

ATHEME: ADVANCING THE EUROPEAN MULTILINGUAL EXPERIENCE

This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 613465.



Myrthe Bergstra

**Presentation
Language Variation
Research Group
28-10-2015**



ATHEME

- March 2014 - March 2019
- 17 partner institutions across 8 European countries
- How does multilingualism in Europe work
 - In the individual multilingual citizen
 - In the multilingual group
 - In the multilingual society

ATHEME PARTNERS

■ Croatia

- University of Rijeka

■ France

- CNRS
- Université de Nantes

■ Germany

- Universität Konstanz

■ Italy

- Università degli Studi di Verona
- Università degli Studi di Trento

■ The Netherlands

- De Taalstudio
- KNAW (Meertens Institute)
- Universiteit Utrecht
- Universiteit Leiden

■ Slovenia

- Univerza v Nova Gorici

■ Spain

- Basque Centre on Cognition, Brain and Language
- Universidad del País Vasco
- Universidad Pompeu Fabra

■ United Kingdom

- Queen Mary University of London
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Reading

ATHEME WORK PACKAGES

- WP1: Project management
- WP2: Regional languages in multilingual Europe
- WP3: Heritage languages and language users in the EU
- WP4: Multilingualism and communicative impairment
- WP5: Being multilingual
- WP6: Dissemination
 - Bilingualism Matters
 - De Taalstudio (for example: Drongo Festival)

WP2: REGIONAL LANGUAGES IN MULTILINGUAL EUROPE

- Grammatical diversity
- Influence of language contact
- Maintenance of regional bilingualism

- Most partners work on syntax (Utrecht, IKER-CNRS, Trento-Verona), some on phonology (Nantes), other on attitudes (Rijeka).

- My focus:
 - Syntactic variation
 - Frisian, Dutch dialects
 - Language contact & syntactic change

A FIRST CASE STUDY ON DUTCH-FRISIAN LANGUAGE CONTACT

- The verb *gean* (“go”) seems to **change** (be used in a very different syntactic context) in Frisian due to language contact with Dutch
 - RQ 1: What is the underlying syntactic structure of different uses of *gean* and how does the new use arise?
 - RQ 2: Was the change in Frisian *gean* induced by language contact in Dutch?

GEAN & GAAN: 3 DIFFERENT USES

■ 1. Motion verb (physical motion)

- **Ik gean nei Amsterdam.** (Former/normative) Frisian
 - **Ik ga naar Amsterdam.** Dutch
- I go to Amsterdam*

■ 2. With posture verb

- **Ik gean sitten.** (Former/normative) Frisian
 - **Ik ga zitten.** Dutch
- I go sit down*

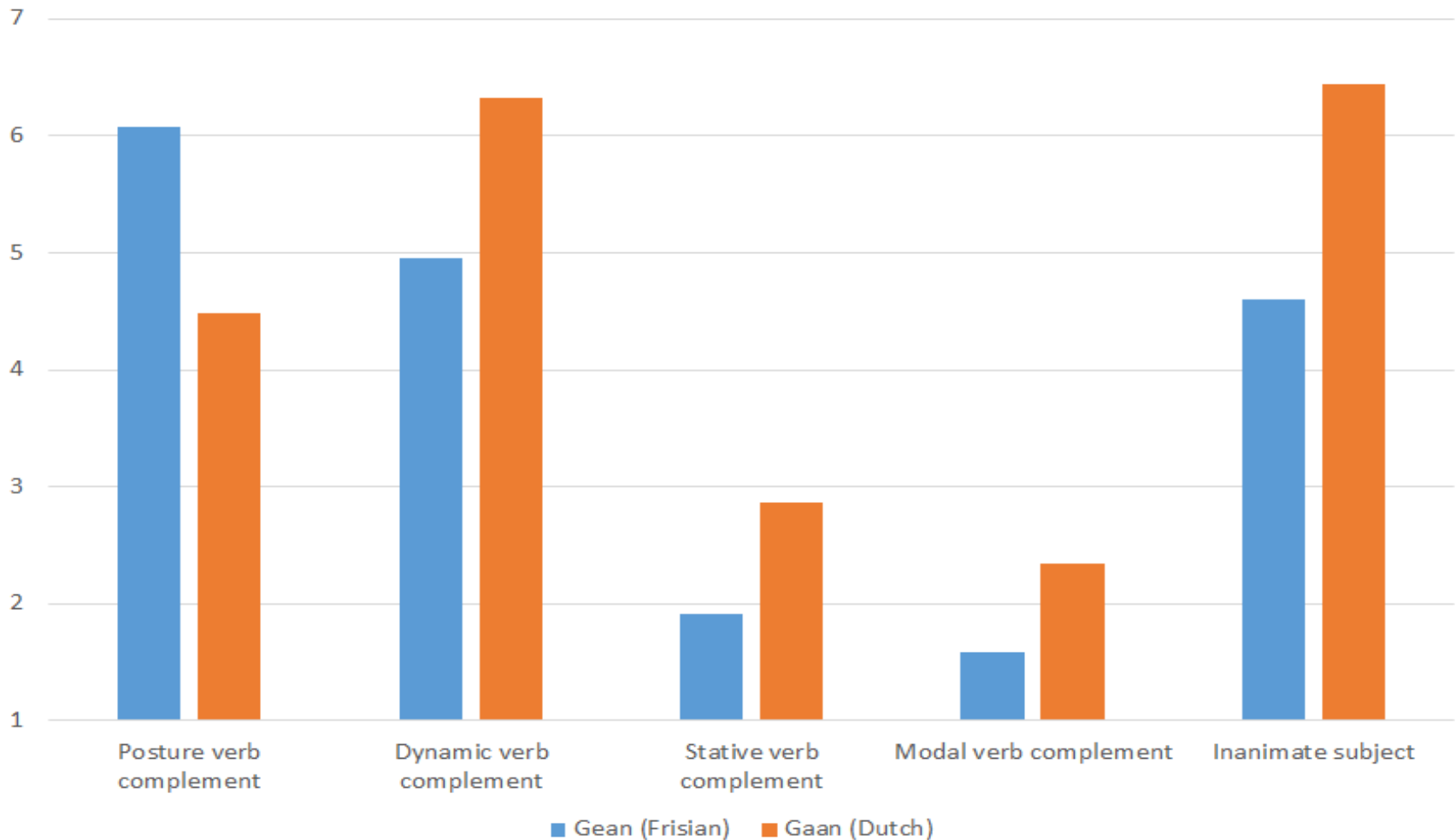
■ 3. With dynamic verb (aspectual use)

- ***Ik gean swimmen.** (Former/normative) Frisian
 - **Ik ga zwemmen.** Dutch
- I go swim*

QUESTIONNAIRE

- Dutch & Frisian written questionnaires
 - *Gaan/gean* vs. *sille/zullen*
 - + posture verb complement (*sit/stand/lie*)
 - + dynamic verb complement (*play, run, get married, etc.*)
 - + stative verb complement (*have, be*)
 - + modal verb complement (*will, must*)
 - + inanimate subject (→ signals functional use)
- Acceptability judgments (scale 1-7)
- Language background information

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS



QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

- *Gean* in its aspectual use (dynamic verb complements, inanimate subjects) is accepted by many Frisian speakers (but not as much as in Dutch)
 - *Gean* is not accepted with modals and statives (so, not Future Tense)
- The aspectual use of *gean* is rated higher by speakers who have more contact with Dutch

→ In short, a change seems to be going on: motion verb *gean* can now be used as an aspectual verb by some speakers of Frisian.

FROM LEXICAL TO FUNCTIONAL USE

- A precedence relationship between 2 things can be both spatial and temporal.
 - Therefore, *gean* shares features with both the lexical motion verbal position and with the Asp_{prospective} position.
- However, since it also involves physical movement, it also has a [+ motion] feature.
 - This conflicts with the features of Asp_{prospective}, so *gean* could only be inserted in the V-position.
- Proposal: *gean* loses its [+motion] feature in a process of grammaticalization.

THE UNDERSPECIFICATION OF GAAN/GEAN

- *Gaan/gean* does not become a functional item, it becomes **underspecified**. It is semantically bleached and can be inserted in multiple contexts (motion contexts and aspectual contexts).
- This approach to grammaticalization explains how the different meanings of *gaan/gean* are related; it is just one item that is now capable of being used in both contexts

CONTACT INDUCED CHANGE?

- Grammaticalization of *go* into an aspectual marker is common cross-linguistically, so why should it be due to contact?
 - Grammaticalization & contact induced change often go hand in hand, contact might influence a grammaticalization process (Heine & Kuteva, 2003), and Dutch and Frisian have intensive contact.
 - Speakers who have more contact with Dutch rated the sentences with aspectual *gean* higher in questionnaire (but native language did not play a role!)
 - *Gean* already grammaticalized in dialects which have (had) much contact with Dutch
 - Town Frisian (Van Bree & Versloot, 2008)
 - West-Frisian (Hoekstra, 1994)

CONCLUSION

- (For speakers who allow aspectual use of *gean*)
gean lost its motion feature
 - Therefore, it became underspecified
 - It could then also be inserted in an Aspect_{prospective} position
 - There is **1** item *gean*, which is now bleached and flexible enough to be inserted in both positions.

- It seems that contact with Dutch has influenced this change

NEXT STEPS

- Next steps: other case studies of verbs in contact situations
 - In which cases do we observe language change?
 - What are the underlying structures of these changing items, what do they have in common?