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At the edge of acceptability: The Flemish External Possessor

DP-internal relations of possession in Flemish, are expressed by either using a genitive-like possessor (1a), a postnominal prepositional possessor (1b) or a structure made up of a possessor which is linked to the possessee by a possessive pronoun which agrees in gender and number with the possessor (1c), which Hendriks (2010) calls the PPPC (prenominal periphrastic possessor construction).

(1) a Oma's fiets   Pronominal *'s* Genitive
       Gran's bicycle
    b de   fiets   van Oma   Postnominal *van*-PP
       the   bicycle of Gran
    c Gran   haar fiets   PPPC
       Emma   her   bicycle
       "Gran's bicycle"

However, there is a fourth structure of nominal possession in the non-standard Dutch varieties spoken in Flanders, which seems similar to the PPPC but in which the possessor is located outside the possessee DP, as in (2), and which until recently has not received much attention in the literature (see Haegeman & Van Koppen 2011, Haegeman & Danckaert 2011a, 2011b; see also Deal 2011, 2013a, 2013b). In this External Possessor structure, the higher DP 'Oma' is interpreted as the possessor of the lower DP 'eur velo'. The possessor DP is argued to be outside of the possessum DP, because the intervening adverbial has clausal scope.

(2)   't Moest lukken dat [Oma]   <u>toen juste</u> [eure velo] kapot was.
       it had-to happen that Gran   then just her   bicycle broken was
       "It so happened that Gran's bicycle was broken just then."

In addition to being the possessor of the lower DP, the higher DP is also seen as affected by the event expressed in the lower part of the clause. This is illustrated by the fact that the external possessor can only be alive, unlike the internal possessors: (1) is acceptable whether the grandmother is alive or dead, (2) only when she is alive, which, according to Hole (2006) is a strong indication of the affectedness of the argument.

This external possessor pattern is not part of standard Dutch and is hypothesised to be limited mainly to the Western part of the Flemish region. We have collected experimental judgment data on the Flemish external possessor, contrasting the pattern with the three patterns of nominal possession in (1). A judgment acceptability norming test showed that while on average the pattern is degraded, there is still quite a lot of speaker variation, both inter- and intraregionally.

References

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