

The asymmetry of Dutch weak pronouns

Marlies van der Velde

The purpose of this paper is to show that existing analyses of Dutch (object) pronouns should at least be refined. Dutch has two series of pronouns: a series of full forms (strong pronouns) and a series of reduced forms. The status of these reduced forms is the subject of some debate. Indeed, the reduced (object) forms are analyzed as clitics (Zwart 1993, 1996 among others) and as weak pronouns (Cardinaletti & Starke 1996). The data in this paper suggest an asymmetry between the reduced object forms, while the cited authors take the reduced (object) forms to constitute a homogeneous class.

1. Introduction

In this paper new data about the distribution of weak object pronouns in Dutch will be presented. These data will suggest that the actual existing analyses for Dutch object pronouns should at least be refined. Dutch has two series of pronouns, a series of full forms and a series of reduced forms. Full forms are analyzed as strong pronouns and they will not be discussed in this paper. The status of the reduced forms is the subject of some debate.

Roughly speaking there are two types of possible analyses. First an analysis according to which the Dutch reduced forms are clitics. This analysis is developed by Zwart (1993, 1996) among others. And second, an analysis according to which the Dutch reduced forms are weak pronouns. This analysis is supported by Cardinaletti & Starke (1996, 2000) among others.

For Zwart (op. cit.) clitics are syntactic heads. In his view clitics are pronominal elements that show a syntactic distribution different from full DPs. Since the reduced forms in Dutch behave differently than full DPs, Zwart claims that they are clitics. For Cardinaletti & Starke (op. cit.) weak pronouns are phonologically deficient elements (in that they cannot be isolated, modified and coordinated etc.); they are maximal projections from the point of view of X-bar theory.

In this paper I would like to suggest that an analysis of Dutch object pronouns must be different from the two types just mentioned. In particular the

claim will be made that reduced forms do not constitute a homogenous class. Although the reduced forms are all phonologically deficient pronouns, a distinction within these pronouns, more particularly a distinction between reduced non-neuter forms and the reduced neuter form, will be made. This idea will be based on facts related to the distribution of reduced forms in Exceptional Case Marking constructions, Double Object Constructions and Prepositional Phrases.

This paper is organized as follows: in the next section the paradigm of the object pronouns in Dutch will be presented. The distribution of the reduced object forms and DPs in the constructions just mentioned will be discussed in sections 3 through 5. In the discussion, I will explain why I have the opinion that existing analyses of Dutch pronouns should at least be refined (section 6).

2. Dutch pronouns

Dutch has two series of object pronouns: a series of full forms and a series of reduced forms. These forms are presented in table I. Observe that the first and second person plural pronouns *ons* and *jullie* do not have a reduced counterpart. Furthermore the third person singular neuter pronoun *'t* does not have a full form counterpart. Given that *het* like the other reduced forms is phonologically deficient, it must be considered as a reduced form.¹

Table I: Dutch object pronouns²

| | full form | reduced form |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1sg | mij | me |
| 2sg | jou | je |
| 3sg-m | hem | 'm |
| 3sg-f | haar | 'r (ze; d'r) |
| 3sg-n | | het; 't |
| 1pl | ons | |
| 2pl | jullie | |
| 3pl | hun;hen | ze |

In this paper the third person reduced forms: *'r*, *'m* and *'t* will be examined in more detail. *'r* is the reduced feminine form, *'m* is the reduced masculine form and *'t* is the reduced neuter form.

With respect to their use, the following points should be underlined. First, as already stated, these reduced forms are phonologically deficient. This means

¹ A reviewer suggested that the demonstrative form *dat* 'that' may be the corresponding full form. Given the fact that I do not consider full forms here, I leave this idea aside.

² Although in (traditionnal) grammar books *'m* is given as third person singular masculine reduced form, *'m* is actually used for both feminine and masculine nouns denoting non-animate entities.

that they cannot be isolated, modified, coordinated and focused (Cardinaletti & Starke 1996, 2000)

Second, these reduced forms can have an animate reference. This is even possible for the neuter pronoun, but note that this is quite marginal: the neuter pronoun can only refer to an animate entity if its referent is denoted by a neuter noun *and* if the sex of the referent is not known by the speaker (this can be the case for *het kind* 'the child', for example). An example is given in (1). Note that in the other cases, if the sex is known, the corresponding masculine or feminine pronoun will be used, even if the corresponding noun is neuter. This is exemplified in (2) and (3).

- (1) - Ik zag een bedelend kind op het station.
 I saw a begging child-N at the station
 'I saw a begging child at the station.'
- Ik kon niet zien of het een meisje of een jongen was.
 I could not see whether it a girl or a boy was
 'I couldn't see whether it was a girl or a boy.'
- Maar ik weet zeker dat ik 't niet eerder gezien had.
 but I know sure that I it not before seen had
 'But I am sure that I never saw it before.'
- (2) Dat meisje? Ik heb 'r zojuist gezien.
 that girl-N? I have her just seen
 'That girl? I just saw her.'
- (3) Dat jongetje? Ik heb 'm zojuist gezien.
 that little boy-N? I have him just seen
 'That little boy? I just saw him.'

Third, for non-animate entities, the third person singular '*m*' is used for both masculine and feminine nouns as can be seen in (4) and (5). The neuter pronoun '*t*' is used to refer to a non-animate entity denoted by a neuter noun and this is exemplified in (6).

- (4) De theepot? Ik heb 'm op de tafel gezet.
 the teapot-M? I have him on the table put
 'The teapot? I put it on the table.'
- (5) De krant? Ik heb 'm op de tafel gelegd.
 the paper-F? I have him on the table put
 'The paper? I put it on the table.'
- (6) Het boek? Ik heb 't op de tafel gezet.
 the book-N? I have it on the table put
 'The book? I put it on the table.'

Table II summarizes the use of the reduced object forms in Dutch.

Table II: The use of Dutch reduced object forms

| | [+Animate] | [-Animate] |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| referring to a [+Neuter] noun | 't | 't |
| referring to a [-Neuter] noun | 'm 'r | 'm |

The examination of ECM constructions in the next section suggests that not all reduced forms behave alike.

3. Exceptional Case Marking

Before discussing the ECM phenomenon, let's first take a look at Zwart's (1993, 1996) analysis. Zwart (1993) assumes that pronominal elements that have a syntactic distribution different than full DPs are clitics. According to Zwart (1996) several syntactic constructions lead to the conclusion that reduced forms in Dutch are clitics. One of these constructions is the ECM construction (other constructions are the Double Object Construction, to be discussed in the next section, and scrambling, not considered here).

Zwart (1993) states that full DPs "cannot cross an embedded subject in an Exceptional Case Marking construction", while reduced object forms can. He illustrates this fact with the examples (7 – 10).³ Indeed, the observation can be made that in (8b) the neuter reduced object form *'t* crosses over the embedded subject, which is not possible for a DP as can be seen in (7b). In (10b) the non-neuter form *'r* crosses over the embedded subject *Jan* while this is not possible for a DP as can be seen in (9b). The direct objects in these examples are boldprinted.

- (7) a. dat ik Jan **het boek** heb zien lezen.
 that I Jan the book have see-INF read-INF
 'that I saw him read the book.'
- b. *dat ik **het boek** Jan heb zien lezen.
 that I the book Jan have see-INF read-INF
- (8) a. dat ik Jan **'t** heb zien lezen.
 that I Jan it-ACC have see-INF read-INF
 'that I saw Jan read it.'
- b. dat ik **'t** Jan heb zien lezen.
 that I it-ACC Jan have see-INF read-INF

³ Examples (7) and (8) are cited from Zwart (1993), his examples (37) and (38), and examples (9) and (10) are from Zwart (1996:125), his examples (47) and (48).

- (9) a. dat Piet Jan **Marie** heeft zien kussen.
 that Piet Jan Marie has see-INF kiss-INF
 'that Piet saw Jan kiss Marie.'
- b. *dat Piet **Marie** Jan heeft zien kussen.
 that Piet Marie Jan has see-INF kiss-INF
- (10) a. dat Piet Jan **'r** heeft zien kussen.
 that Piet Jan her-ACC has see-INF kiss-INF
 'that Piet saw Jan kiss her.'
- b. dat Piet **'r** Jan heeft zien kussen.
 that Piet her-ACC Jan has see-INF kiss-INF

Note that the reduced forms *'t* and *'r* can not only precede the embedded subject as in (8b) and (10b) but also can occupy a position to the right of this embedded subject as in (8a) and (10a). This latter position can also be occupied by a DP as shown in (7a) and (9a). I would like to underline that this suggests that if the Dutch reduced forms are syntactic clitics, then they are not like the syntactic clitics in Romance languages. The Dutch reduced forms can occupy a higher position than a DP but they may also surface in the same position as a DP. This is excluded for Romance pronominal clitics, which can only occupy clitic positions.

According to Zwart, the subject of the embedded clauses in (9) and (10) is *Jan* and the object *Marie/'r*. As can be observed, *'r*, contrary to a full DP, can precede the embedded subject. This is one of Zwart's arguments in support of the claim that reduced forms are clitics.

Interestingly, in the Standard Dutch variety that I speak, the example (10b) must be preceded by an asterisk, whereas I accept the neuter reduced form *'t* to precede the embedded subject as in (8b). In (9') and (10') Zwart's examples are repeated, but this time preceded by my grammatical judgements. Example (10b') shows that the non-neuter reduced form *'r* cannot precede the embedded subject.^{4,5}

- (9') a. dat Piet Jan **Marie** heeft zien kussen.
 that Piet Jan Marie has see-INF kiss-INF
 'that Piet saw Jan kiss Marie.'
- b. *dat Piet **Marie** Jan heeft zien kussen.
 that Piet Marie Jan has see-INF kiss-INF

⁴ More precisely, in (9b) and (10b) the object – subject reading is excluded but not the subject – object reading. This means that these examples are perfect for me if *Marie* and *'r* are considered as the subject and *Jan* as the object of the embedded clause.

⁵ Note that, according to my judgements, the corresponding full form (strong pronoun) *haar* 'her' has the same behavior as *Marie* and *'r* in examples (9') and (10'). For Zwart (1997) however *haar* has the same behavior as *Marie* (but not as *'r*) as in example (9).

- (10) a. dat Piet Jan 'r heeft zien kussen.
 that Piet Jan her-ACC has see-INF kiss-INF
 'that Piet saw Jan kiss her.'
- b. *dat Piet 'r Jan heeft zien kussen.
 that Piet her-ACC Jan has see-INF kiss-INF

Apparently there exists an optionality in Dutch. In the variety spoken in the Southern parts of the Netherlands (Zwart, p.c. and Haegeman for Belgium's West-Flemish), all reduced object forms can precede the embedded subject in ECM constructions. In contrast, in Standard Dutch (my variety) only the reduced object form 't can precede the embedded subject in ECM.⁶

These findings lead to a first conclusion. In Standard Dutch, the reduced object forms do not constitute a homogenous class: a neuter – non-neuter distinction can be established. The neuter form 't can climb to a higher position in the structure and the non-neuter forms 'r and 'm cannot climb to this (higher) position.

In the next section the Double Object Construction will be examined. This construction provides further data to strengthen the idea that reduced object forms belong to two different classes.

4. Double Object Construction

The canonical order of the objects in the Double Object Construction is indirect object followed by direct object as in (11), when the two objects are full DPs. Nevertheless, Zwart argues that if the direct object is a reduced form, it must precede the full DP. This is exemplified in (12) for the reduced object form 't. Example (12b) is quite interesting, because the reduced form 't seems to be moved into a higher position which is not accessible for direct object DPs and full forms. Again the direct objects are boldprinted in these examples.

- (11) a. dat Jan Marie **het boek** gegeven heeft.
 that Jan Marie the book-NEUT given has
 'that John gave Mary the book.'
- b. ?? dat Jan **het boek** Marie gegeven heeft.
 that Jan the book-NEUT Marie given has
- (12) a. ?? dat Jan Marie 't gegeven heeft.
 that Jan Marie it given has
 'that John gave it Mary.'
- b. dat Jan 't Marie gegeven heeft.
 that John it Mary given has

⁶ Note that the masculine reduced form 'm has the same behavior as the feminine reduced form 'r.

As observed in (12b) the direct object reduced form can precede the indirect object full DP, while a direct object full DP cannot. This is a capital difference between reduced forms and full DPs. Apparently reduced object forms can move to a higher position than full DPs.

A closer look at the DOC in Dutch will show that the facts are more complicated than the examples (11) - (12) suggest. Indeed, in these examples the verb *geven* 'give' has a non-animate direct object and an animate indirect object. In the examples (13) - (14), I changed Zwart's examples: here, the verb *aanbieden* 'offer' has two animate objects. The syntactic distribution changes and an important observation has to be made. Example (14b) shows that if the two objects are animate, the direct object reduced form cannot precede an indirect object full DP, while this is possible when the direct object is non-animate as we saw in (12b).

- (13) a. dat de regisseur de actrice **deze souffleur** aangeboden heeft.
 that the producer the actress this prompter offered has
 'that the producer offered the actress this prompter.'
- b. *dat de regisseur **deze souffleur** de actrice aangeboden heeft.
 that the producer this prompter the actress offered has
- (14) a. *dat de regisseur de actrice **'m** aangeboden heeft.
 that the producer the actress him offered has
 'that the producer offered him to the actress.'
- b. *dat de regisseur **'m** de actrice aangeboden heeft.
 that the producer him the actress offered has

Zwart (1993, 1996) assumes that the reduced forms in Dutch are syntactic clitics. This idea is based on the fact that reduced forms show a different syntactic distribution than full DPs. The example (12b) in particular supports this hypothesis. In the example (14b) however, the reduced direct object form cannot precede the indirect object full DP as was expected from example (12b).⁷ A possible explanation is that the reduced form can only precede the indirect object full DP if it refers to a non-animate entity. However, the following examples suggest that this cannot be the right explanation. Examples (15) and (16) show that the reduced forms *'m* (3rd person singular non-neuter) and *ze* (3rd person plural), referring to a non-animate entity cannot precede the full DP indirect object. This is possible for the reduced form *'t* (3rd person singular neuter) as was shown in (12b).

- (15) a. dat Jan de actrice **de auto** gegeven heeft.
 that Jan the actress the car-MASC given has
 'that Jan gave the actress the car.'

⁷ Note that the feminine reduced form *'r* has the same behavior as the masculine reduced form *'m*.

- b. *dat Jan ‘**m** de actrice gegeven heeft.
that Jan him the actress given has
‘that Jan gave it to the actress.’
- (16) a. dat Jan de actrice **de boeken** gegeven heeft.
that Jan the actress the books given has
‘that Jan gave the actress the books.’
- b. *dat Jan **ze** de actrice gegeven heeft.
that Jan them the actress given has
‘that Jan gives them to the actress.’

These data constitute further evidence in favor of the idea that reduced object forms do not form an homogenous class, namely that a distinction should be established between neuter and non-neuter reduced forms.

A third argument in favor of the idea that reduced object forms do not behave in the same way, will be discussed in the following section. This argument concerns Prepositional Phrases.

5. Prepositional Phrases

It is known that the object position of a prepositional phrase (PPs) must be filled by a maximal projection, represented most of the time by a full DP or a strong pronoun. This is also the case in Dutch as shown by example (17).

- (17) a. Ik heb vaak aan **Marie** / aan **haar** gedacht.
I have often on Marie / on her thought
‘I’ve thought a lot of Marie / her.’
- b. Ik heb vaak aan **Piet** / aan **hem** gedacht.
I have often on Piet / on him thought
‘I’ve thought a lot of Piet / him.’

Interestingly, the non-neuter forms ‘*r* and ‘*m* can also surface as object of a preposition. This can be seen in (18).

- (18) a. Ik heb vaak aan **Marie** / aan ‘**r** gedacht.
I have often on Marie / on her thought.
‘I’ve thought a lot of Marie / her.’
- b. Ik heb vaak aan **Piet** / aan ‘**m** gedacht.
I have often on Piet / on him thought
‘I’ve thought a lot of Piet / him.’

Note that in the examples (18) '*r* and '*m* refer to an animate entity. If the referent of the pronoun is non-animate this position becomes unavailable. Example (19) shows this.⁸

- (19) a. De fiets was aan de boom / *aan '**m** vastgemaakt.⁹
 the bike was on the tree-MASC/ on him fixed
 'The bike was fixed on a tree.'
- b. De fiets was aande heg / *aan '**m** vastgemaakt.
 the bike was on the hedge-FEM / on him fixed
 'The bike was fixed on the hedge.'

As remarked in section 2, the neuter form '*t* can refer to non-animate entities (denoted by a neuter noun) and also to an animate entity (when the sex of the referent is not known by the speaker and when the referent is denoted by a neuter noun). Consider the following examples in (20).

- (20) a. De fiets was aan het hek/ *aan '**t** vastgemaakt.
 the bike was on the bars/*on it fixed
 'The bike was fixed on the bars.'
- b. - Ik liep op het station toen ik een bedelend kind zag.
 I walked on the station when I a begging child saw
 'I was walking in the station, when I saw a begging child.'
- Ik kon niet zien of het een jongen of een meisje was.
 I could not see if it a boy or a girl was
 'I couldn't see if it was a boy or a girl.'
- Ik had net appels gekocht, dus heb ik er één
 I had just apples bought so have I clit one
 *aan '**t** gegeven.
 to it given
 'I had just bought a bag of apples, so I gave one to it.'

These examples show that the neuter form '*t* cannot surface as object of a preposition if it refers to a non-animate entity (20a). Interestingly, the position is also unavailable when '*t* refers to an animate entity (20b). These last facts provide further evidence that the reduced neuter form '*t* behaves differently than the reduced forms '*r* and '*m*.

In the next section I will discuss

⁸ Recall that '*m* is used to refer to both feminine and masculine non-animate nouns.

⁹ If the reduced form refers to no-animate entities another construction is triggered. The reduced form will be replaced by the expletive form *er*, which will be placed before the preposition. So (19) will be as in (i).

(i) De fiets was **eraan** vastgemaakt
 The bike was er-on fixed.

two existing analyses for Dutch pronouns and an analysis proposed for pronouns in Romance languages. I will show why these analyses should (at least) be refined.

6. Discussion

The constructions examined in this paper show the following facts:

(i) In ECM constructions only the reduced neuter form *'t* can cross an embedded subject, the other non-neuter reduced forms *'r* and *'m* cannot.

(ii) In Double Object Constructions only the reduced neuter form *'t* can precede a full DP indirect object, the non-neuter reduced forms *'r* and *'m* are excluded in that position.

(iii) Only the reduced neuter form *'t* cannot surface as object of a preposition, regardless of whether its referent is animate or non-animate. The two non-neuter reduced forms can surface as object of a preposition, but only when their referent is [+animate].

(iv) As far as I know, property (iii) holds both in Standard Dutch and in the varieties spoken in the South of the Netherlands (studied by Zwart 1993, 1996). In this part of the country no distinction is made between neuter and non-neuter reduced forms in ECM and DOC.

Recall that for Zwart (1993, 1996) reduced forms are syntactic clitics, while for Cardinaletti & Starke (1996) reduced object forms are weak pronouns. In what follows, I will come back to their propositions in relation to the facts (i) through (iv) summarized above.

First the analysis of Cardinaletti & Starke will be discussed (section 6.1), followed by Zwart's analysis (section 6.2.). Before a brief conclusion (section 6.4.), I will discuss the analysis of Jakubowicz & Nash proposed for Romance pronouns (section 6.3).

6.1. Cardinaletti & Starke's analysis

Let us first consider Cardinaletti & Starke's tripartition of pronouns into: strong pronouns, weak pronouns and clitics. For these authors weak pronouns and clitics are similar in that they are phonologically deficient elements. In contrast, weak pronouns and clitics differ regarding to their X-bar status. The former are XPs, the latter are syntactic heads. Weak pronouns are similar to strong pronouns in that both types of pronouns are XPs; they differ from each other in that strong pronouns are not phonologically deficient elements. Furthermore strong pronouns differ from weak pronouns and clitics in that strong pronouns can only have an animate referent, whereas weak pronouns and clitics may refer to both animate and non-animate entities. This is summarized in table III.

Table III: Classification of pronouns by Cardinaletti & Starke

| | Strong pronouns | Weak pronouns | Clitics |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| phonological status | | deficient | deficient |
| syntactic status | XP | XP | X ^o |
| semantic status | [+human] | [±human] | [±human] |

Cardinaletti & Starke (1996) claim that their tripartition applies also to the Dutch pronouns. According to their analysis of Dutch, all full object forms are strong pronouns. All reduced forms are weak pronouns.¹⁰ Cardinaletti & Starke's analysis of full forms as strong pronouns seems uncontroversial, in contrast their claim that reduced forms are weak pronouns can be questioned on the basis of the data presented here.

If the reduced forms '*r*, '*m* and '*t* were all weak pronouns we would expect them to surface in the positions where full DPs can appear. Thus, weak pronouns are expected to surface as object of a preposition. However, only the non-neuter forms '*r* and '*m* can surface in this position, the neuter form '*t* is excluded (section 5).

It is a fact that in Double Object Constructions reduced forms can occupy positions that DPs can occupy, but they are subject to restrictions that do not exist for DPs. For example, a full DP direct object can follow a full DP indirect object (see example (11a)), but a reduced form direct object cannot follow a full DP indirect object (example (12a)). However in Double Object Constructions and ECM constructions, the neuter reduced form '*t* can climb to higher positions than the non-neuter reduced forms. These observations are not predicted by the analysis for Dutch pronouns as proposed by Cardinaletti & Starke.

Following Cardinaletti & Starke's analysis we should say that '*t* is a clitic and not a weak pronoun. However we have to add that if '*t* is a syntactic clitic, it is not a clitic like the Romance syntactic clitics. In ECM constructions, the neuter reduced form '*t* can occupy the same position as a DP but it can also occupy a higher position, excluded for a DP (This is shown in the examples (8a–b)). Romance clitics in contrast, can only occupy a clitic position and this position is always excluded for a DP.

Keeping Cardinaletti & Starke's idea that the reduced forms '*m* and '*r* are weak pronouns raises additional problems. First, their analysis does not explain why '*m* and '*r* can be object of a preposition only when they refer to an animate entity, while surfacing in this position is excluded when they refer to a non-

¹⁰ More precisely they propose that all full forms (subject and object pronouns), except the subject form *hij* (3rd person singular masculine), are strong pronouns. All reduced forms except the subject form *ie* (3rd person singular masculine) and the full form *hij* are weak pronouns while the reduced subject form *ie* is considered as a syntactic clitic. In this paper I only considered the object pronouns, which these authors suppose to be divided in two distinct classes, namely full forms are strong pronouns while reduced forms are weak pronouns.

animate entity.¹¹ Second, while Cardinaletti & Starke (1996, 2000) argue that weak pronouns can refer to both [+human] and [-human] entities, the reduced form *'r* (a weak pronoun for Cardinaletti & Starke) does not have both these referring properties.¹²

My conclusion is that the tripartition as proposed by Cardinaletti & Starke does not easily apply to the pronominal system of Dutch.

6.2. Zwart's analysis

Let us now consider Zwart's position. For Zwart (1993) a clitic is an element that has a different syntactic distribution than a DP. In this view clitics can be identified without invoking phonological criteria. Furthermore clitics are syntactic heads from the point of view of X-bar theory. If, following Zwart, the reduced forms are clitics we would expect that they should not behave as DPs. Namely they should appear in positions where DPs are forbidden. As we have already mentioned in Standard Dutch only the reduced neuter form *'t* can appear in a position where DPs and the non-neuter forms *'r* and *'m* are excluded. This is a problem for considering all reduced forms as clitics. The data presented in this paper would suggest that only the neuter form *'t* is a clitic.

Furthermore, if clitics, as proposed by Zwart, appear in positions disallowed for DPs, one should expect that their distribution will not overlap. In ECM constructions, although *'t* can climb higher, it can also appear in positions where a DP can appear (see example (8)).¹³

Moreover, the object position of a prepositional phrase being traditionally filled by a maximal projection, we would not expect the reduced forms to appear in this position, if they were clitics in Zwart's sense.

Finally, adopting Zwart's idea that all reduced forms are clitics and given the fact that they can also appear in DP positions, this again suggests that Dutch clitics are quite different from Romance clitics.

¹¹ Cardinaletti & Starke would probably respond that these two forms are ambiguous and that, if they are referring to animate entities, they behave as weak pronouns, while if they are referring to non-animate entities, they behave as clitics.

¹² However in Cardinaletti & Starke (1995) these authors consider that 'as a general class, deficient pronouns can take both values (while it may be the case that one or another individual instance of deficient pronoun is lexically restricted to human or non-human)'.
¹³ If one considers that the other reduced forms (*'r* and *'m*) are also clitics, the same remark will apply. That is, if they were clitics, we would not expect them to appear in positions where a DP can appear.

6.3. Jakubowicz & Nash' analysis

In this section a third analysis, proposed by Jakubowicz & Nash (2000) will be discussed. This analysis is more particularly developed for Romance pronouns, while the two preceding analyses were more particularly proposed for Dutch. It would be nevertheless interesting to see if it can be applied to the Dutch pronominal system. In Jakubowicz & Nash' analysis a pronominal element is a clitic if it is categorially deficient. Being categorially deficient implicates phonological deficiency and is defined in terms of specification for animateness. A noun is specified for animateness in that it has a [+animate] or a [-animate] denotation. Strong pronouns are always [+animate]. Furthermore Jakubowicz & Nash propose that strong pronouns and DPs have a lexical root (in the spirit of the Distributed Morphology, proposed by Halle & Marantz, 1993), which is expressed by their specification for animateness. If a pronominal element lacks a lexical root, then it is a clitic. Therefore clitics can have both a [+animate] and a [-animate] denotation.

Following Jakubowicz & Nash' analysis Dutch full forms are strong pronouns. It is not clear whether the reduced forms are clitics in the sense of Jakubowicz & Nash (op.cit.). At first sight we would say that 'r is specified for animateness ('r = [+animate]) while 'm is underspecified for this feature ('m = [\pm animate]). The reduced neuter form 't is overwhelmingly [-animate] and only marginally [+animate]. In this view only the reduced form 'm would be a clitic (but not as Romance clitics as we will see below).

However, suppose now that all reduced forms lack a lexical root. This is uncontroversial for the reduced form 'm, which can indeed refer to both [+animate] and [-animate] entities. One could argue that the neuter form 't also lacks a lexical root. The fact that 't refers only marginally to animate entities can be explained by the fact that the sex of the referent takes precedence over the grammatical gender of the noun it denotes. In this way the reduced form 't can nevertheless be considered as denoting [\pm animate] entities. Nevertheless the reduced form 'r clearly has a [+animate] status, but recall that feminine nouns denoting a non-animate entity are expressed by the reduced form 'm. Suppose now that 'r for unclear reasons does not exist (maybe does not exist anymore??) for [-animate] feminine entities and that it is replaced by a default form which is 'm. Then the reduced form 'r also lacks a lexical root.

This idea may be controversial but simply suppose that somehow the reduced object forms in Dutch indeed lack a lexical root and that they are clitics. If this idea is true the following questions can be raised.

First, why, does the reduced neuter form 't behave different than the reduced non-neuter forms 'r and 'm? Second, how is it that the non-neuter reduced forms 'r and 'm can only be object of a preposition when they refer to an animate entity? Moreover, the fact that the non-neuter reduced forms 'r and 'm can be object of a preposition is not expected if they are analyzed as Romance syntactic clitics.

6.4. Conclusion

In this paper a certain number of questions have been raised. An adequate analysis of the Dutch pronominal system should be able to answer these questions.

First, it seems to be the case that the reduced object forms do not constitute a homogeneous class, as often supposed. The reduced neuter form 't has a different behavior than the reduced non-neuter forms 'm and 'r. It has also been noted that the behavior of the reduced non-neuter forms 'm and 'r depends on whether these forms refer to animate entities or to non-animate entities. If 'm and 'r refer to an animate entity, they can be object of a preposition, while they cannot if they refer to non-animate entities.

Second if we decide to analyze Dutch reduced object forms as syntactic clitics, we also have to say that these clitics are not of the same type as the syntactic clitics in Romance.

Providing an adequate analysis for Dutch pronouns is one of the aims of my dissertation.

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