Negative polarity in morphology

The case of Frisian FOLLE 'much, many' as compared to Dutch VEEL

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1. Introduction

The subject of this article is the distribution of the Frisian quantifier *folle* 'much, many' in syntax and morphology, as compared to Dutch. The quantifier *folle* is absent in compounds in Frisian (Section 2). In contrast, the Dutch equivalent *veel* is found in a large number of compounds (see appendix). It is shown that Frisian *folle* is a negative polarity item (Section 3), unlike its Dutch equivalent *veel*; on *weinig* 'little, few', the antonym of *veel/folle* 'many, much' in Frisian and Dutch, see J. Hoekstra (2000). It is proposed that these two facts are related (Section 4), that is, the negative polarity character of *folle* prevents it from occurring in the Frisian equivalents of the Dutch compounds given in the appendix; see E. Hoekstra (2010) for the historical development of *folle* in Frisian between 1550 and the present, in relation to its antonym *weinich*.

2. Compounds with *folle-* and *veel-*

It is noted in Tamminga (1973: 14–15) that *folle* can hardly ever be used as a left-hand member in compounds. He claims that there are no more than three examples, which are given below:

(1) Folle as a left hand member of compounds.[1]
foller-hanne	much-hand	'of many kinds'
foller-lei	much-kind	'of many kinds'
follen-tiids	many-times	'many times, often'

Tamminga adds that in Dutch there are much more compounds with *veel* as a left-hand member than there are in Frisian with *folle*. He also adds that examples as in (2–3) are occasionally written (first column is Frisian, last column Dutch):

(2)   folle-foarmich   many-formy   'of many forms'   veelvormig

(3)   folle-sizzend   much-saying   'telling, significant'   veelzeggend

But such examples are not in common usage and certainly not spoken, according to Tamminga.

   Indeed, examples such as (2–3) offend native speaker intuitions, and they have a strong feel of being an ad-hoc loan translation. These intuitions are confirmed by the Dutch Frisian dictionary. It lists 43 Dutch compounds with *veel-* as a left-hand member, which lack a Frisian equivalent with *folle-* as a left-hand member.[2] The list is presented in Appendix 1 below. The dictionary gives only three Dutch compounds which can be translated having *folle-* as a left-hand member. These are exactly the three which Tamminga presented and they were probably included in the dictionary on the authority of Tamminga's article. However, even Tamminga's examples do not stand up to further scrutiny. The frequency of these three items has been investigated with the help of the Frisian Language Corpus (FLC, 25 million words). It turns out that these items are nowadays obsolete in written language, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of *follentiids*, *follerlei* and *follerhanne* in the FLC

	> 1980	1948–1980	1870–1948	1800–1870	1550–1800	All
follentiids	0	1	22	13	0	36
follerlei	0	4	2	0	0	6
follerhanne	0	3	0	0	0	3

The table shows that these items didn't occur before 1800 either. This suggests that they are loan translations imported from Dutch in the 19th century. The Frisian Language Corpus also contains a few isolated instances of other compounds with *folle-*, which are not listed in the dictionary. These form a group of 19 tokens, 8 types, 8 authors. These types are:

(4)   Frisian   English   Dutch
      folleëaskjend   much demanding   veeleisend
      follefâld   multiple   veelvoud
      follefâldichheid   (nominal derivation) veelvoudigheid
      follesidich   many-sided   veelzijdig

follefoarmich	of many forms	veelvormig
follefoarmichheid	(nominal derivation)	veelvormigheid
follesizzend	significant	veelzeggend
follesoartich	of many kinds	veelsoortig

Thus there is a sprinkling of compounds with *folle-* in Frisian, but these can plausibly be explained as loan translations under the influence of Dutch. A distinction must be made between an accepted loan from Dutch and 'bad' Frisian, that is, Frisian that is subject to interference from Dutch. Such a distinction can be made on the basis of frequency and on the basis of native speakers' intuitions.

The sheer frequency of *follentiids*, with several authors, establishes it as an accepted loan from Dutch in the 19th century and early 20th century. All other examples can be treated as interferences, as is confirmed by native speakers' intuitions. To conclude, compounds with *folle* as a left hand member don't exist in Frisian, as compared to Dutch, and if they seem to occur, then they are recognised by native speakers as interferences from Dutch and their frequency is low.

3. Negative polarity

Negative polarity items are words or phrases which only occur in syntactic contexts which are in some sense negative (Fauconnier 1975, Ladusaw 1979, Zwarts 1981). An example is the Frisian verb *hoege* 'need':

(5) a. * Jan hoecht op tiid   te kommen
            Jan needs   on time to come
            'Jan needs to arrive on time.'
     b.   Jan hoecht net op tiid   te kommen
            Jan needs   not on time to come
            'Jan doesn't need to arrive on time.'

Negative polarity items also occur in contexts which are negative in a more abstract sense, such as sentences in the scope of comparative and superlative contexts (Hoeksema 1983, 1986), and sentences in the scope of negative predicates like *deny* (Hoeksema & Klein 1995). The formal definition of 'negative' is a subject of ongoing debate among semanticists (cf. Van der Wouden 1994, Zwarts 1995, De Swart 1998, Giannakidou 2001, 2002).

Frisian *folle* differs from Dutch *veel*, in that it behaves as a negative polarity item (Tamminga 1973: 14–15), as is illustrated below:[3]

(6)   a.   *Jan yt   folle
            Jan eats much
            'Jan eats a lot.'
      b.   Jan yt   net folle
            Jan eats not much
            'Jan doesn't eat much.'

(7)   a.   Jan eet   veel
            Jan eats much
            'Jan eats a lot.'
      b.   Jan eet   niet veel
            Jan eats not much
            'Jan doesn't eat much.'

The equivalent of (7a) is expressed in Frisian by a nominal construction consisting of the indefinite determiner followed by a lexical noun denoting a vague quantity:[4]

(8)   Jan yt   in soad / protte / bult / heap
       Jan eats a lot
       'Jan eats a lot.'

The lexical noun has lost its original meaning. Thus soad originally meant 'amount that can be cooked', but in this quantificational construction, its literal meaning has disappeared, as is usual when lexical items are used in quantificational constructions (Postma 1995). To conclude this section, Frisian *folle*, but not Dutch *veel*, is a negative polarity item.

4.   No licensing of negative polarity items within a word from outside

Having established that *folle* is a negative polarity item, it can be hypothesized that the negatively polar character of *folle* is responsable for its absence in compounds. This idea will be fleshed out below.
   Consider the following sentences:

(9)   a.   *Jan glimke follebetsjuttend
            Jan smiled much-meaning
            'Jan smiled significantly.'
      b.   *Jan glimke net follebetsjuttend
            Jan smiled not much-meaning

The (a) sentence is ungrammatical by hypothesis because *folle-* is not in the scope of a negative constituent. The question arises: why isn't the (b) sentence grammatical, seeing that there is a negative trigger in the form of negation?

Notice though that in the (b) sentence the trigger is a syntactic constituent, sentential negation, whereas the negative polarity item is not a syntactic constituent: it is a part of a word, or put differently, it is a morphological constituent. Can syntactic processes like negative polarity involve such a dependency between a syntactic constituent and a morphological constituent? Di Sciullo & Williams (1987: 50ff) argue that many processes known from syntax cannot target parts of words, such as WH-movement and binding. Following Di Sciullo & Williams, it can be argued that negative polarity is not allowed to relate a syntactic object to a morphological object.

There is independent evidence for the idea that negative polarity is a relation that cannot exist between a morphological object and a syntactic one. Consider the following examples from Van der Wouden (1994: 128–129, 180–181):

(10)   a.   *Zij kan hem uitstaan
             she can him out.stand
       b.   Zij kan hem niet uitstaan
             she can him not out.stand
             'She can't stand him.'

These examples show that the idiom *kunnen uitstaan* contains a negative polarity item, seeing that it must be licensed by negation.[5] Now, we know that *kunnen* is not a negative polarity item:

(11)   a.   Zij kan lachen
             she can laugh
             'She can laugh.'
       b.   Zij kan niet lachen
             she can not stand
             'She can't laugh.'

Hence, the negative polarity item in (10) is the syntactic object *uitstaan*, which forms an idiomatic combination with semantic potentiality as expressed by the verb *kunnen*.

Interestingly, *uitstaan* may also occur as a morphological object (Van der Wouden 1995: 65). In that case, it forms a morphologically idiomatic combination with the suffix *-baar*, which just like *kunnen* denotes potentiality.[6] As a negative polarity item, the morphological object *uitstaan-* must be licensed by negation. What is relevant is that *uitstaan-* as a morphological object must be licensed by morphological negation, as in (12) below, and it can no longer be licensed by syntactic negation, as in (13):

(12)   a.   *Hij is uitstaanbaar
             he is out.stand.BAAR

b.   Hij is on-uitstaanbaar
     he   is un-out.stand.ʙᴀᴀʀ
     'He is insufferable.'
c.   *Hij is niet uitstaanbaar
     he   is not out.stand.

The examples in (10) showed that *uitstaan* is a negative polarity item in syntax. The contrast in (12) shows that when the negative polarity item, being a part of a word, is 'in morphology', it must also find its licenser in morphology.[7]

To sum, when a part of a word is negatively polar, it must find its trigger within that word. The list of compounds with *veel-* given in the appendix are all possible because Dutch *veel-* is not a negative polarity item. Frisian compounds with *folle-* are all lacking because *folle-* is a negative polarity element which cannot find a trigger within the word.

The proposed account also explains that Frisian formations with *folle-* as a left-hand member of a compound cannot be saved by syntactic negation. Thus the ungrammaticality of (9b) is on a par with the ungrammaticality of the (b) examples below:

(13)   a.   *Hy is folleëaskjend *
            he   is much.demanding
       b.   *Hy is net folleëaskend
            he   is not much.demanding

(14)   a.   *It is follefoarmich   ûnderwiis
            it is of.many.forms education
            'It is varied education.'
       b.   *It is gjin follefoarmich   ûnderwiis
            it is no   of.many.forms education
            'It isn't varied education.'

The (b) examples are ungrammatical because syntactic negation cannot license a negative polarity item that is in morphology.

5.   Potential counterexamples

5.1. On the non-occurrence of *onveel-* and *ûnfolle-*

The proposed account would predict that morphological negation should be able to save the structures in (13a-14a), but that prediction is not borne out:

(15) *ûn-folle-easkjend   *ûn-folle-foarmich
       ᴜɴ-much-demanding   ᴜɴ-much-formy

However, (15) is not ungrammatical because some violation of negative polarity is involved. It is ungrammatical for an independent reason having nothing to do with negative polarity. This can be argued on the basis of facts from Dutch. If negative polarity would cause the ungrammaticality of (15), then the Dutch equivalents would have to be grammatical, seeing that Dutch *veel-* is not negatively polar. But Dutch has the same facts as Frisian as far as the prefixation of morphological negation is concerned, as shown in (16a), even though in Dutch the examples without *un-* are grammatical, as shown in (16b):

(16) a. * on-veeleisend   *on-veelvormig
          UN-much.demanding   UN-much.formy
      b. veeleisend   veelvormig
          much.demanding   much.formy

The ungrammaticality of (15) and (16a) must therefore receive an independent explanation. However, a reviewer suggests that the examples in (16a) are ungrammatical as the result of blocking: the presence in Dutch (syntax) of *niet veeleisend* 'not demanding' blocks the presence of *onveeleisend 'undemanding'. Under that hypothesis, the ungrammaticality of (15) is what needs to be explained. However, Embick & Marantz (2008) have presented strong arguments indicating that there is no blocking at the word level nor above it. Apart from the problems inherent to a blocking approach, the lack of compounds beginning with *onveel-* (Dutch) and *ûnfolle-* (Frisian) seems to have an independent morpho-semantic explanation, seeing that the negation of a high degree quantification is rarely expressed morphologically.[8]

Nevertheless, there are some rare cases of compounds beginning with *onveel-* in Dutch, and these characteristically involve litotes, two negations cancelling each other, as in the following examples:

(17) a. niet onveelvuldig
          not UN.much.times
          'not infrequent(ly)'

      b. ? zij is niet onveelzijdig
          she is not UN.many.side
          'she is all-round'

The first example involves a compound of which the second member has no lexical meaning, as there is no existing word *vuld or *vuldig. The second example seems to confirm the suggestion of note 8 saying that *onveel-* is rare because a negation of a high degree word is not very informative. The effect of double negation is that the utterance is informative again. The use of litotes indicates that the speaker is reluctant (for whichever pragmatic reason) to plainly make an affirmative statement (see Van der Wouden 1995:68, who refers to Horn 1991). Note incidentally

that litotes is unable to save Frisian compounds with *ûnfolle-*. To sum, it is not clear why both Dutch and Frisian resist morphological negation of compounds with *veel-* and *folle-*, although it must be conceded that such formations sometimes occur in lithotes in Dutch, but not in Frisian.

5.2 Why can compounds with *any-* be licensed from outside the compound?

Examples like *anybody*, *anything*, and so on seem counterexamples, since the negative polarity item *any* can be viewed as being licensed from outside the compound, as a reviewer notes. However, such examples differ crucially from the examples with *folle-* in that the second member of the compound has lost its lexical meaning; on such phenomena involving the voiding of lexical content as a result of quantificational semantics, see Postma (1995). Thus anybody is not a compound with a denotation that involves bodies. The item -body contributes no more than the feature <+HUMAN>, which restricts the domain of interpretation for the quantifier. All this suggests that it is the lexical meaning of the head of a compound which renders the left-hand member of a compound inaccessible to a licenser outside the compound. Voiding of the lexical content of -*body*, as in *anybody*, makes it possible for *any-* to be licensed by a licenser outside the compound.

5.3 The Middle Dutch prefix *ghe-*

Ackema & Neeleman (2004:118) claim that there can be negative polarity items in morphology licensed by elements in the syntactic representation. They present examples from Postma (1999) involving the Middle Dutch element *ghe*, which according to Ackema & Neelema is a prefix.

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(18) a. Nu   en   can ic langher niet ghe-swigen
          now NEG can I longer   not GHE-be.silent
          'I can no longer be silent now.'
      b. Dies   zwigh-ic-s   nochtans
          therefore am.silent-I-it nevertheless
          'Therefore I will nevertheless be silent about this.'

Ghe is found in the negative context in (a) while being absent in the non-negative context in (b). It is indeed true that Postma shows that *ghe-* behaves like a negative polarity item. However, Postma (1999: 320ff) also shows that *ghe-* must not be analysed as a prefix but as a clitic. Just like a Romance clitic, the element *ghe-* can climb from the main verb onto auxiliary verbs. An example is given below:

(19) Dat ic se   niet en ghe-mach sien
      that I them not NEG GHE-may see
      'That I may not see them.'

The prefix climbs from the main verb onto the modal verb. As clitics are syntactic objects, it need not come as a surprise that they can participate in the relation of negative polarity, as they can in binding and movement relations. Thus there is no need to claim as Ackema & Neeleman (2004: 118) do, that there can be negative polarity items in morphology licensed by triggers in the syntactic representation.[9]

5.4. *Folle* as a right-hand member of compounds

Finally, it must be noted that *folle* also occurs in the idiomatic combinations shown below:

(20) hoe-folle   sa-folle   te-folle
      how-much   so-much   too-much

These combinations are found in writing both written as one word and written as two words, although the prescriptive standard requires that they be written as one word. It is hard to decide whether these combinations must be analysed as a morphological derivation or as a syntactic combination of two elements which are invariably adjacent. In either case, *hoe, sa* and *te* can be viewed as the triggers licensing the negative polarity item *folle*.

6.   Concluding remarks

Evidence has been presented showing that negative polarity items can be licensed either in syntax or in morphology, but that the trigger and the negative polarity item must both occur in the same component. If the negative polarity item is part of a word, so must the trigger be. In contradistinction to its Dutch equivalent *veel*, Frisian *folle* was shown to be a negative polarity item, regardless of whether it occurred in syntax or in morphology. As a member of compounds, *folle* cannot find a trigger, and correspondingly it is excluded there (see appendix). Dutch *veel-*, on the other hand, is not negatively polar, and correspondingly, it is freely used in

compounds. The lack of compounds with *onveel-* and *ûnfolle-*, in itself remarkable, was argued to be independent of the negatively polar character of *folle*.

Notes

* I would like to thank Siebren Dyk, Bouke Slofstra, Arjen Versloot, Willem Visser and two anonymous reviewers for comments and/or discussion.

1. *-lei* is not an independently occurring word, but it can be glossed as 'kind, sort'.

2. Neither De Haas & Trommelen (1993) nor Booij (2002) discusses compounds with *veel-*, presumably because the behaviour of these compounds in Dutch is unremarkable.

3. Tiersma (1999: 82) writes that "*folle* never stands alone before a noun — it must always be part of a larger expression as in *te folle* 'too much' or *net folle* 'not much.'"

4. In this respect, the English word *much* (Thomson & Martinet 1976: 20) behaves like Frisian *folle*: "*Much* is not very often used with affirmative verbs, as almost always in the accusative and usually in the nominative, it is replaced by *a lot (of) / a geat deal (of)*." Pullum & Huddleston (2002: 826) note that *We have much sugar* is extremely unlikely to occur in casual conversation, while some such similar examples are found in literary usage and in certain idiomatic constructions.

5. A reviewer notes that for some speakers *uitstaan* is not just a (strong) negative polarity item, triggered by negation (in tandem with the modal verb *kunnen*). Instead a weaker requirement is involved. Thus, on the internet examples like (i) below are found in informal writing, where *uitstaan* is licensed by the modal verb *kunnen* in tandem with adverbial modification of some sort:

   (i) De temperatuur kan ik hier wel   goed uitstaan
        the temperature can I   here rather good out.stand
        'The temperature, I can stand rather well here.'

6. In the syntax, potentiality is obligatorily expressed in this idiom as the verb *kunnen* 'can'. In the morphology, it is expressed as the suffix *-baar*, which generally carries the same meaning. De Haas & Trommelen (1993: 291) paraphrase the meaning of *-baar* as 'something that can be V-ed' ('kunnende ge-V-d worden' in Dutch), see also Hüning & Van Santen (1994).

7. The data in (12) can also be taken as evidence, as a reviewer notes, that the positive variant of the *on*-word has disappeared from the language, as is the case with **nozel* versus *onnozel* 'silly'. However, *-nozel* can also be viewed as a negative polarity item that *only* exists in morphology, whereas *uitstaan* is a negative polarity item existing both in morphology and in syntax. Put differently, *nozel* has not disappeared from the language, it has lost the ability to function as an independent word.

8. Note that a word like * *onveel* is lacking in Dutch, as it is in Frisian (* *ûnfolle*), in English (* *unmuch*, * *unmany*), in German (* *unviel*) and in other languages. In fact, the same point can be make regarding morphological negation and the quantifier *all* (* *unall*, * *nall*). If a speculation is allowed, I would venture to relate the absence of Dutch and Frisian compounds combining

morphological negation with *veel-* to the fact that quantifiers of high degree or amount generally do not combine with morphological negation, perhaps because it is not very informative to negate an expression of high degree.

9. Ackema & Neeleman mention Postma's clitic analysis in a footnote, claiming that in those cases *ghe-* is a prefix base-generated on the modal verb.

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Appendix

Dutch compounds with *veel-* without a Frisian translation equivalent in the form of a compound with *folle-*; from the Dutch-Frisian dictionary (Visser 1985)

Dutch	Gloss	Translation
*veel*al	much.all	mostly
*veel*belovend	much.promising	auspicious
*veel*besproken	much.discussed	much-discussed
*veel*betekenend	much.meaning	significant
*veel*bewogen	much.moved	eventful
*veel*bladig	many.leafed	with many leaves
*veel*bloemig	many.flowered	many-flowered
*veel*broederig	many.stamened	with many stamens
*veel*delig	with.many.parts	multipartite
*veel*eer	much.rather	rather, more
*veel*eisend	much.demanding	demanding
*veel*geliefd	much.loved	much-loved
*veel*gevraagd	nuch.asked.for	in great demand

Dutch	Gloss	Translation
*veel*godendom	many.gods-dom	polytheism
*veel*heid	much.ness	great amount
*veel*hoek	many.angle	polygon
*veel*hoekig	many.angle	polygonal
*veel*hoevig	many.hoove	many-hooved
*veel*hoofdig	many.head	many-headed
*veel*jarig	many.year	of many years
*veel*kleurig	many.colour	varicoloured
*veel*koppig	many.head	many-headed
*veel*ledig	many.member	of many parts
*veel*lettergrepig	many.syllable	polysyllabic
*veel*omvattend	much.encompassing	comprehensive
*veel*prater	much.talker	loquacious person
*veel*schrijver	much.writer	hack
*veel*schrijverij	much.writing	hack writing
*veel*snarig	many.string	multistringed
*veel*stemmig	many.voice	polyphonic
*veel*talig	many.language	multilingual
*veel*telig	many.sex	polygamous (botanical)
*veel*term	many.term	polynomial
*veel*tijds	many.time	frequently
*veel*vlak	many.side	polyhedron
*veel*vormig	many.form	multiform, polyformic
*veel*voud	many.multiplication	multiple
*veel*vraat	much.eat	glutton
*veel*vuldig	many.times	frequent
*veel*weter	much.knower	polyhistor
*veel*wijverij	many.wive.having	polygamy
*veel*zeggend	much.saying	significant
*veel*zijdig	many.side	all-round
*veel*zins	many.meaning	mostly
velerhande	many.hand	all sorts of
velerlei	many.kind	multifarious

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