

Do you think 'splum' is a verb or a noun?

The different syllable structure of Dutch nouns and verbs

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Abstract

Dutch nouns and Dutch verbs have different syllable structures. This talk presents the results of corpus research that confirms the observation and an experiment involving pseudo-words that shows that this knowledge is part of the native speaker's phonology. I discuss how these data fit within general typological patterns in the languages of the world and I present the most important accounts from the literature for comparable phenomena in Semitic languages.

I discuss one approach in more detail. The Optimal Paradigms Approach (McCarthy 2001, 2005, Cable 2004) hypothesises that the native speaker evaluates candidates for insertion not as single forms, but rather as entire paradigms. In principle, the overall pattern in the language could indeed be understood as a side-effect of verbal inflectional requirements: syllables in a verbal syntactic context need to be able to accommodate an extra consonantal position that realises the inflection. Nouns do not have this need in Dutch, as nominal inflection can always be realised as a syllable on its own. Given that the Dutch verbal paradigm has a higher potential of imposing markedness than the nominal one, verbal bases could end up being more restricted. I provide experimental evidence against the Optimal Paradigms approach, with its claim that the phonology evaluates entire paradigms rather than single forms.

Dr. Marijke De Belder is a linguist who is specialised in Dutch morphology and its interfaces. She worked at the KU Leuven campus Brussels, Utrecht University where she obtained her PhD and at the University of Cyprus before joining the Dutch department at the University of Oldenburg.



Recent publications

De Belder, M. (2020) A split approach to the selection of allomorphs: vowel length alternating allomorphy in Dutch. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 5(1), 42.

Ruijgndijk, Esther, Marijke De Belder & Annelien Schippers. (2021) *Inleiding tot de Nederlandse taalkunde*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

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