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Annelore Willems and Gert De Sutter (University College Ghent, Ghent University)
Grammatical complexity versus discourse status as determinants of PP placement in original and translated Dutch

The present corpus-based study discusses a well-known type of syntactic variation in Dutch, viz. prepositional phrase (PP) placement. Language users can put PPs either before V-final (A) or after V-final (B).

    (A) *Niemand weet   dat   ik   van mannen |hou|$_{V-final}$.*
          No one   knows that I   with men   am in love.
    (B) *Niemand weet   dat   ik |hou|$_{V-final}$ van mannen.*
          No one   knows that I   'm in love   with men.

In this study we investigate which variables determine this variation, and how these variables relate to each other. Furthermore, we will investigate whether these factors have an identical effect in translated vs. non-translated texts, as previous research has shown that translated texts differ in a systematic manner from non-translated texts (Olohan & Baker 2000).

In order to do so, we extracted all PPs from the Dutch Parallel Corpus (DPC), which is a 10-million-word, parallel corpus of Dutch, English and French (Macken et al. 2011). It contains six different text types, but for the present study we opted to look only at PP variation in journalistic texts. After manually checking the relevance of the extracted corpus data, we obtained a dataset containing 1450 clauses with a PP either before V-final or after V-final. We coded the data for the variables grammatical complexity and discourse status, as previous research has shown that these have a significant impact on different kinds of constituent order phenomena (e.g., Arnold et al. 2000; Hawkins 1994; Wasow 2002; Van Bergen & De Swart 2010). Although these factors have already been described in earlier research into PP placement in Dutch (Jansen 1978), a simultaneous comparison has not yet been conducted. The effect of both variables will be analyzed and interpreted by means of a binary logistic regression model.

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