

Debonding of Dutch intensifying prefixoids: a multiple source account

In this study, I will investigate how Dutch prefixoids (with a nominal origin) develop adjectival and/or adverbial uses through debonding, i.e. "a composite change whereby a bound morpheme in a specific linguistic context becomes a free morpheme" (Norde 2009: 186). The process typically involves *severance* (i.e. decrease in bondedness), *flexibilization* (i.e. increase in syntactic freedom), *scope expansion* and possibly *recategorialization* and *resemanticization*.

Debonding applies to clitics, inflectional and derivational affixes (Norde 2009: 186-227), but since affixoids, morphemes that express a specific meaning when embedded in a compound pattern (Booij 2009: 208), still have a lexical counterpart from which they derive and generally express a less bleached meaning than derivational and inflectional morphemes, it could be hypothesized that they will be more subject to debonding. However, as shown by Van Goethem & De Smet (2012), other factors such as the strong degree of prosodical and morphological cohesion of Dutch compounds may counteract debonding in Dutch.

My study will demonstrate that debonding of Dutch prefixoids may be triggered and/or favored by different factors.

First, the intensifying meaning of Dutch prefixoids plays an important role in their reanalysis as intensifying adjectives and/or adverbs. As Booij correctly observes, "[T]he meaning of intensification that is connected to these nouns is a type of meaning expressed prototypically by adjectives [*and adverbs*]¹, and hence the categorial reinterpretation of these nouns as adjectives in this context is a natural development" (Booij 2010: 61) (*the inserted italics are mine*).

Second, the form of many Dutch prefixoids, ending in *-e* (as nominal ending or linking morpheme in the compound pattern) (e.g. *bere* 'lit. bear; great, very', *rete* 'lit. ass; very', *reuze* 'lit. giant; great, very', *klasse* 'lit. class; classy', *pokke* 'smallpox; awful, very') may contribute to a reanalysis as a Dutch inflected adjective (e.g. *een reuze stap* 'a gigantic step', *een erg klasse wijn* 'a very classy wine').

Third, it will be shown that debonding will be facilitated when other processes, such as clipping and conversion, contribute to it. More precisely, in the case of Dutch *top* 'top(-class), great', Van Goethem & Hüning (2013) have shown that its recent adjectival uses can be accounted for both by debonding of [*top* +N]_N compounds (e.g. *een top sfeertje* 'a top atmosphere') and by conversion in the predicative context (e.g. *dat is echt (de) top* 'that is really great (lit. top)'). Besides, previous research has already indicated that clipping may also lead to adjectival uses of compound members (e.g. *het feestje was reuze* 'the party was great' < *reuzeleuk* 'lit. giant-fun') (Van Goethem & De Smet 2012). These observations are completely in line with the recently developed idea of "multiple source constructions" (Van de Velde, De Smet and Ghesquière, forthc.), which claims that innovations in language change often result from (the interaction between) different sources. My study will explore into more detail the interaction between debonding, conversion and clipping.

The aforementioned factors and research questions will be applied to three case studies: *top* 'lit. top; top-class', *klasse* 'lit. class; classy' and *reuze* 'lit. giant; great', all derived from nouns, occurring as intensifying prefixoids and manifesting 'debonded' uses as adjectives, and in the case of *reuze*, also as an adverb. The data will be drawn from the COW (*Corpora from the Web*) internet corpus.

¹ The inserted italics are mine.

References

- Booij, G. 2009. Compounding and Construction Morphology. In R. Lieber & P. Štekauer (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Compounding*, 201-216. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Booij, G. 2010. *Construction Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- COW2012 (*Corpora from the web*): <http://hpsg.fu-berlin.de/cow/colibri/>
- Norde, M. 2009. *Degrammaticalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van de Velde, F., De Smet, H. & L. Ghesquière (Eds) (forthc.). *Multiple source constructions in language change*. Thematic issue in *Studies in Language*.
- Van Goethem, K. & M. Hüning. 2013. Debonding of Dutch and German compounds. Paper presented at the international Germanic Sandwich Conference, Leuven, Jan. 2013.
- Van Goethem, K & H. De Smet. 2012. How nouns turn into adjectives. The emergence of new adjectives in French, English and Dutch through debonding processes. Paper presented at the international conference on Adjectives in Germanic and Romance: Variation and Change, Amsterdam, March 2012.