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WORD ORDER CHANGE IN DUTCH IMPERATIVE CLAUSES: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CONTEXTUAL AND SYNTACTIC FACTORS

MARINEL GERRITSEN

Introduction

In this paper I will try to demonstrate on the basis of a study of word order change in Dutch imperative clauses that the investigation of imperatives might contribute to a deeper insight into the how's, and maybe into the why's of word order change.* First I will show that Dutch imperative clauses developed from intermediate between verb second and verb first to strictly verb first, using a quantitative analysis of such clauses at different points in time between 1300 and 1600. Then I will discuss to what extent these changes fit other word order developments in Dutch by relating them to the universals of word order in imperative clauses that could be constructed by studying these clauses in the so-called 'Greenberg languages'.

1. Changes in Dutch imperative clauses

1.1. Modern Dutch

In modern Dutch, all imperative clauses are strictly verb first. Examples are given in (1).

- (1) a. *Klop* de eieren door de melk
'Beat the eggs through the milk'
b. *Meng* dit door het gehakt
'Mix this through the minced meat'

*This paper reports on research in progress on word order change in Germanic languages. Aspects of change in the syntax of imperative clauses, such as negation and left dislocation will be dealt with in Gerritsen (forthcoming). I am grateful to Frank Jansen and Jan Kooij for comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Thanks are also extended to Henriëtte Schatz for polishing style and content of this paper, to Marjorie Hanzlik of SWIDOC for the on line-search and finally to Martin Prior for his help in finding data for all the 'Greenberg languages'.

- c. *Leg* daarop de plakken edammer kaas
'Put thereon the slices Edam cheese'
- d. Wilt u geen knoflook gebruiken, *neem* dan een halve gesnip-
perde ui
'Want you no garlic use, *take* then a half chopped onion'
- e. *Zet* het nu in de oven
'Put it now in the oven'
- f. *Doe* dat niet
'Do that not'
- g. *Drink* die melk niet
'Drink that milk not'

None of the constituents on the right hand side of the finite verb can occur before the verb. The only elements that may be placed before the finite verb in imperative clauses are vocatives, interjections and conditional clauses. Examples are given in (2).

- (2) a. Hee, *ga* naar buiten
'Hey, *go* outside'
- b. Lieve moeder, *kom* eens hier
'Dear mother, *come* once here'
- c. Als het 20 minuten heeft gekookt, *giet* het dan af
'If it 20 minutes has cooked, *pour* it then off'

1.2. Middle Dutch

Contrary to the word order of imperatives in Modern Dutch, Middle Dutch imperative word order can not be categorically described as verb first, because it is variable. Since it is a well known fact now that quantitative analysis is the best way to gain some insight into the conditioning factors of variability, I have made a quantitative analysis of imperative word order in Middle Dutch texts. Before I go into the results of this analysis, though, I want to say something about the texts from which I have extracted my data.

It is self-evident that a quantitative analysis of certain sentence-types requires a high frequency of occurrence for those sentences. Unfortunately, though, imperative clauses occur very infrequently in texts that are generally considered best for investigations into diachronic syntax, such as charters and chronicles. These more or less traditional texts can be useful for a rough idea about the syntax of imperative clauses, but they are inappropriate sources for discovering the factors conditioning syntactic variation. For this purpose we need many more occurrences than the two or three we may

find in chronicles. For this reason I have looked for other texts which not only meet the requirements for texts in historical syntax, but also have a high frequency of imperative clauses, and it will not be surprising that I ended up studying the language of Middle Dutch cook-books and pharmacopoeiae. The cook-books contain mostly culinary recipes and the pharmacopoeiae specialize in directions how to make remedies for all kinds of ailments, but despite their different purposes, I believe that they both belong to one and the same category. Health and food were closely related matters in the Middle Ages—as they still are for some people today—and in these medieval sources the boundaries between culinary recipes and medical prescriptions are often not so clear-cut. Therefore, the texts I have used meet the requirement Watkins (1976) has formulated for texts to be used in comparative syntactic research: they all convey the same sort of information. All the texts I have used instruct the reader how to prepare foods, drinks, or medications. The texts in my corpus are from 6 different points in time between 1300 and 1600. On the basis of their phonological, morphological and lexical features, they have all been characterized as originating from the Flemish-Brabantish area, in other words from the northern part of Belgium. The texts have been dated by means of a variety of criteria: data about authors, printers, historical events described in the text, data about the manuscript, and phonological and morphological features. Philologists have assured me that the parts of the texts I have chosen for this survey were all originally written in Dutch, but this opinion is based only on the fact that no French, Italian or Latin counterparts of the recipes have been discovered, and I must admit that I am not quite sure how valid this criterion really is.

In column *a* and *b* of Table I, I have indicated how many imperative clauses I have uses for each point in time and what percentage of these clauses were not verb first.¹ I am only concerned here with affirmative imperative clauses, since negative imperatives occurred

¹ This survey is based on the following data: ± 1300 Van Leersum 1912, pp. 117-121, 186; ± 1350 Braekman 1975, recipe 1-31, p. 112, Van de Wiele, 1965, pp. 110-115, 134-140; ± 1450 Braekman 1970, recipes 8-38, 76, 201, 206, 212, 217, 223, 700-737, 989-1033; ± 1500 Frencken 1934, pp. 13-16, Daems 1968, edition 1510, completely; ± 1550 Cockx-Indestege 1971, original recipes, pp. 108, 116, 117, 121, 128, 145, 146, 183, 189, 199, 200; ± 1600 Lindemans 1960, pp. 403-410.

too infrequently to take them into account.

Table I	a.	b.	c.
	number of imperative clauses	number of imperative clauses which are not verb first	percentage of non-verb first imperatives with respect to the potential number of non-verb first occurrences
±1300	158	94 (59 p.c.)	94 p.c.
±1350	194	40 (21 p.c.)	46 p.c.
±1450	255	45 (18 p.c.)	78 p.c.
±1500	213	95 (45 p.c.)	79 p.c.
±1550	115	35 (30 p.c.)	61 p.c.
±1600	164	17 (10 p.c.)	30 p.c.

It appears from Table I that at one time non-verb first imperatives were very frequent in Dutch. In the texts dating from about 1300, 59% of the imperative clauses begin with a constituent other than the verb. In subsequent periods this construction gradually disappears. As far as the features of the fronted constituents are concerned, it seems that there are no constraints on the type or the function of the constituents placed in front position: objects and adverbials occur before the verb as clauses, nominal phrases, pronominal phrases, prepositional phrases, or adverbs. The fronting is constrained by an aspect of form, though, since all fronted constituents contain an anaphoric element. This element, the antecedent, refers to a person, object or state of affairs mentioned earlier in the text. I have not found any non-anaphoric constituent in first position. In the examples given in (3) the constituent in question have been italicized.

(3) a. en maect daer pulver af. *Dit pulver doet* inde edick [Frencken p. 61]

'and make there powder of. *This powder put* in the vinegar'

b. Neemt [imper.2.pl] pulver van levende solver ende ooc olie van hennep sade: *dit menghet* onder een [Frencken p. 62]

'Take [imper. 2. pl.] powder of live sulphur and also oil of hemp seed: *this mix* together'

c. Bernt essenhout *entie wacheit diere tenden uut loopt die houdt* [Van Leersum p. 118]

'Burn ash wood and *that moisture that there at the extremity out runs that keep*'

d. Legt een muuse in oliën, ende laetse der in so langhe datse

vort zij, ende *dan wrivet* dolie en de muus dore een cleet
[Braekman 1975, p. 97]

'Put a mouse in oil, and let her it in as long that she gone is,
and *then rub* the oil and the mouse through a cloth'

e. ende legt den sac weder. *Dus doet* driewarve

'and empty the sack again. *Thus do* three times'

f. [context: follows sentence d.]

Ende *met diere olie salvet* hu aensichte [Braekman 1975, p. 97]

'And *with this oil salve* your face'

g. siedet te gadere tote et dicke wert. Ende *daermet* salft die
iocte biden viere [Braekman 1975, p. 96]

'boil it together until it thick becomes. And *with that*
[pron.] *salve* these itches by the fire'

The givenness of the anaphoric fronted constituents in the verb second imperatives shows a change over time if we assume that the degree of givenness of the constituent is inversely proportionate to the number of words between it and its antecedent.¹ In the texts from 1300 and 1350, the average distance between the anaphoric fronted constituent and its antecedent is between three and four words, but in the later texts the average distance is less than one word. It seems that in the older texts constituents could be farther away from their antecedent—less given—than in later texts and still be placed in fronted position.

This does not mean, though, that all anaphoric constituents whose antecedent is mentioned very closely to the imperative, occur in front position. Whether they are fronted seems to be conditioned by at least two factors: the point in time for the Dutch text and the type of the anaphoric constituent. In Table II I have indicated for each point in time how often adverbs, pronominal objects and pronominal prepositional phrases occur in front of the finite verb and how often they could potentially have occurred in that position. In order to determine this potential number of occurrences, I have referred to methods that have been used extensively in sociolinguistic investigations into phonological and morphological variation, but which had only recently found their way into surveys on syntactic variation (Kroch and Small 1978, Jansen 1979).

¹ Evidently there are many methods to determine the 'givenness' of a certain constituent, but the one used here seems to be the most adequate for this kind of text.

I first counted the maximum number of words between the fronted constituent and its antecedent for each type of constituent and for each point in time. This number of words, plus one, I considered the cut-off point, beyond which fronting of the anaphoric constituent is not likely to take place at that particular point in time. I then determined how many of the anaphoric constituents that were placed after the finite verb would have been closer to their antecedent than the cut-off point if they had been placed in fronted position, instead of after the verb. This number of constituents, plus the number of fronted constituents in the text, was taken to be the potential number of occurrences for imperatives that did not have verb first order. Those anaphoric constituents which were placed after the verb and had an antecedent beyond the cut-off point for that particular constituent have not been taken into consideration, because they were not likely to be fronted anyway. This type of analysis is laborious, but I think that it is worthwhile, because it gives us a more precise insight into the changes that have taken place than the quantitative methods which are generally used in historical linguistics. This can be illustrated by comparing columns *b* and *c* of Table I. In *b* we find per point in time the percentage of all imperative clauses with verb second order. In *c* we find what percentage of all the imperatives that could have had verb second order were indeed verb second. The differences between the percentages in columns *b* and *c* are striking. Look, for example, at the data for 1450. According to column *b* these data are completely deviant from those for the other points in time, but according to column *c* they are rather regular. If we do not take account of the potential number of occurrences we run the risk that other variables than the ones we have introduced will interfere with our independent variables.

Only the potential number of occurrences of adverbs, pronominal objects and pronominal prepositional phrases was high enough to warrant further quantitative examination. I had to leave clauses, nominal objects and nominal prepositional phrases out of consideration, since their potential number of occurrences in the data available for this survey was less than seven for each point in time.

It has been observed in several surveys on word order change in declarative, relative and subordinate clauses that some constituents are more reluctant to word order change than others (Canale 1976, Gerritsen 1980). In Table II the constituents are ordered so that the

Table II
Point in
time

	Adverbs		Pronominal objects		Pronominal prepositional phrases	
	N	P	N	P	N	P
±1300	34	34	44	44	13	18
		100 p.c.		100 p.c.		72 p.c.
±1350	28	29	5	9	3	16
		97 p.c.		56 p.c.		19 p.c.
±1450	29	30	7	13	2	9
		97 p.c.		54 p.c.		22 p.c.
±1500	67	72	16	25	8	17
		93 p.c.		64 p.c.		47 p.c.
±1550	25	32	4	8	4	10
		78 p.c.		50 p.c.		40 p.c.
±1600	15	32	1	10	1	10
		47 p.c.		10 p.c.		10 p.c.

N=Number of occurrences for fronted constituents

P=Potential number of occurrences for fronted constituents

ones which, according to earlier studies, are most reluctant to change are on the left in the table, while those which are somewhat more inclined to change are to the right, and so on. If the word order change in imperative clauses should proceed according to the same implicational hierarchy as the one in declarative, subordinate and relative clauses, we would expect a decrease of the percentages from left to right for each point in time. That is exactly what we find. The overall pattern I have found shows that the word order change in imperative clauses proceeded along the same hierarchy as the change in other types of clauses. Adverbs were most reluctant to change, pronominal objects less so, followed eventually by pronominal prepositional phrases.

I will now go into the changes over time, for which we have to look at Table II from the top down. For all types of constituents we find a decrease of occurrences before the finite verb over time. All imperatives clauses containing the constituents in question undergo a change between 1300 and 1600, tending first towards XV order and later towards VX order. In accordance with the implicational hierarchy I have just discussed, this change is less substantial as the constituent is more inclined to change. The decrease of fronted adverbs between 1300 and 1600 is only 53%, for example,

Dutch is not so strictly verb second, since it may have declarative main clauses in verb third order. There is also more freedom to dislocate elements to the left of the sentence in Middle Dutch than in Modern Dutch, since Middle Dutch has more structures that allow left dislocation than Current Dutch (Jansen 1980). I have shown in this paper that in imperative clauses constituents in front of the finite verb are always anaphoric and therefore always topical. It is a plausible claim that a language in which word order is conditioned especially by pragmatic factors, will allow topical constituents in front position in imperatives and that this device will be used less frequently when the language changes to a type conditioned mainly by syntactic factors. Needless to say, this claim should be substantiated more thoroughly by investigations into the word order of imperative clauses in topic-prominent languages.

2.2. Syntactic factors

The other factor conditioning general word order developments in Dutch is a typological change probably from Proto-Germanic SOV via intermediate between SVO and SOV in the Middle Ages to more SOV in Current Dutch (Gerritsen 1980). Imperative clauses have been explicitly left out of consideration in studies on word order typology until now, so I could not be sure whether verb first imperatives are characteristic for VO languages and verb second imperatives for OV languages. I decided to check this in a number of languages, using the same language sample as Greenberg (1963) for convenience. It was my intention to find the dominant word order in all thirty languages for affirmative imperative clauses lacking subjects, but with a finite verb, nominal or pronominal object, prepositional phrases and adverbials. At first sight, finding such sentences seems to be a very easy task, but it did not turn out to be all that easy, since many of the reference grammars that are generally used for typological studies do not discuss the structure of imperative clauses at all. For many languages I therefore had to resort to different methods to obtain the required data. For a number of languages I found enough examples of imperative clauses in descriptive grammars, in the sections on morphological aspects of the imperative, to be able to construct the word order patterns generally used in such clauses. For some languages I obtained data from native speakers or persons familiar with the language. For other languages I had to turn to sources I would never have used otherwise,

such as *Teach yourself* books and phrase books. 'Military phrases' and 'how to speak to servants' especially provided me with numerous examples of imperative clauses. For Chibcha and Maya I did not succeed in finding data at all. The results are presented in Table III.

Table III The dominant word order of affirmative imperative clauses in the Greenberg languages

VSO languages	imperative clauses	SVO languages	imperative clauses	SOV languages	imperative clauses
Berber	VX	Finnish	VX	Basque	VX
Hebrew	VX	Fulani	VX	Burmese	XV
Maori	VX	Greek	VX	Burushaski	XV
Masai	VX	Guaraní	XV	Hindi	XV
Welsh	VX	Italian	VX	Kannada	XV
Zapotec	VX	Malay	VX	Japanese	XV
		Norwegian	VX	Lotitja	XV
		Serbian	VX	Nubian	XV
		Songhai	VX	Quechua	XV
		Swahili	VX	Turkish	XV
		Thai	VX		
		Yoruba	VX		

The neutral order in affirmative imperative clauses of object, adverbs and prepositional phrases in relation to the finite verb appears to be the same as the neutral order in declarative main clauses for all the 'Greenberg languages' except for Guaraní and Basque.¹ Guaraní is classified as an SVO language, although nominal objects do occur in imperative clauses before the finite verb. With regard to Basque, Rudolf de Rijk (1978) agrees with Greenberg (1963) that Basque is verb final, but he explicitly states that imperatives are an exception to the rule: objects normally follow the verb in Basque imperatives.

On the basis of these facts I claim that XV order in affirmative

¹ Negative imperatives have been left out of consideration here because they had not been considered for Middle Dutch either. Nonetheless, such clauses appear to be interesting, since the position of the negative marker does not seem to be decisive in the VO/OV question. The majority of OV languages tend to use the same order for negative marker and verb stem as the SVO and VSO languages, generally placing the negative marker before the verb stem. In this view Current Dutch is exceptional, placing the negative marker after the verb stem (cf. Gerritsen forthcoming).

imperative clauses is generally related to SOV order in declarative main clauses and that VX order in imperative clauses generally coincides with SVO or VSO order in declarative main clauses. A change from XV to VX order in imperatives may consequently be regarded as a change from the SOV type to the SVO or VSO type.

It will be beyond dispute that the changes in Dutch imperative clauses fit the typological change from Proto Germanic OV to Middle Dutch VO/OV, but that this is not so clearly the case for the change from Middle Dutch to Current Dutch. In Current Dutch imperatives we would have expected a return to some extent to verb second order but this did not actually take place. There are two possible reasons for the fact that this last typological word order change is not reflected in Modern Dutch imperative clauses.

One reason might be that the change-over from a language conditioned especially by pragmatic constraints to a more syntactically constrained language has influenced Dutch more strongly than the typological changes from the OV-genre. The other reason has to do with the relationship between word order in imperative clauses and in other clause-types. We know, for example, that relative clauses are more reluctant to change to VO than subordinate clauses and subordinate clauses are again more unlikely to change than declarative main clauses. To answer the question where the imperative clause belongs in this hierarchy of susceptibility to word order change, I would need to know for all the other clause-types how word order developed between 1300 and 1600 in the dialects I have used for my survey of change in imperatives. Unfortunately, these data are not yet available for more than one point in time. Thanks to a recent survey by de Meersman (1980), I do have a quantitative analysis of word order in relative, subordinate and declarative clauses in a Brabantish text from 1389. It appears from these data that, in that dialect at that point of time, OV order was almost exclusively used in relative and subordinate clauses as well as in declarative main clauses in compound tense. Although the differences in his and my way of analyzing the data make them more difficult to compare, OV order certainly did not occur all that frequently in imperative clauses at that time. Therefore, it is tempting to assume that imperatives underwent the shift from OV to VO more quickly than the other clause-types. If this is indeed the case, it might explain why the return to OV did not happen in imperative clauses, while it did in the other clause-types. The stabilization of word or-

der in Dutch took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. If imperative clauses really are less reluctant to change than other clause-types in the development from OV to VO, we may expect that during this time of stabilization the imperative clauses had already developed so far towards VO syntax that this order was considered standard. The other types of clauses had probably not yet developed so far towards SVO and, therefore, OV could have been taken as the norm for these clause-types. It is clear that this explanation is still tentative and needs to be substantiated both by research on the syntactic development of Dutch and investigations into word order change in imperative clauses in other languages.

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