

Language-specific tendencies towards morphological or syntactic constructions: A corpus study on adjective intensification in L1 Dutch, L1 French and L2 Dutch*

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Abstract: In this study, we present a corpus-based comparison of the use of intensifying constructions in written L1 Dutch (*Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands*) and written L1 French (*Frantext*). We subsequently discuss intensification in Dutch as a second language (L2 Dutch) by French-speaking learners (*Leerdercorpus Nederlands*).

The analysis adopts a constructional perspective (Goldberg 2006; Tomasello 2003) and aims to contrast French and Dutch preferences for morphological and syntactic intensifying constructions. Extending on the “Germanic Sandwich Hypothesis” (Van Haeringen 1956; Lamiroy 2011), we expect to find: i) more morphological intensifying constructions in Dutch, such as ‘elative’ compounds (e.g. *knalrood* ‘completely red’ (Hoeksema 2012)) and ii) more syntactic constructions in French, such as adverbial modification (e.g. *tout rouge* ‘completely red’) and adjective reduplication (e.g. *rouge rouge* ‘completely red’). The present study thus serves a twofold purpose: investigating whether the synthetic vs analytic character of Germanic vs Romance languages holds in the domain of intensification, and on a more applied level, it contributes to identifying possible difficulties for French-speaking learners of Dutch in this field.

Our corpus study partly confirms the expected difference in the use of morphological intensifying constructions between L1 Dutch and L1 French, with significantly more morphological intensifying constructions in L1 Dutch than in L1 French. Adverbial modification remains the default intensifying construction in both languages however. Whilst L2 Dutch productions displayed an overuse of intensifying adverbs (partly due to the overuse of ‘all-round’ intensifiers such as *heel* ‘very’), the learners did however also use elative compounds, a typical Germanic intensifying construction.

Keywords: Intensifying constructions, Construction Grammar, Learner corpus research, Dutch/French

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1. Introduction

This study² presents the results of a pilot corpus analysis on the use of morphological and syntactic intensifying constructions in L1 Dutch, L1 French and L2 Dutch. Whilst intensification applies to various parts of speech and can be expressed through many constructional possibilities (among others, Kirschbaum 2002; Van Mulken & Schellens 2012; Zeschel 2012; Liebrecht 2015; Rainer 2015), the present study focuses on adjective intensification exclusively.

An intensifier can be defined as ‘a scaling device [...] which co-occurs with a gradable adjective’ (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik 1997: 445). Several reference studies, such as Quirk et al. (1997) and Broekhuis (2016: 3.1.2), include both upward scaling – ‘amplifiers’ – and downward scaling – ‘downtoners’ – modifiers in the category of intensifiers. However, in this study the term ‘intensifier’ will follow Lorenz’s (1999) definition and refer only to modifiers that ‘scale upwards’ from an implicitly assumed norm expressed by the adjective, as for example in *très riche* ‘very rich’ and *gloednieuw* ‘brand new’.

Intensification has been a major research topic in linguistics since the 1980s. Previous studies on intensifiers discussed, among others, the rapid renewal in the domain (De Clerck & Coleman 2013; Foolen 2015; Lorenz 1999) with popular intensifiers being used frequently for a short period of time before being replaced by others. For example, Fletcher (1980) established a comprehensive inventory of popular intensifiers in Dutch. Whilst some of these have now become outdated (e.g. *in-droevig* ‘lit. in-sad; very sad’, *puikbest* ‘lit. prime best; very best’, *poesmooi* ‘lit. puss-beautiful; very beautiful’), new intensifiers have recently popped up. They include: *kapot leuk* ‘lit. ‘broken nice; very nice’; *vet lekker* ‘lit. fat tasty; very tasty’.³ *Massa* ‘mass’ or *massa’s* ‘masses’ is another example of an upcoming intensifier, which evolved from lexical head to quantifier and more recently to intensifier in certain varieties of Flemish, e.g. *massa’s ver* ‘lit. masses far; very far’ (De Clerck & Coleman 2013).

According to Foolen (2015), the constant change in the domain of intensifiers is related to the conflict between the diachronic weakening of intensifiers due to erosion and frequent use – grammaticalisation – on the one hand, and the urge for expressivity on the other. Foolen (2015) argues that new intensifiers trigger a more expressive meaning, the so-called ‘thriller-effect’ (Bolinger 1972) which gradually disappears when they go down the cline of grammaticalisation, and which, in the end, creates the need to replace them by new more expressive intensifiers.

Another central topic in research on intensifiers concerns their strong identity-marking feature (Geerts, Haeseryn, de Rooij & van den Toorn 1984: 749). This may explain why they are abundantly used in youth language (Lorenz 1999: 25; Ouden & Van Wijk 2007). Lorenz (1999) analyses adjective intensification in learner and native English and describes it as follows:

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³ We thank the anonymous reviewer for providing these examples.

Like all empathic means of expression, intensifiers are used [...] as linguistic clues to the identity and group-membership of the speaker. This is particularly apparent in the language of the ‘yoof’: every generation of teenagers creates its own set of expressions [...]. And just as these expressions are noted by outsiders and begin to be adopted on a wider scale, they are “out” and obsolete in their in-group function (Lorenz 1999: 24-25).

Despite the fact that the constant renewal and variety of intensifiers are factors that complicate the acquisition of intensifiers in a foreign language, the group-membership marking characteristics of intensifiers make them relevant to acquire in a foreign language. Natives and foreign language learners alike seem to be aware of the fact that the appropriate use of intensifiers is an important aspect of language, since the choice of an intensifier expresses ‘speaker involvement’ and ‘group-membership’ (Lorenz 1999: 26-27). Nevertheless, explicit instruction on intensifiers in foreign language teaching is often limited to the most frequently used intensifiers – e.g. *heel* / *zeer* ‘very’ –.

The acquisition of intensifying constructions lies at the heart of our research project. More particularly, we investigate the acquisition of Dutch intensification by French-speaking learners. In this pilot study, we will compare the use of intensifiers in two native corpora, i.e. the *Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands* – L1 Dutch – and the *Frantext* corpus – L1 French –, which may help us to refine our hypotheses in our next steps. In addition, we will explore intensification in a corpus French-speaking learners of Dutch, i.e. the *Leerdercorpus Nederlands*. The paper’s aim is thus twofold: on a theoretical level, it investigates the different ways of intensifying adjectives in Dutch and French in order to verify whether the synthetic/analytic character of respectively Germanic and Romance languages holds in this field too; on a more applied level, the study contributes to identify possible difficulties that French-speaking L2 Dutch learners have in acquiring/using intensification.

The study adopts a constructionist view on intensification and foreign language acquisition. After an overview of the main principles of this theoretical perspective (Section 2), we present the formal (morphological and syntactic) types of intensifying constructions in Dutch and French, and we formulate some hypotheses about the language-specific preferences for morphological or syntactic constructions in both languages (Section 3). Subsequently we discuss the corpora and the methodology (Section 4). Thereafter we present a comparison of the results drawn from the native corpora analyses, and a discussion of the learner corpus analysis (Section 5). In the final section, we wrap up the main findings and relate them to the theoretical perspectives.

2. A constructional view on intensification

2.1 Construction Grammar and language acquisition

In this study, we adopt the theoretical framework of *Construction Grammar* (CxG) which conceptualises language as a network of constructions, i.e. systematic and conventionalised form-meaning pairs (see among others, Goldberg 2006; Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013; Verhagen 2005). This framework has been applied to several domains such as (foreign) language acquisition (among others, Ellis 2013) and language change (among others, Traugott & Trousdale 2013). In its early days, Construction Grammar was mainly concerned with syntactic constructions (among others, Goldberg 1995). Booij (2010) applied the basic premises of CxG to morphological constructions, introducing ‘Construction Morphology’.

The constructionist view is equally valuable for foreign language acquisition and may account for the complexity of learning foreign languages. Since the beginning of the 1990s, studies on language acquisition have no longer been focusing on single words or isolated grammatical items. They assume that language is *formulaic* (in terms of Wray 2002) to a large degree, i.e. consisting of *chunks*, and that lexicon and grammar work together on the production of the so called ‘constructions’. In this perspective, language is mainly acquired through input and use (Ellis 2002, 2008). The constructionist approach argues that language acquisition can be understood through general cognitive processes such as categorisation (among others, Goldberg 2006). Besides, this approach implies that there is no principled distinction between lexicon and grammar in language acquisition, and learners follow a top-down as well as a bottom-up approach in the acquisition of the patterns. In this view, Tomasello argues that ‘learning words and learning grammar are really all part of the same developmental process’ (Tomasello 2003: 42). The emerging linguistic skills of children are thus ‘most accurately characterised not as “a grammar”, but rather as an inventory of relatively isolated, item-based constructional islands’ (Tomasello 2003: 140).

Since learning a language implies acquiring its constructional inventory (Ellis 2013; Ellis & Cadierno 2009; Goldberg 2006), one can assume competition between the specific constructions of the foreign language and those of the mother tongue (Ellis & Cadierno 2009: 112). This competition often results in an underuse of typical constructions of the target language and/or in an overuse of typical mother tongue constructions. In order to prepare the ground for our future research on adjective intensification in L2 Dutch by French-speaking learners, the present study will compare the language-specific preferences towards synthetic or analytic constructions in this field in two L1 corpora of written French and Dutch.

2.2 Intensifying constructions

The following examples show three constructions in which the adjective *moe* ‘tired’ is intensified:

- | | | | |
|-----|--|---|--------------|
| (1) | [[<i>heel</i>] _{ADV} [<i>moe</i>] _{ADJ}] _{AP} | ↔ | ‘very tired’ |
| (2) | [[<i>super</i>] _{PREF} [<i>moe</i>] _{ADJ}] _{ADJ} | ↔ | ‘very tired’ |
| (3) | [[<i>dood</i>] _N [<i>moe</i>] _{ADJ}] _{ADJ} | ↔ | ‘very tired’ |

Those three constructions illustrate three different types of intensification: the first is a syntactic construction with an intensifying adverb, while both the second and the third show a construction at word-level, a prefixed adjective and an intensifying noun-adjective compound, respectively. These examples show that both syntactic and morphological constructions can be employed for intensification in Dutch. It should also be noticed that some of these constructions are subject to further developments, since, as shown by Norde & Van Goethem (2015), prefixes such as *super-* can be ‘debonded’ and be used as adverbs. This fact supports the idea that intensifying constructions can be ranged along a lexicon-grammar continuum and that the constructional analysis of intensifiers is particularly suitable for our data. Intensifying constructions can indeed be represented by either lexical units or multi-word phrases. We will distinguish between morphological intensifiers, such as intensifying prefixes – *aartslui* ‘lit. arch-lazy; very lazy’ – and intensifying compounds – *boordevol* ‘lit. edge full; completely full’ –, and syntactic intensifiers, such as intensifying adverbs – *verschrikkelijk moe* ‘terribly tired’ –, [*zo* [X]_{ADJ} *als* [Y]_{NP}]_{AP} constructions – *zo sterk als een beer* ‘strong like a bear’ – and adjective reduplication – *mooi mooi mooi* ‘nice

nice nice’ –. Phonological means of intensification, such as vowel lengthening, also exist, e.g. *Dit huis is gigaaaaantisch!* ‘this house is huuuuuuuge (huge)’; however, they were excluded from this study since we examine only written corpora.

Booij’s (2010: 51-93) constructionist analysis of morphological intensifying constructions provides a sound account for the emergence of specific subschemas of regular compounding. One particular Germanic intensification pattern is the use of compounds with intensifying affixoids,⁴ e.g. *reuzeleuk* ‘lit. giant nice; very nice’, and their possible subsequent adverbialisation, e.g. *reuze bedankt* ‘lit. giant thanks; many thanks (cf. Norde & Van Goethem 2015 and Van Goethem & Hiligsmann 2014) (see 3.5).

3. State of the art: intensifying constructions in Dutch and French

In the present study, we based our analysis on both grammar reference books and studies focussing on this phenomenon to establish an inventory of intensifying constructions. However, the inventory will also include types of constructions that resulted from the corpus analysis and had not been mentioned in the literature. As stated above, the different types of intensifiers occur in both Dutch and French but not in the same proportions.

Syntactically, adjectives can be intensified by adverbial modification (see section 3.1), by reduplication (see section 3.2) and through inclusion in a comparative construction [*zo* [X]_{ADJ} *als* [Y]_{NP}]_{AP} (see section 3.3). Morphologically, adjectives can be intensified by prefixes (see section 3.4) or by forming intensifying adjective compounds (see section 3.5). In the last part, we will formulate our hypothesis about the language-specific preferences for morphological or syntactic intensifying constructions in L1 Dutch and L1 French (Section 3.6).

3.1 Adverbial modification

The first formal type of intensifiers is adverbial modification. There is a wide variety of adverbs that indicate the intensity of the property expressed by the adjective; some Dutch examples are given in Geerts et al. (1984: 748) (see 4a). Similarly, adverbial modification is also a common means to express intensification in French. Riegel et al. (1994: 620) indicate *très* ‘very’) as the most prototypical adverbial intensifier in French, which – depending on the context – can be replaced by *tout* ‘all’, *fort* ‘strongly’, *bien* ‘well’, *tout à fait* ‘completely’ (see 4b).

- (4) a. *heel goed* ‘very good’, *zeer fraai* ‘very beautiful’, *uitermate gevaarlijk* ‘extremely dangerous’
 b. *très bien* ‘very good’, *tout joli* ‘all pretty’, *bien bon* ‘very tasty’, *tout à fait bien* ‘totally fine’

⁴ When the compound member has received a specialised (intensifying) meaning within the compound, it is often called an ‘affixoid’ (cf. Booij 2010: 58). It has been pointed out that (relative/simile) compounds are the result of reduction of the [*zo* [X]_{ADJ} *als* [Y]_{NP}]_{AP} construction (see 3.3): for instance, *zo rood als bloed* ‘as red as blood’ can be reduced to *bloedrood* ‘blood-red’ (Hoeksema 2012; Norde & Van Goethem 2014). Norde and Van Goethem (2014) examine in-depth this process of grammaticalisation and bleaching of components of simile compounds into intensifying affixoids: for instance, as they mention, ‘[the morpheme] *reuze* functions as an affixoid in intensifying constructions as well as in similes’ (Norde & Van Goethem 2014: 259), cf. *reuzeleuk* ‘lit. giant-nice; very nice’ vs *reuzesterk* ‘lit. giant-strong; as strong as a giant’.

Geerts et al. (1984:748) note that the original meaning of a qualifier may bleach as a result of its intensifying function; as a consequence, even pejorative adjectives may be used as up-scaling adverbial intensifiers:

- (5) a. *verschrikkelijk blij* ‘lit. horribly happy, very happy’, *vreselijk leuk* ‘lit. terribly nice, very nice’

Intensification can also be expressed by two combined adverbs, e.g. *heel erg* in *heel erg duidelijk* ‘lit. very awfully clear; very clear’ in which *heel* qualifies *erg* and always occurs in first position (**erg heel duidelijk*) (Geerts et al. 1984: 749; see Cacchiani 2009 on complex intensifier collocations). Besides, one and the same adverb can be repeated, both in Dutch (6a) (Hoeksema 2001: 5) and French (6b), resulting in a non-coordinated reduplicative construction that we formalise as follows $[[X]_{ADV}(,)[X]_{ADV} [Y]_{ADJ}]_{AP}$.

- (6) a. *Dat was heel, heel mooi.*
‘That was very, very beautiful’
b. *C’est vraiment, vraiment moche.*
‘It is really, really ugly’

Besides, degree adverbs can be repeated in the following emphasizing construction: $[[X]_{ADV} \textit{maar dan ook} [X]_{ADV} [Y]_{ADJ}]_{AP}$ (see 7a) (Hoeksema 2001: 14), which does also exist in French (see 7b) (Van Goethem, Dugas, Amiot, Cappelle, Lemmens, Patin, & Tayalati 2013b):

- (7) a. *En tja, hij was dus echt, maar dan ook echt helemaal kaal.*
‘lit. And well, he was really but then also really totally bold.’
‘And well, he was really completely bold.’
b. *Super, mais alors super intéressant!*
‘lit. Super but than super interesting!’
‘Super interesting’

Moreover, French has a wide range of intensifying adverbs ending in *-ment* and some of them are very frequently used (Riegel et al. 1994: 620):

- (8) *absolument* ‘absolutely’, *complètement* ‘completely’, *entièrement* ‘entirely’, *extrêmement* ‘extremely’, *totalement* ‘totally’

Furthermore, Riegel et al. (1994: 620) observe a recent tendency for use of *complètement* and *absolument* for modification of even non-gradable notions.

- (9) *Je suis complètement mort.*
‘lit. I am completely dead.’
‘I am exhausted’

Lastly, Riegel et al. (1994: 620) mention the specific intensifying use of adverbs originally expressing that a norm is exceeded:

- (10) a. *La fête est trop bien.*
‘lit. the party is too good’
‘The party is great.’

- b. *L'actrice est **excessivement** belle.*
 'lit. The actress is excessively beautiful'
 'The actress is extremely beautiful.'

In sum, both in Dutch and French, adverbial modification is a widespread means to upscale the intensity of an adjective.

3.2 Reduplication

A second syntactic intensifying construction is reduplication. Intensification can be expressed by duplicating the adjective (Štekauer, Valera, & Körtvélyessy 2012: 104-105).^{5,6} Adjective duplication (or multiplication in general) is a productive means of intensification in Dutch (cf. Hoeksema 2001: 5-6), most typically found in informal registers.⁷ For example:

- (11) *Ik vond het **mooi, mooi, mooi***
 'lit. I found it beautiful, beautiful, beautiful'

In French, intensification can also be expressed through duplication. For example, Riegel et al. (1994: 622) mention the film title *Un monde fou fou fou* 'a crazy crazy crazy world' and the song title *Belles, belles, belles comme le jour* 'Beautiful beautiful beautiful as the day'.

3.3 The comparative [(zo) [X]_{ADJ} als [Y]_{NP}]_{AP} and [(aussi) [X]_{ADJ} que/comme [Y]_{NP}]_{AP} constructions

Another case of adjective intensification is the 'simile construction' or the 'metaphoric zo ... als construction' (Broekhuis 2016: 3.1.3). The Dutch construction is formed as follows: [(zo) [X]_{ADJ} als [Y]_{NP}]_{AP}:

- (12) a. *Ze was **zo trots als een aap**.*
 'lit. She was as proud as a monkey'
 'She was very proud.'
 b. *Je bent **zo dom als een olifant**.*
 'lit. You are as dumb as an elephant'
 'You are very dumb.'

The French counterparts of this construction are the following: [[X]_{ADJ} *comme* [Y]_{NP}]_{AP}, and [*aussi* [X]_{ADJ} *que* [Y]_{NP}]_{AP} as illustrated in (13):

⁵ Hohenhaus (2004) shows that [[X]_N [Y]_N]_N compounds expressed mainly typicality, whereas the [[X]_{ADJ} [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ} and the [[X]_{ADV} [Y]_{ADV}]_{ADV} compounds convey principally intensification (*job-job* 'a proper job' vs *hot hot* 'extremely spicy' (Hohenhaus 2004: 299).

⁶ As pointed out by one of the reviewers, reduplication does not only occur in adjective phrases, e.g. *Je hebt kijken en je hebt kijken kijken* 'lit. You have looking and looking looking', illustrating the "Je hebt [X] en je hebt [X X]" construction, in which the second slot intensifies or elaborates the first slot, meanwhile (slightly) modifying the meaning of the first slot.

⁷ Another type of adjective reduplication is the [[X]_{ADJ} *maar dan ook (echt)* [X]_{ADJ}]_{AP} construction (Hoeksema 2001; Van Goethem, Dugas, Amiot, Cappelle, Lemmens, Patin, & Tayalati 2013a,b). The French counterpart of this construction is [[X]_{ADJ} *mais alors* [X]_{ADJ}]_{AP}, which is a semi-schematic construction with a non-predictable emphatic value (Van Goethem et al. 2013a,b).

- (13) a. *Il est bête comme ses pieds/ Il est aussi bête que ses pieds.*
 ‘lit. He is stupid like his feet’
 ‘He is very stupid.’
 b. *Il est fort comme un Turc.*
 ‘lit. He is strong like a Turkish person’
 ‘He is very strong.’

The constructions [zo [X]_{ADJ} *als mogelijk*]_{AP} in Dutch, or the [*aussi* [X]_{ADJ} *que possible*]_{AP} in French ‘[as [X]_{ADJ} *as possible*]_{AP}’ can also be included in this category.

3.4 Prefixes

Having discussed three syntactic types of intensifying constructions, we now turn to the morphological intensifying constructions. The first morphological type includes intensifying prefixes. Geerts et al. (1984: 346-347; E-ANS 12.4.2.2.2) enumerate the following intensifying prefixes in Dutch: *aarts-* ‘lit. arch-; profoundly’, *oer-* ‘originally, primarily; very’ *super-* ‘super-’, *ultra-* ‘ultra-’ *door-* ‘lit. through; thoroughly’ *in-* ‘lit. in; intensely’, *over-* ‘over-, too’ and *hyper-* ‘hyper-’ (14).

- (14) *aartsconservatief* ‘arch-conservative’, *oerlelijk* ‘lit. originally ugly; repulsive’, *superchic* ‘super fancy’, *ultrakort* ‘ultra short’, *doorkoud* ‘lit. thoroughly cold’, *indroevig* ‘intensely sad’, *overaardig* ‘lit. over-nice; extremely nice’, *hypergevoelig* ‘hypersensitive’

French also has a number of intensifying prefixes that express high intensity, such as *archi-* ‘extremely’, *extra-* ‘extra-’, *super-* ‘super-’, or excess, such as *sur-* ‘over-’, *hyper-* ‘hyper-’ and *ultra-* ‘ultra-’ (15) (Riegel et al. 1994: 621):

- (15) *archiplein* ‘archi full’, *extra-fort* ‘extra strong’, *supergrand* ‘super big’, *surbaissé* ‘very low’, *hypernerveux* ‘extremely nervous’, *ultraléger* ‘ultra light’

Furthermore, ‘repetitive coordination’ can be achieved in Dutch with the use of prepositions as prefixes, such as *door* ‘through’ (16a) and *in* ‘in’ (16b) (Booij 2010: 59-60):

- (16) a. *door- en door-nat*
 ‘lit. through and through-wet’
 ‘wet through and through’
 b. *in- en in-triest*
 ‘lit. in- and in-sad’
 ‘very, very sad’

This first type of morphological intensifiers is a productive means of intensification, although not all prefixes are equally productive.⁸ In the following section we discuss the

⁸ An anonymous reviewer suggested exploring the differences in collocational specialisation and entrenchment in the prefixes. While **aartsleuk* ‘arch-nice’ does not sound idiomatic in Dutch, the prefix *super-* can combine with nearly any adjective base and is hence much more productive. As a follow-up to this pilot study, we aim to conduct a comparative study on entrenchment, specialisation and productivity in prefixes in Dutch and French.

category of intensifying compounds, in which we observe more differences between French and Dutch.

3.5 Compounds

The last intensifying construction type discussed here is the intensifying adjective compound. The most productive type in Dutch is $[[X]_N [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ}$ (17). However, intensifying compounds with a verbal or adjectival modifier also occur: $[[X]_V [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ}$ (18) and $[[X]_{ADJ} [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ}$ (19). Intensifying compounds (or ‘relative compounds’ in terms of Hoeksema 2012), do not occur in comparative or superlative form, and they cannot be modified by degree adverbs (Hoeksema 2012: 4). A productive subtype of the $[[X] [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ}$ compound in Dutch is the compound expressing a comparison (17-18), as in the simile construction discussed in 3.3 (cf. Geerts et al. 1984: 365). Rainer (2015:1342) explains the category change from metaphor to an intensifying compound with a process of semantic bleaching.

- (17) *bikkelhard* ‘lit. dibs hard; very hard’, *boterzacht* ‘lit. butter soft; very soft’,
torenhoog ‘lit. tower high; very high’
- (18) a. (een) *smoorhete* (dag): ‘de dag is zo heet dat men (bijna) smoort (=stikt)’
‘(a) choking-hot (day) – a day so hot that one (almost) chokes’
b. (een) *fonkelnieuw* (horloge): ‘het horloge is zo nieuw dat het fonkelt’
‘(a) shiny-new (watch) – a watch that is so new that it shines’
- (19) *hoogzwanger* ‘heavily pregnant’, *bleekblauw* ‘pale blue’, *diepbedroefd* ‘deeply sad’

Another particular characteristic concerning intensifying compounds is that the intensifying constituent can be reduplicated. Hoeksema (2001: 5) and Booij (2010: 59) illustrate this type of emphatic reduplicative coordination with examples such as:

- (20) a. *Alleen als-ie ijs- en ijskoud is*
‘lit. Only when it is ice- and ice-cold’
‘Only when it is ice-cold’
b. *Het bleef bloed- en bloedheet*
‘lit. It remained blood- and blood-hot’
‘It remained very hot’
c. *We waren dood- en doodop*
‘lit. We were dead- and dead-tired’
‘We were very tired’

Hoeksema (2012: 8-9) refers to some examples taken from Vooy (1947) to illustrate that Dutch-speaking children abundantly employ intensifying compounds, and even overuse them. Vooy’s examples of children saying *pikzwart* ‘pitch black’ as well as *pikdroog* ‘pitch dry’ and *ijskoud* ‘ice-cold’ as well as *ijswarm* ‘ice-warm’ and *ijsmoe* ‘ice-tired’ illustrate that children have little comprehension of the components of the intensifying compounds and that the semantics of the components is subordinate to the intensifying function.

Furthermore, these examples confirm the importance of language input for learning the productivity of a construction: in certain cases extension may be possible (*keihard* ‘stone-hard’, *keimoe* ‘stone-tired’, *keiwarm* ‘stone-hot’), while in others collocational

specialisation may occur (*ijskoud* ‘ice-cold’, but not **ijswarm* ‘ice-warm’) (Hoeksema 2012: 2).

To the best of our knowledge, intensifying adjective compounds are not mentioned in French grammar, but they do occur, albeit rarely, e.g. *ivre-mort* ‘dead drunk’. Note that in the French compounds the adjectival head precedes the intensifying modifier ([X]_{ADJ} [Y]_N_{ADJ}).

In the following paragraph, we summarise the formal types of intensifying constructions discussed above and formulate our hypotheses about the types of constructions we expect to find in the three corpora included in our study.

3.6 Summary and hypotheses

Table 1 summarises the different types of syntactic and morphological intensifying constructions introduced above:

Language Domain	Intensifying construction	Dutch	French
SYNTAX	Intensifying adverb [[X] _{ADV} + [Y] _{ADJ}] _{AP}	<i>heel ziek</i> ‘very ill’, <i>diep ontgoocheld</i> ‘deeply disappointed’	<i>très malade</i> ‘very ill’, <i>profondément déçu</i> ‘deeply disappointed’
	Reduplication [[X] _{ADJ} [X] _{ADJ}] _{AP} [[X] _{ADJ} <i>maar dan ook</i> [X] _{ADJ}] _{AP} / [[X] _{ADJ} <i>mais alors</i> [X] _{ADJ}] _{AP}	<i>mooi, mooi</i> ‘nice nice’, <i>mooi maar dan ook</i> <i>echt mooi</i> ‘lit. beautiful but then really beautiful’	<i>un monde fou fou fou</i> ‘a crazy crazy crazy world’, <i>joli mais alors vraiment</i> <i>joli</i> ‘lit. pretty but then really pretty’
	Simile construction [(zo) [X] _{ADJ} <i>als</i> [Y] _{NP}] _{AP} / [(<i>aussi</i>) [X] _{ADJ} <i>que/comme</i> [Y] _{NP}] _{AP}	<i>zo trots als een aap</i> ‘lit. proud like a monkey’	<i>bête comme ses pieds/</i> <i>aussi bête que ses pieds.</i> ‘lit. stupid like his feet’
MORPHOLOGY	Intensifying prefix [[X] _{PREFIX} + [Y] _{ADJ}] _{ADJ}	<i>overgelukkig</i> , ‘overjoyed’ <i>aartsmoeilijk</i> ‘arch- difficult’, <i>supermodern</i> ‘supermodern’	<i>superpuissant</i> ‘superpowerful’, <i>surdoué</i> ‘lit over- gifted’, <i>ultramoderne</i> ‘ultramodern’
	Intensifying compound [[X] _{N/V/ADJ} + [Y] _{ADJ}] _{ADJ}	<i>bloedmooi</i> ‘lit. blood- beautiful’, <i>fonkelnieuw</i> ‘brandnew’ <i>bleekblauw</i> ‘lit. pale blue’	[<i>ivre-mort</i> ‘dead drunk’]

Table 1: Formal types intensifying constructions

As has been shown, Dutch and French have similar syntactic and morphological constructions at their disposal to intensify adjectives. However, language-specific preferences may be detected. For instance, intensifying compounds are much more productive in Dutch than in French. In the corpus analysis, we attempt to unravel these preferences by comparing the L1 corpora (cf. Section 5.1).

We assume that morphological intensifying constructions will be more exemplary of Dutch than French. This hypothesis is in line with the ‘Germanic Sandwich Hypothesis’ (van Haeringen 1956) which draws a cline between English, Dutch and German on the basis of the encoding of the grammatical knowledge. On one pole of the cline, German is considered as a synthetic language since grammatical information is typically encoded morphologically, through inflection for example, while – on the other pole of the cline – English is seen as an analytic language since grammatical information is typically encoded syntactically, and Dutch is situated in between these two poles. Van der Wouden & Foolen (2017) already extended this hypothesis to the domain of intensification; they found that intensification in German, Dutch and English generally followed this cline, with most intensifying compounds and affixoids found in German, and most intensifying adverbs found in English. French is expected to be similar to English on this point (Lamiroy 2011). Research on adjective modification of nouns, for instance, revealed a preference for analytical modification in English and French (e.g. *hard disk*, *disque dur*/*high tension*, *haute tension*), a high frequency of nominal compounds in German (*Festplatte*, *Hochspannung*), and an in-between status for Dutch (*harde schijf* ‘hard disk’ vs *hoogspanning* ‘high tension’) (cf. Hüning & Schlücker 2015; Schlücker & Hüning 2009; Van Goethem 2009). Based on this assumption, we expect a preference for synthetic intensification in Dutch and for analytic intensifying constructions in French.⁹

We first analyse the proportion of intensified adjectives and the variation and productivity of the used intensifying constructions in the Dutch and French L1 corpora before testing the hypothesis about the distributional differences in morphological or syntactic constructions. Similarly, in our analysis of the learner data we first analyse the variation and the productivity of the used intensifiers, which are expected to be lower compared to the L1 corpora. Before discussing the corpus results in Section 5, we present our corpus data and discuss some methodological issues in Section 4.

4. Corpus data and method

In this fourth section, we first introduce the two native corpora and the learner corpus used in our study (4.1) and then present the method used to extract the adjectives (4.2).

4.1 Corpora

The corpus analysis has been carried out on the following corpora: the *Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands* (L1 Dutch), *Frantext* (L1 French) and the *Leerdercorpus Nederlands* (L2 Dutch).

The *Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands*¹⁰ contains magazine and newspaper articles written in Dutch. We selected articles published in Flanders¹¹ between 2003 and 2009, and

⁹ Possibly inflection plays an important role in this domain: languages with an elaborated inflectional system, such as German, would opt more frequently for compounding in order to avoid formal changes in the inflected adjective (cf. Hüning 2010).

¹⁰ <http://corpushedendaagsnederlands.inl.nl/>. The entire corpus consists of more than 43000000 words.

extracted a total of 21200 adjectives using the integrated interface. The number is much higher than the number of adjectives selected from the two other corpora, but, since it was found that much fewer adjectives were intensified in the L1 Dutch corpus, the sample size had to be extended in order to get a comparable number of intensifying constructions.

The written corpus of native French is based on texts from *Frantext catégorisé*¹² belonging to the following genres: *essais* ‘essays’, *mémoires autobiographiques* ‘autobiographies’ and *mémoires et journaux* ‘autobiographies and diaries’, written between 1980 and 1992.¹³ We collected 9009 adjectives that were examined in the context of the sentences in which they occurred.

Besides comparing the use of intensifying constructions in L1 French and L1 Dutch, we examined the use of intensifying constructions by French-speaking learners of Dutch, on the basis of the *Leerdercorpus Nederlands* (Degand & Perrez 2004), which is the only available learner corpus containing Dutch written by French native speakers.¹⁴ Due to differences in the age of the writers, their degree of expertise, and differences in text genre, the learner corpus is not exactly comparable to the L1 corpora. To solve this problem, we will only compare the native corpora (section 5.1) and present the analysis of the learner corpus separately in section 5.2. In the *Leerdercorpus Nederlands*, we selected mainly the argumentative and literary essays written by students in the sixth grade of secondary school in French-speaking part of Belgium in the year 2003 (Degand & Perrez 2004). We used the CGN-tagger – an automatic Part of Speech tagger initially developed to tag the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* – to extract 8454 adjectives.¹⁵

	<i>Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands</i> (L1 Dutch)	<i>Frantext</i> (L1 French)	<i>Leerdercorpus Nederlands</i> (L2 Dutch)
Adjectives extracted	21200	9009	8454
Intensified adjectives	307	353	498

Table 2: Number of words adjectives and intensifying constructions per corpus

4.2 Identification of the intensifying constructions

After selecting the three subcorpora and extracting the adjectives, we analysed each adjective in its context in order to determine whether it formed part of an intensifying construction. To identify such constructions, we used the inventory of intensifying constructions presented above, whilst also keeping an eye out for cases that could express intensification but were not mentioned in the grammar books and specialized studies. A first coder (author 1) identified and classified the intensifying constructions; a second coder (author 2) verified the classification. Inflected forms such as *hele* ‘very’ were included, and counted as attestations of the lemma, e.g. *heel* ‘very’. Combinations of two intensifiers such

¹¹ Since this pilot analysis opens the way for a more comprehensive study on the acquisition of foreign languages in French-speaking part of Belgium, we exclusively selected texts produced in Belgium.

¹² http://www.frantext.fr/scripts/regular/7fmr.exe?CRITERE=ACCUEIL_CATEGORISE;OUVRIR_MENU=2;ISIS=isis_bbibftx.txt. The entire *Frantext* corpus contains 271599218 words.

¹³ Unfortunately, the more recent texts were not annotated and tagged for parts of speech.

¹⁴ The *Leerdercorpus Nederlands* consists of 260179 words.

¹⁵ *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands*- tagger: <http://ilk.uvt.nl/cgntagger/>

as *heel erg goed* ‘lit. very awfully good’, were counted as separate cases.¹⁶ Table 3 recapitulates our formal classification:

INTENSIFIER
Formal type
Adverb
Repetition/Reduplication
Comparative construction (<i>as ADJ as X</i>)
Prefix
Compound
Lexicalised form ¹⁷

Table 3: Formal and semantic types of intensifiers and adjectives

5. Corpus results

This section presents a comparison between the two L1 corpora (see 5.1) and an analysis of the L2 data (see 5.2). The results are discussed in terms of the proportion of intensified adjectives (see 5.1.1), the variation and the productivity of the intensifying constructions (see 5.1.2) and the most frequent intensifiers in the both corpora (see 5.1.3). We then present a comparison of the morphological and syntactic constructions in the native corpora (see 5.1.4). Subsequently, we turn to the results of the L2 data, and analyse the proportion of intensified adjectives (see 5.2.1), the variation and the productivity of the intensifying constructions (see 5.2.2), the most frequent intensifiers (see 5.2.3), and the proportions of morphological and syntactic intensifying constructions (see 5.2.4).

5.1 Native Dutch and French corpora

5.1.1 Proportion of intensified adjectives in L1 Dutch and French

Before discussing the distributions of the different types of intensifying constructions in the corpora, the overall proportions of intensified adjectives per corpus will first be considered. As Table 4 shows, the proportions of intensified adjectives are quite low, which is probably due to the – rather – formal text genre. Interestingly, however, we found a higher proportion of intensified adjectives in the L1 French corpus (3.92%) than in the L1 Dutch corpus (1.44%). A chi-square test indicated that the difference in the proportion of intensified adjectives in both corpora was significant ($\chi^2(1) = 179,564$, $p < .05$).

	CHN (L1 Dutch)	Frantext (L1 French)
Adjectives extracted (per corpus)	21 200	9009
Intensified adjectives	307	353
Percentage of intensified	1.44%	3.92%

¹⁶ *Heel* ‘very’, as for instance in *heel goed* ‘very good’, is counted as one case, *erg* ‘awfully’, as for instance in *erg lekker* ‘awfully tasty’, is counted as another, and *heel erg* ‘very awfully’, as in *heel erg raar* ‘very awfully strange’, is counted as a third.

¹⁷ The category ‘lexicalised forms’ includes forms such as *overweldigend* ‘overwhelming’ in which the intensified adjective cannot (or no longer) occur independently from the intensifier (**weldigend*).

adjectives		
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Table 4: Proportion of intensified adjectives

5.1.2 Variation and productivity in L1 Dutch and French

We used the *type/token ratio* of the intensifiers as an indication of their variation, and the ratio of *hapax legomena* as measure of (potential) productivity (Baayen 2009). Table 5 presents the *type/token ratio* and the ratio of *hapax legomena* per corpus.

	CHN (L1 Dutch)	Frantext (L1 French)
Type/token ratio	82/307 = 0.267	43/353 = 0.122
Hapax legomena	45/307 = 0.147	20/ 353 = 0.057

Table 5: Type-token ratio and potential productivity

The *type-token ratio* is higher in L1 Dutch compared to L1 French, indicating a greater variation of intensifying constructions in Dutch compared to French. In addition, we also observed a higher *hapax legomena* ratio in L1 Dutch, pointing to a higher potential productivity in L1 Dutch compared to L1 French. Differences in text types might however play a role in accounting for these dissimilarities between the two native corpora. The L1 Dutch corpus consists of magazine and newspaper articles, a genre that is more prone to lexical innovations (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad Finegan 1999; Hundt & Mair 1999) than the text types present in the L1 French data – consisting of essays, autobiographies and diaries. Examples of *hapax legomena* in both corpora are shown in (21).

- (21) a. *De verstandhouding tussen Dirk en mij was altijd **opperbest**.*
‘The relation between Dirk and me was always the very best’ (CHN)
- c. *Aujourd'hui, le Mardi gras est devenu, comme la fête des pères, une opération **purement publicitaire** [...].*
‘Today, Mardi Gras has become like Father's Day, purely a publicity event’ (Frantext)

5.1.3 Most frequent intensifiers in L1 Dutch and French

Before presenting a comparison of the formal types of intensifiers, we briefly discuss the most frequent intensifiers found in each corpus. As can be seen from Table 6, the top five intensifiers in L1 French were all intensifying adverbs (22a). In contrast, L1 Dutch displayed two prefixes among the top five intensifiers: *aller-* ‘most’ (3.6%) and *over-* ‘over-’ (2.9%) (23). These findings are in line with our hypothesis that Dutch would display more synthetic – morphological – intensifying constructions compared to French.

- (22) a. *J'en suis restée tout étonnée, **très flattée***
‘I was completely surprised, very flattered’ (FRANTEXT)
- c. *Het is **heel belangrijk** dat iemand de leiding neemt*
‘It is very important that someone takes the lead’ (CHN)
- (23) a. *Wat was als kind uw **allereerste** experiment?*
‘What were your first experiment as a child? (CHN)

- b. „Het is **overduidelijk** dat Unmik faalt”, aldus Peter
 ‘It is very clear that Unmik fails, according to Peter’ (CHN)

CHN (L1 Dutch)				Frantext (L1 French)		
	Most frequent intensifiers	Abs. freq.	Norm. freq. ¹⁸	Most frequent intensifiers	Abs. freq.	Norm. freq.
1	<i>heel/héél</i> ‘very’	68	22.1%	<i>très</i> ‘very’	145	41.1%
2	<i>zeer</i> ‘very’	30	9.8%	<i>tout(e)(s)</i> ‘completely’	65	18.4%
3	<i>bijzonder</i> ‘particularly’	17	5.5%	<i>si</i> ‘so’	43	12.2%
4	<i>aller-</i> ‘most’	11	3.6%	<i>purement</i> ‘purely’	9	2.5%
5	<i>over-</i> ‘over-’	9	2.9%	<i>parfaitement</i> ‘perfectly’	7	2.0%

Table 6: Most frequent intensifiers

5.1.4 Formal comparison of intensifiers in L1 Dutch and French

Figure 1 represents the different formal types of intensifiers in the two corpora and allows us to examine our hypothesis about the proportions of morphological and syntactic intensifying constructions in the L1 corpora.

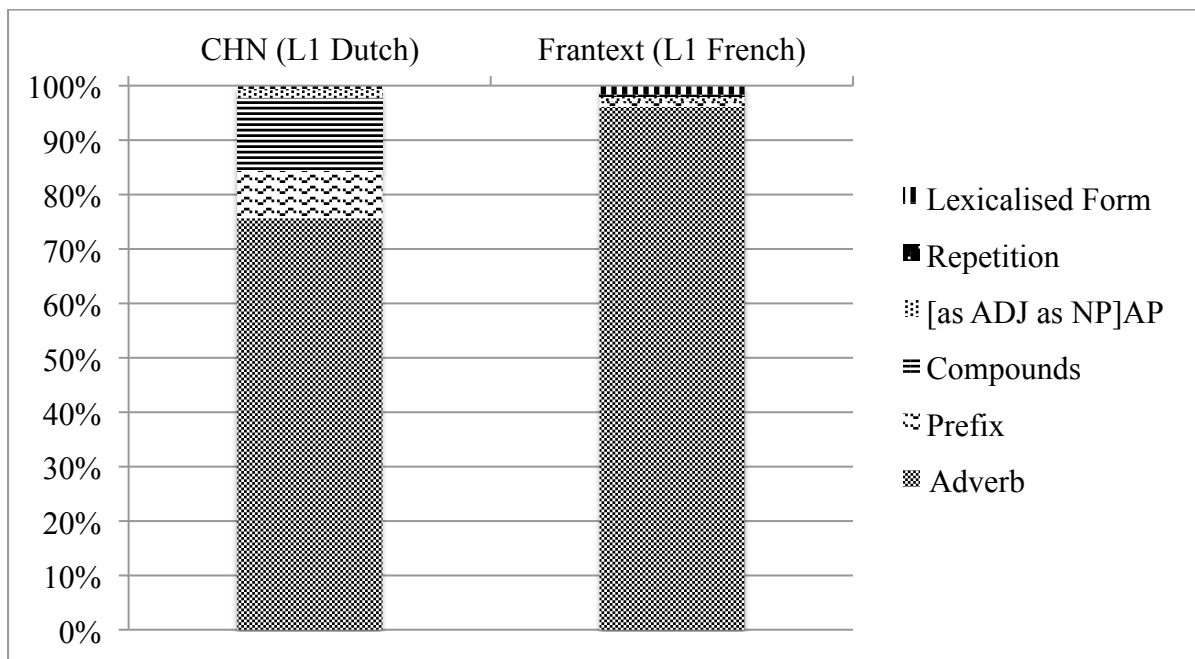


Figure 1: Formal comparison of intensifying constructions

Figure 1 reveals a strong preference for adverbial modification in both corpora. As expected, this tendency is weaker in the L1 Dutch corpus (nonetheless accounting for 75.6% of all intensifying constructions). The other syntactic types of intensifying constructions are rare in comparison; none of them reaches the level of 2%.

Comparing the morphological constructions in both corpora, we observe that the L1 Dutch corpus contains more intensifying prefixes than the L1 French corpus (8.8% vs 1.1%)

¹⁸ Number of tokens divided by total number of intensified adjectives in the corpus.

(24). The difference is even more striking with respect to the proportions of intensifying compounds (25). Intensifying compounds are quite productive in L1 Dutch (13.4% of all intensifying constructions), while compounds are entirely absent from the L1 French corpus. This finding is in line with our hypothesis that Dutch is more synthetic than French.

- (24) a. *In de plaats duikt een visioen op van een **hyper-levendige, hyper-verscheiden** metropool.*
 ‘In its place emerges a vision of a hyper-vivid, hyper-diverse metropolis’ (CHN)
- b. *Cette ubiquité **omniprésente** de l’imagination, quel fabuleux miracle.*
 ‘This omnipresent ubiquity of the imagination, what a fabulous miracle’ (Frantext)
- (25) *Eén **gortdroog** commentaarzinnetje valt op*
 ‘One very dry commentary sentence stands out’ (CHN)

Surprisingly, the [(zo) [X]_{ADJ} *als* [Y]_{NP}]_{AP} / [(*aussi*) [X]_{ADJ} *que/comme* [Y]_{NP}]_{AP} construction is observed more frequently in L1 Dutch (but concerns only 5 cases or 1.6%) (26a) than in L1 French (only 3 cases; 0.8%) (26b). Since it is a syntactic construction, we expected to find it more frequently in French.

- (26) a. *Een column is geen verslaggeving maar commentaar en interpretatie, dat is **zo helder als de kerstster**.*
 ‘lit. A column is not reporting but a commentary and an interpretation, that is as clear as the Christmas star’ (CHN)
- b. *[...] il n’est presque plus séparable de ces enveloppes, aussi concentriques et **aussi serrées que les pelures d’un oignon**, [...]*
 ‘[...] it is hardly separable from these envelopes, as concentric and as tight as the layers of an onion [...]

We predicted that repetition, a syntactic construction, would be rare in Dutch. Indeed, it did not occur in the Dutch corpus; only 1 example was found in the *Frantext* corpus:

- (27) *Les bureaux des armateurs, les entrepôts, les marchés publics, tout est **petit, petit... petit**.*
 ‘lit. Shipowners offices, warehouses, public markets, everything is small, small, small...’ (Frantext)

There were a few more lexicalised forms in the L1 French corpus (6 cases, 1.7%) (28a) than in L1 Dutch corpus (2 cases, 0.7%) (28b).

- (28) a. *La Bourdette est vraiment un carrefour **extraordinaire**.*
 ‘The Bourdette is really an extraordinary crossroads’ (Frantext)
- b. *Steeds meer consumenten willen de **overweldigende** beeld- en geluidservaring*
 ‘More and more consumers want an overwhelming image- and sound-experience’ (CHN)

Table 7 recapitulates the findings in absolute numbers and percentages.

Intensifying constructions	CHN (L1 Dutch)		Frantext (L1 French)	
Adverb	232	75.6%	339	96.0%
Prefix	27	8.8%	4	1.1%
Compound	41	13.4%	/	/
Comparative expression (ADJ <i>as</i> X)	5	1.6%	3	0.8%
Repetition/Reduplication	/	/	1	0.3%
Lexicalised form	2	0.7%	6	1.7%
Total	307	100.0%	353	100.0%

Table 7: Number of constructions L1 Dutch and L1 French (the morphological constructions are indicated in grey)

Merging the morphological types and the syntactic types (Figure 2), the preference of Dutch for morphological constructions, compared to French, becomes more perceptible – the difference is significant ($\chi^2(1) = 61.46$, $p < .05$).

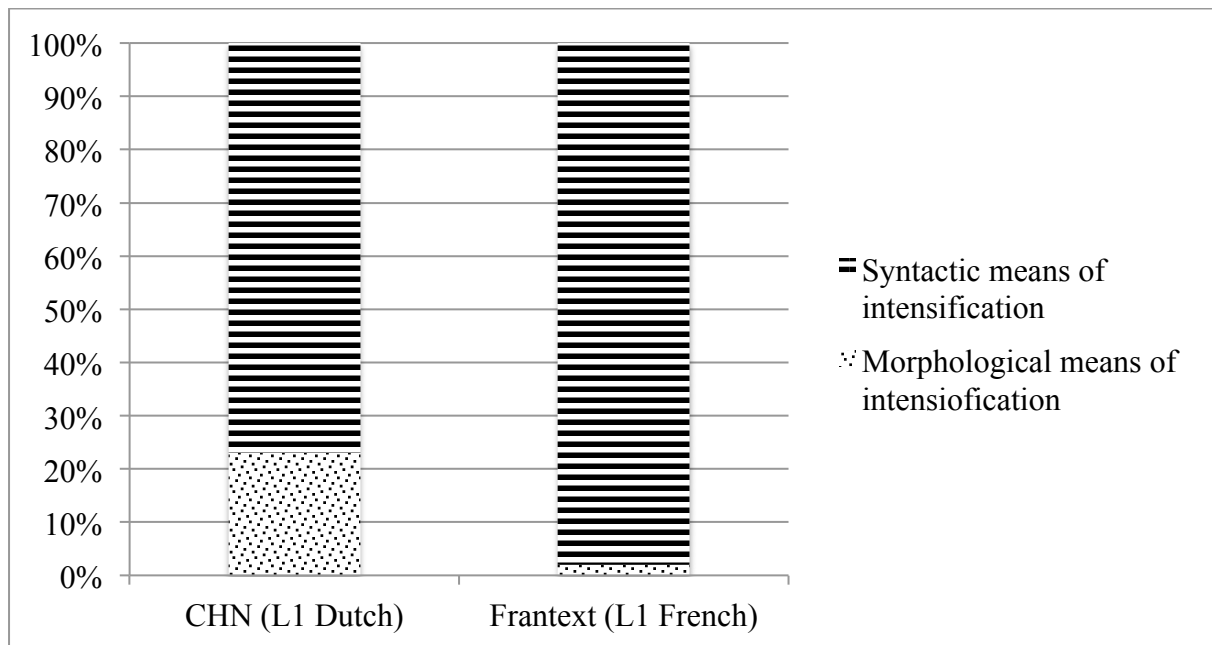


Figure 2: Formal comparison of intensifying constructions – morphological vs syntactic constructions

The findings presented in this paragraph do not entirely confirm our hypothesis (3.2) as L1 Dutch displays an overall preference for syntactic constructions, even though it contains a significantly larger proportion of morphological constructions in comparison to native French.

5.2 Learner Corpus

5.2.1 Proportion of intensified adjectives in L2 Dutch

Upon examination of the overall proportions of intensified adjectives we found a higher proportion of adjective intensification in L2 Dutch (5.89% in Table 8) than in the two native corpora (5.1.1).

LCN (L2 Dutch)	
Adjectives extracted	8454
Intensified adjectives	498
Percentage intensified adjectives	5.89%

Table 8: Proportion of intensified adjectives (L2 Dutch)

Lorenz (1999) reported similar findings in his study on intensification by 16-18 years old German-speaking learners of English. The English essays written by the learners showed an overuse of intensifying constructions compared to the essays written by the L1 English speakers (Lorenz 1999: 190). As one of the explanations for the striking overuse of adverbs by the learners, Lorenz points to the fact that the learners used mostly closed-class all-round intensifiers, like *very*. Comparable outcomes are found in Granger's (1998) study on intensification by French-speaking learners of English:

[Learners] tend to use some amplifiers as 'all-rounders', a tendency confirmed by their use of the amplifier *very* [...] The analysis showed a highly significant overuse of *very*, the all-round amplifier par excellence (Granger 1998: 151).

To account for this, Lorenz hypothesized that L1 speakers have a larger variety of linguistic means at their disposal to express intensification than L2 speakers. L1 speakers may opt more easily for inherently stronger adjectives (e.g. *gigantic* instead of *very big*), or other syntactic, morphological and phonological means of emphasis, whereas L2 speakers tend to use an all-round intensifier modifying a core adjective (Lorenz 1999: 216).

In order to verify this hypothesis, we could have analysed the semantics of all adjectives in our corpora but with more than 38 000 tokens this option was not doable and we narrowed down the scope to the adjectives that were part of intensifying constructions. On the basis of the genre/text type difference of the L1 Dutch texts combined with the difference in the writers' expertise (expert writers for the L1 Dutch corpus vs relatively novice writers in the L2 Dutch corpus), our findings seem to support Lorenz's assumption. Besides, in section 5.2.3 we show that all-round intensifying adverbs are indeed the most frequent in the learner corpus (*heel* 'very' accounts for more than half of all the intensifiers used in the learner corpus).

A second explanation for the overuse of intensifying constructions in Granger (1998) and Lorenz (1999) is that learners tend to adopt an information-dense style. This 'information overcharge' is considered as 'one of the main stylistic weaknesses of non-native writing' (Lorenz 1999: 218). Learners tend to encode more information in comparison to L1 speakers. Lorenz observed that this tendency is even stronger among advanced L2 learners who sometimes intensify attributive adjectives even if the outcome is an unnaturally dense formulation (Lorenz 1999: 216). This is illustrated in the following example from the learner corpus.

- (29) *Iedere dag hetzelfde doen, ze beginnen het gebrek aan verandering op een **zeer zware** manier te voelen.*
 'Lit. Doing every day the same thing, they start to feel the lack of changes in a **very heavy** manner.' (LCN)

The greatest percentage of intensified adjectives in the essays written by learners compared to the L1 Dutch and French corpora points towards such an 'information overcharge' in the

learner language. In the following section, we investigate the variation and productivity of the intensifying constructions in the learner corpus.

5.2.2 Variation and productivity in L2 Dutch

As in the case of the native corpora, we used the *type/token ratio* of the intensifiers as an indication of the variation, and the *hapax legomena* ratio as measure of productivity (Baayen 2009). Table 9 presents the *type/token ratio* and the ratio of *hapax legomena* of the intensifiers in the learner corpus.

LCN (L2 Dutch)	
Type/token ratio	29/ 498 = 0,058
Hapax legomena	10/498 = 0.020

Table 9: Type-token ratio and potential productivity LCN (L2 Dutch)

As expected, the *type-token ratio* and the *hapax legomena* are lower than in the two native corpora, although this cannot unambiguously be interpreted as a learner effect (the learners not having acquired a great diversity of intensifiers yet). It certainly is the result of a combination of factors, such as the expertise and the age of the writers, and the text genre, besides the fact that the text is written in their L2.

The examples below illustrate the larger variety in the CHN corpus compared to the LCN corpus; the learner corpus contains only one type of intensification of the adjective *hoog* ‘high’ (30a) while 4 different types occur in the CHN corpus (30b-e).

- (30) a. *heel hoog*
 ‘very high’ (LCN)
 b. *erg hoog*
 ‘quite high’ (CHN)
 c. *heel hoog*
 ‘very high’ (CHN)
 d. *torenhoog*
 ‘tower-high, high as a tower’ (CHN)
 e. *uitzonderlijk hoog*
 ‘exceptionally high’ (CHN)

5.2.3 Most frequent intensifiers in L2 Dutch

Before discussing the formal types of intensifiers, we will briefly discuss the most frequent intensifiers in the learner corpus. As can be seen from Table 10, the top five intensifiers in L2 Dutch are all intensifying adverbs (31).

- (31) a. *Vroeger was het huwelijk iets heel belangrijk*¹⁹
 ‘In the past, marriage was something very important’ (LCN)

Most frequent intensifiers	Absolute frequencies	Normalised frequencies
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¹⁹ We represent the utterances as the learners wrote them down, including grammatical and other mistakes.

1. <i>heel</i> ‘very’	275	55.2%
2. <i>zeer</i> ‘very’	69	13.9%
3. <i>zo</i> ‘so’	37	7.4%
4. <i>erg</i> ‘quite, very’	36	7.2%
5. <i>echt</i> ‘really’	17	3.4%

Table 10: Illustrating most frequent intensifiers LCN (L2 Dutch)

Interestingly, *heel* ‘very’ makes up more than half of all the intensifiers used by the learners, (as reported in section 5.1.3, in the native Dutch corpus it only represents about 21% of the observed intensifiers). This finding corroborates our previous observation (section 5.2.2) that learner Dutch is characterised by less variation. Besides, these outcomes are quite similar to Granger’s (1998) and Lorenz’s (1999) findings with respect to the overuse of ‘all-round intensifiers’ (as mentioned in section 5.2.1).

Another finding involves the quantifier *veel* ‘many’, which occurred 7 times (1.4%) in the learner corpus in contexts where its use was not appropriate (32).

- (32) *Kinderen hebben kost namelijk veel duur*
‘lit. Having children costs much expensive’ (LCN)

French-speaking learners of Dutch seem to confuse the quantifier *veel* with the intensifier *heel*. In the following section, we examine the learners’ preferences for morphological or syntactic intensifying constructions in Dutch.

5.2.4 Formal comparison intensifiers in L2 Dutch

Figure 3 represents the different formal types of intensifiers in the learner corpus. It reveals a strong preference for adverbial modification (example 33). This tendency is even stronger in the learner corpus (with up to 96.6%) than in the L1 corpora. The other intensifiers in the learner corpus were 9 prefixes (1.8%) (example 34), and 8 compounds (1.6%) (example 35).

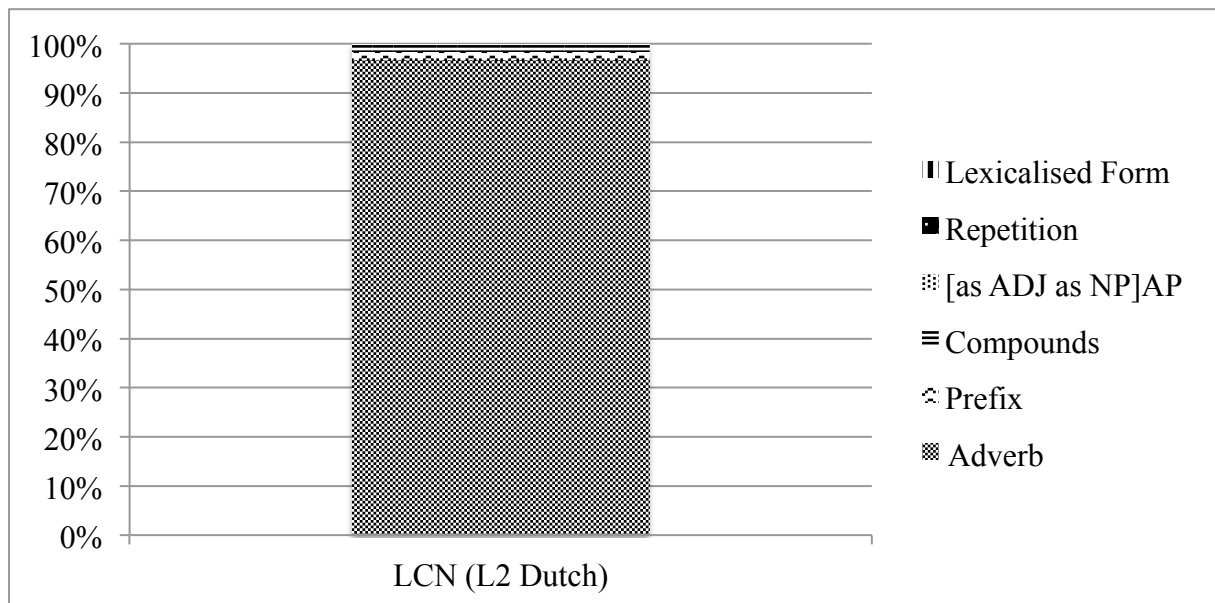


Figure 3: Formal comparison of intensifying constructions

- (33) *Mijn ouders zou zo blij zijn (en ik zou blij ook zijn).*
 ‘My parents would be so happy (and me too I would be happy)’ (LCN)
- (34) *wanneer Olivier in contact is met de werkelijkheid, al is dit niet altijd overduidelijk.*
 ‘lit. when Olivier is in contact with reality, although it is not always this obvious’ (LCN)
- (35) *Als je je partner niet kan vertrouwen wort je meestal doodongelukkig*
 ‘If you cannot trust your partner usually you become (lit.) dead-unhappy’ (LCN)

Table 11 below summarises the frequencies of each construction in the learner corpus; an almost exclusive use of intensifying adverbs can be observed. Furthermore, we detected only three types of constructions, indicating little variation.

Intensifying constructions	LCN (L2 Dutch)	
Adverb	481	96,6%
Prefix	9	1,8%
Compound	8	1,6%
Comparative expression (<i>as</i> ADJ <i>as</i> X)		
Repetition/Reduplication		
Lexicalised form		
Total	498	100%

Table 11: Number of constructions L2 Dutch (the morphological constructions are indicated in grey)

By merging the morphological and the syntactic types (Figure 4), we observe once more a clear preference for syntactic intensifying constructions in L2 Dutch, similarly to our findings from the L1 French corpus.

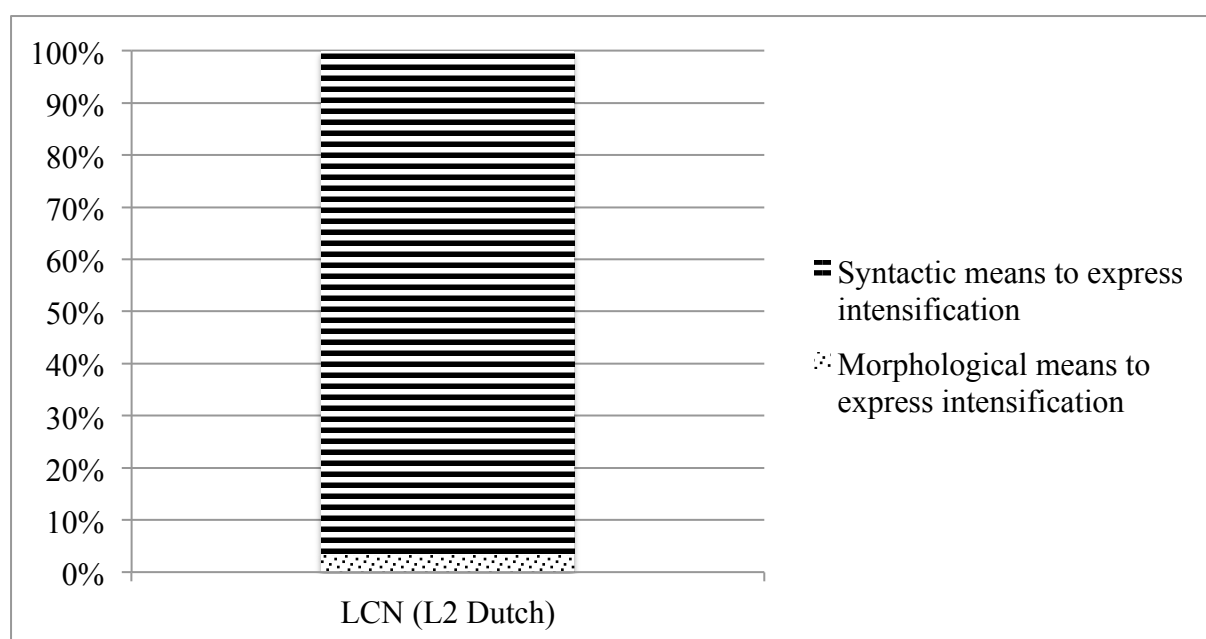


Figure 4: Formal comparison of intensifying constructions – morphological vs syntactic constructions

The findings presented in this paragraph indicate that L2 Dutch is situated between L1 Dutch and L1 French, but the proportions of morphological and syntactic intensifying constructions do not differ significantly from French. This final observation brings us to the conclusions.

6. Discussion and conclusions

In this study, we adopted a constructional analysis of intensification and showed that, in Dutch and French, it can be expressed through lexical (morphological) and grammatical (syntactic) constructions. However, on the basis of theoretical assumptions about the synthetic nature of Dutch and the more analytic character of French, we hypothesised that language-particular tendencies can be detected in the choice for one or the other type of intensification and that these differences might complicate a native-like acquisition of Dutch intensifying constructions by French-speaking second language learners.

The aim of this study was to improve our understanding of the differences in preference for morphological or syntactic intensifying constructions in Dutch and French, and also to check if these language-specific preferences might complicate the acquisition of these constructions by L2 learners of Dutch. To do so, we examined intensification in three different written corpora: a native corpus of Dutch, a native corpus of French and an L2 Dutch corpus written by French-speakers.

Previous research has shown that youth language is characterised by abundant intensification, and that intensifiers are rapidly renewed due to stylistic specialisation and the interplay between diachronic weakening and emotional expressivity. Learners are aware of the importance of a native-like use of intensifying constructions, but may experience difficulties in acquiring up-to-date constructions. Moreover, Dutch and French display different preferences in the use of (morphological or syntactic) means to express intensification. Dutch, which is more synthetic than French, may tend to use more morphological intensifying constructions.

The results of our study corroborate the difference between the synthetic tendency of Germanic languages (Dutch here) and the analytic tendency of the Romance languages (French here). This said, the default intensifier is the intensifying adverb, also in Dutch. The native French corpus contains mostly syntactic intensifying constructions (adverbial modification, repetition and [(*aussi*) [X]_{ADJ} *que/comme* [X]_{AP}]_{AP}, whereas the native Dutch corpus displays more morphological intensifying constructions (compounds and prefixes) than both the learner and French corpus. Admittedly, the selection of the corpora (written and mostly formal language) may have influenced the proportions of the observed intensifying constructions, and the absence of particular constructions, such as reduplication, typically associated with less formal registers.

In addition, the findings of this study have complemented previous studies, such as Lorenz (1999) and Granger (1998), on the overuse of intensification by learners. Our study confirms that learners use the largest proportion of intensifying constructions, especially adverbial intensification, which may be attributed to the fact that they have not yet acquired other means to express intensity and emphasis, such as the use of inherently emphatic lexemes. Despite the overuse of intensification, the learner corpus displays the lowest variety and productivity of intensifying constructions. Learners tend to overuse ‘all-round’ intensifiers, and especially the adverb *heel* ‘very’.

The present research is a pilot study, and although it served the purpose of inventorying intensification in French and Dutch, a possible drawback consists in the limited

comparability of the corpora. To address this constraint, we have collected written data (emails written about the same topics) produced by young natives and learners between 16 and 20 years old, over the course of two school years (2015-2017)). The resulting corpus will allow us to filter out the effects due to the corpus differences and will help us to deepen and broaden the findings of this pilot study. Furthermore the attraction between particular intensifiers and adjectives remains to be explored, as well as the semantics of adjectives and their intensifiers and the semantic compatibility of the two.

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Electronic tools and corpora

- Corpus Gesproken Nederlands- tagger. <<http://ilk.uvt.nl/cgntagger/>>.
- Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands. <<https://portal.clarin.inl.nl/search/page/search>>.
- FRANTEXT, ATILF. <<http://www.frantext.fr>>.
- Website Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst. <http://ans.ruhosting.nl/>.