Preface

This book is intended as an introduction to the phenomena of Dutch syntax, as well as to the various ways in which these phenomena have been analyzed from a theoretical point of view. Consequently, it has two major parts, entitled 'Description' (part II) and 'Theory' (part III).

In preparing this work, I have learned that not all phenomena of Dutch syntax have been accorded equal attention in the theoretical literature. As a result, it appeared impractical to present the data and the analyses side by side, and I have opted instead to separate the two parts completely, and have allowed myself to be guided first and foremost by what seemed interesting from a descriptive viewpoint in part II, and from a historical-theoretical viewpoint in part III. As a result, the organization of the two parts is not completely parallel, and many interesting topics discussed in part II are not picked up in part III, simply for the reason that they have received insufficient theoretical attention.

It has been my intention, then, to create in part II something of a reference work (in English) of the syntax of Dutch, which could be used independently, and might be of service to students and researchers working on Dutch or Germanic more generally. At the same time, I have experienced that many phenomena of Dutch syntax are still not fully explored and are ill-understood, certainly by me, so that this work should not be viewed as comprehensive and conclusive, and I sincerely apologize for its many lacunae. I am sustained by the hope that it will make the phenomena of Dutch more widely available, and will help others in framing the questions to be asked when trying to understand Dutch, syntax, or both.

In writing part III, I have been guided by the question of how the phenomena of Dutch have helped shape syntactic theory over the years. The reader will find here a synopsis of the analyses of verb second, verb clustering, and word order in Dutch, going back as often as possible to pregenerative structuralist work, and continuing up to the current minimalist stage of generative grammar.

Introducing the book is a small part I presenting the Dutch language, its basic morphosyntax, and the main trends of linguistic analysis relevant to the discussion in part III. Five appendices list the Dutch pronouns, adpositions, auxiliaries, verbs taking infinitival complements, and verb paradigms.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 00:04:58, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.001

I would have liked to conclude this work with a part IV discussing aspects of Dutch syntax that have played a major role in discussions confined to Dutch linguistics journals, and hence little known to researchers outside the Netherlands. For various reasons, this proved too ambitious at this point. As a result, some of these constructions have not received sufficient attention here, and it is hoped that this can be rectified in a future edition.

In many ways, preparing this volume started long before its inception, and I have many people to thank for helping me along the way. For fear of leaving anyone out, I refrain from listing them here, and refer to the reference section instead. For comments on parts of this manuscript, I thank Jack Hoeksema, Jan Koster, and Mark de Vries. I am especially grateful to Helen Barton, Sarah Green, Elizabeth Davey, and Kay McKechnie at Cambridge University Press, for their patience and support.

Sadly, as I was composing this preface, word reached us that one of the pioneers of Dutch syntactic theory, Hans den Besten, had passed away. This book is dedicated to his memory.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 00:04:58, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977763.001