

When typological rara become productive: the extension of grammatical agreement in Dutch dialects

In a recent paper, Siewierska (1999) points out the typological rarity of so-called ‘grammatical agreement’ of verbs. That is the type of agreement in which an inflectional person marker is accompanied obligatorily by another person marker that carries a larger referential load, usually some anaphoric element. Most Germanic languages display grammatical agreement, but the phenomenon is unknown to the vast majority of the world’s languages: in Siewierska’s sample of 272 languages, only two examples are found. One of them is Standard Dutch, in which inflectional person markers always co-occur with pronouns or lexical NPs. The rarity of grammatical agreement is assumed to be due to a tendency to develop new agreement markers when the ‘old’ ones become non-referential.

Significantly, in some Dutch dialects the agreement system seems to extend to other classes than verbs, such as complementizers (Hoekstra & Smits 1997), and the answering particles *ja* (‘yes’) and *neen* (‘no’). The second phenomenon is shown in (1):

- (1) A: Gaa-n ze morgen naar Gent?
 go-AGR they tomorrow to Ghent.
 ‘Shall they go to Ghent tomorrow?’
 B: Jaa-n-s.
 yes-AGR-they_{clitic}
 ‘Yes, they do.’

The agreement marker in (1B) can only appear when it is followed by a clitic. This use of clitics following answering particles is a *rarum* in itself. Cross-linguistically, clitics do sometimes attach to other hosts than verbs, most notably to elements in the first or second position of the clause, but the restriction to *ja* (‘yes’) and *neen* (‘no’) seems unparalleled in the world’s languages (cf. typological overviews such as Corbett 1991, 2000; Siewierska 2004).

In our talk, we will discuss the typological rarity of both grammatical agreement of non-verbal constituents and cliticisation to answering particles. In addition, we will provide an explanation for the fact that the agreement marker needs to co-occur with a clitic in the relevant dialects.

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