

Predication in nominal phrases

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- ☞ clausal and nominal predication are similar in many respects
- ☞ just as in the clausal domain, DPs do also differentiate between A-movement and A'-movement
- ☞ all types of predication result from small clauses
- ☞ data mainly from Dutch, similar construction in a number of languages

		Clause	Nominal
A-movement	-PM	Die kerel is een beer. <i>That guy is a bear</i>	een kerel als een beer <i>a guy like a bear</i>
A-movement	+PM	De grootste beer is die kerel <i>The biggest bear is that guy</i>	een beer van een kerel <i>a bear of a guy</i>
A'-movement	+PM	Wat is die kerel? <i>What is this guy?</i>	wat voor een kerel? <i>what for a guy?</i>
A'-movement	+PM	Wat is dat een kerel! <i>What is that a guy!</i>	wat een kerel <i>what a guy</i>

1 Data

- (1) a. *een beer van een vent*
a bear of a man
b. *een vent als een beer*
a man like a bear

☞ predication → the man is associated with the property of being a bear

- different word order in (1-a) and (1-b)
- Example (1-a) instantiates a case of predicate inversion, just as in (2)

- (2) a. John is the best candidate.
b. The best candidate is John.

- predicate inversion is A-movement around the subject

- (3) a. [IP ... *be* [XP John X [P_{pred} the best candidate]]]
b. [IP John *be* [XP t_{John} X [P_{pred} the best candidate]]]
c. [IP the best candidate *be* [XP John X [P_{pred} t_{pred}]]]

☞ Why should nominal predication be similar?

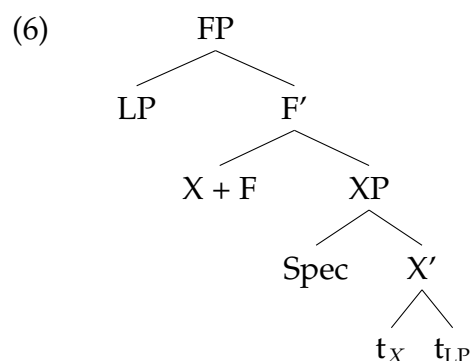
- subject and predicate are coindexed
- predicate moves to a position where it c-commands its coindexed subject → violation of Principle C, see (4)
- similar nominal construction are also ungrammatical, see (5)

(4) *Which man do you consider the best candidate to be?

- (5) a. **een huis waar hij [een kast van t] heeft gekocht*
 a house where he [a giant of] has bought
- b. *een huis waar hij [een verdieping van t] heeft gekocht*
 a house where he [a floor of] has bought

Problem: Predicate inversion poses a problem for *Relativized Minimality* since the predicate crosses an A-position (the subject)

- head-movement of X to F extends the domain (in case of predicate inversion) → no problem to Relativized Minimality
- Structure for predicate inversion in (6)



2 What's F?

- (7) a. I consider John (to be) the best candidate.
 b. I consider the best candidate *(to be) John.

☞ Since the copula is obligatory only in predicate inversion cases, it is assumed that the copula is the morphological reflex of F

☞ in nominal predication, F reflects as *van*, as in (8)

- (8) *een beer van een vent*
 a bear of a man

3 What's X?

- the indefinite article *een* does not occur with plural, proper names or mass nouns, see (9)

- (9)
- Ik heb een boek gelezen*
I have a book read
 - **Ik heb een boeken gelezen*
I have a books read
 - **Ik heb een Westertoren gezien*
I have a Westertoren seen
 - **Ik heb een spinazie gegeten*
I have a spinach eaten

In nominal predication, however, **een** can occur with proper names and mass nouns, potentially also with plurals (interindividual variation).

- (10)
- ?*die ramp van een getalscongruentiefeiten*
that disaster of a number.agreement.facts
 - die pracht van een Westertoren*
that beauty of a Westertoren
 - een pracht van een spinazie*
that beauty of a spinach

→ In nominal predication, **een** does not form a constituent with N_2

- (11)
- die schatten van een kinderen*
those darlings of a children
 - die idioten van een regering*
those idiots of a government

→ In nominal predication, **een** does not form a constituent with N_1

The example in (12) indicates that **een** and **als** are in complementary distribution.

- (12) *met [die jongen als (?een) oplichter]*
with that boy as a conman

Moreover, **een** is obligatory in the N_1 *van een* N_2 construction:

- (13) *die oplichter van *(een) jongen*
 the conman of a boy

☞ X hosts **een** and other linking element such as **als**

4 What about English?

In a similar construction in English, **a** has to precede a singular noun:

- (14) a. *that disaster of **a** number agreement facts
 b. those fools of **a** police force
 c. *those darlings of **a** children

	with a	without a
singular of singular	idiot of a man	*idiot of man
plural of singular	idiots of a police force	*idiots of police force
singular of plural	*disaster of a facts	*disaster of facts
plural of plural	*idiots of a men	idiots of men

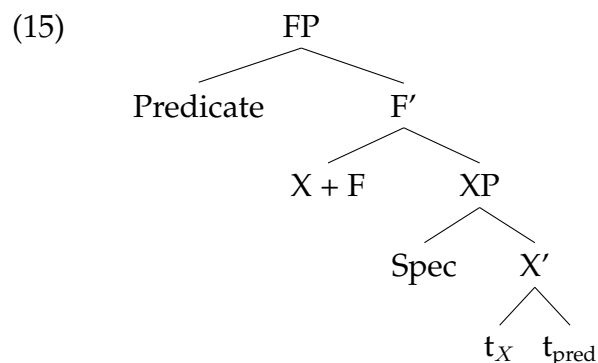
English *N of N* constructions and spurious articles

	with een	without een
singular of singular	idiot van een man	*idiot van man
plural of singular	idioten van een regering	*idioten van regering
singular of plural	ramp van een feiten	*ramp van feiten
plural of plural	idioten van een mannen	idioten van mannen

Dutch *N of N* constructions and spurious articles

- Dutch and English do not differ in article-less column
 - English allows **a** only with singular whereas Dutch allows **een** in all four cases
- **a** is specified [-PLUR], whereas **een** is unspecified for number

Why doesn't the spurious article appear in plural-of-plural constructions?



- X (recall: home of spurious article) has the possibility to undergo Spec-Head agreement relationship with subject **before** movement
 - X has the possibility to undergo Spec-Head agreement relationship with predicate **after** movement
- Zero allomorph arises when neither predicate nor subject are singular

(16) Swedish

- Pelle och Lisa är *(ena) djävlar på grammatik.*
Pelle and Lisa are a devils on grammar
- Lisa och Kalle är ?ena riktiga doktorer.*
Lisa and Kalle are a real doctors

☞ Swedish has indefinite article that is specific for predication contexts?

	een	no een
singular	die etter can een jongen <i>that creep of a boy</i>	*die etter van jongen <i>that creep of boy</i>
plural	etters van een jongens <i>creeps of a boys</i>	etters van jongens <i>creeps of boys</i>

distribution of **een** in *N van een N* construction

	een	no een
singular	wat voor en jongen <i>what for a boy</i>	wat voor jongen <i>what for boy</i>
plural	wat voor een jongens <i>what for a boys</i>	wat voor jongens <i>what for boys</i>

distribution of **een** in *wat voor* construction

	een	no een
singular	wat een jongen! <i>what a boy!</i>	*wat jongen! <i>what boy!</i>
plural	wat een jongens! <i>what a boys!</i>	*wat jongens! <i>what boys!</i>

distribution of **een** in *wat*-exclamatives construction

- in *N van een N* constructions, **een** is obligatory in singulars and optional in plurals
- in *wat voor* constructions, **een** is always optional
- *wat*-exclamatives constructions, **een** is always obligatory

Surprising is ...

- the ungrammaticality of **wat jongens!* (we would expect zero allomorph)
- the grammaticality of *wat voor jongen?* (we don't expect zero allomorph)

5 *Wat* constructions

It is argued that the semantic interpretation of *wat* arises from its syntactic environment.

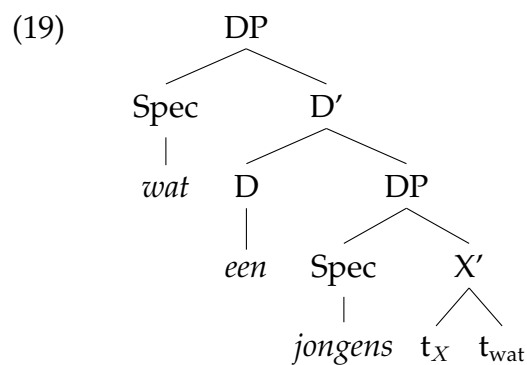
- (17)
- Hij heeft wat gegeten.*
he has what eaten
'He has eaten something.' → indefinite
 - Wat heeft hij gegeten?*
what has he eaten
'What did he eat?' → interrogative
 - Wat heeft hij gehuild!*
what has he cried
'Boy, did he cry!' → exclamative
- (18)
- Ik heb [wat boeken] gelezen.*
I have what books read
'I have read some books.' → indefinite
 - [Wat voor boeken] heb jij gelezen?*
what for books have you read
'What kind of books have you read?' → interrogative
 - [Wat een boeken] heb jij gelezen!*
what a books have you read
'Boy, did you read a lot of books!' → exclamative

Interpretation is licensed ...

- the **wat** interrogative construction by a [+wh] C/D head
- the **wat** exclamative construction by a [+excl] C/D head

5.1 The *wat*-exclamative construction

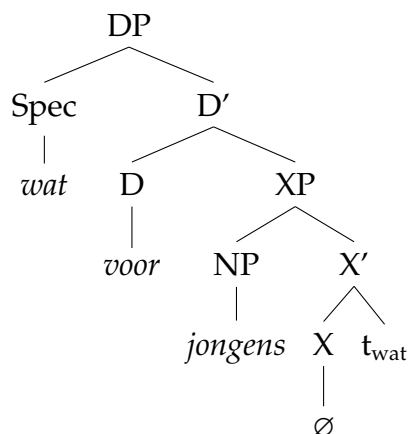
- **wat** has to move to SpecDP due to [+excl] operator
- movement requires D-head to be lexical
- easiest way to spell out D is to move **een** from X



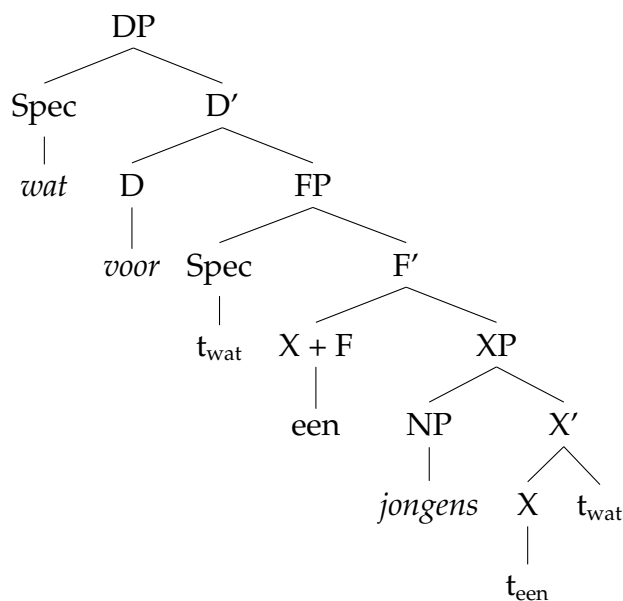
5.2 The *wat*-interrogative construction

- *voor* is spell-out of [+wh]-operator in D
 - since *voor* lexicalises D, movement of **een** is not necessary
 - how do we account for optionality of **een**?
- optionality is accounted for by two different Xs

(20) No overt **een**



(21) Overt **een** due to prior predicate inversion



Optionality of predicate inversion can be found in clausal domain as well:

- (22) a. Down which hill did the baby carriage roll? wh-movement
- b. Down which hill rolled the baby carriage? Predicate Inv + wh-mvmt

Semantic differences between both variants of **wat**-interrogative constructions:

- (23) a. *Wat voor jongens zijn dat?*
 what for boys are that? Nice boys. / Harry, Ron and Neville.
- b. *Wat voor een jongens zijn dat?*
 what for a boys are that? Nice boys. / *Harry, Ron and Neville.

6 Conclusion

We have seen that nominal and clausal predication are similar in many respects:

- ☞ there are copular elements (*be* and *van*)
- ☞ both constitute a small clause
- ☞ both have A-movement and A'-movement
- ☞ **een** only in nominal predication

Possibly open issues:

- **een** being unspecified for number