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Abstract

This paper concerns the interrelation between the theoretical status and the social dimensions of syntactic variation in Heerlen Dutch. I will discuss syntactic variation in Heerlen Dutch which consists of (i) a range of dative constructions which are acceptable in the Heerlen dialect but unacceptable in Standard Dutch and (ii) Standard Dutch variants of the dative constructions which are rare in the Heerlen dialect. The theoretical primitive causing syntactic variation is taken to be the different values or settings of a parameter. Although all local dialect constructions in Heerlen Dutch seem superficially similar for they are construed with a dative NP or the reflexive *zich*, I will argue that these constructions must be attributed to two distinct parameters. The different social distributions of the dative constructions in Heerlen Dutch are a confirmation that two distinct parameters are involved.

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## Syntactic variation, parameters, and social distribution

### 0. Introduction

This paper concerns the interrelation between the theoretical status and the social dimensions of syntactic variation of a regional language variety in the Netherlands, namely Heerlen Dutch. Heerlen is a town of 90,000 inhabitants, situated in Limburg, a province in the southeast of the Netherlands near the Belgian and German borders, as shown in Map 1.

Map 1: The location of Heerlen in the Netherlands

In the Belgian area as indicated in Map 1, a variety of Dutch is spoken, namely Flemish. Nowadays, Heerlen is a bilingual community in which the inhabitants speak a variety of Heerlen Dutch as their first language, or the local dialect as their first language and a variety of Heerlen Dutch as their second language. The local dialect of Heerlen is situated in the westernmost dialect-geographical transition zone of the Ripuarian dialects, a sub-branch of the Franconian dialect group. From a linguistic point of view, it was heavily influenced by the German city of Cologne for centuries (see Hinskens 1993:80 for a more extensive discussion). Consequently, the Heerlen dialect differs from Standard Dutch in all linguistic aspects: lexical, phonological, morphological and syntactical. It is for this reason that syntactic interference in Heerlen Dutch from the local dialect may well result in syntactic constructions that are marginal or even unacceptable in Standard Dutch. Furthermore, there are interference effects in Heerlen Dutch in the sense of forms that are available in neither the local dialect nor Standard Dutch (see Cornips 1992: 39).

The syntactic variation we will encounter raises the following question: what is the theoretical status of the syntactic variation or, in other words, which theoretical primitives cause this syntactic variation? In this paper, this question will be addressed by analyzing syntactic variation within the framework of generative grammar. Within this framework syntactic variation is considered as a type of parametric variation that is partly the result of the innate principles of Universal Grammar (UG), and partly the result of the triggering experience of exposure to a specific language variety. From this point of view, variation that is language-specific illustrates different ‘settings’ or ‘values’ of a syntactic parameter (see Borer 1984; Haegeman 1991:15; Ouhalla 199; Roeper and Williams 1987).

If we consider the interrelation between the theoretical status and the social dimensions of syntactic variation, two intriguing questions that arise, are (i) how to bridge the gap between formal syntax and sociolinguistics (see Winford 1996) and (ii) if and how poses the phenomenon of social stratification a serious challenge for the domain of the theoretical analysis? Note that Thomason & Kaufman (1988:19) claim that syntactic primitives alone are

not sufficient to predict the results of language contact since ‘it is the social context, not the structure of the languages involved, that determines the direction and the degree of interference’. This paper argues that since both social variables and theoretical primitives influence the amount, the type, and the extent of language variation an approach is needed in which the pattern of social stratification is considered to be a clue about the validity of the analysis of the theoretical primitive. More specifically, it is argued that if the theoretical primitive causing syntactic variation is located in some speaker’s or group of speakers’ grammars, it will be plausible that these speakers show similar correlations with respect to their external variables (see Labov 1966, 1972).

### **1. The location of Heerlen**

With respect to other Dutch dialect areas, Heerlen occupies an exceptional position, since within a span of twenty years the expanding mining industry in the area attracted numerous workers from elsewhere in the Netherlands and abroad, as illustrated in Table 1.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1: Number and origin of inhabitants of Heerlen between 1899 and 1930

This immigration altered the linguistic uniformity of Heerlen in two important ways: (i) the native population who spoke the local dialect became almost a minority (see Table 1) and (ii) a new intermediate variety, or rather, a new regional Dutch variety namely, Heerlen Dutch emerged (see Cornips 1992/94).

Some interesting results of a sociological study by Brassé and Van Schelven (1980) shed light on the rate of this process of language shift. Brassé and Van Schelven examined the process of assimilation of Polish, Slovenian and Italian immigrants who became inhabitants of Heerlen between 1920 and 1940. Among others, the degree of speaking ability in either Standard Dutch or the local dialect was taken to be one indicator of the extent of assimilation. A subset of these immigrants was questioned about their speaking ability or fluency in the two varieties. Tables 2 and 3 give the immigrants’ opinions. Both tables display that (i) at least since 1920, Heerlen was already a bilingual community, i.e. both Standard Dutch and/or the local dialect were spoken and (ii) the speaking ability in both Standard Dutch and the local dialect increased tremendously between the first and second generation of immigrants, even though they were all born outside the Netherlands. This is an indication that the language shift in Heerlen took place at a very fast rate.

Table 2: Foreign immigrants’ speaking ability in Standard Dutch in their own opinions

Table 3: Foreign immigrants’ speaking ability in the Heerlen dialect in their own opinions

Furthermore, Table 2 differs from Table 3 in that all the generations of immigrants believe that their speaking ability in Standard Dutch is better than their command of the local dialect

of Heerlen. These opinions indicate that Standard Dutch, rather than the local dialect, was the target language in the process of language shift (see Thomason and Kaufman 1988).

However, if we examine carefully the varieties of Dutch in Heerlen, it is obvious that the native population and the immigrants as well failed to learn Standard Dutch perfectly. With respect to syntax, what distinguishes Heerlen Dutch from Standard Dutch is that in Heerlen Dutch, (i) dative objects appear in a much wider range of constructions and (ii) the reflexive *zich* has a wider set of uses (see Cornips 1994). If we adopt the various scenarios discussed by Thomason and Kaufman (1988), Heerlen Dutch may be considered as the result of imperfect group learning during the very rapid process of language shift due to an insufficient availability (of speakers) of Standard Dutch in the beginning of this century (see Singler 1988). Such a shift began with the carryover of contrasts and patterns from the shifters' local dialect into their version of Standard Dutch: that is, with their failure to learn that these patterns did not exist in the target language. Subsequently, these patterns have spread to the target language as a whole (see Thomason and Kaufman 1988:38,51). It is relevant to note that by and large, the typological distance between the local dialect of Heerlen and Standard Dutch is minimal.

Nowadays, Heerlen Dutch still involves a large spectrum of intermediate lects varying between the local dialect and Standard Dutch. Therefore, it may be argued that the varieties of Heerlen Dutch themselves represent in fact a mesolect in which speakers since the beginning of this century have adjusted their vernacular speech (the basilects) to a certain extent to Standard Dutch (the acrolect) (Bickerton 1975).

## 2. Syntactic variation attributed to parameters

First of all, it is important to keep in mind that syntactic variants considered to be instances of parametric variation are no longer treated as different surface manifestations of the same underlying or 'deep' syntactic structure, as was the case in the more classic transformational generative grammar (Borer 1984; Harris 1984; Roeper et al., 1987; Winford 1996:180). The parametric approach has the advantage that a full range of several syntactic variants may be attributed to one parameter. Thus, the assumption presented above boils down to the following: it predicts that all syntactic variants attributed to the same parameter will show identical correlations with respect to the social (sub)dimensions of a speech community. On the other hand, this assumption implies that a range of syntactic variants which are considered as resulting from two or more parameters or, in other words, are attributed to different parameters will yield different social distributions. It is important to note, however, that the opposite does not necessarily hold: that is if two or more parameters show a similar social stratification, nothing can be said about the plausibility of the analysis. Hence, it may be the case that both parameters possess the same lexical properties or it may be the case that the social distribution of the settings of both parameters are identical.

In this paper, I have to deal with two kinds of difficulties which are in large part due to problems inherent to syntactic variation: that is, the difficulties with respect to (i) a sufficient quantity of tokens and (ii) the full range of variants in a piece of spontaneous discourse (see Milroy 1989; Kroch 1989). In the next section, I'll first present a range of syntactic variants in Heerlen Dutch which may be analyzed as resulting from one parameter.

## 2.1 Syntactic variation: inalienable possession

The local Heerlen dialect allows dative objects to occur in a much wider range of constructions than does Standard Dutch (see Cornips 1994). One kind of dative construction that is abundantly used in the eastern dialect varieties of Dutch, though extremely rare in Standard Dutch, is the possessive dative construction illustrated in (1) (Hdial=Heerlen dialect, SD=Standard Dutch).<sup>ii</sup>

- (1) Hdial /?\*SD    Ik was Jan<sub>dat.</sub>/hem<sub>dat.</sub> de handen.  
                   I wash Jan/him        the hands  
                   'I am washing Jan's/his hands.'

The possessive dative construction always expresses an inalienable possession relation: that is, the referent of the dative NP Jan/hem 'Jan/him' can only be interpreted as the person whose hands are cleaned, as illustrated in (1) (see also Guéron 1985, 1986). In addition, the direct object NP always refers to a body-part, and the N referring to the body-part is always preceded by a definite determiner if the inalienable body-part is obligatory singular like 'stomach', 'nose' and 'mouth'. The possessive dative construction allows an indefinite inalienable argument if the number of the body-parts per individual is more than one like hand, foot and knee. In that case we are dealing with a partitive determiner that is interpreted as referring to the fact that for each individual one out of two hands, feet is washed.

- (2) Hdial /SD a. \*Ik was Jan<sub>dat.</sub>/hem<sub>dat.</sub> een buik.  
                   I wash Jan/him        a stomach  
                   'I am washing Jan's/his stomach.'  
                   Hdial /?\*SD b. Ik was Jan<sub>dat.</sub>/hem<sub>dat.</sub> een voet.  
                   I wash Jan/him        a foot  
                   'I am washing Jan's/his foot.'

In variants of the construction in (1), the referent of the dative NP can be construed as the possessor of the referent of an underlying object or a prepositional complement such as de handen 'the hands' in (3a) and in (3b), respectively.

- (3) Hdial /?\*SD a. De handen bevriezen Jan<sub>dat.</sub>/hem<sub>dat.</sub>  
                   the hands freeze Jan/him  
                   'Jan's/His hands are freezing.'  
                   Hdial /?\*SD b. Het cadeau valt Jan<sub>dat.</sub>/hem<sub>dat.</sub> uitde handen.  
                   the present falls Jan/him out the hands  
                   'The present drops out of his hands.'

Another characteristic of the dative inalienable possession construction is that the external argument of the predicate, that is, the agents, cannot enter into a possessive relation with the direct object (or prepositional complement), not even if the indirect object is absent, as illustrated in (4a) (see Broekhuis and Cornips 1994; Vergnaud and Zubizarreta 1992). In the local dialect, and in Heerlen Dutch (as we will see), a possessive relation between the subject

and the direct object can only be expressed indirectly, namely by inserting a dative NP or a reflexive zich, as in (1) and (4b), respectively.

- (4) Hdial /SD a. \*Hij<sub>i</sub> wast de handen<sub>i</sub>  
 Hdial /?\*SD b. Hij<sub>i</sub> wast zich<sub>i</sub> de handen.  
 he washes refl the hands  
 'He is washing his hands.'

In Standard Dutch, however, the inalienable possession relation must be expressed by means of a possessive pronoun, namely zijn 'his', as illustrated in (5). In turn, the constructions in (5) are rare in the local dialect of Heerlen (see Cornips 1994):

- (5) SD/?\*Hdial a. Ik was zijn/Jans handen.  
 I wash his/Jan's hands  
 'I am washing his/Jan's hands.'  
 SD/?\*Hdial b. Zijn/Jans handenbevriezen.  
 his/Jan's hands freeze  
 'His/Jan's hands are freezing.'  
 SD/?\*Hdial c. Het cadeau valt uitzijn handen.  
 the present fallsout hishands  
 'The present drops out of his hands.'

Interestingly, in Heerlen Dutch, which involves a large spectrum of intermediate varieties, both the Standard Dutch and the local dialect variants coexist (HD=Heerlen Dutch):

- (6) HD/?\*SD a. Ik was hem<sub>dat.</sub> de handen.  
 HD/SD b. Ik was zijn handen.  
 'I am washing his hands.'
- (7) HD/?\*SD a. De handen bevriezen hem<sub>dat.</sub>  
 HD/SD b. Zijn handen bevriezen.  
 'His hands are freezing.'
- (8) HD/?\*SD a. Het cadeau valt hem<sub>dat.</sub> uitde handen.  
 HD/SD b. Het cadeau valt uitzijn handen.  
 'The present drops out of his hands.'

The constructions in (1), (3) and (4) do not exhaust the full range of the dative inalienable possession constructions in Heerlen Dutch and in the local dialect. These varieties also allow a copular construction with a possessive dative, as illustrated in (9). The inalienable possessive constructions in (9a) and (9b) refer to a state of 'the stomach being dirty' and 'the hair being grey', respectively. Note that in (9) the body-parts buik 'stomach' and haar 'hands' must be preceded by a definite determiner in order to be acceptable:

- (9) HD/Hdial/\*SD a. Debuik is me<sub>dat.</sub> vies.  
 the stomach is me dirty

'My stomach is dirty.'  
 HD/Hdial/\*SD b. Hem<sub>dat.</sub> zijn de haren grijs.  
 him are the hairs grey  
 'His hair is grey.'

The possessive dative copular constructions in (9) are ungrammatical in Standard Dutch. In the standard variety, only copular constructions in which the inalienable possession relation is expressed by a possessive pronoun arise, as illustrated in (10). This construction also appears in Heerlen Dutch but it is extremely rare in the local dialect:

(10)HD/SD a. Mijn buik is vies.  
 my stomach is dirty  
 'My stomach is dirty.'  
 HD/SD b. Zijnhaar is grijs.  
 his hairs are grey  
 'His hair is grey.'

What is more, the possessive dative copular construction in (9) alternates with the construction in (11), in which the N referring to the body-part again combines obligatorily with the definite determiner.

- (11) HD/Hdial/\*SD a. Ik<sub>i</sub> heb/krijg de buik<sub>i</sub> vies.  
 I have/got the stomach dirty  
 'My stomach is dirty.'
- HD/Hdial/\*SD b. Hij<sub>i</sub> heeft/krijgt de haren<sub>i</sub> grijs.  
 he has/gets the hair grey  
 'His hair is grey.'

In Broekhuis and Cornips (1994), we proposed that in (9), the copular verb zijn 'be' is able to assign dative case to the possessor; in (11), however, the semicopulas hebben 'have' and krijgen 'get' cannot assign dative case to the possessor which must therefore receive nominative case. The facts that (i) the external argument of the predicate cannot enter into a possessive relation with the direct object (see (4)) and (ii) the possessive reading is unmistakably present in (11) provides us with a conclusive argument in favor of the claim that we are dealing with raising of the underlying indirect object to subject position, that is to say, the possessive dative shows up as the surface subject (see Broekhuis and Cornips for a more extensive discussion). It is important to note that the inalienable possessive constructions in (9) and (11) refer to a temporary state, whereas the Standard Dutch variant in (10) may refer to both a temporary and a permanent state. Therefore, the subject in the local dialect variant of (9) and the direct object in the case of (11) combines with stage-level predicates, whereas in the Standard Dutch variant the relevant NP may also combine with an individual-level predicate such as intelligent. This accounts for the following contrast in (12) and (13):

- (12) HD/Hdial a. \*De zus is me<sub>dat.</sub> intelligent/slim  
 the sister is me intelligent/clever  
 'My sister is intelligent/clever.'
- HD/Hdial b. \*Ik heb/krijg de zus intelligent/slim  
 I have/got the sister intelligent/clever  
 'My sister is intelligent/clever.'
- (13) HD/SD Mijn zus is intelligent/slim.  
 my sister is intelligent/clever

So far, I have shown that in Heerlen Dutch constructions expressing inalienable possession between the referent of an (underlying) dative argument of the verbal predicate and the referent of the relevant NP denoting body-parts, as in (1), (3), (4b), (9) and (11), may be considered as syntactic interference from the local dialect. Hence, they are acceptable in the local dialect whereas they are unacceptable in Standard Dutch. On the other hand, in Heerlen Dutch also constructions in which the 'possessor'-role is realized as a possessive pronoun appear (see (5) and (10)). Since these constructions are fully acceptable in Standard Dutch but rare in the local dialect, they may be considered as Standard Dutch variant realizations. From this, it is obvious that we are dealing with several kinds of constructions expressing inalienable possession to a fairly great extent.

First of all, it is clear that the local dialect and the Standard Dutch constructions may be considered as variants involving one and the same sociolinguistic or syntactic variable in Heerlen Dutch. Since the variants are different ways of expressing inalienable possession, they satisfy the requirement of strict semantic equivalence (Cheshire 1987; Winford



1996:190). Since the beginning of this century, these variants are competing forms involved in a process of language shift, or to be more precisely, these variants are due to a different degree of adjustment of the basilects, i.e. the local dialect to Standard Dutch as the acrolect. From this point of view, the syntactic variation in Heerlen Dutch as a linguistic continuum itself represents successive stages of a language change by which the various variants are in competition among themselves, that is to say, in this continuum two grammars interact, i.e. the local dialect and Standard Dutch (see Winford 1996).

## 2.2 The functional category DP as parameter: inalienable possession

Essentially, if we want to attribute the syntactic variation discussed above to one parameter, it must be demonstrated that the local dialect and the Standard Dutch variant realizations in Heerlen Dutch are language (variety)-specific variants that illustrate different 'settings' or 'values' (see Haegeman 1991:15, Roeper et al., 1987). Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992) argue that inalienable constructions in which either a dative object or a possessive pronoun appear differ systematically in a cluster of properties. Interestingly, the following judgments on the Heerlen Dutch/Standard Dutch examples are similar to those given by Vergnaud and Zubizarreta for French. The first distinguishing property is that the dative inalienable possession construction in (14) requires a strictly distributive interpretation: that is, although the inalienable argument de buik 'the stomach' is singular in the dative construction, it is nevertheless interpreted as referring to more than one 'stomach', due to the plural possessor hun 'their' and zij 'they' in (14a,b) and (14c), respectively (see Vergnaud et al., 1992:598):

- (14)HD/\*SD     a. Ik was hun<sub>dat./3pl</sub> de buik<sub>sg</sub>  
                   I wash them the stomach  
                   'I am washing their stomachs.'
- HD/\*SD     b. De buik<sub>sg</sub> is hun<sub>dat./3pl</sub> vies.  
                   the stomach is them dirty  
                   'Their stomach is dirty'
- HD/\*SD     c. Zij<sub>3pl</sub> hebben de buik<sub>sg</sub> vies.  
                   theyhave the stomach dirty  
                   'Their stomach is dirty'

Apparently, what distinguishes the dative construction in (15) from the possessive pronoun construction in (16), is that in the former all fingernails are being painted or dirty, whereas this is not necessarily the case in the latter. So, it cannot be the case that in (15) one fingernail was painted per individual, nor can the sentence have a vague interpretation (less than ten fingernails having been painted) as in (16) (see Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992:600)):

- (15)HD/\*SD     a. Ik verf hun de vingernagels rood.  
                   I paint them the fingernails red  
                   'I am painting their fingernails red.'
- HD/\*SD     b. De vingernagels zijn hun vies.  
                   the fingernails are them dirty

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'Their fingernails are dirty.'  
HD/\*SD c. Zij hebben de vingernagels vies.  
theyhave the fingernails dirty  
'Their fingernails are dirty.'

- (16)HD/SD a. Ik verf hun vingernagels rood.  
 I paint their fingernails red  
 'I am painting their fingernails red.'  
 HD/SD b. Hunvingernagels zijn vies.  
 their fingernails are dirty  
 'Their fingernails are dirty.'

A second distinguishing property is that of grammatical number: "certain inalienable body-part nouns are obligatorily singular in the dative construction, whether they have a plural possessor or not, whereas they may singular or plural" in the possessive pronoun construction (Vergnaud et al., 1992:598), as illustrated in (17) and (18), respectively:

- (17)HD/SD a. \*Ik was hun<sub>dat./3pl</sub> de buiken<sub>pl</sub> (see (13a))  
 I wash them the stomachs  
 'I am washing their stomachs.'  
 HD/SD b. \*Debuiken<sub>pl</sub> zijn hun<sub>dat./3pl</sub> vies (see (13b))  
 the stomachs are them dirty  
 'Their stomachs are dirty.'

- (18)HD/SD a. Ik was hun<sub>pl</sub> buiken<sub>pl</sub>  
 I wash their stomachs  
 'I am washing their stomachs.'  
 HD/SD b. Hun<sub>pl</sub> buiken<sub>pl</sub> zijn vies.  
 their stomachs are dirty  
 'Their stomachs are dirty.'

Finally, the dative construction cannot be modified by just any attributive adjective, whereas there is no such no restriction in the possessive pronoun constructions, as exemplified in (19a) and (19b), respectively:

- (19)HD/SD a. \*Ik was hem<sub>dat.</sub> de vieze buik  
 I wash him the dirty stomach  
 'I am washing his dirty stomach.'  
 HD/SD b. Ik was zijn vieze buik.  
 I wash hisdirty stomach  
 'I am washing his dirty stomach.'

The question that arises, then, is: how can the syntactic variation expressing inalienable possession in Heerlen Dutch be considered as the result of parametric variation in which the possessive dative and the possessive pronoun constructions illustrate different 'values' of one parameter? According to Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992), the variation between the two possessive constructions is linked to the lexical properties of a functional category (see also Ouhalla 1991).<sup>iii\*\*</sup> More specifically, they argue for French and English that the cluster of properties of the two possessive constructions mentioned, can be accounted for by assuming that the definite determiner is part of the functional category D(eterminer) which has the lexical property [ $\pm$ Agr(eement)]. If D shows [+Agr], inalienable possession can be expressed

between the referent of an (underlying) dative argument of the verbal predicate and the referent of the relevant NP denoting a body-part. But if D is [-Agr], then the ‘possessor’-role must be realized as a possessive pronoun. If we adopt this proposal, we can account for the syntactic variation in Heerlen Dutch by considering the two possessive constructions as parametric variation attributed to the different lexical properties of the functional category D in the local dialect of Heerlen and in Standard Dutch. Vergnaud and Zubizarreta expect that if in a certain language variety the functional category D has the property [+Agr], the definite determiner in this variety will be morphologically variable. We would then expect that the local dialect of Heerlen differs from Standard Dutch in that the definite determiner will show more agreement, that is to say, it will vary more with respect to grammatical number, gender and person in the dialect than the definite determiner in the standard variety. If we consider the paradigm of the definite determiner in Standard Dutch and the local dialect of Heerlen, this prediction is borne out. In Standard Dutch, nouns can be distinguished on the basis of the article they select: non-neuter singular nouns take the article de ‘the’ and een ‘a/an’, while neuter ones take the article het and een. In the plural, the gender distinction is neutralized: the article de is used in all cases. On the other hand, in the local dialect of Heerlen, neuter singular nouns take the article et and ee, while masculine and feminine ones take the article der/inne and de/ing, respectively (Jongeneel 1884:39). In the plural, the article de is used in all cases just as in Standard Dutch. Further in both varieties, the indefinite plural counterpart of de is not morphologically realized ( $\emptyset$ ). Hence, in the local dialect the article varies more with respect to grammatical gender, as illustrated in (20).

(20)

<u>Heerlen dialect</u>	<u>Standard Dutch</u>
<u>singular, all persons</u>	<u>singular, all persons</u>
masculine <u>der/inne</u> vader 'father'	masculine <u>de/een</u> vader 'father'
feminine <u>de/ing</u> moeder 'mother'	feminine <u>de/een</u> moeder 'mother'
neuter _____ <u>et/ee</u> kind 'child'	neuter <u>het/een</u> kind 'child'
<u>plural, all gender</u> ( $\emptyset$ )	<u>plural, all gender</u> ( $\emptyset$ )
<u>de</u>	<u>de</u>

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Although the definite determiner in Heerlen Dutch is identical to the definite determiner in Standard Dutch, I assume that this article in Heerlen Dutch is still a local dialect feature, that is to say, it is specified in an abstract way. Furthermore, it can be argued that, with respect to the variation expressing inalienable possession, the parametric variation in the varieties of Heerlen Dutch is the result of the availability of the different parameter settings.

In sum, it is argued that the syntactic variants expressing inalienable possession in Heerlen Dutch are brought about by different values of just one parameter. The parameter involves the functional category D which has the lexical properties [ $\pm$ Agr]. If D has the property [+Agr] a construction is acceptable that expresses inalienable possession between an

(underlying) dative argument of the verbal predicate and the relevant NP denoting a body-part: on the other hand, the ‘possessor’-role will be realized as a possessive pronoun if D has the property [-Agr].

### 3. Syntactic variation attributed to the parameter D and social distribution

It is argued that the analysis discussed above is on the right track if the syntactic variants expressing inalienable possession will yield identical correlations with respect to the social (sub)dimensions of a speech community. Therefore, let us now turn in more detail to the social dimensions of syntactic variation in Heerlen Dutch.

#### 3.1 The sociolinguistic survey: the speaker variables and the spontaneous speech data corpus

The total number of male speakers in this survey is 67. The municipal authorities of Heerlen provided a random sample from the city register. Three speaker variables were taken into account in order to investigate the social distribution of the varieties of Dutch spoken in Heerlen: language background, education/occupation and age.

The speakers were divided into three language groups according to their language background, namely import, dialect and Heerlen Dutch:

import: speakers who speak (Heerlen) Dutch as a first language and whose parents were born outside the province of Limburg;

dialect: speakers who speak the local dialect as a first language and (Heerlen) Dutch as a second language;

Heerlen Dutch: speakers who speak (Heerlen) Dutch as a first language and whose parents speak the local dialect as a first language.

I expected to find that the import speakers should produce the least number of the dative construction, Heerlen Dutch speakers should produce more, and dialect speakers should produce the most.

The speakers were then further subdivided into smaller groups according to their education/occupation and age. The education/occupation variable is based on two values on a high to low scale, i.e. middle/high level employees and unskilled/skilled labor. With respect to the variable age, a distinction was made between those aged between 20 and 45 years or older than 60. The speaker variables are shown in Table 4. The specification of these variables made it possible to investigate whether the groups of speakers show any social stratification. The data consist of 33,5 recorded hours of spontaneous speech between two speakers who did not know each other but they belonged to the same cell (in-group conversation) and the recordings took place at the speakers' homes.

Table 4: Number of speakers in each cell divided by speaker variables

Unfortunately, if we examine the type/token distribution of the syntactic variants expressing inalienable possession in the spontaneous speech data corpus of Heerlen Dutch, it becomes obvious that we are confronted with one of the best known problems of syntactic variability, namely the low frequency of tokens (see Labov 1972). This is illustrated for the local dialect variants expressing inalienable possession in figure 1. Figure 1 shows that these variants never or hardly occur in the Heerlen Dutch corpus. Of course, the low frequency of dative constructions expressing inalienable possession does not imply that these variants are not productive or acceptable in Heerlen Dutch "since nonoccurrence in a corpus may always be due to nongrammatical, contextual factors or even to chance" (Kroch 1989:200).

Figure 1: Distribution type/token dative inalienable possession construction in the speech data corpus of Heerlen Dutch

From this, it is clear that a quantitative analysis of each syntactic variant is not feasible. On the other hand, a quantitative approach does become possible if all occurrences of the syntactic variants are counted up. Table 5 shows that there are 29 dative inalienable possession and 10 possessive pronoun constructions in the spontaneous speech data corpus. In order to assess social stratification, I analyzed these occurrences by means of a chi-square test. Table 5 reveals significant results for the language background variable. More specifically, Table 5 shows that the group of speakers who speak Heerlen Dutch as a first language uses the local dialect variant, i.e. the dative inalienable possession construction, significantly more often than the other groups of speakers.

Table 5: The distribution of the tokens of the dative construction (numerator) and all possible occurrences (dative and pronoun constructions (denominator))

Table 6 shows the proportions of speakers on the use or non-use of the dative inalienable possession construction. This table reveals significant results for the language background and age variables. To be more precise, Table 6 shows that the group of speakers who speak Heerlen Dutch as a first language and the group of young speakers use the local dialect variant significantly more often than the other groups of speakers:

Table 6: Proportion of speakers in each cell using the dative inalienable possession construction

Taken together, in spontaneous speech the use or non-use on the dative and possessive pronoun inalienable construction correlates with the language background and/or age variables of the speakers.<sup>iv</sup> This means that variation brought about by the different settings of one parameter, i.e. the lexical properties of the functional category D only play an important role in these social dimensions of the bilingual community of Heerlen. However, it is clear that we were not able to support the assumption that the syntactic variants attributed to the lexical properties of one parameter will show separately identical correlations with respect to the social (sub)dimensions of a speech community. Hence, in order to apply quantitative analysis all occurrences of the syntactic variants expressing inalienable possession had to be joined together. It is for this reason that we have to examine again a range of syntactic variants which are attributed to a different parameter. In this case, we will expect to find different correlations with respect to the social dimension of the speech community in Heerlen.

#### 4. The dative benefactive construction in Heerlen Dutch

In addition to the constructions discussed in section 1, several further dative constructions occur in Heerlen Dutch which are acceptable in the local dialect but unacceptable in Standard Dutch, as exemplified in (21).

- (21)\*SD/HD/Hdial a. Zijwast hem<sub>dat.</sub>/zich<sub>dat.</sub> de auto.  
 She washes him/refl the car  
 ‘She is washing the car for him/for herself.’
- \*SD/HD/Hdial b. Zijverft hem<sub>dat.</sub>/zich<sub>dat.</sub> een huis.  
 she paints him/refl a house  
 ‘She is painting a house for him(self).’

The dative constructions in (21) seem superficially similar to the dative constructions expressing inalienable possession for they are all construed with a dative NP or the reflexive zich. Since the benefactive constructions do not show a similar cluster of properties as the possessive dative constructions, I will argue, however, that these dative constructions may not be attributed to the same parameter as discussed above. First, the benefactive and the possessive dative constructions differ with respect to the restrictions placed on the direct object. In the former, the direct object may be preceded by either a definite or an indefinite NP, as already demonstrated in (21a) and (21b), respectively. What is more, unlike the inalienable dative construction, the indefinite NP in the benefactive construction is not a partitive determiner referring to the fact that for each individual one out of a greater number of cars/houses is washed/painted.

Secondly, in (21) neither body-parts are present nor is the referent of the dative NP necessarily construed as a possessor. Instead, the referent of the dative object can be understood as a beneficiary (see Gropen et al., 1989). First of all, in Standard Dutch the counterpart of the dative NP is a voor ‘for’-PP. As we would expect, this PP-variant is also acceptable in Heerlen Dutch, as shown in (22).

- (22)SD/HD a. Zij wast de auto voor hem/voor zichzelf.  
 She washes the car forhim/for herself  
 'She is washing the car for him/for herself.'
- SD/HD b. Hij verft een huis voor hem.  
 he paints a house for him  
 'He is painting a house for him.'

Thirdly, although the referent of the dative argument is plural and (ii) the direct object het huis 'the house' is singular, the interpretation of (23) never obligatorily implies the existence of more than one house being painted. Since there is no distributive effect, (23) has a meaning that all the referents of the dative NP hun have 'something to do' with a/one house.

- (23)\*SD/HD/Hdial Ik verf hun<sub>dat./pl</sub> het huis. (cf. (15))  
 I paint them the house  
 'I am painting the house for them.'

Moreover, it is never the case that certain objects are obligatorily singular, as can be seen in (24):

- (24)\*SD/HD/Hdial Ik was hun<sub>dat./pl</sub> de auto's. (cf.17))  
 I wash them the cars  
 'I am washing the cars for them.'

Furthermore, unlike the dative inalienable constructions, the benefactive construction can be modified by all kinds of attributive adjectives (cf. (19)).

- (25)\*SD/HD/Hdial a. Zijwast hem<sub>dat./zich</sub><sub>dat.</sub> de vieze/gele auto.  
 she washes him/refl the dirty/yellow car  
 'She is washing the dirty/yellow car for him/herself.'
- \*SD/HD/Hdial b. Ik verf hem<sub>dat.</sub> het oude huis.  
 I paint him the old house  
 'I am painting the old house for him.'

With respect to the distributive effect and the acceptability of an attributive adjective, the benefactive construction is similar to the Standard Dutch variant.

- (26)SD/HD a. Ik was de auto/auto's voor hun. \_\_\_\_ (see (23))  
 I wash the car/cars for them  
 'I am washing the car/cars for them.'
- SD/HD b. Ik was de vieze/gele auto voor hun. \_\_\_\_ (see (24))  
 I wash the dirty/yellow car forthem  
 'I am washing the dirty/yellow car for them.'

Finally, if the dative benefactive constructions in (21) are attributed to the same parameter as the dative inalienable possession constructions, we cannot explain the fact why the two



constructions behave differently with respect the occurrence of durational adverbs, such as een minuut lang 'for a minute'. Now, compare the following contrast in (27).

- (27)HD/\*SD a. Hij wast haar<sub>dat.</sub> een minuut lang de handen.  
 he washes her for a minute the hands  
 'He is washing her hands in a minute.'
- HD/\*SD b. \*Hijwast haar<sub>dat.</sub> een minuut lang de auto.  
 he washes her for a minute the car  
 'He is washing the car for her in a minute.'

This contrast raises the questions of (i) what kind of construction we are dealing with and (ii) how from a parametric point of view the variation between the dative benefactive construction and the voor 'for'-PP variant, i.e. the local dialect and Standard Dutch variant in Heerlen Dutch can be accounted for.

Therefore, let us examine the dative benefactive constructions more carefully. As (27b) and (28a) show, the dative benefactive construction is ill-formed if it is combined with an adverbial phrase expressing duration, but is fully grammatical if linked to an adverbial phrase indicating an end-point of the action expressed by the predicate, as exemplified in (28b) (see Hoekstra 1992; Roberts 1987; Tenny 1987).<sup>v</sup>

- (28)HD/\*SD a. \*Hijwast haar<sub>dat.</sub> /zich<sub>dat.</sub> een minuut lang  
 He washes her/refl for a minute  
 \_\_\_\_\_ de auto.  
 the car
- HD/\*SD b. Hij wast haar<sub>dat.</sub> /zich<sub>dat.</sub> binnen 5 minuten de  
 He washes her/refl in 5 minutes the  
 auto.  
 car

Interestingly, the Standard Dutch voor 'for'-PP variant is fully acceptable with both types of adverbial phrases, as is the case with the corresponding constructions without the dative NP.

- (29)HD/SD a. Hij maait binnen een uur/een uur lang de \_  
 Hemows in an hour/for an hour the  
 tuin voor haar.  
 garden for her  
 'He is mowing the garden in an hour/for an hour.'
- HD/SD b. Hij wast binnen een uur/een uur lang de auto.  
 Hewashes in an hour time/for an hour the car  
 'He is washing the car in an hour/for an hour.'

Apparently, in contrast to the corresponding Standard Dutch constructions, the benefactive construction as in (28b) expresses the delimitation of the event, or rather, it highlights the fact that the direct object is totally involved in the situation or that the event is completed (see Almagro (1993); Nishida 1992:442 ). In Van Hout (1996), it is argued that the category of predicates in (29) yields an atelic-telic event type. These predicates express that

the telic event is a dynamic event that evolves along a certain temporal scale such that successive and continuous stages of the event are involved (see also Jackendoff 1996). For wash for instance, the endpoint is reached when the car is completely washed and, as a result, this category of predicates does not need an external phrase to specify what the end state of the telic event involves. Instead every sequence of a subevent or slice of washing the car denotes a different point on a time-axis and, as a result, the object the car becomes quantitatively delimited. Or in other words, the object 'gets' more and more, and eventually, totally involved (or finished) in the washing-event: that is the object the car measures out the washing event. It is relevant to note, however, that the presence of the dative beneficiary or reflexive does not alter the event structure since the event structure of the verb itself may both express a delimited or non-delimited event, as illustrated in (29) (see Cornips & Hulk 1996; Pustejovsky 1992). Rather, the presence of the dative benefactive or reflexive attributes to the state introduced by the event structure of the verb itself. Since it can be argued that the local dialect benefactive variant and the Standard Dutch PP-variant in Heerlen Dutch differ aspectually, I like to propose that from a parametric point of view, this variation can be accounted for by assuming a functional category ASPP (Aspect) as the parameter which has the lexical properties [ $\pm$ perfective] as different values.<sup>vi</sup> A benefactive dative construction appears if the functional category ASPP shows the lexical property [+perfective] while the voor 'for'-PP construction occurs if this functional category shows the lexical property [ $\pm$ perfective], that is to say, an aspectual unspecified feature.

#### 4.1 Syntactic variation attributed to the parameter ASPP and social distribution

If the assumption that the pattern of social stratification of syntactic variation indicates whether the analysis of the parameter bringing about this syntactic variation is valid, we would expect the benefactive constructions to yield a different social distribution than the inalienable possession constructions. Of course, this will be the case if both parameters do not possess the same lexical properties.

Table 7 shows that there are 68 dative benefactive constructions out of 87 possible occurrences (including Standard Dutch PP-voor 'for') in the speech data corpus. This table reveals significant results for the education/occupation variable. More specifically, Table 7 shows that the group of speakers with a low level of education/occupation use the local dialect variant (the dative benefactive construction) significantly more often than the other groups of speakers.

Table 7: The distribution of the tokens of the benefactive dative construction (numerator) and all possible occurrences (local dialect and Standard Dutch variant realizations (denominator))

Table 8 shows the proportions of speakers on the use or non-use of the dative benefactive construction. This table reveals no significant results for the speaker variables.

Table 8: Proportion of speakers in each cell using the benefactive dative construction

We may conclude that in spontaneous speech the use or non-use of the dative benefactive and the PP-voor 'for' construction correlates significantly with the education/occupation variables of the speakers. This means that variation attributed to another parameter, i.e. the functional category ASPP, is only relevant in this social dimension of the bilingual community of Heerlen.

Taken together, it is clear that, although the two kinds of dative constructions, i.e. inalienable possession and benefactive, are interferences from the local dialect and although they all possess an (underlying) dative object, they do not exhibit a similar social stratification according to the speaker variables. In spontaneous speech, the use and non-use of the dative inalienable possession is linked to the language background and age variables of the speakers. By contrast, the variation with respect to the benefactive construction correlates with the education/occupation variable of the speakers. Consequently, this variation takes part in another social domain of this community. What is of crucial importance here is that these different correlations confirm the analysis that two distinct theoretical primitives are involved. Without this assumption the different social stratifications would constitute a puzzling fact since both kinds of dative constructions are interferences from the local dialect which at first glance seem structurally identical.

## 5. Concluding remarks

In this paper, syntactic variation is considered as parametric variation. With respect to the syntactic variation involving dative constructions in Heerlen Dutch, I have shown that this kind of variation must be attributed to two different parameters. First, I have assumed that the variation with respect to the possessive dative and possessive pronoun constructions is the result of the different values of the lexical properties of the functional category D(eterminer). If this functional category has the lexical property [+Agr], the possessive dative construction shows up, whereas the possessive pronoun construction arises if this functional category lacks [-Agr].

Second, I have discussed the dative benefactive construction in Heerlen Dutch. After showing that this kind of construction lacks the properties of the possessive dative construction. Instead, I have proposed that the variation with respect to the dative benefactive and the PP-voor 'for' constructions is brought about by the selection of the functional category ASPP. Importantly, I have argued that the different patterns of the social distribution of the syntactic variants are a confirmation that two distinct theoretical primitives are involved. Further, I have proposed that the two theoretical primitives are the lexical properties of the functional categories D and ASPP as two distinct parameters. These parameters do not exhibit a similar social stratification according to the speaker variables. In spontaneous speech, the variation brought about by the functional category D shows significant correlations with the language background and age variables of the speakers. By contrast, the variation due to the functional category ASPP correlates with the education/occupation variable of the speakers

and, consequently, this variation takes part in another social domain of this community. These different social distributions are taken to be a confirmation of the analysis of two theoretical primitives or two parameters that cause the syntactic variation in Heerlen Dutch.

**Endnotes**

1. The percentages in 1920 do not add up to 100% since the figures are taken from two different sources (see Cornips 1994:14).
2. The possessive dative construction cannot be found in Geerts et al. (1984) that is considered to be a guideline for correct Standard Dutch grammar. Further, it must be noted that for some western Dutch speakers the possessive dative is to some extent acceptable although archaic and idiomatic.
3. A more detailed and extensive discussion of the question how the properties of the two possessive constructions actually follow from the values [ $\pm$ AGR] can be found in Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992).
4. With respect to the language background variable, the hypothesis that the dialect speakers should show the greatest number of datives is not confirmed. Although I do not have an explanation for this social distribution, I like to propose that this pattern is primarily due to the fact that the Heerlen Dutch speakers are monolingual speakers as opposed to the dialect speakers who speak both the local dialect and Heerlen Dutch. Unlike the dialect speakers, the Heerlen Dutch speakers are not aware that the dative construction only arises in the local dialect or, in turn, the dative construction does not exist in the standard variety.
5. The aspectual notions 'duration' and 'end-point' of the event are related to the alternative notions activity, atelicity, non-delimited, unbounded, process and accomplishment, telicity, temporally delimited, bounded, respectively (Jackendoff 1996:306).
6. It is relevant to note that Generative Grammar has not yet developed a fully elaborated theory of Aspect. In Cornips and Hulk (1996), it is argued that the aspectual properties of the dative NP and *zich* can be accounted for by assuming that a functional projection AspP is selected by the verb. This functional projection itself takes a small clause as its complement and *zich* occupies the specifier position. Of course, also in Standard Dutch a functional projection AspP may appear. Similar to the use of *zich* in Heerlen Dutch, in Standard Dutch a telic interpretation can be achieved by means of aspectual particles and prefixes that are the heads of a small clause (Mulder 1992).

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Map 1: The location of Heerlen in the Netherlands



SYNTACTIC VARIATION, PARAMETERS, AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Table 1: Number and origin of inhabitants of Heerlen between 1899 and 1930

year	number of inhabitants of Heerlen	born in the province of Limburg %	born outside the province of Limburg %
1899	6312	87.8	12.1
1920	33014	47.8	51.1
1930	46917	45.3	54.7*

\*22% of whom were born outside the Netherlands

SYNTACTIC VARIATION, PARAMETERS, AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Table 2: Foreign immigrants' speaking ability in Standard Dutch in their own opinions

generation	none or bad	moderate	well	no answer	total
1	8 16%	25	10 20%	7 14%	50
2	0	50%	170 97%	3	176
3	0	3	153 92%	2	166
		1			

SYNTACTIC VARIATION, PARAMETERS, AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Table 3: Foreign immigrants' speaking ability in the Heerlen dialect in their own opinions

generati on	none or bad	modera te	well	no answer	total N=392
1	25 50%	9	5 10%	11 22%	50
2	38 22%	18%	84 48%	25 14%	176
3	32 19%	26 15% 6 4%	90 54%	38 23%	166

SYNTACTIC VARIATION, PARAMETERS, AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Table 4: Number of speakers in each cell divided by speaker variables

	<u>low level of education</u>		<u>high level of education</u>		<u>total</u>
	<u>young</u> 25-40 years	<u>old</u> >60 years	<u>young</u> 25-40 years	<u>old</u> >60 years	
<u>language</u>					
import	3	6	5	5	19
dialect	5	6	8	10	29
Heerlen Dutch	8	--	8	3	19
total	16	12	21	18	67

Figure 1: Distribution type/token dative inalienable possession construction in the speech data corpus of Heerlen Dutch

TYPE	TOKEN
copula construction with <u>zijn/worden</u> 'be' (see (9))	0
semi-copula construction with <u>krijgen</u> 'got' (see (11))	0
semi-copula construction with <u>hebben</u> 'have' (see (11))	15
possessive dative construction, i.e. body-part as an NP or prepositional complement(see (1),(3))	14

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SYNTACTIC VARIATION, PARAMETERS, AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Table 5: The distribution of the tokens of the dative construction (numerator) and all possible occurrences (dative and pronoun constructions (denominator))

tokens inalienable N=29 and possible occurrences N=39	LOW level of education		HIGH level of education		TOTAL	
	YOUNG	OLD	YOUNG	OLD		
		2/5	2/2	0/0	1/2	5/9
		2/5	2/2	4/5	3/5	.55
		4/4	--	8/8	1/1	11/17
						.65
						13/13 1
TOTAL		8/14	4/4	12/13	5/8	29/39

<sup>2</sup>(language background) =7.00, df=2, p < .05

SYNTACTIC VARIATION, PARAMETERS, AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Table 6: Proportion of speakers in each cell using the dative inalienable possession construction

DATIVE <u>inalienable</u> <u>possession</u> N=29	LOW level of education		HIGH level of education		TOTAL
	OLD	YOUNG	OLD	YOUNG	
YOUNG <u>language</u>					
IMPORT	2/3	2/6	0/5	1/ 5	5/19
DIALECT	2/5	2/6	4/8	3/10	.26
HEERLEN DUTCH	4/8	--	8/8	1/ 3	11/29 .38 13/19
TOTAL	8/16	4/12	12/21	5/18	.68 29/67

<sup>2</sup>(language background) =7.47, df=2, p < .01

<sup>2</sup>(age) = 3.92, df=1, p < .05

SYNTACTIC VARIATION, PARAMETERS, AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Table 7: The distribution of the tokens of the benefactive dative construction (numerator) and all possible occurrences (local dialect and Standard Dutch variant realizations (denominator): (spontaneous speech)

tokens benefactive N=68 and possible occurrences N=87	LOW level of education		HIGH level of education		TOTAL	
	YOUNG <u>language</u>	OLD	YOUNG	OLD		
IMPORT		4/4	8/9	1/2	3/8	16/23 .70
DIALECT		9/9	8/10	6/9	16/17	39/45 .86
HEERLEN DUTCH		3/4	--	7/10	3/5	13/19 .68
TOTAL		16/17	16/19	14/21	22/30	68/87
		.94	.84	.67	.73	

<sup>2</sup>(education) =4.14, df=1, p < .05



SYNTACTIC VARIATION, PARAMETERS, AND SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Table 8: Proportion of speakers in each cell using the benefactive construction (spontaneous speech)

DATIVE <u>benefactive</u> N=42	LOW level of education		HIGH level of education		TOTAL
	OLD	YOUNG	OLD	YOUNG	
YOUNG <u>language</u>					
IMPORT	2/3	4/6	1/5	3/5	10/19
DIALECT	3/5	5/6	5/8	7/10	.53
HEERLEN DUTCH	3/8	--	6/8	3/3	20/29
					.69
					12/19
					.63
TOTAL	8/16	.50	9/12	12/21	13/18
			.75	.57	.72

not significant