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## Review Studies in West Frisian Syntax (Germen de Haan)

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Besprek fan

Germen J. de Haan, *Studies in West Frisian Syntax*. Selected papers of –. Edited by Jarich Hoekstra, Willem Visser, Goffe Jensma. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010, 384 pp. ISBN 978 90 272 55440.

This book collects 18 papers by Ger de Haan, all concerning Frisian grammar and ranging from subjects in Frisian syntax (Old and Modern), language change, sociolinguistics, and Frisian phonology: 10 chapters on syntax, 5 on sociolinguistics, 3 on phonology. The chapters stem from a variety of sources, journals, proceedings, etc. Six chapters are translations: 2 from Frisian and 4 from Dutch. The title has 'West Frisian' grammar, but the book simply uses 'Frisian' everywhere, both in the introduction and in the actual chapters. We have to wait until p. 275 (chapter 14), where 'West Frisian' is used for the first time for being provided with a definition. The title of chapter 5, which had 'West Frisian' in the original was changed into 'Frisian'. Apart from this, 'West Frisian' is used in chapter 18, and in note 14 on p.197, where West Frisian refers to a Dutch dialect in North-Holland with a Frisian substrate. It appears that the editors have chosen for 'Frisian', but Benjamins changed the title of the book into 'West Frisian' independently. I think the use of 'West Frisian' for 'Frisian' in the Dutch province of Frisia is confusing. Let's call it Frisian.

The *raison d'être* of this book lays in having these papers on Frisian collected and made the many new data and theories accessible to the international public. The papers are of high quality, the data are solid, the scientific intuitions healthy, and the structure of the reasoning of some chapters is so lucid that they can be used as training material in classes in generative grammar. That is as far as the author's contribution is concerned. As to the editors' input: they added a 6-page preface, added glosses, made a general reference list, and a subject index. Although the editors seem to aim at an international audience, they apparently expect the readers to know the basic data on Frisian because they do not take any effort to give a short introduction on Frisian or provide a map of the linguistic area involved. Probably they have thought that any information will be either too concise to be helpful, or too extensive and distractive. I do not agree, but I respect this decision. What is more a problem is that the texts are included "as they are", apart from being translated and the glosses (and changing some titles slightly). The editors only give a few forward references in the introduction but none in the texts themselves. This is a missed chance. It would have been of invaluable help to Frisian linguistics if they would have included them, and it would have been an extra purpose for this book. The editors are also qualified to do so, as they cover the

three areas of the book. As a consequence of their sober editorial task, errors (e.g. "In *independent sentences*" (p.49)) or typo's in the original texts have not been corrected, cross-references within De Haan's oeuvre and within the book are not given, which causes a lot of useless browsing (to the bibliography and back to the previous chapter).

The translations are all made by De Haan himself (apart from one), which results in a very readable and accessible English. The editors added glosses to the example sentences. Unfortunately, something has gone terribly wrong in the process. Especially the glosses on pp. 51-61 are so erroneous as to become incomprehensible. For instance, example (2) on p. 58 is glossed as:

sa onwarde thi ther mat him to askie  
so answer the (one) REL one it him demands

while it should be:

sa onwarde thi ther mat him to-askie  
so answer the (one) REL one-it him demands

Adding such glosses does not help. We are dealing with a difficult relative construction, and the erroneous identification of REL to *mat* (which is actually a contraction of two pronouns *ma* 'one' and 'it') makes the understanding more difficult than the original text from the *Handbook of Frisian Studies*, which was without glosses. Translations are confused with glosses, e.g. *op ia* (p. 50), which is glossed and outlined as 'give up', which is the translation, instead of 'up give'. Words are arbitrarily split and merged, e.g. *anda* = to+the in the original is split into *and a* and glossed as: *and* 'to' + a 'the', which does not make any sense. Even worse is *to reszande* 'to reach' or 'PRT suffice') in example (33), which has been split into *to reszan + de*, deviating from what the *Handbook* had. Now *de* seems a kind of determiner to the following object *thritich merca* '30 marks'. These are editing mistakes for which the publisher and/or editors should be held responsible. This chapter on Old Frisian has received the sloppiest editing in the book. But also the modern Frisian glossing went wrong on various places, e.g. in "*by de ljedder op*", *by de* is glossed as 'the' instead of *by* as PRT or P, probably because Dutch lacks the preposition in this case. At some points, errors were introduced, as in (34) on p. 110, where a mysterious form *our* (glossed by 'me') occurs in the Frisian text where the original had the correct *my*. Also in the phonological papers, a number of errors were introduced that were not in the original articles. For instance, in (12) on p. 321 *meunster* 'monster' has an IPA transcription [mI:<sup>n</sup>stər] instead of the correct [mön:<sup>n</sup>stər], and [tsji<sup>n</sup>:nst] (with both nasal and segmental [n]), instead of the correct [tsjI<sup>n</sup>:st]. In (19) on p. 324, *wine*, *fine* and *winne* ('wind', 'find', 'win') have the nasal transcription [wi<sup>n</sup>ə], etc. instead of the correct [winə], etc. The original did not have these mistakes. It is good when new data become available to an international public but this should be

done with the utmost care and responsibility. I think it would be a good suggestion if Benjamins added a sheet with all the errors.

As to the contents, it was a pleasure to read or to re-read the various studies, all entertained from a thorough generative perspective. Two articles I liked most, are chapter 5 on embedded root clauses with a complementizer, and chapter 18 on schwa deletion.

The first is part of a sequence of papers (chap 4-6) on Frisian constructions with embedded V2 of various types. Chapter 6 has as motto a quote by the Dutch linguist Gerrit Siebe Overdiep in 1937 "For the study of the Dutch vernacular, the Frisian language is an indispensable norm of comparison". This can *mutatis mutandis* be applied to the study of West-Germanic in general, and it can be considered the reason for this article collection. Strangely enough, De Haan never makes the actual comparison between Frisian and Dutch, or between Frisian and German himself. If a construction, such as the imperativus pro infinitivo (IpI) or ECV2 construction occurs in Frisian but not in Dutch, the author discusses its syntactic structure, but never poses the question what triggers this difference in behaviour in allowing embedded V2. Is this an isolated difference or is it tied to other properties of Frisian? Where is this difference "stored"? As the author claims on page 85, there is no syntactic difference between main and embedded clauses, and that all differences in V2-properties between main and dependent clauses should be regarded as *caused by illocutionary and pragmatic factors*. So, do Frisian and Dutch, then, differ in their illocutionary and pragmatic factors?

This brings me to another systematic omission (or is it a choice?) in the reasoning by De Haan. When analyzing a construction, De Haan is very thorough in applying various tests to determine the syntactic built of the construction. De Haan's reasoning is immaculate in this respect. But then he stops. Syntax, however, is not just a configurational space (a graph or tree) but also a *calculus* on this graph or tree. While the trees can be drawn in any language, it is the calculus over these trees that determines whether a tree is well- or ill-formed. Not surprisingly, it is this calculus that undergoes important changes in linguistic theory, e.g. from Chomsky's barriers calculus, or Kayne's connectedness calculus, to the feature calculus of Minimalism, to mention just three. So, while the configurational argumentation in the book is very thorough, the calculus over these trees is virtually absent. Ironically, this omission makes the content of the syntactic chapters almost classical, as the trees themselves are much less disputed than the calculus. So then, let us ask: why does Frisian have the IpI-construction and Dutch does not? The main working hypothesis of Minimalism is that the differences between languages are

stored in the morphological make-up of the languages. Now it can be shown (Postma 2005) that the IpI has the distribution of the Romance subjunctive: they typically occur in embedded contexts: under a modal (intentional subjunctive, Stowell 1993, Quer 1998) and under a polarity operator (polarity subjunctive). It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the verbal forms in the IpI constructions are not imperatives but subjunctives. Both diachronic and synchronic considerations support this morphological claim. If so, the distinction between Frisian and Dutch would be part of the Frisian lexicon that hosts (Romance-type) subjunctives. Chapter 5, which discusses the Frisian ECV2 constructions, is my favorite and I hope that it will inspire readers to making a complementary calculus to the important structural analysis given by De Haan. Hopefully, such a calculus will make clear why Frisian allows for this construction and Dutch does not.

A similar consideration can be made on the chapter 18. In that chapter De Haan develops a theory of schwa deletion, as being epithetic rather than deletive in character. So, De Haan considers the alternation between (sy) *hannelen* and (sy) *hanlen* ('they acted'), as having the second as the underlying form, and the first as an epithetic form. De Haan here follows ideas in Van Oostendorp (1997) on the complementarity of underlying schwa (u-schwa) and epenthetic schwa (e-schwa). De Haan, however, is here more consequent than Van Oostendorp, who considers the above alternation a post-lexical deletion process (which allows more complex onsets). De Haan proposes to apply the same complementarity between u-schwa and e-schwa as in the earlier stages of phonological derivation (but with a relaxed onset principle). In other words, since both forms *hannələn* and *hanlən* alternate, epenthesis must be involved, i.e. to be compared with the alternation *tsjerkə/tsjerəkə* 'church', *jerm, jerrəm* 'arm'. But why does Frisian allow for a syllabified r-consonant in *earder* [(j)Edr̥] while Dutch does not: \*[eərdr̥]? Is the comparative morpheme /r/ in the Frisian lexicon, and /ər/ in Dutch? If so, why is the comparative of Frisian *rea* 'red' not [re<sup>ə</sup>r] but [re<sup>a</sup>dər] or re<sup>a</sup>dr̥], with d-epenthesis? So, while De Haan amply discusses the *representation* of the Frisian forms, he ignores to discuss what makes Frisian different.

What I further would like to mention in this review is an observation by De Haan in chapter 10 that needs discussion. Recently, it has been suggested that Frisian is pro-drop in 2nd person singular contexts (Barbiers *et al.* 2005, I, 23, De Vogelaer 2005: 247). It is partly understandable that this idea came up, as the literature on Frisian empty subjects is not crystal clear (Hoekstra (1997, note 4), Hoekstra & Tiersma (1994: 526). But claiming that Frisian is pro-drop in direct contexts is a mistake. As De Haan notices, true pro-drop, i.e. null subjects that are licensed by inflection, is only present in enclitic contexts (matrix inversion contexts and embedded

contexts). According to De Haan, the preverbal cases, as in *moast Pyt helpe* 'you must help Peter' should be subsumed to topic drop. I agree with De Haan: these preverbal examples have their own specific conditions, such as speaker change and strict clause-initiality. If one tests a direct context where the topic-drop requirements are not met, the structure with an empty pronoun is ill-formed, as in (i).

- (i) I haw dy net citearre mar dou/\* $\emptyset$  wiest earder  
'I did not cite you but you were earlier'

Unfortunately, I did not refer to De Haan's observation in a recent paper on the decline of *du* 'thou' (Postma 2010), where I made this point in a note. Hereupon, De Haan and I had an email exchange on these sentences and - as to me - the following picture arose. Frisian has three types of null 2nd person subjects: in imperative contexts, in enclitic contexts (inversion and embedded contexts), and topic drop contexts. Topic drop contexts have a number of restrictions mentioned above. Curiously, what facilitates topic drop considerably is a hortative reading, as in De Haan's (24), here repeated as (ii).

- (ii) moast Pyt helpe!  
pro<sub>i</sub> must.2sg [<sub>NP</sub> e<sub>i</sub>] Peter help.inf

It is usually accompanied with a manual gesture, such as pointing. Perhaps these preverbal pro-subjects are all hortative. Whether licensing by the hortative reading has some connection to the possibility of null subjects in imperatives needs further research.

Summarizing, we may be very glad that these articles were collected and made available to the international community, despite the various points of criticisms on their editing. The book is certainly an extremely useful and an indispensable tool for anyone in Frisian linguistics and Germanic linguistics in general.

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