

The development of the Dutch genitive in comparison with German and English

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A Germanic Sandwich 2010: Dutch between German and English

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Aims of presentation

- focus on the historical development and present-day use of the genitive in Dutch
- propose an explanation for the present-day productivity of a remnant of the genitive case in Dutch
- view the Dutch developments in the context of developments in English and German

Structure of presentation

1. Introduction: historical development & cross-linguistic comparison
2. The genitive in present-day Dutch: productive use & relation to (core) morphology
3. The genitive and Dutch morphology and syntax
4. Conclusions

1. Introduction

Historical development

Cross-linguistic comparison of the genitive in the Germanic languages

The Germanic languages

- Proto-Germanic:
 - vocative, nominative, accusative, dative, instrumental and genitive cases (e.g. Ringe 2006: 233-4)
- Individual Germanic languages:
 - all start with four-case system (nominative, accusative, dative and genitive + remnants of instrumental)
 - genitive case marked possession (in a broad sense), partitive & temporal relations; governed by a number of prepositions, adjectives & verbs
 - competition from prepositional possession marking, e.g. English *of*, German *von*, Dutch *van*
 - case system weakens

English

- Morphological case system lost during Middle English period (c. 1100-1500) (Allen 2008: 1)
- Possessive *-s* developed from genitive *-s* – once-only, right-edge attachment

ðes forʒel**tes** Adames**es** anlicnesse

the.GEN guilty.GEN Adam.GEN likeness

‘the guilty Adam**’s** likeness’ (1140, from Allen 2008: 138)

- Present-day English (Denison et al., to appear):
the leader of the council**’s** shirt (BNC: JT7 095)
the gentleman**’s** name with the tape recorder (BNC FMY 0008)

German

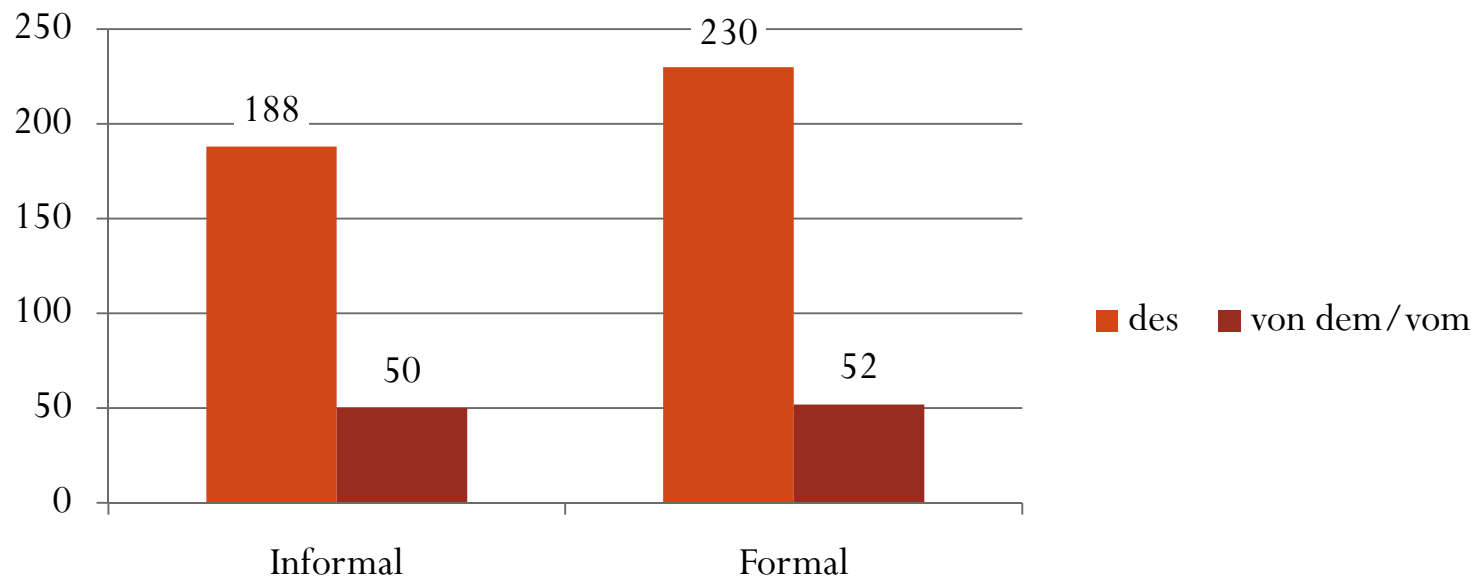
- German dialects:
 - general simplification of the case system, e.g. merging of accusative and dative, or complete loss of dative (Koß 1983: 1245; Schönfeld 1990: 110)
 - genitive absent from most dialects with the exception of some Swiss dialects, e.g. Bosco Gurin (Russ 2002: 88)
ds Chenns Chappi
the.GEN child.GEN cap.DIM ‘the child’s little cap’
- Standard German:
 - nominative, accusative, dative, genitive
 - genitive is “poster child” of language decline: *Der Dativ ist dem Genitiv sein Tod* (Sick 2004), *Im Zweifel für den Genitiv* (Duden 2008)

Genitive v. *von* (Scott, in press)

- genitive rare in colloquial language (Hentschel & Weydt: 2003: 171)
- in potentially interchangeable situations on *Twitter*, *des* dominates *von dem/vom*

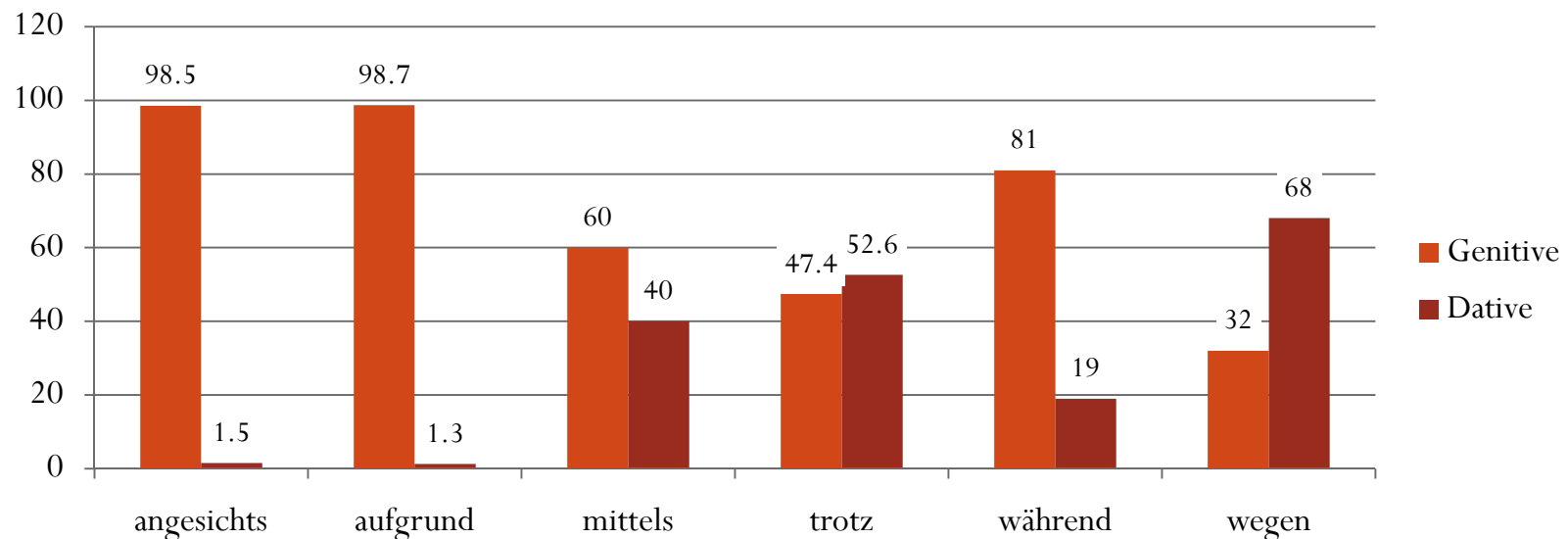
zähle jetzt 2 neue blaue flecken zu **den bereits vorhandenen 3 des badewannenunfalls**

ich vergess **den namen von dem vogel** immer... egal



Genitive v. dative (Scott, in press)

- Die französische Regierung sucht **mittels eines Wettbewerbs** Entsprechungen für Anglizismen
- Die Suche in Eclipse **mittels dem Suchdialog** findet nichts mehr
- Twiteroff **aufgrund baldigen Feierabends**
- geh jetzt **aufgrund akutem Schneefall** zu Fuß

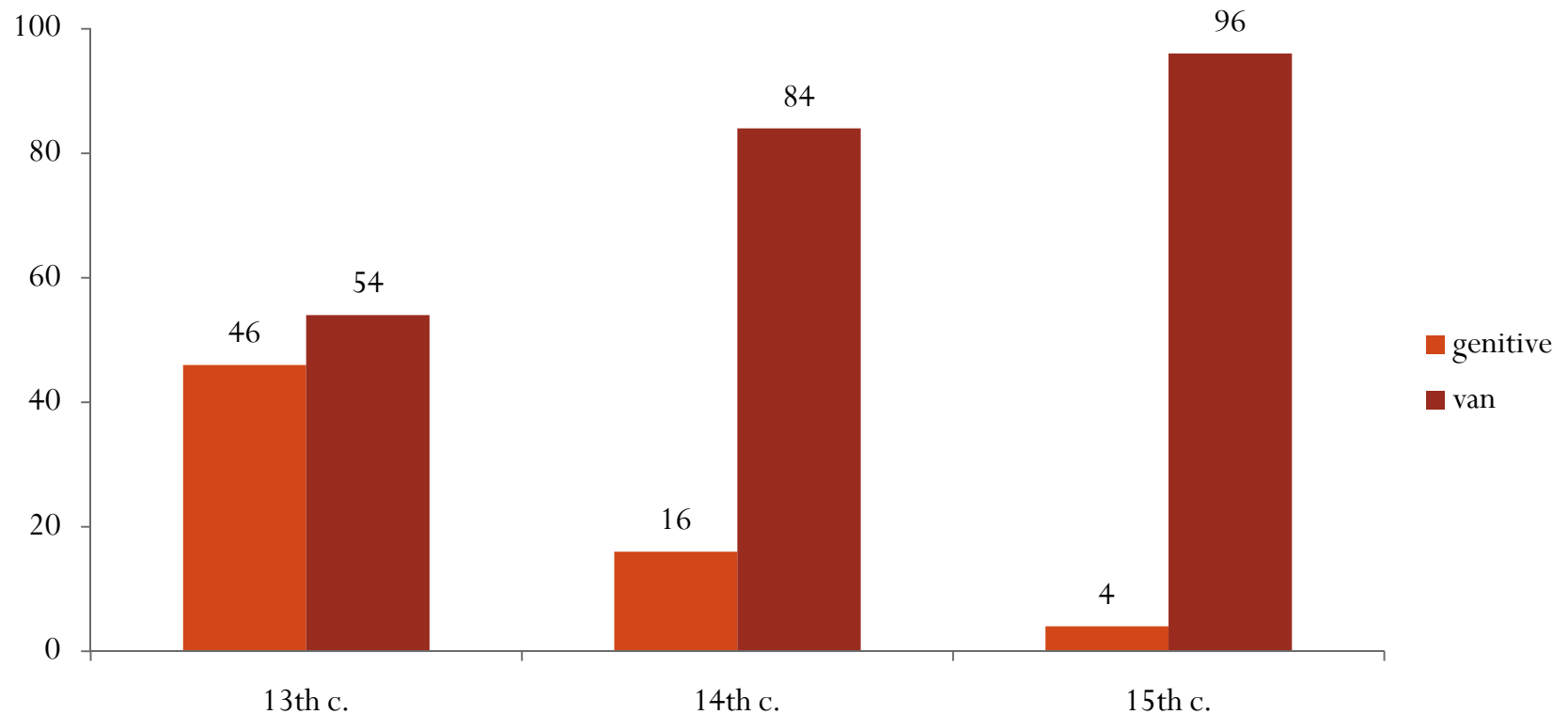


Dutch

- Dutch case system had broken down by the end of the MD period (van der Wal & van Bree 2008: 191)
 - but: evidence that case system continued before puristic support started (Hendriks 2010)
- 17th-19th century written language characterised by its preserving of archaic case forms, which were absent from speech (van der Wal & van Bree 2008: 251, 307)
 - Jacob van Lennep: genitive is the *heilig naamval* (van Lennep 1865: 42)
- concurrent loss of distinction between masculine and feminine nouns (in the north of the Dutch-speaking area)

Dutch: genitive v. *van*

- strong competition from *van* at expense of adnominal genitive
- data from Weerman & de Wit (1999: 1158) (orig. ex. 6):



2. The genitive in present-day Dutch

Productive use

Relation to (core) morphology

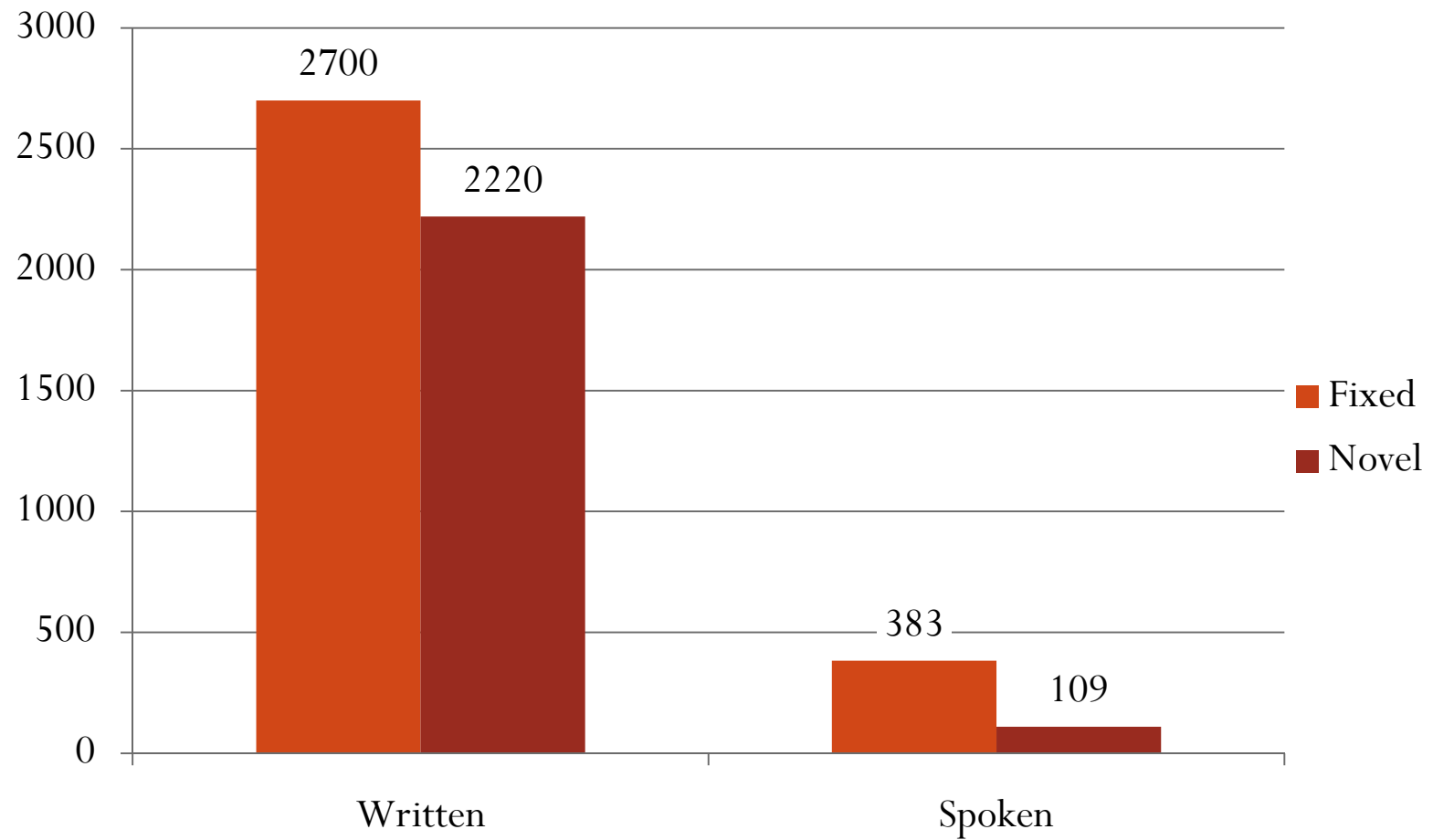
Data

Corpus	Written/ spoken	Contents	Size (words)	Period
Corpus Gesproken Nederlands	spoken, written texts read out loud	conversations, radio & TV, lectures, speeches	c. 9 million	1991-2003
Eindhoven	written, spoken	journalistic texts, popular scientific texts, fiction, speech	c. 720,000	1960-1973
INL 27 Miljoen Woorden Krantencorpus	written	newspaper texts (NRC)	c. 27 million	1994-1995

Definitions

- genitive \neq possessive *-s* (*Siska's boek, mijn vaders huis, etc.*)
- genitive: *X der Y, X des Y-s*
- fixed genitive: listed in dictionaries and other reference works
 - een steen **des aanstoots**
 - de loop **der tijd**
 - het Leger **des Heils**
- novel genitive: not listed in dictionaries, likely to have been formed from scratch
 - de generatie **der babyboomers**
 - de alcoholische geneugten **des levens**
 - het hanteren **dier elektronische taal**
 - de pedagogische, vormende waarde **dezer inhouden**

Fixed v. novel genitives



Characteristics

- productive remnant of genitive very restricted compared to Middle Dutch genitive (cf. Weerman & de Wit 1999: 1184):
 - only adnominal (i.e. no longer governed by prepositions, adjectives or verbs)
 - markers used:
 - *der*: feminine singular; all genders plural
 - *des*: masculine & neuter singular (infrequent)
 - constituent order:
 - postnominal, e.g. de generatie **der babyboomers**
 - prenominal, e.g. **des koelkasts** paradijzen (infrequent)
 - genitive NP only (= ‘characteristic of’), e.g. **des supporters** (see Hoeksema 1998)

Characteristics

- constituent order in INL 27 Mil.:

Genitive marker	postnominal	prenominal	gen. NP only
<i>der</i>	1645	1	0
<i>des</i>	135	9	15

Genitive morphology

- one dominant structure: postnominal
- one dominant marker: *der*
 - *X der Y*
- novel genitive phrase (Y) formed on the basis of the morphological properties of the noun involved
- *der* was originally the genitive definite article for fem. sg. and all genders plural – this is still the situation:
 - most novel genitive phrases involve a plural noun or a transparent “feminine” derived noun

Preference for plural nouns

Corpus	Singular noun	Plural noun
Eindhoven	152 41.6%	213 58.4%
INL 27 Mil.	528 29.7%	1247 70.3%
CGN	16 25.8%	46 74.2%

een groot respect voor **de keizer der saxofoonblazers** John Coltrane
(CGN: fv800778.5)

Het open- en dichtgaan der winkels is als een getijdebeweging
(INL 27 Mil., NRC Jul. 1994)

Ik ben in **de rijken der overbodigen en nodelozen** opgenomen
(INL 27 Mil, NRC June 1994)

Singular derived “feminine” nouns

Corpus	Simplex noun	Derived noun
Eindhoven	45 29.6%	107 70.4%
INL 27 Mil.	158 29.9%	370 70.1%
CGN	6 37.5%	10 62.5%

het probleem der overbevolking in de gevangnissen moet inventiever worden aangepakt (CGN fv600879.58)

Komend uit de advocatuur, dacht ik van **de last der partijdigheid** te zijn verlost (INL 27 Mil., NRC Jan. 1995)

illustreert opnieuw hoezeer **de identiteit der Nederlandse sociaal-democratie** veranderd is (INL 27 Mil., NRC Feb. 1995)

Complexity of the genitive phrase

- usual structure: der + N
- 416 tokens (366 types) are more complex than this:

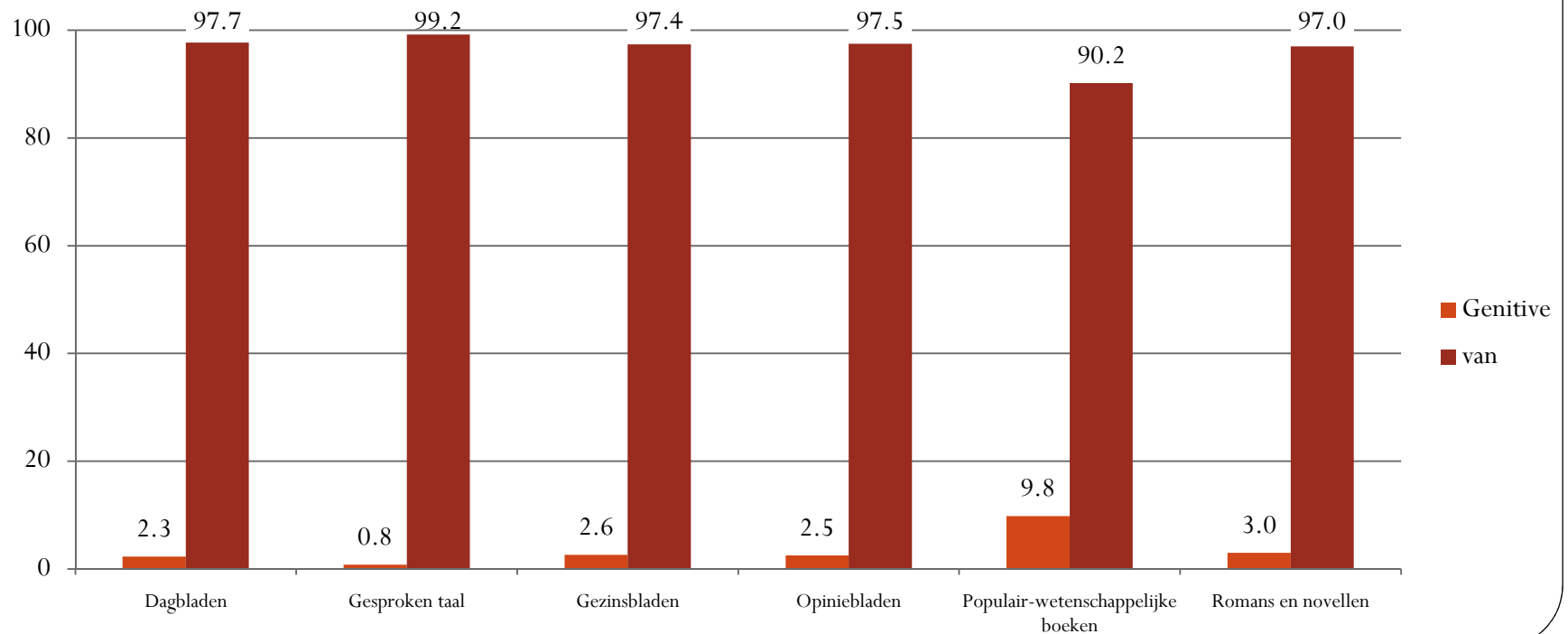
De toegang tot **het domein der digitale hobbyïsten** is nog niet voldoende aangepast [...] (INL 27 Mil., NRC Feb 1994)

Laat staan als het om een orkest gaat als dat van de Bayerische Rundfunk, **een der beste na-oorlogse Duitse ensembles** met een opmerkelijke staat van dienst. (INL 27 Mil., NRC March 1994)

Buiten de Russische federatie, **de grootste der uit de Sovjet-Unie voortgekomen nieuwe staten**, leven naar schatting 36 miljoen ‘Russischtaligen’ . (INL 27 Mil., Jan 1994)

The genitive and *van*

- adnominal genitive and *van* are often synonymous and therefore potentially interchangeable
- compare *Eindhoven* data to Weerman & de Wit's 15th century figures (genitive 4% v. *van* 96%):



The genitive and *van*

- genitive is used to avoid the *horror aequi* of a string of *van*-phrases (E-ANS §4.1, van Haeringen 1956: 32-3, Weerman & de Wit 1999: 1184)

aangaande **de wensen van de meerderheid der Nederlandse bevolking** met betrekking tot de vorm van de omroep (INL 27 Mil., NRC Oct. 1994)

enige tijd dringen de fransen en engelsen sterk aan op **de hervatting van de bespreking der grote vier** over het midden-oosten (Eindhoven, Dagbladen, 1560)

- usual restrictions apply: genitive is used with transparent feminine singular nouns and plural nouns

3. The genitive and Dutch morphology and syntax

Why did the postnominal adnominal genitive survive?

The place of the genitive in present-day Dutch morphology and syntax

Survival of genitive

- informal study of Dutch 16th-18th century texts in *Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren* (as precursor to future research):
 - many postnominal adnominal genitive phrases
 - non-adnominal use of genitive is rare/absent from many texts
- explanations:
 - coherence/autonomy of postnominal structure allowed its survival
 - was isolable from genitive case as a whole (unlike individual lexemes that governed the genitive)
 - the postnominal structure became a frame into which NPs could be inserted as required
 - now isolated from core Dutch morphosyntax

Is the Dutch genitive still a case?

- ‘typically, case marks the relationship of a noun to a verb at the clause level or of a noun to a preposition, postposition or another noun at the phrase level’ (Blake 2001: 1)
- lexical case: ‘word bound, i.e. tied to specific lexical entries’ (Barðdal, to appear)
- but: doesn’t fit easily into a traditional theory of inflection
- isolated, autonomous frame
- ‘specific instantiations of general syntactic patterns may have started to lead a life of their own’ (Booij 2005: 123)
- Construction Grammar explanation?

The genitive construction

- Constructions:
 - ‘partially lexically filled and fully general linguistic patterns’ (Goldberg 2003: 219)
 - ‘some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist’ (Goldberg 2003: 219)
- Genitive Construction v. *van*-Construction
 - express a (broadly) possessive relationship between two NPs
 - *van*-Construction is default; Genitive Construction is restricted in register

Frames/constructional schemas

X der Y if Y = plural noun, singular complex noun ending in *-age, -de, -heid, -ie, -iek, -ij, -ing, -iteit, -nis, -schap, -st, -te* or *-uur*

[X *der* Y]

[het milieu **der** **musical-fanaten**]

[het einde **der** **rentestijging**]

X des Y-s if Y = singular neuter noun, singular common ('masculine') noun

[X *des* Y-s]

[de machtigste man **des** **lands**]

[de eisen **des** **tijds**]

4. Conclusions

Conclusions

- English:
 - fully lost morphological case system
 - remnant of genitive: possessive *-s*
- German:
 - standard language: morphological case system retained; genitive “under threat”
 - dialects: morphological case system simplified; genitive generally lost
- Dutch:
 - fully lost morphological case system
 - remnant of genitive: postnominal adnominal genitive frame (construction) – insertion of NPs based on morphological structure
- why did a fragment of genitive case morphology survive in Dutch but not in English?

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