

Chapter

3

Dummy subjects

In chapter two we presented criteria which constructions should meet in order to be used in a study on the Critical Period Hypothesis for syntax in second language acquisition. Such constructions should be very difficult to acquire for second language learners and learners should only be able to acquire them through processing input, i.e. there should not be simple rules available to second language learners that they can learn by heart and apply without really having acquired them. Dummy subject constructions in Dutch seem to meet these criteria. That is why we chose these constructions for our tests.

In this chapter, we will discuss previous literature on dummy subject constructions, the results on these constructions from our sentence preference task with native speakers of Dutch, and what German, French and Turkish learners have to acquire in order to behave like native speakers of Dutch with respect to dummy subject constructions.

We will first review the relevant literature on dummy subjects in Dutch from a purely descriptive perspective (§ 3.1). In paragraph 3.2 we will present the results from our sentence preference test with native speakers. Subsequently, in § 3.3, we will look at some generative analyses for dummy subject constructions. In paragraph 3.4, we will explore how dummy subject constructions, and distinctions that in our study turned out to play an important role in these constructions (in Dutch), are expressed in German, French and Turkish. Finally, we will discuss what native speakers of German, French and Turkish have to acquire with respect to dummy subject constructions in order to behave like native speakers of Dutch in our tests.

In the literature, different terms are used for dummy subject constructions and it is not always clear exactly what constructions researchers using the term “dummy subject” have in mind. Some clarification of what we mean when we refer to dummy subject constructions is, therefore, necessary. We use this term to denote constructions with a logical subject that does not occur in the normal syntactic subject position for semantic or pragmatic

reasons (e.g. heaviness). Instead, the syntactic subject position is filled by a dummy element, which can be *het* (it), *er* (there) or *0*. In this study, *0* is used in sentences in which *het* or *er* is absent, in cases in which an equivalent sentence with *het* or *er* is (theoretically) possible.

We distinguished three types of dummy subject constructions in Dutch:

- sentences with *er* or *0* in which the logical subject is a noun phrase/determiner phrase (DP-type)
- active sentences with *er*, *het* or *0* and a sentential subject (AS-type)
- passive sentences with *er*, *het* or *0* and a sentential subject (PS-type)

Because results from a pilot test with native speakers did not reveal clear differences between active and passive sentences of the DP-type we restricted this type to active sentences. An example of each type is presented in (3.1)-(3.3). In these examples (and all other examples from our study), the dummy subjects are represented by the symbol \diamond and logical subjects are underlined. To the right, we present preference judgements that are extracted from the results on the sentence preference test from the native speaker control group in our study. In these preference judgements, a preference for *0* to *er*, for example, is indicated by the symbol $>$. When sentences with *0*, for example, are judged as either better or equally good/bad as equivalent sentences with *er*, this is indicated by the symbols $>$ and $=$. The judgements of the native speakers will be discussed in paragraph 3.2 below.

I DP-type:

- (3.1) Men beseft niet altijd dat \diamond een pinguïn een vogel is.⁵ $0 > er$
 one realises not always that \diamond a penguin a bird is
 “One does not always realise that a penguin is a bird.”

II AS-type:

- (3.2) Meestal valt \diamond niet mee om kaartjes voor een concert te krijgen.
 $het > 0 \geq er$
 usually falls \diamond not with to tickets for a concert get
 “Usually it is not easy to get tickets for a concert.”

⁵ In sentences like these, it is not clear whether the logical subject is in the normal syntactic subject position or not. It can be argued that it is not, however, in similar sentences with a constituent in between the complementizer and the logical subject, as in:

- i Ik heb gehoord dat volgens haar een pinguïn geen vogel is.
 I have heard that according her a penguin not a bird is
 “I heard that according to her a penguin is not a bird.”

III PS-type:

- (3.3) In de krant wordt \diamond beweerd dat hij dronken achter het stuur
gezetten heeft. $\emptyset \geq er \geq$ het
in the newspaper is \diamond claimed that he drunk behind the wheel sat
has
“It is claimed in the newspaper that he was drunk while he was
driving.”

For the different types there are different reasons for using a dummy subject. In sentences of the DP-type with a non-specific subject, the subject is generally not in topic position, because non-specific subjects are typically not topics. In sentences of the AS- and PS-type, sentential subjects (i.e. embedded clauses) occur at the end of the sentence, because heavy elements are preferred in sentence final position in most languages for processing reasons. Because of this, the syntactic position of the subject is supposed to be occupied by some other element, i.e. a dummy subject.

3.1 Traditional analyses of dummy subjects in Dutch

In this paragraph, we will focus on the descriptions in Haeseryn, Romijn, Geerts, De Rooij and Van der Toorn (1997) for the different dummy subject construction types, as this grammar provides the most elaborate description of dummy subjects in Dutch presently available. Haeseryn et al. describe in what kind of sentences dummy subjects can occur and in what sentence types and positions they tend to be obligatory or optional. We will discuss other proposals when relevant. In paragraph 3.4, we will discuss traditional analyses of the other languages involved in our study, German, French and Turkish, both with respect to dummy subject constructions and the factors that play an important role in this study.

DP-subjects

Haeseryn et al. (1997) discuss many factors concerning the acceptability of sentences with a DP-subject and “presentative *er*” (see paragraph 8.6.3 of Haeseryn et al.). They give a wide range of sometimes very subtle judgements for the examples they present, which we have divided below into two categories: a preference for \emptyset to *er* and a preference for *er* to \emptyset . Since these are preference judgements (as are the judgements we elicited in our study), they do not provide information about the grammaticality of sentences with the non-preferred dummy subject. In general, however, sentences with a preference for \emptyset cannot contain *er*, whereas in sentences with a preference for *er* \emptyset is often also grammatical.

For each category we present the factors discussed in Haeseryn et al., together with one of their examples. The presentation of these examples is different from that of the other examples in this dissertation. The main reason for this is that in most of the examples from Haeseryn et al. *er* occurs in initial position, whereas in our study we mainly looked at dummy subjects in non-initial position. The reason for this was that in sentence-initial position, the dummy subject *Ø* is principally excluded. Haeseryn et al. often only present examples with *er* and not the equivalent sentences with *Ø*. It should be noted that in the examples in which *er* is in initial position the equivalent sentence with *Ø* has a different word order.

Factors that conspire against er (Ø > er):

Perception verbs with a non-finite embedded clause:

- (3.4) Ik zag (*er*) iemand oversteken. (p.468)
I saw there someone cross
“I saw someone cross the road.”

Categorical and generic subjects:

- (3.5) *Er* is een zebra gestreept. (p.469)
there is a zebra striped
“Zebras are striped.”

Definite subjects:

- (3.6) *Er* staat de auto bij de schuur. (p. 470)
there stands the car near the shed
“The car is near the shed.”

Predicates which strongly emphasize an activity:

- (3.7) *Er* besloep een tijger zijn prooi. (p. 472)
there stalked a tiger his prey
“A tiger stalked its prey.”

Predicates in which the referent of the subject plays an active role:

- (3.8) *Er* sommeerde mij een agent af te stappen. (p. 472)
there summoned me a policeman off to get
“A policeman summoned me to get off my bike.”

Questions for clarifications and riddles:

- (3.9) Wat is (*er*) rond en toch vierkant? (p. 473)
what is there round and yet square?
“What is round and yet square?”

Questions with a definite direct object:

- (3.10) Schrijft (*er*) één van jullie die brief? (p.474)
Writes there one of you that letter?
“Is one of you going to write that letter?”

DUMMY SUBJECTS

Questions with a subject complement:

- (3.11) Wie van u is (*er*) de dokter? (p.474)
who of you is there the doctor?
“Which one of you is the doctor?”

Sentences with a definite object in initial position:

- (3.12) Al die foto's heeft (*er*) iemand bewaard. (p. 476)
all those pictures has there someone saved
“Someone has saved all those pictures”

Factors that favour er (er > 0):

Indefinite (non-categorical) subjects:

- (3.13) *Er* staat een auto bij de schuur. (p. 470)
there stands a car near the shed
“A car is near the shed.”

Definite subjects in enumerations, and with repetition, habit or custom:

- (3.14) *Er* waren op de receptie aanwezig: de burgemeester, de wethouders en de meeste leden van de gemeenteraad. (p. 470)
there were at the reception present: the mayor, the aldermen and the most members of the local council
“At the reception were present: the mayor, the aldermen and most members of the local council.”

Questions with an intransitive verb:

- (3.15) Wie komt *er* vanavond op dat feest? (p. 472)
who comes there tonight at that party?
“Who is coming to that party tonight?”

Questions with an adjectival subject complement:

- (3.16) Wie is *er* ziek? (p. 473)
who is there ill?
“Who is ill?”

Questions with an indefinite direct object:

- (3.17) Wie schrijft *er* een brief? (p. 474)
who writes there a letter?
“Who is going to write a letter?”

Sentences with *zijn* or *bestaan* with the meaning of *to exist*:

- (3.18) *Er* is/bestaat ook een aap zonder staart. (p.469)
there is/exists also a monkey without tail
“There are also monkeys without tails.”

Subject with special emphasis in sentence-initial position:

- (3.19) Een student kwam *er*! (p. 474)
a student came there!
“It was a student who showed up.”

Sentences with an indefinite object in initial position:

- (3.20) Foto's heeft *er* altijd wel iemand bewaard. (p. 476)
 pictures has there always someone saved
 "There is always someone who has saved pictures."

Many of these factors are related to specificity. In most examples with a preference for *0*, the entity referred to by the subject does not need to be introduced into the discourse, either because it is already present or because it is clear from the context what is meant. For most examples with a preference for *er*, the opposite holds: it is not clear to the listener in advance what subject the speaker is going to talk about. Therefore, introduction of the subject by means of presentative *er* is necessary.

The examples given by Haeseryn et al. (1997) of predicates which strongly emphasize an activity (as in (3.7)), and predicates in which the entity referred to by the subject plays an active role (as in (3.8)) are often also transitive. Moreover, in transitive sentences subjects are more easily interpreted as specific. In these sentences it is therefore hard to tell exactly which factors determine the preference for *0* to *er*.

For declarative sentences with the logical subject in initial position, Haeseryn et al. (1997) claim that *er* is optional in most cases. It should be noted here that from the dominant analysis within a generative perspective (presented in paragraph 3.3) such sentences could never contain a dummy subject and that *er* should always have a locative interpretation in these cases (see e.g. Bennis, 1987)

A factor not discussed by Haeseryn et al. (1997), but mentioned by other researchers, is the specificity of the verb. Grondelaers, Speelman and Carbonez (2001) make a three-way distinction between verbs with respect to specificity: very specific verbs, such as *branden* (burn), *zitten* (sit) and *verschijnen* (appear), very unspecific verbs, such as *zijn* (be) and an in-between category, consisting of verbs such as *ontstaan* (arise), *blijven* (stay) and *heersen* (rule) (Grondelaers et al. 2001:22).

Sentential subjects in active sentences

For dummy subject constructions in active sentences with a sentential logical subject, it is much less clear which factors play a role. According to Haeseryn et al. (1997), *het* can occur in all sentence types: in main clauses without embedded clauses, in main clauses with both non-finite and finite embedded clauses, in cleft sentences, in "balansschikking"-constructions (complex sentences with the complementizer *of*, of which the first part contains a negative item and the second part has the word order of a main clause (van den Hoek, Houtman & Jullens, 1988: 6)), in pseudo-cleft sentences and nominal predicates with embedded antecedents (Haeseryn et al., 1997: 1133-1137).

DUMMY SUBJECTS

Examples of each type are presented in (3.21)-(3.27).

Main clause without embedded clause:

(3.21) *Het* valt niet te ontkennen: zijn houding is de laatste tijd aanmerkelijk veranderd. (p. 1136)

it falls not to deny: his attitude is the last time considerably changed
“It cannot be denied: his attitude has changed considerably recently.”

Main clause with non-finite embedded clause:

(3.22) *Het* is gezond om veel te wandelen. (p. 1135)

it is healthy to much to walk
“It is good for your health to walk a lot.”

Main clause with finite embedded clause:

(3.23) *Het* zou te betreuren zijn als je je werk niet af kunt maken. (p. 1136)

it would to regret be if you your work not complete can make
“It would be regrettable if you cannot finish your work.”

Cleft sentence:

(3.24) *Het* is om vier uur dat de trein vertrekt. (p. 1133)

it is at four hour that the train leaves
“It is at four o'clock that the train leaves.”

“Balansschikking”:

(3.25) *Het* duurde niet lang of het onweer brak los. (p. 1135)

it took not long or the thunderstorm broke loose
“It did not take long for the storm to break.”

Pseudo-cleft sentence:

(3.26) *Het* is niet zo dat we nu al maatregelen gaan nemen. (p. 1137)

it is not so that we now already measures go take
“It is not the case that we are going to take measures right now.”

Nominal predicate with embedded antecedent:

(3.27) *Het* is namaak wat je daar ziet. (p. 1137)

it is imitation what you there see
“It is an imitation that you see there.”

In some of these constructions, *het* can be absent (in non-initial position) or replaced by *er*. Examples of this from the Eindhoven corpus (a Dutch corpus with different text types, see Uit den Boogaart, 1975) are presented in (3.28) and (3.29).

- (3.28) Maar steeds duidelijker blijkt *0* dat militaire macht niet zonder meer kan worden omgezet in politieke macht.
 but increasingly clearer appears *0* that military power not just like that can be transformed into political power
 “However, it becomes more and more clear that military power cannot be transformed into political power just like that.”
- (3.29) ... *er* bleek alras dat zij allerminst gerekend moesten worden tot pseudo-voorzitters van de vliegengod of zelfs tot potentiële tegenstanders.
 ... there turned out soon that they not in the least counted should be to pseudo-advocates of the fly god or even to potential opponents
 “... it soon turned out that they should not at all be counted as pseudo-advocates of the fly god or even as potential opponents.”

It should be noted that the role of predicates with a change of state, which turned out to be important in our study, is not discussed in the traditional literature on dummy subjects. Moreover, in most syntactic studies on dummy subjects hardly any attention, if any at all, has been paid to the question when *er* and *0* can occur in sentences with a sentential logical subject.

Passive sentences

Passive sentences are more or less the opposite of active sentences with respect to the distribution of dummy subjects: they generally show a preference for *er* or *0*. According to Haeseryn et al. (1997), *er* is used with non-factive predicates, as in (3.30) and *het* with factive predicates, as in (3.31). It should be noted that the dummy subject is in initial position in these sentences. Hence, the option of *0* is left out of consideration, because Dutch requires an overt element in sentence initial position in affirmative sentences.

- (3.30) *Er* wordt beweerd dat hij gefraudeerd heeft. (p. 1138)
 there is claimed that he committed fraud has
 “It is claimed that he has committed fraud.”
- (3.31) *Het* wordt betreurd dat hij gefraudeerd heeft. (p. 1138)
 it is regretted that he committed fraud has
 “It is regretted that he has committed fraud.”

Examples of passive sentences with different dummy subjects in non-initial position are presented in (3.32)-(3.36). As is observed by Haeseryn et al. (1997), the use of *er* is either optional or excluded when the subject is a subordinate clause in initial position (p. 475). It is not clear, however, when it is optional and when it is excluded.

DUMMY SUBJECTS

- (3.32) Dat hij gefraudeerd heeft wordt *er/0* beweerd. (Haeseryn et al., 1997: 475)⁶
that he committed fraud is there/0 claimed
“It is claimed that he has committed fraud.”
- (3.33) Dat hij hard gewerkt heeft, kan **er/0* niet gezegd worden. (Haeseryn et al., 1997: 475)
that he hard worked can there/0 not said be
“It cannot be said that he has worked hard.”
- (3.34) Of er een dokter in de zaal was, werd *er/0* gevraagd. (Haeseryn et al., 1997: 475)
if there a doctor in the room was was there/0 asked
“It was asked whether there was a doctor in the room.”
- (3.35) Of ze misschien toch een verblijfsvergunning kan krijgen, wordt **er/0* nog onderzocht. (Haeseryn et al., 1997, p. 476)
if she perhaps still a residence permit can get is there/0 still investigated
“It is still investigated whether she can get a residence permit after all.”
- (3.36) ... dat *er/het* gezegd werd dat jij komen zult. (Vikner, 1995: 243)⁷
... that there/it said was that you come will
“... that it was said that you will come”

3.2 The present study: results from native speakers of Dutch

The native speakers of Dutch in our study serve as the control group for the results of the native speakers of German, French and Turkish who have acquired Dutch as their second language. Since some of the constructions in our study are ill-understood and subject to a great deal of variation, these results do not merely provide evidence for a pre-established native speaker norm. Rather, we also use these results to determine what preferences native speakers actually have with respect to dummy subjects in Dutch. This is why these results are presented here.

⁶ When no example with *het* is given, the equivalent sentence with *het* is always ungrammatical.

⁷ The dummy subject *0* is left out here, because Vikner does not give a judgement for this option. How Vikner arrived at the other judgements in this sentences is unknown. It seems to us that “het” is not acceptable for many native speakers of Dutch in this context.

Preliminary study and pilot study

In order to find out what factors play a role for native speakers in their choice of dummy subjects, we first did a very small-scale preliminary study in which we elicited absolute grammaticality judgements from five native speakers of Dutch, four of whom were linguists. On the basis of the results from this study we designed a pilot test, which we conducted with sixty native speakers of Dutch: thirty with a high level of education (higher professional education and university) and thirty with a somewhat lower level of education (MAVO and HAVO: lower and higher general secondary education). Each participant was presented with half of the test items. Because some participants in our preliminary study had indicated that they had problems giving absolute judgements, we used a sentence preference design (see chapter 4) for the pilot with a three-point scale (a = I prefer sentence A; a/b = I don't have a preference; b = I prefer sentence B). The order of the a- and b-sentence within items was randomised and the same for all participants. For our final test, we used those factors that seemed to play a role in the choice of dummy subjects in our pilot and those items for which the participants in our pilot study had the most consistent results. Since the results for active and passive sentences with a DP-subject were very similar, we restricted our final test to active sentences for this construction type.

In our final study, we used highly educated native speakers of Dutch (most of whom were undergraduate students). We did this for practical reasons and for comparability with the second language learners (most of whom had a very high level of education). Since the results from our pilot study did not reveal large differences between the highly educated group and a group with a lower level of education, this restriction seems justified for this construction type. Because of the differences between our pilot study and our final study, both in the items and in the scale that we used, we cannot be absolutely certain, however, that there are no differences related to educational level. In order to see whether our results from the native speakers are generalisable to the whole native speaker population, more research would be necessary.

General results

The results from the native speakers who participated in our sentence preference task (for the methodology: see chapter 4) reveal that for each construction type there is a general pattern, and that there are one or two factors which disturb this general pattern. Judgements for the (active) DP-type deviate from the general pattern when the subject is non-specific and the predicate is intransitive. Those for the active sentential type (AS-type) deviate from the general pattern when the predicate expresses a change of state. Judgements for the passive sentential type (PS-type), finally, deviate

DUMMY SUBJECTS

from the general pattern when the equivalent active sentence contains a dummy object. The preference patterns with examples are given below:

– *DP-type*

General pattern (DPg): **0 > er**

- (3.37) Men beseft niet altijd dat \diamond een pinguïn een vogel is.
 one realises not always that \diamond a penguin a bird is
 “One does not always realise that a penguin is a bird.”

Transitive predicates with a non-specific subject (DPnst): **0 >= er**

- (3.38) Op televisie doen \diamond veel mensen dingen die ze normaal niet durven
 on television do \diamond many people things that they normally not dare
 “On television many people do things they normally would not dare to do.”

Intransitive predicates with a non-specific subject (DPnsi): **er >= 0**

- (3.39) Ik vind het vervelend dat \diamond boven een raam open staat.
 I find it annoying that \diamond upstairs a window open stands
 “It bothers me that there is a window open upstairs.”

– *AS-type*

General pattern (ASg): **het > 0 >= er**

- (3.40) Meestal valt \diamond niet mee om kaartjes voor een concert te krijgen
 usually falls \diamond not with to tickets for a concert get
 “Usually it is not easy to get tickets for a concert.”

Change of state (AScos): **0 / het > er⁸**

- (3.41) Nu schiet \diamond mij ineens te binnen dat ik nog boodschappen moet doen.
 now occurs \diamond me suddenly that I still shopping must do
 “Now it suddenly occurs to me that I still have to go out shopping.”

⁸ We use the symbol / in the presentation of the judgements from the native speakers in our experiment when there was no clear preference for one dummy subject. On average, however, the dummy subject to the left of this symbol was preferred.

– *PS-type*

General pattern (PSg):

0 >= er >= het

(3.42) In de krant wordt \diamond beweerd dat hij dronken achter het stuur gezeten heeft.

in the newspaper is \diamond claimed that he drunk behind the wheel sat
has

“It is claimed in the newspaper that he was drunk while he was driving.”

Sentences with a dummy object in the active equivalent (PSdo):

het >= 0 >= er

(3.43) Door haar vrienden wordt \diamond bewonderd dat ze ook in moeilijke tijden vrolijk blijft.

by her friends is \diamond admired that she also in difficult times cheerful
remains

“Her friends admire her for remaining cheerful, even in difficult times.”

Active sentences with a DP-subject

For active sentences with a DP-subject, the sentences that fit the general pattern can be divided into three subcategories:

- perception verbs with a non-finite embedded clause
- categorical subjects
- specific subjects

The sentences with categorical subjects get the strongest preference for *0*. Transitivity turned out to be a weak factor. That is the reason why the preference for *0* to *er* for transitive predicates with a non-specific subject (DPnst) is weaker than that for the general category. Moreover, although in general native speakers have a preference for *0* for DPnst and a weak preference for *er* for intransitive predicates with a non-specific subject (DPnsi; see table 3.1 below), there are some exceptions, as can be seen in (3.44) and (3.45):

Transitive predicate, but weak preference for *er*

(3.44) Op zijn verjaardag drinken \diamond nooit zo veel mensen bier. *er* > 0

on his birthday drink \diamond never so many people beer

“At his birthday party there are usually not many people who drink beer.”

Intransitive predicate, but weak preference for \emptyset

- (3.45) Op dit feest zijn \diamond heel veel mensen behoorlijk dronken. $\emptyset > er$
 on this party are \diamond very many people rather drunk
 “Quite a few people are rather drunk at this party.”

It may well be that transitivity and specificity interact. Moreover, (non-)specificity turned out to be a hard factor to control. The reason for this might be that the specificity of the subject is determined in part by the previous discourse, which was lacking in our test. The results for all categories are given in table 3.1. For more detailed information on individual items and deviations from the patterns presented below, see appendix C.

Table 3.1: Results for the DP-type

Category	NS Pattern	Subcategories
DPg	$\emptyset > er$	perception verbs with a non-finite embedded clause; categorical subjects; specific subjects
DPnst	$\emptyset >= er$	-
DPnsi	$er >= \emptyset$	-

Active sentences with a sentential subject

For active sentences with a sentential subject, the aspect of the predicate plays an important role. For predicates with stative aspect, as in (3.40) above, native speakers of Dutch have a strong overall preference for *het*. For predicates with terminative/inchoative aspect and a change of state verb, as in (3.41), this general pattern is disrupted: \emptyset gets better and *het* seems to get worse. It should be noted that there is a great deal of variation for this category and many different preference patterns occur, even inconsistent ones (e.g. $\emptyset > het$; $het = er$; $er > \emptyset$). However, only four native speakers have the same preference pattern for both predicate types. It should also be noted that other factors, such as factivity of the predicate, occupation of the object position by a DP and conditionality of the embedded clause, did not disturb the general pattern. An overview of the preference patterns of the native speakers is given in table 3.2. The subcategories presented are categories that seemed to play a role in our preliminary or pilot study, but turned out not to elicit distinctive judgements in our final test.

Table 3.2: Results for active sentences with a sentential subject

Category	DS pair	NS pattern	Subcategories
ASg	het - er	het > er	non-finite embedded clause; conditional embedded clause; DP object; other sentences
	het - 0	het > 0	non-finite embedded clause; conditional embedded clause; DP object; other sentences
	er - 0	0 >= er	non-finite embedded clause; conditional embedded clause; DP object; other sentences
AScos	het - er	het / er*	-
	het - 0	none (0 / het)	-
	er - 0	0 >= er	-

* For some predicates, some NSs had a preference for *er* to *het* in initial position.

Passive sentences with a sentential subject

For the passives, we used various predicate types, but on the basis of our results we could only make a distinction between passives with a dummy object in the corresponding active sentence, as in (3.47), and passives that do not have this, as in (3.46).

- (3.46) In de krant wordt \diamond beweerd dat hij dronken achter het stuur gezeten heeft. 0 >= er >= het
 in the newspaper is \diamond claimed that he drunk behind the wheel sat
 has
 “It is claimed in the newspaper that he was drunk while he was driving.”
- (3.47) Door haar vrienden wordt \diamond bewonderd dat ze ook in moeilijke tijden vrolijk blijft. het >= 0 >=er
 by her friends is \diamond admired that she also in difficult times cheerful
 remains
 “Her friends admire her for remaining cheerful, even in difficult times.”

Equivalent active sentence:

- (3.48) Haar vrienden bewonderen *het* dat ze ook in moeilijke tijden vrolijk blijft.⁹
 her friends admire it that she also in difficult times cheerful remains
 “Her friends admire her for remaining cheerful, even in difficult times.”

⁹ In this example, the dummy object is in italics and the semantic object is underlined.

Since dummy objects are always *het* in Dutch, native speakers also have a preference for *het* for the corresponding passive sentences. The preference pattern for this category is the same as the general pattern for active sentences, but it is weaker (compare table 3.3 to table 3.2), probably under the influence of the general preference pattern for passives. This general pattern is a clear preference for *er* and *0* to *het* and a very weak preference for *0* to *er*. It should be noted here that, for passives that do not have a dummy object in their equivalent active sentence, there is a great deal of variation, both between predicates and between native speakers. The patterns for the PS-type are presented in table 3.3. This table does not have a subcategories column, since there were no subcategories that could be distinguished in our pilot.

Table 3.3: Results for the PS-type

Category	DS pair	NS pattern
PSg	het - er	er >= het
	het - 0	0 >= het
	er - 0	0 / er
PSdo	het - er	het > er
	het - 0	het >= 0
	er - 0	0 >= er

Relevant factors

On the basis of our results for the three dummy subject construction types we will focus in the remaining paragraphs on the following factors:

- specificity and transitivity (for the DP-type)
- change of state (for the AS-type)
- dummy objects (for the PS-type)

3.3 Generative analyses

In generative syntactic research, dummy subjects have received considerable attention, but the constructions discussed are often limited to expletive *there* and some passive constructions, and to sentences with dummy subjects in initial position (see e.g. Hoekstra & Mulder, 1990; Chomsky, 1995; Lasnik, 1995; Moro, 1997; Radford, 1997). According to the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995), features of subjects are case-checked in the AgrSP through spec-head agreement (against the features of the verb). In languages like Dutch, this checking can take place either by overt movement of the subject DP to spec AgrSP, or by attraction of case features from the subject

DP by spec AgrSP (covert movement). When case checking takes place through attraction, a dummy subject must fill the specifier position of the AgrSP (Radford, 1997)¹⁰ to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle (EPP), according to which the subject position must be filled (see e.g. Chomsky, 1995:55). An example of such an analysis of item ns8 from the DPnsi category, presented in example (3.49), is given in figure 1.

- (3.49) ... dat *er* vandaag nog een bus komt bij deze halte
 ... that there today still a bus comes at this stop
 “... that there will be another bus at this bus stop today.”

These “true” dummy subjects are assumed to lack a Θ -role and therefore “occur with verbs that fail to assign an external Θ -role such as existential *be*, unaccusative or raising verbs, and they always require the presence of a thematic associate (the logical subject)” (Felser & Rupp, 2001: 290). For the analysis of this construction (expletive *there*), different proposals have been made within generative grammar.

Chomsky (1995) analyses the expletive as an LF-affix and assumes that the formal features of the associate (the logical subject) adjoin to T. The Φ -features of the associate are assumed to consist only of a [person] feature (i.e. [number] features are lacking). According to Lasnik (1995), the associate must have partitive case, which is assigned by *be*, unaccusative verbs and raising verbs. This means that the associate must be indefinite, because definites have objective case. It also means that expletive *there* (or its equivalent in other languages) can never occur with a transitive verb. Several researchers, however, have challenged the link between partitive case and indefinites and have shown that expletives can sometimes combine with transitive verbs (see e.g. Felser & Rupp, 2001).

¹⁰ This proposal deviates from the original Minimalist theory as proposed by Chomsky (1995) in that, according to Chomsky, there is no AgrSP and case checking takes place within TP. The mechanism of checking case features, however, is the same in both proposals.

DUMMY SUBJECTS

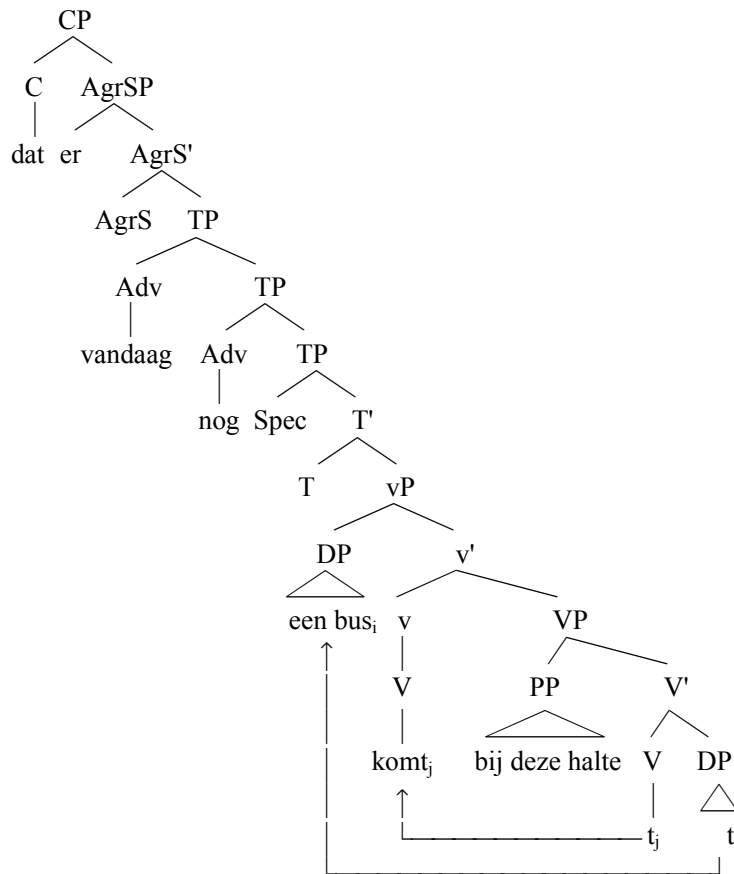


Figure 3.1: Minimalist analysis of dummy subject construction

Felser and Rupp (2001) propose instead that the associate in existential sentences carries a [number], but no [person] feature. Because the [person] feature of T cannot be checked by the associate, the associate cannot be assigned nominative case and receives default case (case used for DPs that check neither structural nor inherent case). The expletive, which is considered a spatio-temporal argument and carries a [person] feature, is subsequently merged into spec TP and is assigned nominative case. In existential sentences (with or without expletive) the associate is interpreted in predicate-internal position, a position that is not available for individual level predicates, such as *to be intelligent* (see Carlson, 1977). This accounts

for why stage-level predicates (such as *to be available*) can be interpreted existentially and combine with expletive *there*, whereas individual level predicates cannot¹¹. In order for stage-level predicates to receive a strong (specific) interpretation, the logical subject must appear outside the VP. Felser and Rupp assume that transitive sentences have two predicate-external subject positions. Because of this, transitive sentences can contain expletive *there* as well.

Moro (1997) analyses the expletive as the predicate of a small clause (SC) complement of a copula, which raises to spec-IP to check nominative case. The PP that is often (obligatorily) present in these sentences, as in (3.50), is analysed by Moro as IP-adjunct.

(3.50) [_{IP} [_{IP} *There*_i is_j [_{VP} t_j [_{SC} [a man] t_i]]]] [_{PP} in the room]] (p. 98)

In these frameworks, it is not clear why overt and covert movement to AgrSP can coexist (compare (3.51) and (3.52)), what determines the choice of a particular dummy subject and why dummy subjects in some sentence types can be absent or phonetically unrealised, as in (3.53), in languages which have the Extended Projection Principle (or an EPP-feature).

¹¹ According to H. de Hoop (personal communication, October 2004) individual level predicates can occur in Dutch with *er*, depending on the predicate and the context, e.g. in sentences like:

- (i) *Er zijn veel taalkundigen een beetje gek*
there are many linguists a bit mad
“Many linguists are a bit mad.”
- (ii) *Er zijn weinig vrouwen hoogleraar.*
there are few women professor
“Few women are professors.”
- (iii) *Er kent in elk geval één persoon Latijn.*
there knows in any case one person Latin
“There is at least one person who knows Latin.”
- (iv) *Er hebben maar twee van de drie jonge katjes een wit befje.*
there have two of the three young cats a white chest
“Two of the three kittens have a white chest.”

It should be noted that these sentences are somewhat marked, that their grammaticality can be influenced by the presence of adverbs and that *0* may in fact be preferred for several of these examples. However, the fact that *er* can be used in these examples is a problem for the theory outlined here.

DUMMY SUBJECTS

- (3.51) *Er* komt een auto de hoek om.¹²
 there comes a car the corner around
 “There comes a car around the corner.”
- (3.52) Een auto komt de hoek om.
 a car comes the corner around
 “A car comes around the corner.”
- (3.53) Zelden wordt *0* aan ouderen precies uitgelegd hoe de kaartautomaat op het station werkt.
 rarely is *0* to elderly exactly explained how the ticket machine at the station works
 “It is rarely explained to elderly people exactly how the ticket machine at the station works.”

In the Minimalist Program, overt movement must always be motivated by checking requirements of strong features, and “arbitrary” scrambling is not possible. What motivates overt movement in sentences like (3.51), but not in what have been termed equivalent sentences, such as (3.52), has not been accounted for within these frameworks. In the case of sentences with a dummy subject and a logical subject in the form of a DP (DP-type), one could imagine that a presentational or existential feature is checked, but such features have not been proposed in the literature.

Another problem is that the subject position does not have to be phonetically filled in all contexts. If the subject position can be phonetically empty in sentences like (3.53), why can it also be filled by *er* in the same sentence and why can there not be a phonetically empty subject in initial position and in sentences like (3.54) to (3.56)?

- (3.54) Langzaam drong *het/*0* tot hem door dat hij nooit meer zou kunnen lopen.
 slowly got it/*0* to him through that he never anymore would can walk
 “It was slowly getting through to him that he would never be able to walk again.”
- (3.55) Fatima zegt dat *het/*0* zelden voorkomt dat zij te laat zijn.
 Fatima says that it/*0* rarely happens that they too late are
 “Fatima says that it rarely happens that they are late.”
- (3.56) Zij vond dat *het/*0* een schande zou zijn als dat plan door zou gaan.
 she found that it/*0* a disgrace would be if that plan through would go
 “She thought it would be a disgrace if that plan went through.”

¹² This example is not taken from our sentence preference task, because all pairs were constructed in such a way that they only differed with respect to the choice of dummy subject.

Bennis (1987), in a pre-minimalist framework, proposes that dummy subjects are not semantically empty. Instead, he proposes that in dummy subject constructions¹³ either an adverbial pronoun (*er*) is adjoined to the left of the subject (like PPs), or a referential pronoun (*het*) occupies the subject position and the external argument (the logical subject) is extraposed. According to Bennis, restrictions with respect to what logical subjects can combine with a dummy subject are semantically and/or pragmatically determined. He proposes two pragmatic rules that govern the use of expletive *er*. They are given in a and b.

- a) In unmarked sentences, presupposition precedes focus (p. 223)
- b) There is a presuppositional hierarchy (from [+presuppositional] to [-presuppositional]):
 weak pronoun - strong pronoun - name - definite NP - indefinite NP [+spec] - indefinite NP [-spec] (p. 223)

Although this proposal accounts for the fact that *er* can be optional in non-initial position (because it is an adjunct), it does not account for why the same seems to hold for *het* (which cannot be an adjunct in Bennis' proposal) with certain verbs (see e.g. (3.41 and 3.43) above).

Only some of the factors that in our experiment with native speakers turned out to play an important role in the choice of dummy subjects in Dutch (specificity, transitivity, change of state and dummy objects), have been elaborately discussed in the generative literature. Instead of specificity, definiteness is considered to play a crucial role. Unaccusativity (which could not be distinguished from change of state as the crucial factor for the AS-type in our study) is discussed in some of the literature, but with respect to the DP-type, rather than the AS-type. Moreover, unaccusative verbs are claimed to behave in the same way as raising verbs in these accounts (see e.g. Felser & Rupp, 2001), which turned out not to be the case for sentences of the AS-type in our study.

What all these generative accounts have in common is that they cannot account for (part) of the optionality of *er* and/or *het* in our native speaker data. If Dutch has an EPP-feature, it should always work and an overt subject should always be present. Our data clearly show that both *er* and *het* can sometimes be optional, but not for all predicates. Accounting for this optionality will be a challenge for future generative work.

¹³ The term “dummy subject constructions” is used here as proposed in this paragraph. Since Bennis (1987) argues that these elements are not dummy subjects, he would not call these constructions “dummy subject constructions”.

3.4 German, French and Turkish

So far, we have discussed some general generative analyses of dummy subject constructions, some traditional analyses of dummy subjects in Dutch and the results from the native speakers of Dutch in our experiment. To gain more insight into the possible role of transfer in the results from our second language learners, we will now discuss relevant constructions and factors in German, French and Turkish that may affect the acquisition of dummy subject constructions by German, French and Turkish speaking learners of Dutch. We will also discuss what German, French and Turkish learners of Dutch have to acquire in order to behave like native speakers of Dutch on items with dummy subject constructions in our tests.

Dummy subjects and relevant factors in German

German sentences in which the logical subject is not in clause initial position for semantic or pragmatic reasons normally have *es* in initial position, as in (3.57).

- (3.57) *Es wartet jemand auf dich* (Drosdowski & Augst, 1984: 720)
 there waits someone on you
 “There is someone waiting for you.”

Some German syntacticians claim that *es* can only occur in sentence-initial position (see e.g. Drosdowski & Augst, 1984: 720 or Engel, 1988: 860). According to Müller's generative analysis (Müller, 1998), the reason for this is that German has only one functional projection (F(inite)P) above VP, which is always occupied in embedded or inverted sentences (either by a complementizer or by an object or adjunct), so it can never contain *es*. Others, however, give examples of German sentences with *es* in non-initial position, as in (3.58)-(3.60). As is the case for dummy subjects in Dutch, *es* can occur both in sentences with inversion, as in (3.58) and (3.59) and in embedded sentences, as in (3.60).

- (3.58) *Heute macht *es* mir großes Vergnügen, Sie hier zu sehen.* (Curme, 1952: 458)
 today makes it me great joy you here to see
 “I am very pleased today to see you here.”
- (3.59) *Uns freute *es*, den Freund wiederzusehen* (Helbig & Buscha, 1991: 110)
 us pleased it the friend again to see
 “It pleased us to see our friend again.”

- (3.60) Es scheint, daß *es* ihr unsagbar mühsam ist, den Mund zu öffnen
 (Zifonun et al., 1997: 1284)
 it seems that it her unspeakably difficult is the mouth to open
 “It seems that it is unbelievably hard for her to open her mouth.”

When *es* can occur in non-initial position, it can also sometimes be left out. According to Curme (1952), this happens most often after a non-emphatic predicate, as in (3.61).

- (3.61) Richtig ist *0*, daß ... (Curme, 1952: 460)
 right is, that ...
 “It is right that ...”

Other examples in the literature of sentences in which *0* can presumably occur are given below.

- (3.62) Einmal war *0* ein König in großer Not. (Curme, 1952: 462)
 once were a king in great need
 “Once there was a king in great need.”
- (3.63) Mir war *es/0* sehr peinlich, ihn um das Buch zu bitten. (Helbig & Buscha, 1991: 110)
 to me was (it) very painful him for the book to ask
 “It was very painful for me to ask him for the book.”
- (3.64) Natürlich ist *es/0* gut, daß du gekommen bist (Vikner, 1995: 226)
 of course is (it) good, that you come are
 “Of course it is good that you have come.”
- (3.65) Gesagt wird *es/0* nicht daß Johan krank ist. (Vikner, 1995: 230-231)
 said is it/0 not that Johan ill is
 “It is not said (emphasis) that Johan is ill.”

It should be noted that in the examples in which *es* can occur in non-initial position, the logical subject always has the form of an embedded clause. According to Vikner (1995), in these cases *es* or *0* (which he calls *pro*) is a (quasi-)argument and can occur both in spec IP or in spec CP. If it occurs in spec IP, *es* is optional according to Vikner, as in (3.64) and (3.65), except with raising verbs, as in (3.66).

- (3.66) ... daß *es/*0* scheint daß du kommen würdest. (Vikner, 1995: 264)
 ... that it/*0 seems that you come will
 “... that it seems that you will come.”

Expletive *es* (which has a DP-subject), on the other hand, can only occur in

DUMMY SUBJECTS

spec CP, because the verb is in C in verb second (V2) languages. When this position is occupied by a complementizer, a topic or a wh-element, as in (3.67)-(3.69), the expletive (which is generated in spec IP) must be realized (in spec IP) as *pro* in German.

- (3.67) Ich weiß, daß **es/0* ein Junge gekommen ist. (Vikner, 1995:70)
 I know, that it/*pro* a boy come is
 “I know that a boy has come.”
- (3.68) Gestern ist **es/0* ein Junge gekommen. (Vikner, 1995:185)
 yesterday is it/*pro* a boy come
 “Yesterday a boy came.”
- (3.69) Warum ist **es/0* ein Junge gekommen? (Vikner, 1995:185)
 why is it/*pro* a boy come?
 “Why did a boy come?”

Vikner (1995) does not indicate, however, why this should be the case. Moreover, this hypothesis cannot be carried over to Dutch. Although Dutch behaves like German with respect to V2, expletive *er* (DP-type) can occur in non-initial position in Dutch. It should be noted that in this analysis (contrary to Müller, 1998), there are at least two functional projections above VP, so there is no obvious reason why *es* could not be in spec IP position (like *pro*).

If we consider in what sentence types *es* can occur in German, there seem to be very few restrictions. According to Vikner, there is no restriction in German (and Dutch) on the predicate types with which *es* can occur: it can occur with unaccusatives (which Vikner calls ergatives), active and passive intransitives, and both active and passive transitives. Some examples are given in (3.70)-(3.72).

- (3.70) *Es* ist ein Junge gekommen. (Vikner, 1995:69: unaccusative predicate)
 there is a boy come
 “A boy has come.”
- (3.71) *Es* hat jemand Bücher gekauft (Vikner, 1995: 235: active transitive)
 there has someone books bought
 “Someone has bought books.”
- (3.72) *Es* wurde am Tatort ein Dänischer Linguist gesehen (Vikner, 1995: 175: passive transitive)
 there was at the scene of the crime a Danish linguist seen
 “A Danish linguist was seen at the scene of the crime.”

With respect to specificity for constructions with a DP-subject, German, unlike languages like Dutch and English, can have *es* with definite/specific

subjects, as can be seen in (3.73) and even with categorical subjects as in (3.74)

- (3.73) *Es* ist heute der Brief von Maria gekommen (Vikner, 1995: 174)
 there is today the letter from Maria come
 “Today Maria’s letter arrived.”
- (3.74) *Es* hat der Basilgenpeterlein eine Krafft ...
 (<http://www.kraeuter.ch/trachyspermum/Trachyspermum.htm>)
 there has the bishop’s weed a warm strength ...
 “The bishop’s weed has a warm strength...”

The only clear restriction on *es* in German seems to be that it does not occur in sentences with individual level predicates, as in (3.75)

- (3.75) **Es* war jemand intelligent. (Felser & Rupp, 2001: 302)
 there was someone intelligent
 “Someone was intelligent.”

Looking at the differences between dummy subjects in German and Dutch, it becomes clear that German learners of Dutch have to learn several things in order to behave like a native speaker of Dutch with respect to dummy subject constructions. They have to find out that:

- *es* should be translated as *er* in sentences with DP-subjects and in passive sentences with no dummy object in the active equivalent, but mostly as *het* in active sentences with a sentential subject and in passive sentences with a dummy object in their active equivalents.
- *er* can occur in non-initial position in sentences with a DP-subject, but not with specific and categorical subjects.
- The choice between *het* and *o* is not optional in active sentences with a sentential subject, but related to properties of the verb (change of state verbs versus stative verbs)

If we consider the factors that determine which dummy subject should be used in Dutch, we can try to predict which of the aspects mentioned above will be the most difficult to acquire for German learners of Dutch. Specificity, which is the most important factor in dummy subject sentences with a DP-subject in Dutch, is not expressed through grammatical means in German. However, German does distinguish between definites and indefinites by using different articles. Since specificity and definiteness often coincide, in many cases German learners of Dutch might use definiteness to decide whether to use *er* or not. However, categorical subjects are indefinite

but behave like specific subjects in that they do not take *er*. We might expect, therefore, that for dummy subject sentences with a DP-subject German learners of Dutch, if they have discovered that *er* can occur in non-initial position for this construction in Dutch, will have most problems with categorial subjects in our test.

For the AS-type, it is difficult to tell whether German learners of Dutch will have problems acquiring the distinction between change of state verbs and other predicates. Since this distinction seems never to have been looked at before, we cannot tell whether German and Dutch behave similarly or differently in this respect.

For passive sentences with a sentential subject, the relevant factor in Dutch is the presence of a dummy object in equivalent active sentences. Since German also has dummy objects and generally with the same predicates as Dutch, this factor in itself should not cause great problems for German learners of Dutch. However, it might be difficult to connect the right dummy subject preference to the right construction. German learners of Dutch will have to find out that the general pattern for passives is a preference for *er* and *0* to *het*, whereas for passives with a dummy object in the active equivalent, *het* is preferred to *0* and *er*.

All in all, we expect German learners of Dutch to have the fewest problems with active sentences with a sentential subject. For the DP-type, we expect less advanced learners to overgeneralise *0* to the whole construction, and more advanced learners to overgeneralise *er* to categorial and perhaps specific subjects. For the passives, we predict problems in finding out the right preference pattern for the right category. We do, however, expect German learners to be consistent within the two categories of the PS-type (PSg and PSdo).

Dummy subjects and relevant factors in French

In French there are two dummy subjects, *il* and *ce*. Dummy subjects in French can hardly ever be left out. Examples of different constructions with dummy subjects are presented in (3.76)-(3.89) below. The judgements presented in these examples are based in part on the literature and in part on judgements from three native speakers of French.

- (3.76) Hier *il/*c'/*0* est venu quelques hommes. (unaccusative + DP-subject; Hoekstra & Mulder, 1990: 47)
 yesterday there is came some men
 "Yesterday some men came."

- (3.77) Elle disait qu'*il*?que *c'est*/*que *0* est établi que le ministre a fraudé. (unaccusative + sentential subject)¹⁴
 she said that it is established that the minister has frauded
 “She said that it has been established that the minister has committed fraud.”
- (3.78) En 1930 *il* roulait encore quelques trams dans Paris. (unergative + DP-subject; Hoekstra & Mulder, 1990: 48)¹⁵
 in 1930 there ran still some trams in Paris
 “In 1930 there were still some trams running in Paris.”
- (3.79) Maintenant *il*/**ce*/**0* paraît que le ministre a fraudé. (raising verb + sentential subject)
 now it seems that the minister has frauded
 “It seems now as if the minister has committed fraud.”
- (3.80) A mon avis *il*/**c*/**0* est possible qu'il vienne. (*être* + adjective + sentential subject)
 according to me it is possible that he comes
 “I believe it is possible that he will come.”
- (3.81) **Il* a dansé quelqu'un dans le jardin. (active intransitive + DP-subject; Vikner, 1995: 203)
 there has danced someone in the garden
 “Someone has danced in the garden.”
- (3.82) **Il* a mangé quelqu'un une pomme. (active transitive + DP-subject; Vikner, 1995: 198)
 there has eaten someone an apple
 “Someone has eaten an apple.”
- (3.83) ?**Il* a été dansé. (passive intransitive without logical subject; Vikner, 1995: 209)
 there has been danced
 “There were people dancing.”
- (3.84) Elle disait que ici *il*/**c*/**0* a été organisé un grand concours. (passive transitive + DP-subject)
 she said that here there has been organised a big competition
 “She said that a big competition has been organised here.”

¹⁴ When no reference is given, the grammaticality judgements in these examples are my own. The reason for this is that in the literature examples are often incomplete, in the sense that judgements are not given for all dummy subject types or only for one position. For the sake of consistency, quoted examples are sometimes presented in a slightly different form than in the original source.

¹⁵ We used the original example from Hoekstra and Mulder (1990) here. It should be noted, though, that *en Paris* would be more correct in this context.

DUMMY SUBJECTS

- (3.85) *Il a été mangé une pomme* (passive transitive + DP-subject; Vikner, 1995: 202)
 there has been eaten an apple
 “An apple has been eaten.”
- (3.86) **Il me vexé, qu'il ait fait ça*. (active + sentential subject).
 it me annoys that he has done that
 “It annoys me that he did that.”
- (3.87) **Il me plait, qu'il ait fait ça*. (active + sentential subject)
 it me pleases that he has done that
 “I am glad that he has done that.”
- (3.88) **Il me fait plaisir qu'il ait fait ça*. (active + sentential subject)
 it me does pleasure that he has done that
 “I am glad that he has done that.”
- (3.89) *Il lui passa par la tête qu'il avait oublié de faire des courses*. (active + sentential subject)
 it him passed through the head that he had forgotten to do shopping
 “It struck him that he had forgotten to do the shopping.”

According to Vikner (1995), French dummy subjects can only occur with unaccusatives, with raising verbs, with *être* + adjective and in passive transitive sentences. However, as can be seen in (3.89), there are also other verbs that can combine with *il*. In the *être* + adjective construction there seems to be a general preference for *ce* and for unaccusatives there seems to be a general preference for *il*. *Il* is generally considered more formal or poetic than *ce*.

For the unaccusative sentences with a DP-subject, the same restrictions on the subject seem to hold as in Dutch: the subject cannot be specific or categorical, as is shown in examples (3.90)-(3.92).

- (3.90) **Il est venu les hommes*. (specific subject)
 there is come the men
 “The men have come.”
- (3.91) **On ne réalise souvent pas, qu'il est un pingouin un oiseau*.
(categorical subject)
 one realises often not that there is a penguin a bird
 “One does not always realise that a penguin is a bird.”
- (3.92) **On ne réalise souvent pas, que c'est un pingouin un oiseau*.
(categorical subject)
 one realises often not that there is a penguin a bird
 “One does not always realise that a penguin is a bird.”

With respect to sentences with a DP-subject, French learners of Dutch have to learn that in Dutch dummy subjects are not limited to unaccusative and passive transitive predicates. Once they have learned this, however, they can apply the same restrictions on the subject as in French.

For active sentences with a sentential subject, dummy subjects can roughly occur with the same predicate types as in Dutch, but in most cases alternative sentences without a dummy subject are preferred in French. The different predicate types, however, follow a different pattern for Dutch. Whereas in French there is a distinction between *être* + adjective (preference for *ce*) versus all other predicate types, in Dutch the distinction is between (a subclass of) unaccusative verbs (namely change of state verbs) versus all other predicate types. We might therefore expect that, in the case of active sentences with a sentential subject, French learners of Dutch will have most problems with predicates that are neither unaccusative nor contain an adjective (e.g. reflexive verbs).

For passive sentences with a sentential subject, French learners of Dutch have to learn to use dummy subjects, since the equivalents in French in general do not contain a dummy subject. Furthermore, since French does not have dummy objects, they also have to learn the distinction between sentences that have a dummy object in their active equivalent versus sentences that do not. We therefore expect this sentence type to be very difficult for French learners of Dutch. It seems likely that French learners will have a preference for *0* for all passives. For the passives without a dummy object in their active equivalent, this would actually be a reasonably good strategy, since native speakers also have a (slight) preference for *0* for this category. For passives with a dummy object in their active equivalents, however, this strategy will not work. We therefore expect French learners of Dutch to have most problems in this category.

Relevant factors in Turkish

Turkish does not have any semantically empty elements, like dummy subjects, and pronominal subjects can often be left out (from a generative perspective, Turkish is a pro-drop language and does not have an EPP feature). In Turkish, the logical subject always coincides with the syntactic subject. Constructions taking the form of an embedded clause in Western European languages can either have the form of an embedded clause in Turkish (as in (3.95)) or they can be nominalised (as in (3.96)). The former construction is borrowed from Persian and some native speakers of Turkish do not use it. Examples of Turkish sentences with a dummy subject in their Dutch equivalents are given in (3.93)-(3.99)¹⁶.

¹⁶ I would like to thank Hugo Strötbaum for his help with and comments on the Turkish examples in this paragraph.

DUMMY SUBJECTS

- (3.93) Bir adam geldi.
a man come-PAST(3s)
“There came a man.”
- (3.94) Dün bir adam geldi.
yesterday a man come-PAST(3s)
“Yesterday a man came.”
- (3.95) Biliyorum ki bir adam geldi.
know-1sg, that a man come-PAST(3s)
“I know that a man came.”
- (3.96) Bir adamın geldiğini bil-iyor-um.
a man-GEN come-NOM-POSS(3s)-ACC know-PROGR-1s
“I know that a man came.”
- (3.97) Beni kızdır-dı ki gel-di-n.
I-DAT irritate-PAST(3s) that come-PAST-2s
“It annoys/annoyed me that you came.”
- (3.98) (Senin) geldiğin beni kızdır-dı.
(you-gen) come-NOM-POSS(2s) I-DAT irritate-PAST(3s)
“It annoys/annoyed me that you came.”
- (3.99) Dans edildi.
dance do-PASS-PAST(3s)
“People danced.”

Since Turkish does not have dummy subjects, Turkish learners of Dutch have to learn many things in order to be able to perform like native speakers of Dutch with respect to dummy subject constructions. Besides finding out which dummy subject to use in which construction in Dutch (see paragraph 3.2), they have to find out:

- that certain complex constituents that are nominal in Turkish have the form of an embedded clause in Dutch (for those native speakers of Turkish who do not have the “ki-construction”)
- the form of embedded clauses in Dutch
- that Dutch has dummy subjects
- that Dutch has dummy objects
- that specificity plays a role in the choice of dummy subjects (of the DP-type)
- that change of state plays a role in the choice of dummy subjects (for the AS-type)

Let us now consider the factors that play a role in the choice of dummy subjects in Dutch. Specificity, which is the most important factor in dummy subject sentences with a DP-subject in Dutch, is expressed through grammatical means in Turkish, but it is the object which is marked, rather

than the subject. Specific objects get an accusative case morpheme in Turkish, whereas non-specific objects are not marked morphologically, as can be seen in (3.100)-(3.104).

- (3.100) Mektub-u yaz-dı-m.
letter-ACC write-PAST-1sg
“I wrote the letter.”
- (3.101) Mektup yaz-dı-m.
(a) letter(s) write-PAST-1sg
“I wrote a letter / I wrote letters.”
- (3.102) Ali bir piyanoyu kiralamak istiyor. (Enç, 1991: 4)
Ali a piano-ACC hire want-PROGR
“Ali wants to hire a (specific) piano.”
- (3.103) Ali bir piyano kiralamak istiyor. (Enç, 1991: 5)
Ali a piano hire want-PROGR
“Ali wants to hire a (any) piano.”
- (3.104) Oda-m-a birkaç çocuk gir-di. (Enç, 1991: 6)
room-my-DAT a few child enter-PAST
Some children entered my room.
- a) İki kız tanı-yor-du-m.
two girl know-PROGR-PAST-1sg
“I knew two girls.”
- b) İki kız-ı tanı-yor-du-m.
two girl-ACC know-PROGR-PAST-1sg
“I knew two of the girls.”

The fact that specificity is expressed through grammatical means in Turkish might help Turkish learners of Dutch to choose the right dummy subject for sentences with a DP-subject.

For the active sentences with a sentential subject, we expect that Turkish learners of Dutch may have problems acquiring the right preference pattern for the two categories (change of state and the general category). Change of state verbs do sometimes behave differently from other predicates in Turkish in that they can get a past tense marking for a present tense meaning (Özyürek, personal communication, 2003), as can be seen in (3.105)-(3.106). This possibility does not exist for other verbs, such as *yemek* in example (3.107).

- (3.105) Gel-di-m.
come-PAST-1s
“I am coming/came/have come.”

DUMMY SUBJECTS

- (3.106) Ibrahim kız-dı.
Ibrahim get angry-PAST(3s)
“Ibrahim is/was/got angry.”
- (3.107) Ibrahim domuz eti ye-me-di.
Ibrahim pork (meat) eat-NEG-PAST(3s)
“Ibrahim *does/did not eat / has not eaten pork.”

We expect it will be difficult, however, for the Turkish learners to use this distinction in finding out the right pattern in Dutch, especially given the huge amount of variation for the native speakers of Dutch on AScos.

For passive sentences with a sentential subject, the relevant factor in Dutch is the presence of a dummy object in equivalent active sentences. Since Turkish does not have anything like dummy objects at all, we expect this construction type to cause the greatest problems for Turkish learners of Dutch.

All in all, we expect Turkish learners of Dutch to have the fewest problems with active sentences with a DP-subject, and the most problems with passive sentences with a sentential subject. Since there is nothing that Turkish learners of Dutch can transfer directly from their L1, we expect them to have great difficulties in finding out which dummy subject to use in which construction in Dutch.

Problems for German, French and Turkish learners of Dutch

In paragraph 3.2, we discussed which factors are relevant for the choice of dummy subject in our tests. In the previous subparagraphs, we discussed what German, French and Turkish learners of Dutch have to learn with respect to dummy subject constructions and where we expect most problems to occur. Table 3.4 provides an overview of the relevant facts that each learner group has to acquire for each sentence type. The things we expect to be most difficult to acquire are printed in bold.

Table 3.4: Predicted problems for learners of Dutch with respect to dummy subject constructions

	DP-type	AS-type	PS-type
L1G	- er in non-initial position - distinction between specific versus non-specific subjects + right pattern	- distinction between change of state verbs and other predicates + right pattern *	- dummy objects as crucial factor + right pattern
L1F	- dummy subjects for all predicate types	- ce → het - il → 0 for change of state verbs - il → het for all other predicates	- use of dummy subjects - distinction between sentences that have dummy objects and those that do not + right pattern
L1T	- specificity of subject as crucial factor + right pattern	- embedded clause at end of sentence - change of state verbs as crucial factor + right pattern	- embedded clause at end of sentence - distinction between sentences that have dummy objects and those that do not + right pattern

* It is not clear whether this distinction is also made in German or not.

We expect these learning difficulties to translate into the following accuracy order, where the constructions that we expect to be easiest are on the left and the constructions for which we expect most problems are on the right:

L1 German: ASg > PS > DP

L1 French: DPg/DPnst > DPnsi > AScos > ASg > PSg > PSdo

L1 Turkish: DPg/DPnst > DPnsi > AScos > ASg > PSg > PSdo

It should be noted that for the L1 German group AScos is left out, because we do not know how this works in German. For the L1 French and L1 Turkish group we put AScos before ASg and DPg/DPnst before DPnsi, because for AScos, DPg and DPnst 0 is generally preferred. It should be noted that, in spite of the many differences between French and Turkish, our predictions with respect to accuracy order are the same for speakers from both first language backgrounds. This does not mean, however, that we expect the Turkish and French participants to behave similarly on the sentence preference task. We expect the native speakers of Turkish to have more problems in general than the native speakers of French. However, we do expect both groups to have most problems with categories that are on the right in the accuracy hierarchy and least problems with categories that are on the left in this hierarchy. In chapter 5, we will see whether these predictions are borne out in our study.