

## Microvariation in the syntax of ONE-insertion

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**1. Introduction** English N-ellipsis in constructions such as (1) requires ONE-insertion. In Dutch, ONE-insertion is impossible (2), but we do find it in some Frisian, Groningen and Brabantish varieties (3-4) (cf. Tiersma 1985 for Frisian; De Bont 1962 for Brabantish).

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|-----|---|---------------------------|
| (1) | That dog is a quick *(one)  | English                   |
| (2) | Die hond is een snelle (*een)   | Dutch                     |
| (3) | Dô bist eak 'n raren (iën)!<br>you are also a strange one<br>'You really are a strange person!' | West-Terschelling Frisian |
| (4) | Dè perd is ok 'n snel (een)!<br>that horse is also a quick one                                  | Rosmalen Brabantish       |

The primary goal of this paper is to show that ONE insertion in (1), (3) and (4) involves three different syntactic structures and that the differences between these structures can be reduced to the different morphosyntactic feature specifications of ONE, nouns and adjectival inflection in the language varieties involved, thus supporting the Minimalist hypothesis (Chomsky 1995, 2001) that morphosyntactic features are the main locus of language variation. The secondary goal of this paper is to shed some light on the fine structure of the noun phrase periphery and on the licensing conditions on N-ellipsis.

**2. Background** In previous work we put forward the hypothesis that English has ONE-insertion but Dutch does not because English lacks adjectival inflection. In English N-ellipsis the feature [count] is identified by ONE. Numerals have a [count] feature themselves and do not trigger ONE-insertion, unless they are followed by an adjective that blocks local identification (5). In Dutch N-ellipsis the [gender] feature of N needs to be identified by adjectival inflection. When there is no visible adjectival inflection for gender, as is the case in indefinite singular neuter noun phrases, N-ellipsis is impossible for most speakers of Dutch (6). Numerals in Dutch do not have a [gender] feature, hence they trigger *er* 'there' insertion, unless there is an inflected adjective (7).

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|-----|-----------------------|-----|--------------------------|---------|
| (5) | I have two (*ones)    | vs. | I have two red *(ones)   | English |
| (6) | Ik heb een leuk       |     | *(boek) gelezen          | Dutch   |
|     | I have a nice- NEUTER |     | book read                |         |
| (7) | Ik heb *(er) twee     | vs. | Ik heb *(er) twee rod-e  |         |
|     | I have there two      |     | I have there two red-AGR |         |

**3. Description** The differences between ONE-insertion in English and ONE-insertion in Frisian, Groningen and Brabantish varieties clearly show that ONE-insertion in the latter does not take place to identify a feature of the absent N. (i) ONE-insertion is obligatory in English and optional in the other varieties; (ii) The Frisian and Groningen varieties have the same gender distinction and adjectival inflection system as Dutch; (iii) The Brabantish varieties distinguish masculine-feminine-neuter which is visible as adjectival inflection; (iv) ONE-insertion is possible in definite noun phrases in English but not in the other varieties; (v) ONE-insertion is possible in plural noun phrases in English but not in the other varieties; (vi) ONE-insertion is possible in the presence of numerals in English, but not in the other varieties; (vii) In some Brabantish dialects, ONE-insertion is possible even when the noun is present. We conclude from these properties and from the homophony with the numeral ONE that in Frisian, Groningen and Brabantish ONE-insertion ONE is a numeral with the features [singular] [indefinite]. Since ONE typically

(8) Dieje mens is ok 'nen aorigen inne (9) Die vrou is ok 'n aorige een  
that man is also a strange ONE-MASC that woman is also a strange ONE-FEM

(10) [<sub>NumP</sub> [<sub>Num'</sub> een  
ONE  
[<sub>DP</sub> zo'n [<sub>NP</sub>  
such-a  
(AP) [<sub>N'</sub> boek]]]]] Dutch  
book

(12) [NumP [Num' inne [DP 'nen [NP [AP aorigen] [N' ]]]]] Brabantish  
ONE-M-S-IND-F a- M-S-IND strange-M-S-IND-FO

Brabantish ONE insertion is derived by optional movement of DP to SpecNumP. When DP movement does not take place the elements in Num and D are adjacent at PF and only one of them is spelled out. In (12) ONE and DP fully agree, as both have the features [masculine] [singular] [indefinite] [focus]. We assume that full agreement between ONE and DP is a prerequisite for DP to SpecNumP movement (cf. Chomsky 2001). It follows from this requirement that Brabantish ONE insertion is impossible with plural or definite DPs. The analysis correctly predicts that DPs with an overt N can occur with ONE in Brabantish (*Ge bent e vól kiendje een* lit. ‘you are a dirty child one’) and that DPs in SpecNumP can run away from home. It also follows that in Dutch DP to SpecNumP is impossible. Dutch ONE has an [indefinite] feature, but no gender or number (cf. 10–11). Since Dutch DPs always have gender and number, ONE and DP will never fully agree and DP to SpecNumP (i.e. ONE insertion) does not occur. Similarly, in the Frisian and Groningen varieties full agreement between ONE and DP is impossible as ONE does not have a gender feature whereas DP does. This rules out a DP to SpecNumP analysis of ONE insertion in these varieties. We claim that ONE insertion in these varieties involves the base structure in (13) and optional movement of AP to SpecNumP. This movement is only possible for AP in N-ellipsis since only there an obligatory *–en* suffix shows up on A (cf. Tiersma 1985) that has a focus feature but no gender and therefore fully agrees with ONE. This analysis further correctly predicts that neither ONE insertion with overt N nor DP moving out of SpecNumP are possible in the Frisian and Groningen varieties. The structure in (13) also predicts the existence of varieties which exploit the option of base generating constituents expressing high degree or focus in SpecNumP. We show that Zürich German is such a variety. For English ONE insertion the DP to SpecNumP analysis is excluded as well, as ONE has a feature [count] but not an (in)definiteness feature required for full agreement with DP. Since English does not have the *–en* suffix of the Groningen and Frisian varieties either, the AP to SpecNumP analysis is ruled out too. The remaining option is to insert ONE in N. Finally, we show that the licensing conditions on N-ellipsis differ for each variety: in English ONE is the licenser, in Dutch adjectival inflection, in Frisian and Groningen varieties adjectival inflection and the *–en* suffix, and in Brabantish there are no special licensing conditions.