

# SYNTAKTISCHE VERANDERING IN KONTROLEZINNEN

Een sociolinguïstische studie van het  
Brugs van de 13e tot de 17e eeuw

Proefschrift

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door

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# Summary in English

## 0. Preliminary

The purpose of the study Syntactic change in infinitive constructions. A sociolinguistic study of the dialect of Bruges between the 13th and the 17th century is twofold: first, to increase our knowledge of syntactic change in Dutch and second, to test and possibly refine (socio)linguistic theories about the causes of reanalysis and the factors that play a part in the spread of a syntactic change. The study was carried out by the use of a quantitative investigation of infinitive constructions (these are printed bold in 1 and 2) in prose texts from 1277-1600 written in different styles of the Middle Dutch dialect of Bruges.

- (1) De cause was dat hy int land van Vlaender  
The reason was that he in the country of Flanders  
ghebracht hadde valsche munte om tvolc  
brought had forged coins in order the people  
**mede te bedrieghene**  
with to deceive (15th, Chronicle:58)
- (2) De voors. Jhane ontkende de worden ende hiesch den  
The named Jhane denied the words and demanded the  
**heesch over te hebbene in gheschriften**  
sentence again to have in writing (15th, Trial:1026)

The infinitive constructions that I examined have the following characteristics (Chapter 4):

- they lack tense
- the comp-position is not always filled
- they have a prosubject in deep structure that is controlled by the subject, direct object or indirect object of the matrix clause or that can be interpreted freely.

I call this type of infinitive constructions 'control sentences' (kontrolezinnen). My study deals chiefly with two aspects of these control sentences: change and stability in the basic ordering and movement rules (Chapter 5) and the development of the use of the word 'om' (Chapter 6).

## 1. Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter I outlines briefly the history of the study of diachronic syntax in the last century. I suggest reasons for the growing interest in syntactic change in general, and in syntactic change in Dutch.

## 2. Chapter 2: Design

The first part of chapter 2 contains an account of the methods I used to investigate syntactic change (2.1). I explain my decision to carry out the investigation in real time according to the trend method, and to study more than two points of time in the period under investigation. I give reasons for the combination of working in a generative framework and using quantitative techniques.

The second part of chapter 2 is devoted to the design of my study (2.2). I explain why it was control sentences that I chose to investigate and why I carried out research into non-literary prose texts written in the last quarters of the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. I also say why I carried out the study on the dialect of Bruges - mainly because two thirds of the oldest records suitable for the study of syntactic change, originate from Bruges. Finally, I discuss the incorporation of the independent variable style. This variable was introduced in order to gain insight into the stylistic embedding of syntactic change. I introduced the following styles, increasing in attention paid to the language use: public trials, diaries, chronicles and statutes. I expected to find that the style differences in the Middle Ages take place on the continuum modern-archaic language, by lack of a continuum dialect-standard language, and that archaic constructions remain longer in styles where great attention is paid to language use, than in those where this occurs less. Because of difficulties with data gathering I was not able to study all the different styles for all points of time (see 3.2). Consequently my study has the following design:

formal	c.1275-1300	c.1375-1400	c.1475-1500	c.1575-1600
	Statutes	Statutes	Statutes	Statutes
↓		Chronicles	Chronicles	Chronicles
Informal			Diaries	Diaries
			Public trials	Public trials

Table I The design of the investigation in Bruges prose texts

## 3. Chapter 3: Problems

The first part of chapter 3 concerns general problems of investigations into syntactic change (3.1). I deal in 3.1.1 with the consideration that, theoretically speaking, it may be difficult to assess whether two syntactic constructions are realizations of one syntactic variable, since syntactic elements bear referential meaning. 3.1.2 is about the problem of the low frequency of syntactic constructions, which becomes a greater difficulty in studies on historical syntax, because of the limitations of the material.

## Summary

3.2 is concerned with two problems of data gathering. I had serious problems in acquiring data from the last quarter of the 14th century; during that period there were political reasons for writing in French. I was therefore unable to find diaries and trials for the 14th century and because there is hardly any material left for the 13th century, I could only study statutes for that period.

### 4. Chapter 4: Control sentences in Standard Dutch

Chapter 4 contains a description of Modern Dutch control sentences. It is shown that control sentences have the same base rules as sentences with tense (3) and that Sbars are obligatorily extraposed and PPs optionally.

- (3) Sbar → Comp S (=V3)
- V3 → NP (Adv)\* (PP)\* (Sbar)\* V2
- V2 → (Adv)\* (PP)\* (Sbar)\* V1
- V1 → (NP) (NP) (PP) (AP) (Sbar) V0

The use of 'om' in control sentences is obligatory if they have the function of a subject complement (4), a predicative adjunct (5), an adverbial clause of purpose (6), a specifier of NP with the value of a relative clause (7) and a specifier of AP indicating degree (8). The use of 'om' is optional in control sentences in the function of subject (9), direct object (10) (unless the matrix verb has the meaning of 'say' or 'notice' in which case the use of 'om' is ungrammatical (11)), specifier of NP with the value of conjunctive clause (12) (unless the NP expresses the meaning of 'communication' or 'experience', in which case the use of 'om' is ungrammatical (13)) or specifier of AP not indicating degree (14). Apart from the cases already mentioned, 'om' is also ungrammatical in control sentences in the function of complement of a preposition (15).

- (4) De muziek is niet om aan te horen  
The music is not to hear
- (5) Ik vind haar in die jurk om te stelen  
I think her in that dress for to steal
- (6) Hij ging naar Amerika om beroemd te worden  
He went to America in order famous to become
- (7) Een boek om te lezen  
A book <..> to read
- (8) Het is te mooi om waar te zijn  
It is too good for true to be
- (9) Het past je niet (om) dat te doen  
It becomes you not (<..>) that to do
- (10) Hij probeerde (om) het hek te sluiten  
He tried (<..>) the fence to close
- (11) Moeder zei vroeg thuis te zullen zijn  
Mother said early home to will be
- (12) De drang (om) altijd weer te liegen  
The impulse (<..>) always again to tell lies

## Summary

- (13) Zijn mededeling     niet te willen komen  
His communication not   to want    come
- (14) Hij is vrij (om)    zich       aan te sluiten bij    een club  
He is free (<..>) himself to join       with a    club
- (15) Zonder de deur te openen  
Without the door to open

### 5. Chapter 5: Change and stability in basic ordering and movement rules

Chapter 5 is concerned with changes and stability in the position of major categories relative to the V. The basic ordering and extraposition rules of Modern Dutch perfectly account for the position of adverbs and Sbars in my corpus, since the first are always preverbal and the latter postverbal. They cannot account for the position of NPs and APs relative to the V. NPs and APs occur frequently after the V. The Modern Dutch rules can account for the position of PPs relative to the V, but it is remarkable that VPP-structures occur far more often in Middle Bruges than in Modern Dutch.

5.2.1 deals with the position of the NP relative to the V. There is not only a statistically significant decline in the use of VNP-structures between the 13th and the 16th centuries, there is also a change in the factors that condition VNP order during the period under investigation.

- The length of the NP: the NPs in VNP-structures are significantly longer than those in NPV-structures in the 15th and the 16th century. The influence of the length of the NP on its position increases in a statistically significant way between the 13th and the 16th centuries.
- Casemarking of the NP: NPs with unambiguous case always occur before the V and never after, in the 13th century. This is a confirmation of the theory that the loss of casemarking has affected the change from OV tot VO (Vennemann, 1974).
- Function of the NP: sisters of VO occur less often in VNP-structures than sisters of V1 and V2.

5.2.2 deals with the relative position of APs to V. Although APs hardly occur in my corpus, my data indicate a statistically significant decrease in the use of VAP-structures between the 13th and the 16th centuries.

The subject of 5.2.3 is the position of the PP relative to the V. There is a significant decrease in the use of VPP-structures between the 13th and 16th centuries and there is a change in the factors that condition the occurrence of VPP-structures.

- The length of the PP: PPs after V are significantly longer than those before the V in the 15th and the 16th centuries.
- The function of the PP: there is a tendency for PPs that are

## Summary

sisters of V0 and that do not have the function of object of the preposition, to occur more often in VPP-structures than PPs that are sister of V1 or V2. The decrease in the use of VPP-structures takes place chiefly in PPs that are sister of V0 and do not have the function of object of a preposition.

The majority of the stylistic differences in placement of the NP and the PP to the V confirm the hypothesis that syntactic change proceeds faster in informal than in formal styles.

I have examined in 5.3 whether the basic ordering and movement rules of Standard Dutch (3) should be adapted in order to account for my Middle Bruges data and whether there are changes in base and/or movement rules in the period under investigation. I have therefore traced whether the theoretical arguments that are put forward for the base and extrapositions rules of Standard Dutch hold true for my data. I assume that the position relative to the V of NPs that are sister of V0 (V0-NPs), defines whether the V governs to the right (Modern English) or to the left (Modern Dutch) and that the direction of government is category bound. Referring to Sturm (1986), I assume furthermore that movement of constituents is only allowed if they have an element in surface structure that expresses their relationship to V (a case-marking, preposition).

It emerges from my study that it is not possible to determine the base structure of Middle Bruges on the basis of these criteria. V0-NPs occur at all points of time both before and after V; they do not always have a marking in either position that shows their relationship to the V. Consequently, there are no theoretical arguments for movement of NPs from a right or a left peripheral V. It is not possible to define the basic ordering strictly within government and binding terms. I offer two alternatives, one which retains the notion of category bound direction of government of the V, and one which exchanges this for a lexically bound direction of government.

If we preserve the criterion of the category bound direction of government, the most plausible assumption is that - in spite of the unexplainable VNP- and VAP-structures - Middle Bruges had a V governing to the left, as has Standard Dutch.

- V0-NPs occur mostly left of the V and it is most likely that the child learning its language deduces the structure that occurs most frequently.

- It is generally assumed that the Germanic languages had a V governing to the left before the documented period; Modern West-Flemish also has a left governing V. It is not probable that a language will change very quickly from left to right governing V and back again.

- pronouns never occur after V, and movement of pronouns is, from

## Summary

a theoretical point of view, highly unacceptable. We do not find a change in the base and/or the extraposition rules between the 13th and the 17th centuries, but a change in the frequency of the extraposition rules and of the factors that condition extraposition. Extraposition of NPs, APs and PPs occurs in the older periods more frequently than in the younger ones. The conditions on extraposition become more and more restricted in the period under investigation. It looks as if the language develops a tendency to become a language with a left peripheral V in the 13th century, but this tendency clearly diminishes in the period under investigation.

If we abandon the concept of category bound direction of government, the data can be interpreted differently. The change from a V governing to the left, to a V governing to the right, seems to have taken place in a lexically diffuse manner: verbs with VNP-structures never have NPV-structures and vice versa in the 13th century. It seems that in the period under investigation, postposition of NPs depends first on the lexical item that governs it, the V, and later on the length of the NP. My data suggest that the child learning its language had problems to discover which verbs governed to the left and which to the right and that language production factors have subsequently interfered. The latter resulted in long NPs occurring after verbs that governed to the left. The language acquiring child next deduced that NPs with a great length may appear after the V.

5.4 is concerned with possible explanations for the change from XV in the direction of VX (5.4.1) and the change back to XV (5.4.2). I show that my data indicate that the change from XV to VX has to do with the decline of the case system, but I have not been able to demonstrate that convincingly. Secondly, I enumerate the phenomena that according to Stockwell (1977) led to the reinterpretation of OV Old English to VO, and I show that two of those phenomena did not occur as frequently in Middle Bruges as in Old English: first, the frequent occurrence of single unit verbs (Gerritsen, 1984) and second, the frequent occurrence of adverbs after the V. I argue in 5.4.2 that the lack of those phenomena in Middle Bruges might have caused the change back to XV. Following Vennemann (1984) I suggest further that it is likely that the developing written language has also brought about the stabilization of XV. This assumption is supported by the fact that the change from VX to XV takes place in both German (Ebert, 1980) and Middle Bruges after the 15th century, thus after the invention of the art of printing (c.1450), which led in both countries to the standardization of the written language. The stylistic differentiation in the use of XV-structures in the 16th century supports this assumption.

## 6. Chapter 6: The rise of 'om' in control sentences

Chapter 6 is devoted to the rise of the use of the word 'om' in control sentences. 'Om' occurs mainly in control sentences with the function of adverbial clause of purpose, so-called purpose control sentences (1,6). The bulk of this Chapter therefore deals with the rise of the use of the word 'om' in purpose control sentences. These show a significant increase in the use of 'om' between the 13th and the 16th centuries. Two traditional explanations for the rise of 'om' in purpose control sentences are tested in 6.2. I show that it might be affected by the fading of the final meaning of 'te', the word that introduces all infinitive constructions. This explanation cannot be tested due to the scarce knowledge we have about the history of 'te' in Dutch. Next, I have traced the hypothesis that the disappearance of the marking of the gerund by the ending -e (see 1,2) caused the rise of the word 'om'. My results indicate that this is not plausible, since 96% of the 13th century purpose control sentences are formed with a gerund with an ending, whereas in this century 48% already was introduced by 'om' (See Diagram I, p.151).

The addition of 'om' to purpose control sentences with a gerund with an ending developed between the 13th and the 15th centuries and is conditioned by the following factors:

- Subcategorization features of the matrix verb: In the 13th century, purpose control sentences with 'om' occur significantly more often with intransitive matrix verbs than with transitive ones.
- Length control sentence: control sentences with 'om' contain significantly more constituents.
- Distance: The distance in words between the purpose control sentence and the NP in the matrix clause that has to be interpreted as its subject, is always greater in sentences with 'om'. The style differences in the formation of purpose control sentences corroborate fully the hypothesis that syntactic change occurs faster in informal than in formal styles.

6.4 gives a survey of the use of 'om' in control sentences with another function than purpose adverbial. 'Om' occurs in all control sentences in functions in which it is obligatory in Modern Dutch (cf. Chapter 4). Although the data are scarce, it looks as if those control sentences have always been constructed with 'om'. The occurrence of 'om' in control sentences in which it is optional in Standard Dutch, is very slight. There is a small but statistically insignificant, increase from the 13th to the 16th century (see Diagram II, p.187).



## 7. Chapter 7: Evaluation method of investigation

My socio-historical approach to syntactic change is different from the one generally found in previous studies of syntactic change in Dutch. That is why in Chapter 7 I evaluate whether this labour-intensive approach renders a sufficient harvest. 7.1. deals with the results of the combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. I show that the quantitative analysis has indeed led to more adequate observations than would have been possible by means of a qualitative analysis only. Using the quantitative approach I found, for example, that the position of NPs relative to the V was related to the lexical representation of the V in the 13th century: if a verb had the NP to its left it never had it to its right and vice versa. The combination of both approaches made it further possible to trace changes in the conditions of the use of VNP-structures. Secondly, I gained greater insight into the extent to which language learners have to be exposed to ambiguous structures, before reanalysis takes place. My 13th century data show that even if a language with a V governing to the left has a lot of constituents after the V ( in this instance 100% PP, 100% AP, 33% NP), reinterpretation to a V governing to the right does not yet take place. It is extraordinary that the 13th century Bruges toddlers did not deduce from the language input that the V governed to the right. My study also provides insight into the structures that are relevant for the birth of reanalysis. It seems that the position of adverbs and VO-NPs to the V is very important here.

7.2 deals with the harvest of the incorporation of external factors. I show that considering four points of time in the period between the 13th and the 17th centuries has produced many results. Table I (p.218) summarizes all the significant changes. My study shows that there are more syntactic differences between the different periods of Middle Dutch than has been generally assumed. In the few cases where the results of my study can be compared with similar regional dialect studies, the results of the comparison are widely varying. It suggests that we have to reckon with regional differences in syntax. I found many striking differences between the styles (Table II, p.223). They support the hypothesis that syntactic change takes place quicker in informal than in formal styles. It also appears from my study that distinctions such as indicator and marker can be implemented on syntactic variants. The style differences in the use of 'om' indicate that it is a marker, as is to be expected from a lexically bound syntactic variant. The style differences in the use of VNP- and VPP-structures show a change from indicator to marker between the 15th and the 16th centuries. My investigation shows that the consideration of style differences can increase our knowledge of the stylistic embedding of syntactic change.