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## From morphophonemics to zero, or not? The case of Dutch inflectional affixes

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

The typological rarity of the Dutch grammatical person marking system combines with intra-lingual instability when it comes to the dialects. Dutch dialects differ from the Standard and each other with respect to at least two points: first, most dialects do not only use inflectional affixes and pronouns for person marking, but make an extensive use of bound, non-grammatical person markers (realised through clitics) too. Secondly, in some dialects the agreement system seems to extend to complementizers as well. The first property may be illustrated by an example of subject doubling (see (1)). The second property, complementizer agreement, is illustrated by means of (2).

- (1) Morgen gaan-**ze zunder** met mij naar Gent.  
Tomorrow go-they they with me to Ghent.  
'Tomorrow they go to Ghent with me.'
- (2) Kpeinzen dan-ze (zunder) goan kommen. (West-Flemish; Haegeman 1992:61)  
I think that they (they) go come  
'I think that they are going to come.'

The possibility of the construction in (1) in certain dialects may be indicative of a shift from a (typologically rare) grammatical person marking system towards a system that makes use of clitics as bound person markers, a system known to many of the world's languages. Given the grammaticalisation cline, one would expect the loss of the seemingly redundant grammatical person markers in those dialects. However, this does not prove to be the case: precisely in those dialects that make the most extensive use of clitics, the use of grammatical person marking has extended to complementizers (cf. (2)). In my paper, I will argue that these data indicate that grammatical agreement markers have their own functionality, and should not be considered as merely redundant elements on the verge of disappearance.

### REFERENCES

- Haegeman, L. (1992). *Theory and description in generative grammar. A case study in West Flemish*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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