

FLAVORS OF n°: On the morphosyntax of collective nouns

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Central claims

- Collective nouns (such as *cutlery* and *underwear*), which cannot be pluralized, are not bare roots.
- Monomorphemic collective nouns (such as *stock*) are rootless structures; the sole morpheme realizes a categorial head.

Theoretical consequences

- Collectives do not falsify the claim that all roots can occur in all structures (Borer 2005).
- The analysis opens up the possibility of rootless phrases.

OUTLINE OF THE TALK

1. DATA & PROBLEM: Dutch collective nouns cannot be pluralized
2. ANALYSIS PART 1: COLLECTIVE NOUNS ARE DERIVATIONS
 - 2.1 Bimorphemic collectives are derivations
 - 2.2 Monomorphemic collectives are rootless derivations
3. ANALYSIS PART 2: THE SEMANTICS OF THE COLLECTIVE SUFFIX
 - 3.1 The collective suffix is [+mass]
 - 3.2 The collective suffix is [+atomic]
4. FURTHER RESEARCH
 - 4.1 The architecture of n°
 - 4.2 Extension to languages with noun classes?
5. CONCLUSION

1. DATA & PROBLEM: DUTCH COLLECTIVE NOUNS CANNOT BE PLURALIZED

Data

Nouns can occur both in mass and count readings

- 1) suiker [mass]
sugar
'sugar'

- 2) drie suikers: glucose, fructose en saccharose [count]
three sugars: glucose, fructose and saccharose
'three sugars: glucose, fructose and saccharose'
- 3) Er hangt hond aan de muur. [mass]
there hangs dog on the wall
'There is dog on the wall.'
- 4) drie honden [count]
three dogs
'three dogs'

→ Exo-Skeletal claim (Borer 2005a,b): roots are not endowed with morphosyntactic features, i.e. they are categoryless.

Collective nouns are an exception: they resist count readings

- 5) suikerwerk [mass]
sugar.WORK
'confectionery'
- 6) * drie suikerwerken [count]
three sugar.WORK.PL
- 7) handelswaar [mass]
trade.WARE
'merchandise'
- 8) * drie handelswaren [count]
three trade.WARE.PL

They always get mass readings

a) they are (syntactic) singulars

- 9) Suikerwerk **is** vaak decoratief.
sugar.WORK is often decorative
'Confectionery is often decorative'
- 10) Proper ondergoed **is** prettig.
clean.SG.NEUTER under.GOOD(SG.NEUTER) is nice
'Clean underwear is comfortable.'

b) Being singulars, they combine with *much*

11) veel suikerwerk
much sugar.WORK
'much confectionery'

12) veel handelswaar
much trade.WARE
'much merchandise'

c) Being singulars, they pass the test for cumulativity (Krifka 1998)

13) Ik had al **ondergoed**.
I had already underwear.

Dan kocht ik er wat extra.
Then bought I there some extra.

Nu heb ik veel **ondergoed**.
now have I much underwear

'I already had some underwear. Then I bought some extra. Now I have a lot of underwear.'

Problem

Data question:

14)

	MASS	COUNT
<i>suiker</i> 'sugar'	√	√
<i>suikerwerk</i> 'confectionery'	√	*

How can we account for the observation that collective nouns resist count readings?

Theoretical question:

Exo-Skeletal claim: all roots can enter all structures

Do collectives falsify this claim?

Proposal

Collective nouns are derivations.

- The affix realizes a feature which is semantically incompatible with count readings.
- As they are not roots, they do not falsify the Exo-Skeletal model.

2. ANALYSIS PART 1: COLLECTIVE NOUNS ARE DERIVATIONS

2.1 BIMORPHEMIC COLLECTIVES ARE DERIVATIONS

The majority of Dutch collective nouns are morphologically complex:

15) gereed-schap
ready-SHIP
'tools'

16) schrijf-gerei
write-WARE
'stationery'

17) speel-goed
play-GOOD
'toys'

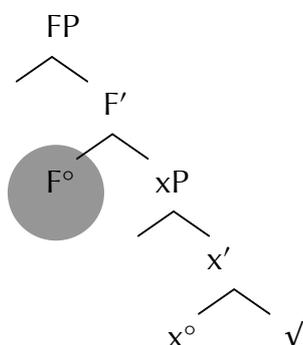
18) handels-waar
trade-WARE
'merchandise'

19) kled-ij
cloth-ING
'clothing'

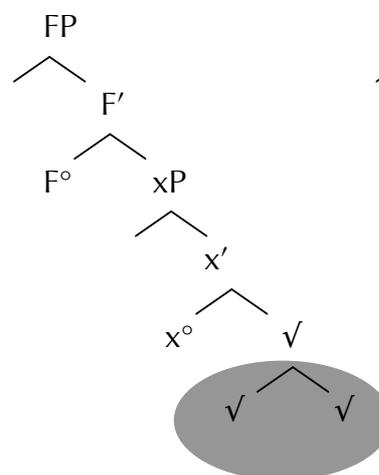
What is the nature of the right-hand morpheme?

Three hypothetical possibilities:

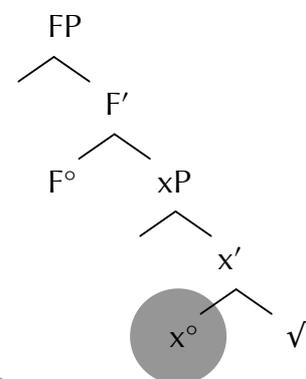
a) a functional head:
inflection



b) a root:
compounds



c) a categorial head:
derivations



a) *It is not inflection*

Non-compositional meaning:

- 20) gereed-schap
ready-SHIP
'tools'
- 21) linnen-goed
linen-GOOD
'linen' (can be made of cotton)
- 22) leeg-goed
empty-GOOD
'return bottles'

Lexical gaps:

- 23) speel-goed
play-GOOD
'toys'
- 24) * studeer-goed
study-GOOD

→ the collective morpheme does not realize inflection

b) *They are not compounds*

At first sight, many collective nouns resemble compounds:

- they get the 'specifying-specified' interpretation, which is the most common interpretation for Dutch compounds

- 25) deur-bel [compound]
door-bell
'doorbell'
- 26) huiswerk [collective noun]
house-work
'homework'

- the left-hand part of some collective nouns can occur as a free morpheme

- 27) We hebben veel werk.
we have much work
'We have got a lot of work.'

However, a compounding analysis faces problems:

- Dutch compounds are fully productive: no lexical gaps expected

28) speel-goed
play-GOOD
'toys'

29) * studeer-goed
study-GOOD

- Dutch compounds allow for an [[A N] N] structure productively, as long as [A N] is a fixed combination.

30) bruine-suiker-fabriek
brown.MASC.SG-sugar-factory
'factory which produces brown sugar'

Collective nouns do not allow for such a structure.

31) * bruin(-e)-suiker-werk
brown(-MASC.SG)-suiker-WORK

→ Collective nouns are not compounds

c) *They are derivations*

Lexical gaps are expected.

32) speel-goed
play-GOODS
'toys'

33) * studeer-goed
study-GOODS

The lack of [[A N] X] is expected:

Dutch derivations do not readily allow for an [[A N] x°] structure productively.

34) suiker-en
sugar-INFINITIVE
'to sugar'

35) * bruin(-e)-suiker-en
brown(-MASC.SG)-sugar.INFINITIVE

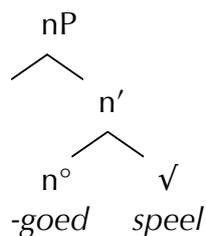
Some collective nouns take bound morphemes

- 36) kled-ij
cloth-ING
'clothing'

→ The collective suffixes always and only derive nouns: they realize n° .

Conclusion:

- 37) speel-goed
play-GOODS
'toys'



2.2 MONOMORPHEMIC COLLECTIVES ARE ROOTLESS DERIVATIONS

Problem

Dutch has a small set (with probably less than 10 members) of undeniably monomorphemic nouns which are collective nouns.

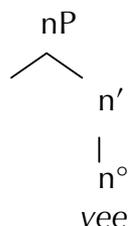
- 38) vee
stock
'livestock'

- 39) aas
bait
'bait'

How do they fit in the above structure?

Proposal: Rootless derivations

- 40) vee
stock
'livestock'



→ the sole morpheme is the collective suffix:
monomorphemic collective nouns are rootless derivations

Analysis

They occur as the right-hand part of a closed set of bimorphemic nouns:

41)

DUTCH	GLOSS	# of Google hits K= 10 ³
vee	livestock, cattle	706K
rundvee	cow-stock	102K
fokvee	breed-stock	31K
slachtvee	slaughter-stock	47K
melkvee	milk-stock	57K
pluimvee	feather-stock	223K
stamboekvee	pedigree-stock	19K
vleesvee	meat-stock	73K
aas	bait/carrion	290K
lokaas	attract-bait	129K
kunstaas	artificial-bait	38K
visaas	fish-bait	1K

(The most complete Dutch dictionary *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* mentions about 40 bimorphemic lexemes with *vee* as the right-hand part and less than 10 with *aas* as the right-hand part.)

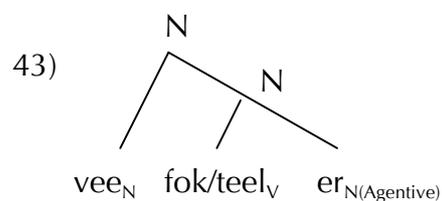
They are not compounds:

i) Not productive:

Compare the number of Google hits:

42)

fokvee 'breed-stock'	31.300	veefokker 'stock-breed-er'	2.420
teelvee 'breed-stock'	0	veeteler 'stock-breed-er'	4.360



44)

	VEE 'stock'	POOT 'leg'
geit 'goat'	1 ^{1,2}	831
olifant 'elephant'	0	6.160
kameel 'camel'	0	1.300

45)

	AAS 'bait'	KWEKERIJ 'farm'	KAAS 'cheese'
worm 'worm'	11	6.440	93
made 'maggot'	0	285	345

ii) *[[A N] N]

Recall the fact that Dutch compounds allow for an [[AN]N] structure, as long as [AN] form a fixed combination, whereas Dutch derivation do not necessarily allow for such a structure.

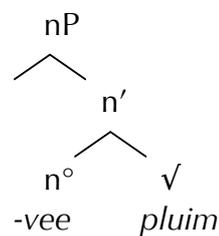
46) eerlijk.e-handels-organisatie
 fair.MASC.SG-trade-organisation
 'fait trade organisation'

47) handels-vee
 trade-stock
 'livestock which is meant to be traded'

48) * eerlijke-handels-vee
 fair-trade-stock

Not productive & *[[AN]N]:
 follows straightforwardly if one assumes that they are derivations:

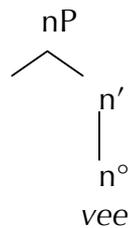
49) pluim-vee
 feather-stock
 'poultry'



¹ The attestation was found in an 18th century text.

² I googled each lexical item with all possible linking vowels and consonants typically attested in Dutch compounds.

50) vee
stock
'livestock'



→ the sole morpheme is the collective suffix:
monomorphemic collective nouns are rootless derivations

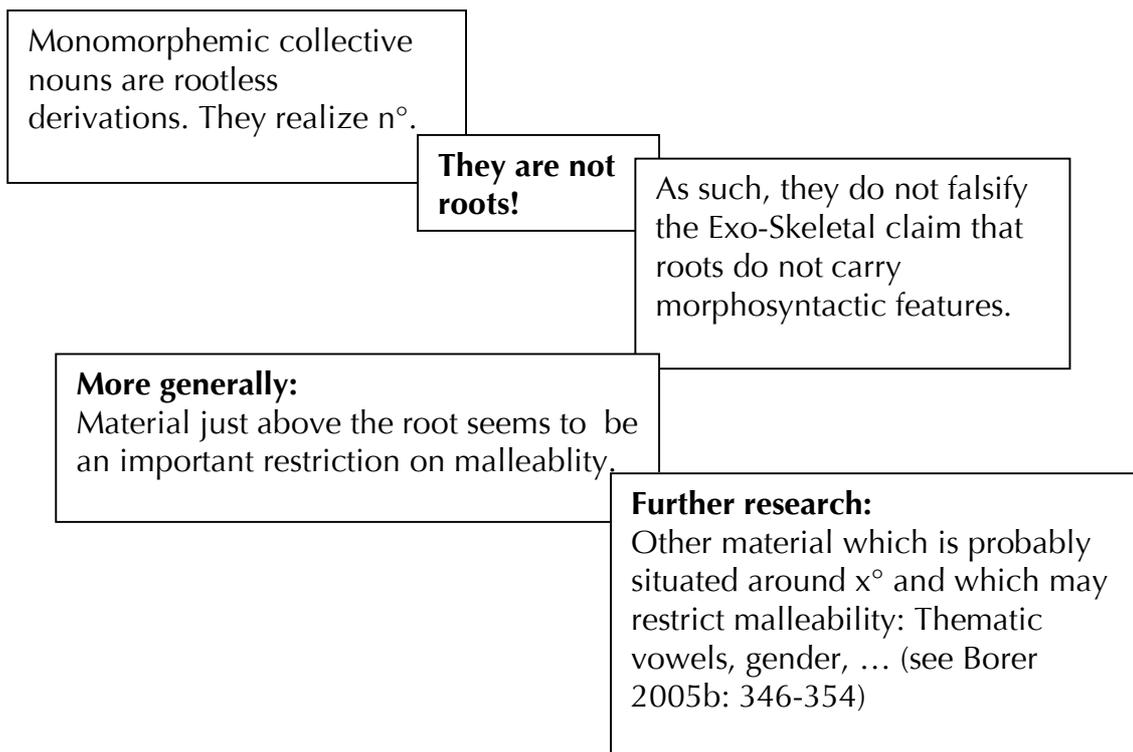
Do we always need a root in the structure?

Syntactically: In the Exo-Skeletal Model, roots are featureless. Hence, they are syntactically inert. Their absence should not have any effect.

Semantically: Roots may be understood as modifiers (Borer 2005b, Den Dikken 2008). As such, they are optional.

Theoretical consequences:

Collective nouns do not falsify the Exo-Skeletal Model just because they cannot get count readings



3. ANALYSIS PART 2: THE SEMANTICS OF THE COLLECTIVE SUFFIX

3.1 THE COLLECTIVE SUFFIX IS [+MASS]

Recall: collective nouns only allow for mass readings:

51) suiker-werk
 sugar-WORK
 'confectionery'

52) * drie suiker-werk-en
 three sugar-WORK-PL

This property cannot be assigned to features of the lexical root:

53) drie suiker-s: glucose, fructose en saccharose
 three sugar-PL:glucose, fructose and saccharose
 'three sugars: glucose, fructose and saccharose'

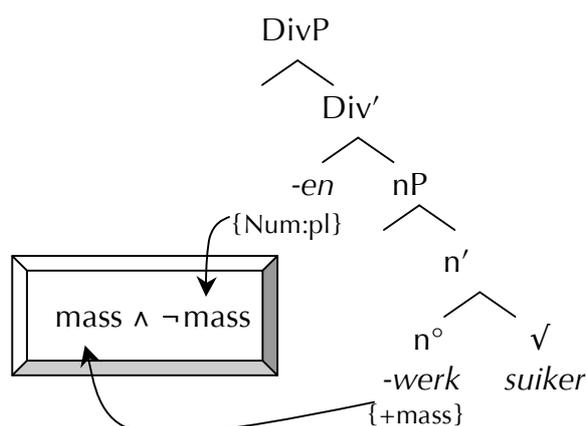
→ The property follows from the collective suffix: it is [+mass]

Interim conclusion: collective suffixes are [+N, +mass]

It now follows that collective suffixes cannot get number marking:

number marking: -mass } semantic
 collective suffix: + mass } contradiction

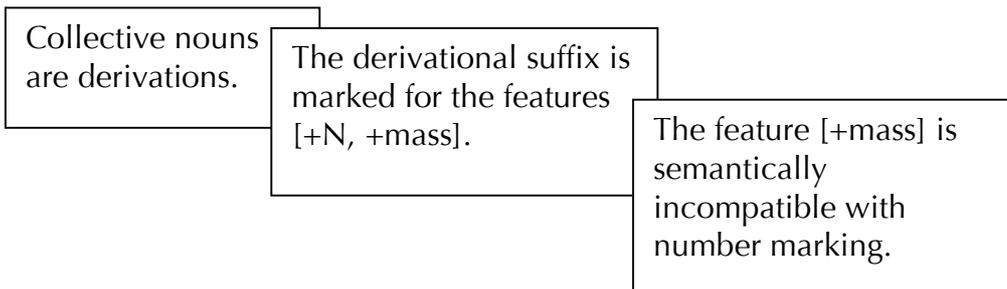
54) * drie suiker-werk-en
 three sugar-WORK-PL



(Note that a count reading for collective nouns can be derived syntactically. The result, however, is meaningless.)

As such, collective suffixes are a flavour of n°, i.e. a categorial head which affects the amount of functional structure that can be merged in the nominal domain.

CONCLUSION



3.2 THE COLLECTIVE SUFFIX IS [+ATOMIC]

We now have two ways to derive a mass reading:

i) the one that results from the absence of features ('the default reading'), henceforth the simple mass reading (Borer 2005a)

55) suiker
sugar
'sugar'

ii) the one that results from the presence of a collective suffix, henceforth the collective mass reading

56) suiker-werk
sugar-WORK_(mass)
'confectionery'

The two structures correspond to two different readings:

i) simple mass reading: ground, divisive

Gleason (1965:136-137): all nouns can be interpreted as mass:

57) Mother termite is concerned over her child: "Johnny is very choosy about his food. He will eat book, but he won't eat shelf."

This effect was recognized by Pelletier (1979) and called the *universal grinder* (Pelletier 1979:5-6).

Indeed, simple mass readings are always ground readings, characterized by divisivity:

58) If you've got a portion of sugar and you divide it, the result is still sugar.

ii) *collective mass reading: atomic*

Collective mass nouns do not obey divisivity and ground readings:

59) One item of cutlery, say a fork, is still cutlery, but a tooth of a fork is no longer cutlery.

→ collective suffixes are marked for the feature [+atomic]

Conclusion

The features of the collective suffix: [+N, +mass, +atomic]

4. FURTHER RESEARCH

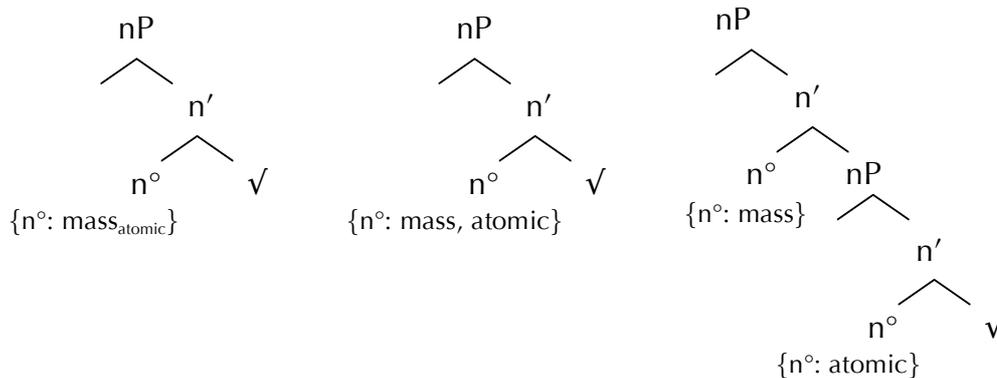
4.1 THE ARCHITECTURE OF N°

The categorial head n° of collective nouns expresses the following features: [+N, +mass, +atomic].

The questions now arise

- whether if these features are separate features or values of one another
- whether if we should assume that these three features are realized on one single head (Thráinsson 1996, Bobaljik & Thráinsson 1998) or on separate heads (Kayne 2005)?

Hypotheses:



4.2 EXTENSION TO LANGUAGES WITH NOUN CLASSES?

Dutch:

- nouns with a flavoured n° form a minority
- [+mass, +atomic] are the relevant features

Kiowa-Tanoan family (native North American languages):

- all nouns are flavoured, i.e. restricted to some structures
 - nouns can be categorized in classes, each class has its own unique feature combination
 - the features which define the classes are:
 - +/- singular: the atomic parts in a lattice
 - +/- augmented: the join elements in a lattice
 - +/- group: something is +group if it has non-salient subparts, something is – group if it contains salient subparts
- (Noyer 1992, Harbour 2007)

+ augmented: reminiscent of what we called [+mass]

- group: reminiscent of what we called [+atomic]

Research questions:

- Is the parallel between Dutch collective nouns and Kiowa-Tanoan noun classes real?
- Can Kiowa-Tanoan noun classes be given a parallel account?

5. CONCLUSION

- All collective nouns, both bimorphemic and monomorphemic ones, contain a collective suffix.
- The collective suffix is endowed with the features [+mass, +atomic].
 - [+mass] make collective nouns semantically incompatible with number marking
 - [+atomic] distinguishes collective nouns from simple mass readings.

Theoretical results:

- Collective nouns are not roots, hence they do not falsify the Exo-Skeletal claim that all roots can enter all structures.
- Material just above the root may appear to be an important source of restriction in malleability.
- Noun classes may be analyzed on a par.
- Rootless structures are a possibility.

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