

# DEGRAMMATICALIZATION OF FRENCH AND DUTCH COMPOUNDS

**K. Van Goethem – Ph. Hiligsmann**

[kristel.vangoethem@arts.kuleuven.be](mailto:kristel.vangoethem@arts.kuleuven.be) – [philippe.hiligsmann@uclouvain.be](mailto:philippe.hiligsmann@uclouvain.be)

## FRENCH

### ▪ N+N compounding

e.g. *mot-clé* 'key word'

➡ adjectival uses of *-clé*:

- ✓ adverbial modification:
  - (1) *c'est un mot vraiment clé* 'it is a really key word'
- ✓ attributive use:
  - (2) *les secteurs économiques clés* 'the key economic sectors'
- ✓ predicative use:
  - (3) *ce mot est clé* 'this word is key'
- ✓ comparative / superlative use:
  - (4) *le point le plus clé* 'the most key point'

Other examples:

- *visite éclair* – *une visite très éclair*  
'lightning visit' – 'a very fast and short visit'
- *époque charnière* – *cette époque est vraiment charnière*  
'hinge period' – 'this period is really pivotal'

## DUTCH

### ▪ N+N compounding

e.g. *sleutelwoord* 'key word'

➡ NO adjectival uses of *sleutel-*:

- (1') *\*het is een echt sleutel woord*
- (2') *\*de sleutel economische sectoren*
- (3') *\*dit woord is sleutel*
- (4') *\*het meest sleutel(e) punt*

### ▪ N+A compounding

e.g. *keihard* 'rock-hard'

➡ adjectival / adverbial uses of *kei*:

- ✓ attributive use: *het was een kei feestje* 'it was a great party'
- ✓ adverbial use: *dat vind ik kei jammer* 'it really is a pity'

Other examples:

- *beresterk* – *het was bere gezellig*  
'as strong as a bear' – 'it was very cosy'
- *stapelgek* – *ik ben stapel op jou*  
'completely crazy' – 'I am madly in love with you'
- *reuzegroot* – *het uitstapje was reuze*  
'as big as a giant' – 'the outing was great'

## HYPOTHESIS

### FRENCH

#### GRAMMATICALIZATION

N+N compound ➡ N2 = (qualificative) semi-suffix

#### DEGRAMMATICALIZATION

➡ N2 = Adjective

### DUTCH

#### GRAMMATICALIZATION

N+A compound ➡ N1 = (intensifying) semi-prefix

#### DEGRAMMATICALIZATION

➡ N1 = Adjective / Adverb

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Which degrammaticalization parameters are involved in this process (resemanticization, deparadigmaticization, debonding, recategorialization, phonological strengthening, cf. Norde 2009)?
- Which types of (French / Dutch) compounds are subjected to degrammaticalization and to which degree does the process apply to both languages?
- Which mechanisms are behind this degrammaticalization process (reanalysis, analogy, etc.)?
- What is the interaction between grammaticalization and degrammaticalization?

## METHOD

- Synchronic, diachronic, and comparative corpus-based study