

## Template course description

*Titel course:* Verb placement and agreement

*Teacher:* Olaf Koeneman

### Contact

*Address:*

English Department, Radboud University, PO Box 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen

*Email address:* o.koeneman@ru.nl

*Web:* <http://www.ru.nl/engels/waar/medewerkers/dr-olaf-koeneman/>

### Course info

*Level:* advanced

*Course description:*

It is well known that the position of the finite verb within the clause is subject to cross-linguistic variation. It is also well known that verb placement can be variable within one and the same language. This course offers two case studies, one addressing the first type of variation, and another addressing the second type of variation.

An example of the first case (inter-language variation) would be the contrast between English and French, displayed in (1):

- (1) a. John often kisses Mary  
b. Jean embrasse souvent Marie  
Jean kisses often Marie

Whereas in English finite lexical verbs follow adverbs like 'often', in French they precede similar adverbs.

An example of the second case (intra-language variation) would be Dutch. As can be observed in the following contrast, the finite verb in a Dutch main clause either follows or precedes the subject:

- (2) a. Jan kust Marie waarschijnlijk vaak  
Jan kisses Marie probably often  
b. Waarschijnlijk kust Jan Marie vaak  
probably kisses Jan Marie often

Both types of variation can be shown to correlate with the morphological expression of subject agreement on the finite verb.

In the first case, it can be shown that languages that place the finite verb to the left of adverbs also have rich subject agreement, whereas languages that place the verb to the right of similar adverbs do not. This correlation, known as the 'rich agreement hypothesis', has been criticized severely over the last two decades because of the existence of potential counter-examples. I will show (basing myself on work with Hedde Zeijlstra), that closer scrutiny reveals that these counter-examples have been misanalysed and that the rich agreement hypothesis should be assigned the status of a potential language universal.

The second case can be illustrated with a phenomenon known as 'inversion morphology'. In Dutch, the morphological form of the finite verb depends on its position with respect to the verb in 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular contexts. Whereas the verbal stem carries a *-t* if it follows the subject, this *-t* is absent if the verb precedes the subject:

- (3) a. Jij kust Marie waarschijnlijk vaak  
b. Waarschijnlijk kus jij Marie vaak

The literature offers distinct proposals on the nature of this phenomenon. I will show (basing myself on work with Jan Don and Paula Fenger) that a close look at

Dutch dialects reveals a number of generalizations that help us characterize this phenomenon in a very detailed way.

In short, the course provides macro- and micro-typological generalizations pertaining to verb placement and its interaction with agreement. Of course, I will postulate theoretical proposals that aim at deriving these generalizations.

*Day-to-day program*

Monday: Introducing verb movement and the rich agreement hypothesis

Tuesday: Well-behaved and ill-behaved languages

Wednesday: A new proposal

Thursday: Introducing inversion morphology

Friday: Deriving the generalizations