of the dependent NP: it could be dative (ex. 23), genitive (ex. 22) or unmarked direct case (ex. 24).

(22) <u>der Sarrasine haer rike</u> (Stoett, 1909)
      the-GEN f. Saracen-GEN her reign

(23) <u>Grote Kaerle sijn zoon</u> (Stoett, 1909)
      Charles-DAT the Great his son

(24) <u>die ionghe man sijn bloet alte</u> (Stoett, 1909)
      the young man his blood old

From this brief outline of the Middle Dutch and Modern Dutch genitive systems, the closiness and similarity of the two systems is quite puzzling, since a few centuries elapsed in between during which Dutch underwent a significant change in all its other aspects: first of all the change from the SOV type to the SVO type.

Scheme 7

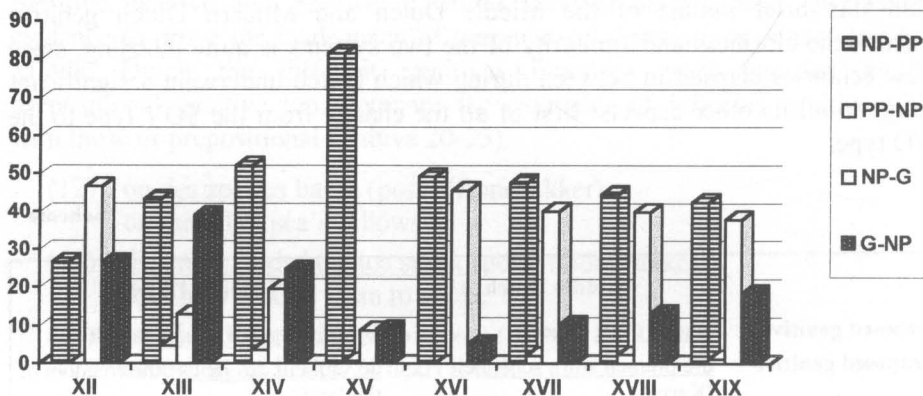|	Middle Dutch	Modern Dutch
preposed genitive	<u>Davits mont</u> (Kern)	<u>Davids mond</u> "David's mouth"
postposed genitive	<u>die blumen sinre schonheit</u> (Kern)	<u>de vrijheid des lands</u> "the freedom of the land"
prepositional genitive	<u>sine edele sele van sine lighame</u> (Kern)	<u>zijn edel ziel van zijn lijf</u> "his noble of his life"
possessive-linked genitive	<u>sinre liver muder hare herte</u> (Kern)	<u>zijn liefde moeder d'r hart</u> "his dear mother her heart"

In fact, textual analysis leads us to conclude that the state of affairs described in present-day grammars and reflected in the written standard is not the outcome of the spontaneous change of the language, but the result of the interference and interaction between language standardisation and spontaneous drift.

3. The development of morphosyntactic genitive strategies

Before entering into the question regarding the development of genitival strategies in Dutch, it will be advisable to analyse texts over a wide time span and collect the occurrences of the various morphosyntactic devices encoding genitival functions. The collected data depict an unexpected development.

Table 1: Occurrences of the four patterns in literary and non-literary texts

|	XII	XIII	XIV	XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII	XIX
NP-PP	20	229	473	1075	82	135	155	139
	(26,6%)	(43,3%)	(52,1%)	(81,4)	(49,1)	(47,5%)	(44,5%)	(42,5%)
PP-NP	0	25	33	8	0	6	8	4
		(4,7%)	(3,6%)	0,6%)		(2,1%)	(2,3%)	(1,2%)
NP-G	35	68	178	117	76	114	139	124
	(46,6%)	(12,9%)	(19,6)	(8,8%)	(45,5%)	(40,1%)	(39,9%)	(37,9%)
G-NP	20	207	224	122	9	29	46	60
	(26,6%)	(39,1%)	(24,7%)	(9,2%)	(5,4%)	(10,3%)	(13,3%)	(18,4%)
TOTALE	75	529	908	1322	167	284	348	327

Graph.1: Distribution of the four patterns in literary and non-literary texts

From the first glance at Table 1., we could identify a critical century, the 15th c., which constitutes a sort of borderline between two opposing moments of

language development. In this century, the various genitive strategies seem to reach a critical point due to its peculiar diachronic development and the apex of their evolution, after which there is no homogeneous continuation. Graph. 1 exemplifies the whole situation, visualised by the column referring to <u>van</u>-PP occurrences, which towers over on the other columns in correspondence of the 15th century on the abscissae axis.

Until the 15th century, the change perfectly agrees with what I would expect to follow from the change from SOV to SVO and the loss of inflection. Both preposed (G-NP) and postposed (NP-G) genitives are less and less frequent, decreasing from 83,2% in the 12th century to 18% in the 15th century –the postposed genitive from 46,6% to 8,8%, and the preposed genitive from 26,6% to 9,2% respectively. Proportionally the postposed genitive dropped more sensibly than the preposed.
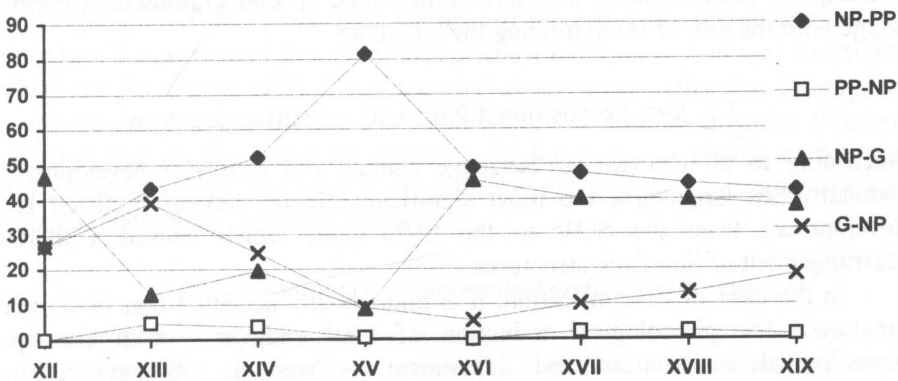
Graph. 1a: Occurrences of the four patterns in literary and non-literary texts

As a matter of fact, during Middle Dutch, with the establishment of the SVO word order, operators (Vennemann, 1976) in general tended to follow their operands (Vennemann, 1976) more and more consistently. In the case of the genitive, moreover, the ambiguity of the case endings due to phonological erosion favoured the replacement of inflected genitive with prepositional phrases. Thus, the decrease of postposed genitives was parallel to the increase in frequency and in function of the prepositional genitive, which rose from 26,6% in the 12th century to 81,4% in the 15th century, becoming the most used genitive strategy.

After the 15th century, language drift seems to have been overturned: most modifiers are post-nominal, but the postposed genitive occurs more or less as often as the prepositional one in the following four centuries (see Table 1). In other words, both postposed genitive and prepositional genitive equally share the modifying function of the genitive, the prenominal position remaining under the domain of the heavily constrained preposed genitive.

Not only such a reversal of development, but also the invariable frequency of the three main morphosyntactic patterns is undoubtedly bewildering. The textual data regarding the centuries before the 15th c. give evidence of the language change that was certainly taking place in Middle Dutch (as it appears in Graphic 1a). However, after the 15th century a difference can hardly be noticed in the occurrences of the two patterns: the prepositional genitive sets its frequency at about 45%, the postposed genitive at about 40%. The lines depicting their behaviour go almost parallel to the abscissae axis (Graph.1a). Only the occurrences of the preposed genitive vary and increase up to 18,4% in the Jans fiets pattern (see 3.3.).

The almost invariable occurrences of the three morphosyntactic genitival patterns arouses the suspicion that they may not reflect the spontaneous continuation of language drift, but depend on an external interference of prescriptive grammarians, who have established special grammatical norms of usage with the aim of standardizing the language.

3.1. Van-Prepositional Phrase as a genitive structure

According to all theories on language change and historical development in Indoeuropean languages, the most significant change having occurred is the development from the SOV to the SVO type, which caused a thorough rearrangement of linguistic structures.

In the case of case inflection, it is undoubtedly accepted that in Germanic languages the phonological reduction of final endings – with consequent phonological assimilation and adjustment as well as case syncretism – jeopardized the efficency and the transparency of case marking[5] and triggered the search for clearer analytic devices[6]. The change from a SOV word order to a SVO type – i.e. from one type where the semantic relations were expressed by case morphology and the pragmatic roles by position to the other one where position became relevant for both semantic and pragmatic roles – favoured post-modification and the replacement of inflectional case with prepositional analytic forms[7]. In this direction, both the analogical spread of the -s ending from the original strong masculine declension to proper and addressing names, and the formation of van-PP must be understood.

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[5] What I have described as preference for analysis, is called "conspiracy" by Lass (1987).

[6] Thomason and Kaufmann (1988) specifically speak of three factors: (1) the loss of inflectional endings (due to the common Germanic stress pattern), (2) the levelling of the article (to a different degree in the individual Germanic languages), (3) syntactic ambiguity (as a consequence of (1) and (2)).

[7] For a more exhaustive and complete discussion about the change SOV > SVO and the consequent development depending on the "principle of modifier placement" (Lehmann, 1973) or the "principle of natural serialization" (Vennemann, 1974), see Lehmann (1973) and Vennemann (1974).

With the decay of inflection, the post-posed inflected genitive became formally insufficient and functionally inefficient. The preposition <u>van</u> could very well replace the missing link between the head NP and the dependent NP, because it did not contrast with the language-internal preference for post-modification and it implied similar semantic features as the genitive marker: [local/origin][8]. Its development from an originally local adverb to a grammatical case marker can be described as a process of grammaticalization, i.e. through semantic bleaching, an already grammatical formative was turned into a more grammatical one. As grammaticalization is not an abrupt reanalysis, but a gradual process, the occurrence of prepositional genitive as an equivalent to the inflected genitive did not spring up suddenly to very high frequency. On the contrary, a slow gradual extension in functions and frequency is traceable throughout the analysed written texts which resemble an S-curve (Gerritsen and Stein, 1992).

As shown in Table 1, the prepositional genitive steadily increased until the 15th, when it represented the most used pattern to express genitival functions, reaching the percentage of 81,4% of the total occurrences. After that century, its occurrences decreased to almost 50%, remaining nevertheless the most frequent genitival device. In the 12th-13th centuries, its function was almost exclusively partitive and of origin, but later it started to express possessive, objective and subjective relationships too (see Table 2).

Table 2: Occurrences of postnominal prepositional genitive

	gn.obj.	gn. subj.	gn. part.	gn.poss.	gn.or.+loc.	gn.temp.
XII			15 (75,0%)	5 (25,0%)		
XIII	21 (9,5%)	15 (6,5%)	106 (45,5%)	40 (17,3%)	49 (21,2%)	
XIV	65 (14,3%)	46 (10,2%)	156 (34,4%)	113 (25,0%)	71 (15,7%)	2 (0,4%)
XV	172 (16,0%)	124 (11,5%)	384 (35,8%)	264 (24,6%)	123(11,4%)	8 (0,7%)
XVI	18 (22,0%)	14 (17,0%)	18 (22,0%)	27 (33,0%)	5 (6,0%)	
XVII	26 (19,2%)	15 (11,1%)	39 (29,0%)	42 (31,1%)	13 (9,6%)	
XVIII	29 (18,7%)	18 (16,6%)	45 (29,0%)	33 (21,3%)	27 (17,4%)	
XIX	29 (20,9%)	21 (15,1%)	40 (28,8%)	30 (21,5%)	19 (13,7%)	

More exactly, after the 15th century, it encoded objective, subjective and partitive relationships (together with the post-nominal genitive) and possessive relationships (together with the prenominal -<u>s</u> genitive). Graph 2a represents such a spread of the functional domain of the prepositional genitive in a very efficacious way by means of the increase of columns (corresponding to the different genitival functions) which stand out reaching an almost equivalent height.

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[8] For the analogous development in English, see Wischer (1997).

(25)　die ceure van den saye (obj) (Velde)
　　　　the choice of the material
(26)　den sayen van Brugghe (orig) (Putte)
　　　　the material of Brugge
(27)　der goeder waerde van meester scerres (Subj) (Obreen)
　　　　during the good watch of the master of wool
(28)　de ooms van den coninc van Vrankerike (poss) (Diegerick)
　　　　the uncles of the king of France
(29)　een van den pitten van den doobeerers (part) (Gysseling)
　　　　one of the kernels of the berries
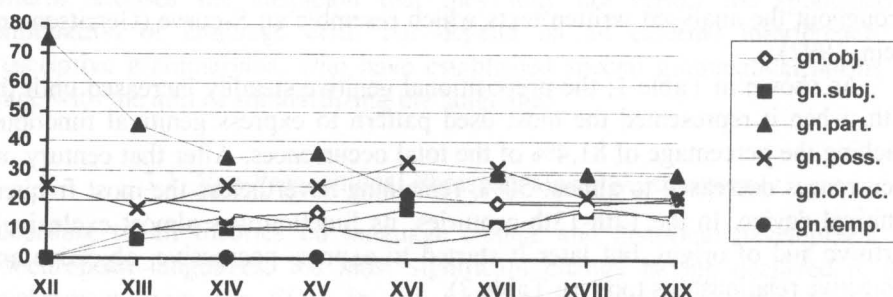
Graph. 2a: Occurrences of postnominal prepositional genitive along the time intervals according to the functions

3.2. Inflected Genitive

Talking about the inflected genitive, it is useful to distinguish from the beginning between the preposed genitive and the postposed one because they followed different paths of development, although they were both affected by the loss of inflectional endings and by analogical levelling.

From what I have assumed so far, the development and establishment of Dutch as an SVO language should imply the gradual replacement of the inflected genitive with the analytic one. The existence of a synthetic genitive side by side with a prepositional genitive during Middle and Early Modern Dutch is accounted for partly by such a graduality of language change, partly by a process of functional specialization of the two patterns. As a matter of fact, the co-existence of an inflected genitive and a prepositional one is not peculiar to Dutch, but to all Germanic languages, which tend to have a prenominal -s genitive and a prepositional phrase. Actually, what turns out to be rather peculiar is the diachronic development and distribution of the postposed genitive.

Table 1 concerning the occurrences of the four morphosyntactic devices shows quite a fuzzy direction of change. The frequency of the prenominal genitive constantly and remarkably decreased until the 15th century and later rose slightly to reach 20 % of the total occurrences of genitival structures, but its occurrence remained quite marginal limited to some functions. On the contrary, the postposed genitive, almost faded away in the 15th century (specially in the possessive function), came back to life after the 15th c. and became the second most productive pattern to express genitival functions (the first one is the prepositional genitive), preferably partitive, possessive and subjective, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Occurrences of postposed genitive

	gn.obj.	gn.subj.	gn.part.	gn.poss.	gn.or.+loc.+temp
XII	2 (10,0%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	10 (50%)	
XIII	9 (17,2%)	3 (19,8%)	40 (25,2%)	117 (69,2%)	
XIV	19 (11,3%)	46 (26,1%)	33 (18,7%)	73 (41,4%)	5 (2,8%)
XV	19 (17,2%)	22 (19,8%)	28 (25,2%)	38 (34,2%)	4 (3,6%)
XVI	19 (25,0%)	17 (22,4%)	18 (23,7%)	22 (28,9%)	0
XVII	15 (13,2%)	23 (20,2%)	37 (32,4%)	28 (24,6%)	11 (9,6%)
XVIII	23 (16,5%)	31 (22,3%)	45 (32,4%)	27 (19,4%)	13 (9,4%)
XIX	22 (18,7%)	29 (23,5%)	38 (30,6%)	35 (28,2%)	
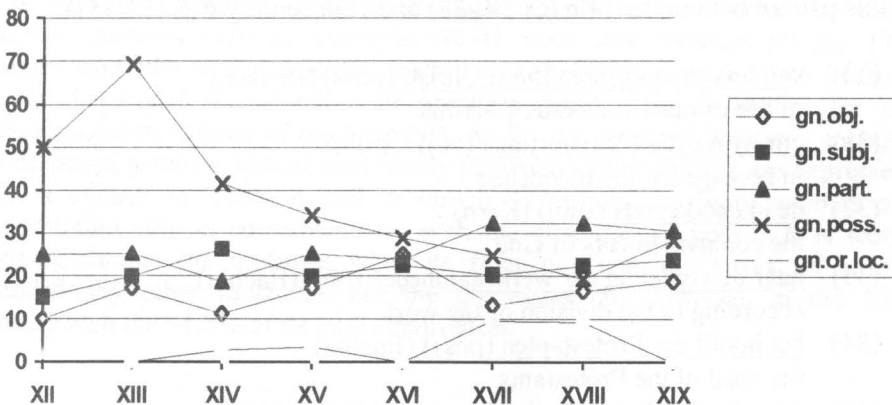
Graph. 3a: Occurrences of the postposed genitive along the time intervals according to the functions

Such a development contrasts with both diachronic and typological predictions because it concerns the restoration of an unproductive and opaque inflectional

system. It is generally assumed that because of the loss of case-marking, Germanic languages (and others) resorted to prepositions to encode the semantic roles previously expressed by cases. In the case of the Dutch genitive, together with the disappearance of case-marking distinction – the only exception being the masc./neutr. gen. sg. -s –, the post-posed genitive began to be replaced by the prepositional one, a shift which occurred (proved by our data) from the 12th to the 15th century.

After this last century, even though the semantic role of a noun phrase was not traceable from its morphological form, a type of postposed genitive was however re-established, loading all the case information on deictic and possessive pronouns and on definite and indefinite articles that still retained formally distinguished case forms: more precisely, deictic and possessive pronouns retained a trace of the so-called pronominal declension (gen.sg. m.n. -es, f. -er, pl. -er), and articles were not yet affected by formal syncretism, but had one form for the gen.fem.sg. and gen. pl. der, and one for the gen. masc./neutr. sg. des. This newly reintroduced postposed genitive applied to complex NPs in particular and since the beginning it had always been in full swing.

What remains unexplained is the reason why it started to be used again and how it could be maintained intact for so long. The comparison between Table 1 and Table 3 shows how regular the behaviour of the preposed genitive after the 15th century is – see also Graph. 3a, where the groups of columns are almost identical –. The following examples point out how unaltered the usage of this pattern both in the 14th (ex. 30-32) and 18th century was (33-35).

(30)   van levene ons Heren Ihesu Christi (poss) (Beuken)
       of life of our Lord Jesus Christus
(31)   om wrake der bloetstortinge (obj) (Bruin)
       in revenge for the bloodshed
(32)   de ghebode gods (subj) (Kern)
       the commandments of God
(33)   naar de verdeling der werkzaamheden (obj) (Bachin)
       according to the division of the work
(34)   het hoofd der Protestanten (poss) (Bachin)
       the head of the Protestants
(35)   dit geloof en het doel zijns levens (subj) (Bachin)
       the belief and the purpose of his life

The prenominal genitive, on the contrary, shows a behaviour completely in line with the other Germanic languages. In this position, firstly the -s ending was analogically extended as a genitive marker to proper and addressing names (first masculine and then also feminine); secondly it was restricted to animate

and short NPs; and thirdly, while in early Middle Dutch genitives could freely combine with indefinite quantifiers (see example 36) and even with definite quantifiers (see example 37) – even if more seldom – , in the course of Middle Dutch and then in Early Modern Dutch preposed genitive could not co-occur with determiners unlike the prepositional and the postposed genitive, thus acquiring a similar function to that of a determiner (see Lyons (1986) for the distinction between determiner genitives and adjectival genitives, and Plank (1992) for the scalar properties between determination and modification).

(36) een svaders lieue vrint (Kern)
      one the-GEN father's dear child

(37) a. die gods soene (Beuken)
          the-pl. God's sons

      b. alle des convents boeken (Galliard)
          all the-GEN sg. monastery's books

In Table 1 the decrease of such a pattern is quite evident: from around 25% in the 12th-14th centuries the percentage sank to around 9% in the 15th, and then to 5,4% in the 16th century, and slightly rose in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The decrease in frequency reflects the restriction on the number of types of dependent NPs that could occur in the preposed genitive and on its functions. Complex NPs, even if made up with a determiner and a noun, were discarded in prenominal position, and only one-constituent NPs endowed with the features [+human] [+Det Ref], in particular proper and addressing names, were favoured. Patterns such as examples 38-39 became more and more unusual; patterns such as examples 40-41 were still common till the 17th century when the only acceptable pattern was that of examples 42-45 because of the functional specialization of preposed genitive as an anchor for the referential identification of the head NP. As for the genitival functions encoded by preposed genitive, almost exclusively possessive relationships are expressed: this is evident in Table 4 and in Graph 4a, where the high columns are concentrated only in correspondence with the abscissa "gn.poss.". It is worth noticing that in the centuries when its frequency was the lowest, it hardly encoded any other functions, but the possessive: for instance, in the 15th century with the 91,8% of its total occurrences.

Table 4: Occurrences of preposed genitive

	gn.obj.	gn. subj.	gn. part.	gn.poss.	gn.or.+loc.+temp
XII	4 (11,5%)	9 (25,7%)	0	22 (62,8%)	0
XIII	15 (7,2%)	42 (20,2%)	3 (1,4%)	147 (70,7%)	0
XIV	6 (2,7%)	40 (17,8%)	0	178 (79,5%)	0
XV	0	10 (8,2%)	0	112 (91,8%)	0
XVI	0	1 (11,1%)	0	8 (88,9%)	0

	gn.obj.	gn. subj.	gn.part.	gn.poss.	gn.or.+loc.+temp
XVII	0	2 (6,9%)	0	27 (93,1%)	0
XVIII	3 (6,5%)	6 (13%)	0	37 (80,7%)	0
XIX	2 (3,3 %)	4 (6,7%)	0	54 (90%)	0
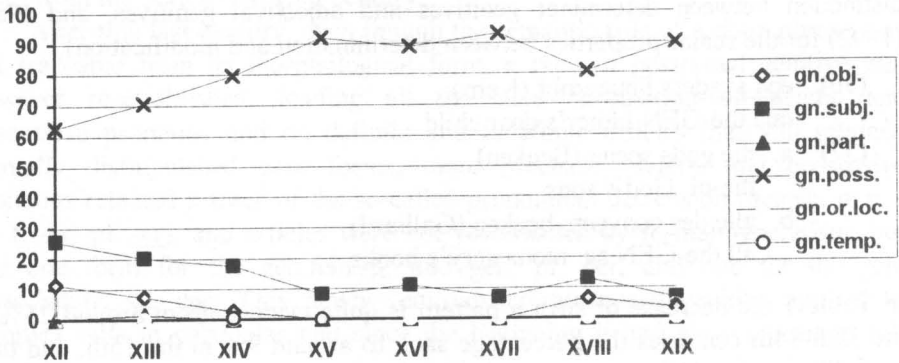
Graph. 4a: Occurrences of the preposed genitive along the time intervals according to the function

Such strict constraints on the prenominal genitive, which specifically distinguishe this pattern from the others, have led linguists to find a particular name for it: in the "Dutch milieu" it is commonly called the "Jans fiets-pattern"

(38) mijns reinen lichamen vrucht (Maerlant)
       my-GEN pure body's fruit
(39) alle de porters end der porters kinder of hare wif (Gysseling)
       all the citizens and the-GEN citizen's childern or their women
(40) mit des ridders zone (Boedental)
       with the-GEN knight's son
(41) des keysers brieven (Gysseling)
       the-GEN emperor's letters
(42) Reinaerts werc (Reinaert)
       R.'s work
(43) Oorlyens zuster (Putte)
       O.'s sister
(44) omme de bede van Diedeic Pieters soene (Pauw)
       on the both of D. P.'s sons
(45) maar wij zullen tantes gezondheid eens drinken (WolffandDeken)
       but we should drink to ant's health

The constraints on the types of dependent NPs in preposed genitive constructions regard their topicality from both an extracontextual and a contextual point of view: i.e. the dependent element coming first in the phrasal cluster corresponds to the theme and is endowed with the feature [+given], while the rheme coincides with the head NP [+new], whose referent is identified via its relation to the referent of the genitive. Its preceding position is thus pragmatically motivated. In fact, it is very easy to identify the referents of the NPs Reinaerts werc, Oorlyens zuster, Diedeic Pieters soene, tantes gezondheid if it is known which Reinaert, Diedeic Pieter , Orlean or tante are meant (see examples 42-45). This type of genitive was used as an anchor for the referential identification of the head NP.

In this position it is easy to predict what is going to be the probable development. The prenominal genitive starts to lose its relational / grammatical function and behave like either a determinator or a sort of qualitative genitive (whose function is similar to that of an adjectival modifier), as it already happens in Frisian.

3.3. Jan z'n boek pattern

At the same time as the inflection was corroded by phonetic erosion and reduced by the following syncretism, a further periphrastic pattern made its first appearance in written texts: the possessive-linked genitive. Over the centuries, its frequency was no more than sporadic. Since the beginning and in all the above-mentioned three different patterns (dependent on the case of the dependent NP) this pattern had been characterized by a particular constraint: the dependent NP either had been already mentioned or was contextually highly topical; in no cases could it be determined by the features [- Det] or [-Ref]. In other words, also this structure had a strongly pragmatic motivation as well as an anchoring function for the second NP.

In its earliest textual occurrences, the possessive-linked genitive only occurred when the head NP was introduced for the first time in the discourse; in other words when a new topic of the discourse was being established. Since its dependent NP either corresponded to the theme or was extracontextually topical, this pattern had a similar function as the preposed genitive, that is it played an important pragmatic role for the referential identification of the head NP through the topicality of the dependent NP. Like the preposed genitive, it expressed predominatly possessive relationships. In fact, the head NP was constantly either a possessed thing or a kinship name.

In written texts, it was at its heights in the 15th-16th-17th centuries, exactly during the period when the preposed genitive reached its lowest frequency. These two facts are in fact closely related. Due to their functional similarity, once the preposed genitive was restricted to proper names or proper-name-like nouns, its anchoring function with complex dependent NPs was completely appointed to the possessive-linked genitive.

(46) den hertoghe Philips zinen zone (Stoett, 1909)
      the duke Philip-GEN his son
(47) sinre liver muder hare herte (Kern)
      his-GEN dear mother har heart
(48) den Spaengers haer overdaedicheyt (Eeghen)
      the Spanish-DAT their excessiveness
(49) Mahomet sijn' beenen (Vermeeren)
      Mahomet his legs

With the 18th century it seems to have completely disappeared. There is hardly one example, and if it occurs, it is included at the most in dialogues between illiterate people. These two factors – its almost total absence in the written standard, and its occasional occurrence in explictly non-standard, informal texts – enable us to suppose that the possessive-linked genitive survived and has developed in the low colloquial register to express close or possessive relationships between two NPs, where the topicality of the dependent NP was relevant for the identification of the head NP. To put it differently, in the informal register, it replaced the preposed genitive in all its occurrences because it was phonetically more conspicuous. At the spoken level, the structure des coning huis must have been less trasparent than de coning zijn huis where an independent element, the possessive pronoun, made the link between the two NPs explicit and specified their relationships unambiguously. This supposition is further confirmed by the same fact that it is still used, representing nowadays the only real alternative to the prepositional genitive.

In the texts studied here, personal datives of this sort are especially frequent in constructions to do with body parts or illness. They function as a means of bringing to prominance the involvement of the person (e.g. Dat suuert hem die hersen, dat heelt hem dat seer). These expressions have now formed the basis of a reanalysis whereby the dative has emerged as a new case of possession. This is true of Modern colloquial Dutch (e.g. Dat is die vrouw d'r kind) and a number of other Germanic dialects. In Afrikaans it has completely replaced the original possessive construction and has become the usual expression of possession. This development represents a shift from what was essentially a rhetorical device for promoting the personal interest or emotional involvement of a person in an event or situation to a syntactic marker of possession" (Burridge, 1993:259)

4. Interaction of spontaneous drift and language standardization

The discontinuity in the diachronic development as well as the divergence between the present-day grammatical descriptions and actual usage are easily accounted for if both grammars and written texts (in any time and for any

language) are considered to reflect the formal standard usage of the language. And Dutch is not an exception in this respect.

Like most of the European languages, Dutch underwent a process of uniformation and standardisation precisely during the 15th-16th centuries, when Europe witnessed the rise of urbanization, the creation of nations, the establishment of economic - political powers, a new social stratification and the increased importance of secular literature. The new social and cultural establishment asked for the formalisation of new linguistic means. The lay society in particular claimed the importance of their vernacular as a means of cultural and not only business-like communication; therefore, they required the "polishing" of the language they had spoken until then and the creation of grammars and prescriptive norms which should uniformise and regulate the usage of the vernacular and elevate it to the level of a prestigious language.

4.1. Standard versus Colloquial Language

Syntax is the first aspect of language to be commented upon in terms of correctness and the first whose forms are subjected to evaluative categorisations into 'goodies' and 'baddies' – even before the onset of standardisation proper. Standardisation has always gone hand in hand with the increasing use of written language; and written language is accompanied by a tendency for uniformity in language. (Cheshire and Stein, 1997:3)

Written standards are a product of (often naive) language engineering of grammarians (Van Marle, 1997:2) and therefore they are artificial, often exhibiting characteristics no longer present in any kind of 'cultivated speech' and encoding grammatical distinctions that have disappeared from the spoken varieties. Not infrequently, written languages have, in fact, a solemn and archaic character.

This process of language engineering aimed at the creation of a language that could compete with Latin, the prestigious language par excellence. For this purpose, grammarians directed all their efforts to give their own language prestige and decorum. But to do that, certain filtering criteria and general principles must have been complied with.

One of the principles at the very heart of standardisation depended on internal linguistic factors and was represented by the so-called "no variation" principle (Milroy and Milroy, 1993:4). Once one form among several dialectal variants was elicited as the most noble and correct, grammarians had to established a set of prescriptive rules to impose it. Such a form was selected according to individual structural factors deriving from two main sources: the ideology of essayist literacy, such as anti-orality, and the ideology of language as a "logical" system.

According to the former, grammarians and scholars deliberately searched for an effect of distance from the spoken language or from whatever could be

regarded as an "expression of intensity" and "emotional subjectivity" (in the sense of Labov, 1984) or "discourse-structuring meaning" (in the sense of Dorgeloh, 1996). Dependent on the latter, since Latin was regarded as the most logical and prestigious language, grammarians promoted those structures which sounded logical or, in other words, Latin-like and Latin-based.

As a consequence of their artificial origin, standards are rather conservative and resistant to change. Standards are connected with formal situations when the language user is aware of the prescriptive norm, and the phenomenon of blocking variants is nothing but a consequence of the efficacy of lexical norms. On the contrary, spoken language is more affected by variation, and thus by language change, since in informal speech the norms for correct usage are much more relaxed, and speech production is governed by performance mechanisms.

4.2. Standardisation of Dutch

In the case of Dutch, its written standard is commonly regarded to represent a purposely elaborated language variety which had the urban dialects of central Holland as its starting point, but which at the same time was modelled after Latin and German, as Roorda had already recognised in the XIX century. In his Schrijftaal en Spreektal (1855) he considered inflection as exclusively belonging to the written variety and one of the effects of both Latin and German influence. The interference of these two languages and the artificiality of the standard were always evident and strong along the whole history of Dutch.

In the Middle Dutch period, in spite of the abundancy of literary works, it is unacceptable to speak of a standard Dutch nor of an original Dutch grammar. From the 13th century until the beginning of the XIV, the written language of the other regions was strongly characterized by features of the Flemish dialect, without reaching though a complete hegemony. In the course of the 14th century, the Brabant dialect achieved the leadership. In spite of the undoubted Flemish-Brabant character, the written Middle Dutch was, though, under the heavy influence of foreign (mostly French, Latin and German since the 14th century) literary and linguistic models[9].

> Van een éénvormige „schrijftaal" was nog geen sprake (De Vooys, 1952:50).
> There was not yet a spoken counterpart of an uniform written language.

Nevertheless, aspects of the mother language began to arouse grammatical interest even among literary authors: for example, Jan de Weert – Spiegel der

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[9] "Invloed van andere talen op zinsbouw en woordgebruik is het eerst te onderstellen in de talrijke vertalingen uit het Frans en uit het Latijn" (De Vooys, 1952:52).

sonden (1350) – or Jan van Boendale – Der leken spieghel (XIV) –. Boendale himself seems to have already had clear ideas about what a grammar is and what it is for, since he said that the grammar "leert ons scone sprake, / Te rechte voeghen die woorde / Elc na sinen scoonsten accoorde, / Te rechte scriven ende spellen Ende dat pointelijc voort vertellen" "teaches us a beautiful language / to join the words in a right way / each one according to its best agreement / to write well and to spell And to narrate it properly" (chapter 15).

The didactic writings were usually written in Latin and followed the example of classical grammars, i.e. of Latin and Greek. At the very most, the vernacular could be used in grammatical treatises as a mere support and help for better understanding and learning Latin: for example, in Alexander de Villa Dei's Doctrinale and Exercitium puerorum grammaticale (1488).

The great cultural revolution was brought about by the invention of printing and by the education of lay people. In all western countries, education and cultural tradition had been the exclusive domain of church and cloisterschools. Latin, therefore, represented the international language, the means of scientific and scholarly communication. In the 15th-16th centuries, the increase of trade and business relationships enforced the rise of the bourgeoisie and the trade middle class to a new social recognition. Consequently, such a change in society triggered an analogous one in culture: lay and state schools for more technical education were created next to religious schools, and besides Latin also the vernacular began to be used in teaching. The spread of education implied an increase in communication and in the requirement of printed texts.

In its turn, printing asked for a common standard language, which enabled more and more people to read printed text. Hinne Rode, director of the Hieronymusschool in Utrecht, said in 1525:

> (...) niet heel Hollants ofte Brabants, mer tusschen beyden, (...) na onsen vermogen een gemeyn spraeck te volgen, die men all Nederlant (...) solde mogen lesen ende verstaen. (De Vooys, 1952:62).
> Neither pure dialect of Holland norof Brabant, but between both, to achieve according to our intentions a commun language, which the people all over the Netherlands should be able to read and understand.

Both the printing activity and the trade business were concentrated on the Northern regions: Utrecht, Gouda, Delft, Leiden, Haarlem, Deventer, Zwolle and then Antwerpen and Leuven. The fact that books from the South were printed in the North and vice versa, accelarated the process of language intermingling and interaction.

The 16th century witnesses the rise of the national self-consciousness of the Netherlands as a state and an economic power. The Netherlands needed its own prestigious language that could represent it and come up to its political

role. These factors favoured the emancipation from the Latin yoke and the unification of the Dutch dialects into a uniform language. For this purpose, besides orthoGraphic treatises[10], quite a few number of Dutch grammars[11] were published, in which Dutch was no longer a simple support to the teaching of Latin. These grammatical treatises, though, were still based on the functional and formal categories of Latin and still had the classical Latin grammarians as their model, i.e. Donatus and Priscianus: for instance, Cornelius Valerius's Grammaticae institutiones (1550) or Spieghel's Voorreden van de noodich ende nutticheit der Nederduytscher taelkunste (1568), which modelled syntax and prosody, and in particular the nominal inflectional paradigm, on the Latin example. The declared aim of such grammatical treatises was to give clarity, rationality and a logical and comprehensible structure to the Dutch language.

The unifying process of Dutch was strengthened by the 17th c. urban development and the new social stratification that boosted secular literature and the establishment of a cultivated language – of which Huygens was partly the responsible creator and of which Zeeland and Holland were the centres –. At that time, the written standard was not spoken at all. Grammars and linguistic ideology continued to be affected by the Renaissance thought and philosophy and followed Spieghel's example. In fact, Samuel Ampsing in his Taelbericht argued that "de vermeninge der geslachten ende verbrabbelinge der gevallen, dringt aan op een strenge regeling, omdat wij onse monden en oren liever aen regelen behoren te gewennen", "the confusion of the genders and the jabber of the cases, insists on a strict rule in order that we should accustom our mouths and ears better to the rules"(1628:133) and that the norm did not have to be "de gewoonte van de gemeynen man", "The habit of the common man", but "by de geleerden is het beste en sekerste oordeel", "with educated people is the best and the most secure judgement"(1628:197)

The union of the seven regions in the 18th century gave the first political blow to language unification, which was prepared by the hegemony of Holland in the previous centuries and was parallel to the rise of a uniform written

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[10] Joos Lambrecht, Nederlandsche spellijnghe, Gent 1550; Joannes Masius, De orthoGraphia linguae Belgicae, Leuven 1576; Pontus de Heuiter, Nederduitse orthoGraphie, Antwerpen 1581. The publication of orthografic treatises continued and increased in the XVII and XVIII centuries: for biblioGraphical details, see Baker and Dibbets (1977) and van Haeringen (1954).

[11] Geraert Leeu, Exercitium puerorum, 1458; Coornhert, Voorreden van de noodich en nutticheyt der Nederduytscher taelkunste 1568 and Twe-spraack vande Nederduitsche letterkunst 1584, Ruygh-bewerp vande redenkaveling, ófte Nederduytsche dialectike 1585, Kort begrip des redenkavelings 1587; Joannes Goropius Becanus, Origines Antwerpianae, 1569; Pieter de Bert, Neder-duytsche letter-konst, 1588; C.Dz. van Niervaert, Onderwys in de letter-konst, 1600; Richard Daffornes, Grammatica ofte leez-leerings steunsel, 1627;Christiaen van Heule, De Nederduytsche grammatica ofte spraec-konst, 1625; Petrus Leupenius, Aanmerkingen op de Neederduitsche taale, 1653; for further references on the following centuries, see also Baker and Dibbets (1977) and van Haeringen (1954).

standard. Undoubtedly, there was no spoken standard yet, and in the different regions people spoke their dialect.

In a letter dated May 1800, Geldersman Staring admitted:

> Het Hollandsch is ons Parijsch Dialect, het Dialect van de Schrijvers, die door de geheele Republiek willen gelezen en verstaan worden.
> Dutch is our parish-dialect, the dialect of writers, who want to be read and understood throughout the whole republic. (De Vooys, 1952:147)

As it is witnessed by the initial capital letter of nouns in this quotation, the influence of German was still deep and widespread: for example, grammarians looked up to Adelung and his works as their model.

It is only in the course of the 19th century that a spoken standard gradually developed: its emergence was rooted in the written standard or, more precisely, the written standard gradually came to be adopted as a speaking norm. The process was put into effect by the elite of the towns of the central Holland area, by speakers whose dialects were relatively close to the written standard. Since the written language served as a point of reference for the spoken standard, the latter represented some sort of hybrid, swinging between the high and the low register, i.e. dialects, partly influenced by the written standard as well. For this reason, the spoken standard still avoids the structures which resemble too closely oral features.

4.2.1. Standardisation of the morphological genitive in Dutch

In the light of the above-mentioned facts, the development of genitival patterns in Dutch seems no longer inscrutable. If it is true that standard Dutch was elaborated on the image of Latin and German, then it is not surprising that prescriptive norms of correct Dutch tended to preserve the inflected forms and support the intensive usage of synthetic structures, following the Latin and German examples. According to van Marle, the influence of German was so strong that only those inflectional categories have been set up in Dutch which have a parallel in German, i.e. inflectional patterns present in Latin but absent in German were never introduced in Standard Dutch. According to De Vooys, one should speak of a latinizing and germanizing process of Dutch.

Before the 15th century, the written language, although distant from the spoken varieties, was rather a mixture of various dialectal and foreign features and words, selected to meet rhyme and metrical requirements than a real standard governed by grammatical norms. Therefore, syntactically speaking, although written, it was more inclined to accept variation and to be affected by natural change, one effect of it being, in the case of the morphosyntactic encoding of genitive, the increase of trasparent prepositional phrases at the expense of ambiguous inflected forms. As a matter of fact, in the 15th century

the collected data depict "a very modern Dutch", absolutely like the present-day spoken usage: the inflected genitive was preserved only in prenominal position and with proper name or addressing names in the so-called Jans fiets- pattern; otherwise, genitival functions were encoded only by the prepositional genitive.

This is even more clear if texts close to informal and spoken language, namely Chronicles and Laws are concerned. As far as it can be inferred from Graph. 5 and 6., in the 15th century the preposed genitive, already quite reduced, faded away completely. Contrary to the prepositional genitive that covered the whole range of genitival functions, the preposed genitive was almost as rare as the postposed genitive, occurring only in the Jans fiets pattern, and encoded especially the wide range of relationships which can be labelled under the term "possessive".
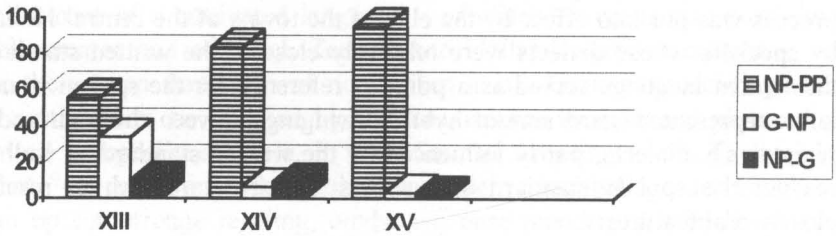
Graph. 5: Distribution of the four genitival devices in legal texts
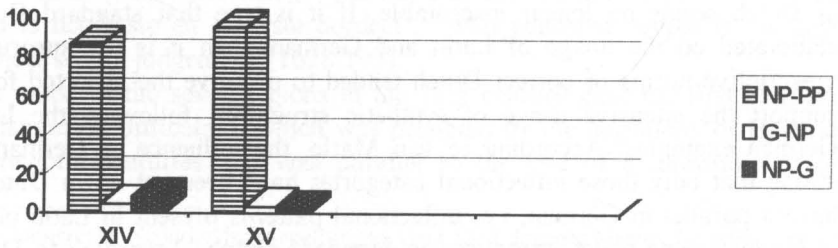
Graph. 6: Distribution of the four genitival devices in chronicles

After the 15th c., the written language witnessed the heavy direct interference of grammarians, who tried to shape Dutch on the example of what they regarded as prestigious languages: Latin, the language of culture and religion, and German, the language of the court. Since both those languages had nominal inflection, grammarians restored the usage of inflection in Dutch and at the same time banned the analytic structures as a mark of inelegance and uneducation.

The re-establishment of the morphological genitive (in fact, only in the usage of inflected determiners and determinative and inderminative articles) could not imply a thoroughly restructuring of the language. The prenominal position was already the unquestionable domain of the -s̲ genitive with proper names or proper-name-like nouns and had exclusively an anchoring function. Therefore, only into the postnominal position could the newly restored genitive squeeze. As a matter of fact, though, comparing of Table 1 with Table 2 and Table 3 respectively, it seems that the percentage of occurrences lost by the prepositional genitive has been gained by the postposed genitive. From the cross-comparison between Table 5., 6., 7., and 8. the v̲a̲n̲-PP turns out to occur in so many functions and so frequently as the postposed genitive, apart form a slight preference of the v̲a̲n̲-PP for the objective relationship and of the postposed genitive for the subjective one. This proportion holds over four centuries.

Table 5: Subjective genitive

	NP-PP	PP-NP	NP-G	G-NP
XII		0	3 (25,0%)	9 (75,0%)
XIII	15 (25,0%)	0	3 (05,0%)	42 (70,0%)
XIV	46 (35,8%)	0	46 (35,8%)	40 (30,4%)
XV	124 (80,5%)	0	22 (14,1%)	10 (06,4%)
XVI	14 (44,7%)	0	17 (53,1%)	1 (03,2%)
XVII	15 (38,5%)	0	23 (57,5%)	2 (05,0%)
XVIII	18 (33,7%)	0	31 (56,4%)	6 (10,9%)
XIX	21 (39,9%)	0	29 (53,7%)	4 (07,4%)

Table 6: Partitive genitive

	NP-PP	PP-NP	NP-G	G-NP
XII	15 (75%)	0	5 (25%)	0
XIII	106 (62,3%)	24 (13,9%)	40 (23,1%)	3 (1,7%)
XIV	156 (71,2%)	33 (14,9%)	33 (14,9%)	0
XV	384 (92,9%)	6 (01,4%)	28 (06,7%)	0
XVI	18 (50%)	0	18 (50%)	0
XVII	39 (48,1%)	5 (06,2%)	37 (45,7%)	0
XVIII	45 (46,4%)	7 (07,2%)	45 (46,4%)	0
XIX	40 (50%)	2 (02,5%)	38 (47,5%)	0

Table 7: Possessive genitive

	NP-PP	PP-NP	NP-G	G-NP
XII	5 (13,5%)	0	10 (27%)	22 (59,5%)
XIII	40 (14,1%)	1 (0,3%)	117 (38,4%)	147 (48,2%)

	NP-PP	PP-NP	NP-G	G-NP
XIV	113 (32%)	0	73 (20,1%)	178 (48,9%)
XV	264 (64,5%)	2 (0,5%)	38 (9,1%)	112 (26,9%)
XVI	27 (48,4%)	0	22 (38,6%)	8 (14%)
XVII	42 (43,8%)	1 (1%)	28 (28,6%)	27 (27,6%)
XVIII	33 (34%)	0	27 (27,8%)	37 (38,2%)
XIX	30 (25,2%)	0	35 (29,4%)	54 (45,4%)

Table 8: Objective genitive

	NP-PP	PP-NP	NP-G	G-NP
XII		0	2 (33,3%)	4 (66,7%)
XIII	21 (47,7%)	0	9 (20%)	15 (33,3%)
XIV	65 (73,2%)	0	19 (21,1%)	6 (06,7%)
XV	172 (91,1%)	0	19 (09,9%)	0
XVI	18 (46,6%)	0	19 (51,4%)	0
XVII	26 (63,4%)	0	15 (36,6%)	0
XVIII	29 (52,7%)	0	23 (41,8%)	3 (06,9%)
XIX	29 (54,7%)	0	22 (41,5%)	2 (03,8 %)

Because of the engineering and planning procedure of grammarians and scholars, standards are not only artificial, but invariable in time too. In the case of inflection, as above briefly mentioned, the data concerning the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries show nearly no variation. As a matter of fact, already in the 19th century, the revolutionary and anticonformist Multatuli[12] claimed, in his protest against didactic handbooks prescribing how to write, that teachers should teach the language and not create it and that the written word should follow the spoken one, and not vice versa. According to his ideology, in the last print of his romantic novel, Max Havelaar, he replaced the postposed genitive of the first edition (1860) with the spoken corresponding pattern. Thus, van de, van een occur instead of der, eener.

While the written language was framed into rigid rules, the spoken varieties and dialects developed freely according to natural change. The two levels remained more or less separated until now, so as in a linguistic situation of diglossy, being both a self-contained system in their own right and being used in different contexts.

In dialects the two analytic genitives, i.e. the prepositional genitive and the possessive-linked genitive, have developed and become the only acceptable genitival constructions apart from a few fossilised phrases such as te zijner tijd

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[12] Multatuli, however, was not the only one to consider the inflected genitive (together with subjunctive and other morphosyntactic structures) to be archaic already in the 19th c.

"in the course of time". Both of them represent, in fact, perceptually the most transparent and clearest devices. In those cases where the two NPs are tightly interrelated and the dependent NP is necessary for the determination of the head noun, the possessive-linked genitive is selected. In all other cases, the unmarked option is the prepositional genitive.

In the informal register, the prepositional genitive encodes all the derivational genitives (namely objective and subjective), partitive genitive, specifying genitive (such as <u>a man of quality</u>) and possessive genitives with either a complex or a non-topical dependent NP, whereas the NP+Poss+NP pattern encodes the possessive and close relationships with a topical dependent NP.

Contrary to the prepositional genitive, the possessive-linked genitive was always looked down on and was never accepted in the written language, since it contradicts the basic filtering principles of standardisation[13]. By its nature, this construction was bound to be associated with orality and spoken register, given that it is highly expressive, pragmatically motivated, iconic, redundant and discontinuous.

The sequence of their components reflects the temporal and perceptive sequence of the referential identification: the preceding position of the more topical NP, which is the dependent NP in this case, gives the hearer the right point of reference to the identification of the following NP and obeys the topicality principle. The possessive pronoun provides the NPs with an unambiguous morphosyntactic link, repeating part of the morphological information already expressed through the dependent NP, but thus allows complex noun phrases to occur in pronominal position without risking to compromise the communicative efficacy of the message. Sequences such as examples 4 d. and 4 e., on the one hand, would have been perceptually rather difficult to understand if an preposed genitive had been used, on the other head they would not have had the same pragmatical meaning, if a postposed genitive had been resorted to because of the complexity of the dependent NP.

In other words, the reason of its success in informal situations and in spoken register turned out to be the reason of its censure in formal situations and in the standard.

5. Conclusion

Standard syntactic forms are often at the centre of attention because of the care that is taken to correct grammar in writing and by extension in speech. Therefore, the syntax of a language comes to be identified with the syntax of the standard variety, not only by laymen, but also by linguists.

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[13] For further details, see Cheshire and Stein (1997), Milroy and Milroy (1985).

Written languages represent languages deprived of both their natural medium – their sounds and their intonation – and their natural context. Put it differently, in comparison with their spoken counterparts they represent the unnatural option. They become however linguistic systems on their own, developing their own properties: for instance, elaborate systems of sentence and noun phrase embedding, complex and artificial rules in the field of deixis – as it did happen in standard Dutch (Uhlenbeck, 1990) –. Their characteristics are generally results of grammarians' planning to embellish and nobilitate their language. As a consequence of their relatively independent status, written languages may differ remarkably from their spoken counterparts which are less affected by the norm and more prone to changes in order to improve the transparency and learnability of the system.

As in many other Germanic languages, in the Dutch dialects verbs come in two types: regular ('weak') verbs and irregular ('strong') verbs. Throughout the history of Dutch, strong verbs shifted to the class of weak verbs. Interestingly, in some of the Dutch dialects this regularizing trend is much stronger than in standard language. In the province of Limburg, kommen and zwemmen have become regular and form the preterite by adding the regular preterite ending -de to the verb stem. The same point can be made in reference to the pronominal system. Standard Dutch distinguishes between subject and oblique forms, whereas dialects have already undergone formal syncretism, having subject and object pronouns the same form – the objective one for the plural and the subjective for the singular.

Being purely spoken, dialects tend to be overcome by the effects of strategies relating to the actual process of speech production and to privilege constructions that improve the efficacy of communicative performance. For this reason, what is defined 'colloquialisms' are often the effects of processes typical of speech production.

If one concentrates on the written standard, namely on the product of reference grammars, pedagogic grammars and teaching models, and neglects the spoken counterparts and dialects, one risks to miss the structural makeup of languages and the whole spectrum of diachronic language variation and language change. This amounts to saying that in diachronic studies one must pay attention in dealing with data collected exclusively from written texts. The development of the genitive structures in Dutch is a good exemple of it.

On the basis of the written texts, the diachronic development of the Dutch genitive patterns is split into two parts by the 15th century: in the former period, the language shows an unambigous tendency towards analysis; in the latter, the direction is reverse and the data prove a return to synthesis. This development is indeed uncommon. However, given that the written language is an artificial language, feebly linked to its spoken counterpart, the 'mystery' comes to be solved if present-day Dutch and its colloquial, informal register, are taken into account.

In short, Dutch never reversed its direction of change, but kept on moving towards more and more transparent analytic structures. Prescriptive grammatical norms prevented this change from affecting the written standard, which on the contrary has always been very conservative and resembled the foreign linguistic models (Latin and German).

In Graph. 7, literary texts show a more regular usage of the four morphosyntactic devices than non-literary texts. Even in this latter case the same development and the same turnover can be detected in the 15th century, although the preposed genitive and in particular the postposed genitive occurred more frequently in this genre than in chronicles and legal documents, which must have been closer to the spoken language.
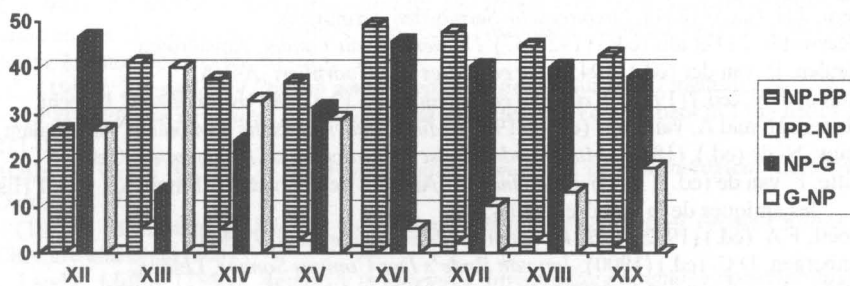
Graph. 7: Distribution of the four genitival devices in literary texts

Only dialects reflect thoroughly the effects of the change Dutch underwent and make use of the most functional morphosyntactic patterns. On the one hand, dialects lost inflected genitives as a productive strategy, and encoded all modifying relationships through the van-pattern. On the other hand, they maintained the usage of the -s form with proper names and addressing names in prenominal position, and made larger use of the possessive-linked genitive with topical both complex and simple dependent NPs to express the close semantic and referential relationships between them and their head NPs.

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