Uninflected adjectives in Dutch

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0. Introduction

In this paper three exceptions to the normal rules determining the inflection of attributive adjectives in Dutch will be discussed.[1] These three exceptions can be illustrated by the examples *het bijvoeglijk naamwoord* 'the adjective' (lit.'the adjectival noun'), *een dapper soldaat* 'a brave soldier' and *de maatschappelijk werker* 'the social worker', respectively. They will be called (rather arbitrarily) type-I, type-II and type-III exceptions, respectively. I will sketch an analysis for type-I and for type-III exceptions. The properties of type-II exceptions remain unexplained but our analysis imposes a number of boundary conditions on possible analyses of this construction. The analysis sketched has a number of consequences, both for the grammar of Dutch and for Universal Grammar. In section 1 I will sketch the main rule for agreement of attributive adjectives in Dutch and some of the exceptions to it. I will characterize the analysis that will be outlined later in abstract terms. Section 2 describes the framework adopted and some relevant assumptions required. Section 3 shows how these assumptions account for the properties of type-I exceptions. In section 4 it is described how these assumptions account for the properties of type-III exceptions. Some consequences of the analysis are given in section 5.

1. Agreement of attributive adjectives

Adjectives in Dutch can and in certain cases must get the ending *-e* in certain attributive contexts. These contexts can be described as follows: (1) if the head noun is a *de*-word (cf. *lekker*(e) kaas* 'nice cheese', *lekker(*e) bier* 'nice beer'; *de/*het kaas* 'the cheese', **de/het bier* 'the beer'); (2) if the *number* of the head noun is *plural* (cf. *klein*(e) meisjes* 'little girls' vs. *een klein(*e) meisje* 'a little girl'); (3) if the adjective occurs in a definite NP (cf. *het klein*(e) meisje* 'the little girl' vs. *een klein(*e) meisje* 'a little girl').

It is well known that there are some exceptions to these rules. In this paper the three exceptions mentioned in the introduction will be discussed. All three exceptions are NPs which contain at least a noun and an adjective.

Type-I exceptions can be definite or indefinite, singular or plural; the noun in type-I exceptions is a *het*-word. Type-I exceptions do not have fully compositional semantics. The adjective does not get the *e*-suffix in the singular, not even in a definite NP, but it is suffixed in the plural. Some relevant examples are given in (1):[2,3]

(1) *het zelfstandig naamwoord* 'the noun' (lit. 'the substantive noun'); *het medisch dossier* 'the medical file'; *het openbaar ministerie* 'the Prosecuting Counsel'; *het Utrechts Nieuwsblad* 'the Utrecht News'; *het Burgerlijk Wetboek* 'the civil code'; *het akademisch ziekenhuis* lit. 'the academic hospital'; *het stoffelijk overschot* 'the mortal remains'

Type-II exceptions can only be indefinite, and they can occur only in the singular. The nouns designate male persons (or female persons if there is overt morphology to mark this). There are apparently arbitrary restrictions on what nouns can occur in this construction (cf. *een braaf man/ *vent/ *kerel/ *jongen* 'a good man/ *guy/ *bloke/ *boy'). The semantics of the phrases is fully compositional (though it differs from the semantics of regular phrases). The adjective does not get the *e*-suffix although it modifies a *de*-word. Some relevant examples are given in (2):

(2) *een groot man* 'a great man'; *een bekwaam veldheer* 'a competent general'; *een Frans filosoof* 'a French philosopher'; *een knap timmerman* 'a skilful carpenter'; *een goed pianiste* 'a good female piano player'

Type-III exceptions can be definite or indefinite, singular or plural. The nouns in type-III exceptions designate male human beings (or female persons if there is overt morphology to mark this). The semantics of the phrases is not fully compositional. The adjective never gets the *e*-suffix, neither in indefinite singular NPs nor in definite singular NPs, nor in plural NPs. Some examples are given in (3):

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[2] Certain expressions look like type-I exceptions but do not take a suffix even in the plural, e.g. *het direct object* 'the direct object', *het indirect object* 'the indirect object', *het centraal station* 'the central station'. I have no explanation for the behavior of these examples.

[3] Some people accept the *e*-suffix even in singular, at least for some of the examples, though only in the spoken language. See below for possible explanation of this fact.

(3) *de gevolmachtigd minister* 'the minister plenipotentiary'; *de waarnemend burgemeester* 'the acting mayor'; *de buitengewoon hoogleraar* lit. 'the extraordinary professor'; *de toeziend voogd* 'the co-guardian'; *de maatschappelijk werkster* 'the female social worker'

It has often been remarked that type-I and type-III exceptions are a kind of compound or unit (de Vooys 1967:63, ANS:328, Donaldson 1981:75, Schultink 1980:65). The intuition behind these statements appears correct to me, but the specific claims are either too vague or simply incorrect. The aim of this paper is to make this hypothesis more precise.

If we were interested in achieving observational adequacy only, then we could simply start to describe rules to form the relevant constructions. However, if it is our intention to achieve descriptive adequacy, or even explanatory adequacy, then it is necessary to identify and isolate the common parts in these constructions. In this paper I propose that the constructions must be decomposed in the following way: the formation of compounds contains the operation of *formal lexicalization* (to be explained below in more detail) as a suboperation. Type-I exceptions are regular phrases to which *formal lexicalization* has applied and type-III exceptions are type-II exceptions to which *formal lexicalization* has applied.

2. Framework and general assumptions

The analysis to be sketched falls within the so-called *Principles and Parameters* framework (Chomsky 1981, 1986a, 1986b). I will make a number of concrete assumptions, some of which will be relatively uncontroversial specific assumptions within the general framework assumed and some of which are crucial assumptions in the analysis adopted. Furthermore, some assumptions specific to the different constructions will be made.

I assume X-bar theory (formulated informally in (4a)), and two universal structure formation rules (formulated informally in (4b,c)):[4]

(4) a   **X-bar Theory** $X^{i+1} \rightarrow ...X^i...$ $(i < max)$
    b   **Modification** $N' \rightarrow AP\ N'/N$
    c   **NP Rule** $N'' \rightarrow D\ N'$

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[4] I assume here an NP analysis instead of a DP analysis. This is not essential. The analysis sketched here carries directly over to DP analyses in general, though, of course, it may be incompatible with specific analyses (whether these are DP or NP analyses).

It is assumed that adjectives and their projections have three attributes (*def*, *num* and *gen*). When any of these attributes has a nondefault value, these features will be spelled out as the suffix *-e* in PF if morphological conditions allow. Agreement is characterized in the following way: if two (or more) attributes agree, then they share the same value, i.e. there is only one occurrence of a value for agreeing attributes. This assumption is required for a uniform analysis of type-I and type-III constructions. Attributes that do not have a value from inherent lexical properties of lexical items when the derivation starts have a default value. Rules, principles and conventions can change these values when required. This assumption is necessary in 6rder to avoid multiple derivations for type-I constructions and be able to derive type-III constructions.

   It is assumed that syntactic rules are subject to the condition of *Lexical Integrity* (see Chomsky 1972), so that they cannot relate elements α and β in configuration (5):

   (5)   ...α...$[_{X_0}$...β...]...

I assume that the category N and all its projections have the attributes *num* (to indicate syntactic number), *gen* (to indicate syntactic gender) and *plf* (to indicate how the plural form of the noun is formed), and that the values of these attributes are shared by all elements on the projection line. Finally, I assume that agreement of NP internal adjectives is accounted for by two different rules. Note that the third context where adjectives get *-e* according to the rules given in section 1 refers to *definiteness*. In consequence, the rule governing these cases can apply only when the definiteness of NP has been determined, i.e. when the NP node is created. This does not hold for the other two cases, where there is only a reference to the head noun (its gender or number). Rules for these cases can already apply when the adjective phrase is combined with the head noun to form an N'. Therefore, I assume that the process of assigning *-e* to adjectives consists of two different rules, formulated informally below:

   (6) a   **N-A Agreement** The attributes *gen* and *num* of AP get the values of
                  these attributes of N (N') by sharing them.
         b   **Definiteness Rule** The attribute *def* of AP gets the value of the
                  attribute *def* of the D (determiner) occurring in the same NP by
                  sharing.

The *N-A Agreement rule*[5] applies when the rule of *Modification* is applied, the *Definiteness rule* applies when the *NP rule* is applied. The distinction between the two rules is natural since many languages do have a variant of *N-A Agreement* but not the *Definiteness Rule*.

3. Type-I exceptions

Type-I exceptions cannot be considered real compounds because the adjective is inflected in certain configurations (but not all) and the stress pattern is phrasal. In addition, a description as compounds would describe the fact that (exceptional) absence of inflection on the adjective occurs only when a neuter noun is modified as accidental. The following syntactic structure for type-I exceptions is assumed:

(7) $[_N [_{N'} [_{AP} bijvoeglijk] [_N naamwoord]]]$

Essential in this structure is the fact that a lexical node N dominates a phrasal node N'.[6] This clearly violates standard assumptions of X-bar Theory, but I think that this kind of structure should be allowed, so that any syntactic structure headed by a node of category Y^n can be dominated by a lexical node of category X^0. The lexical node dominating the phrasal node captures the intuition that these expressions form units or are compound-like. I will call the principle by which such structures are allowed *Formal Lexicalization*. It can be formulated as follows:

(8)   **Formal Lexicalisation $X^0 \rightarrow Y^n$**

If this operation is to be allowed, adaptation of the notion of *projection line* is also required. I assume that the lexical node and some projection which it dominates can belong to the same projection line. Whether they do or not depends on independent factors the nature of which I do not fully understand but which apparently relate to the compositionality of the whole phrase. I also assume that *formal lexicalization* cannot apply to structures that have already been marked for semantically relevant number. In consequence, the structure dominated by the lexical node is marked with the default value (*sg*). Semantically relevant number is introduced on the highest lexical node of a structure.

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[5]   The formulation of this rule must be adapted to account for the uniformity of agreement between APs and N in NP (what Frits Stuurman calls the 'Across-the-Board' character of NP internal agreement). This aspect has been ignored here. See also below.

[6]   A lexical node is a node of category N, V, A or P with zero bars.

The principle of *formal lexicalization* extends the number of possible syntactic structures considerably. It is therefore necessary to indicate how the application of formal lexicalization can be constrained. This will be done below, when the semantics of type-I exceptions is discussed.

Let us now illustrate how this accounts for the relevant facts by deriving some relevant examples, starting from lexical material and building structure on top, in accordance with the assumptions made. In order to derive the singular *het bijvoeglijk naamwoord,* first an AP and an N are combined into an N', according to the rule of *Modification* described above. The number on N is not semantically relevant, so the attribute *num* has the default value *sg* (singular). Since N and AP must agree in number and gender, and N and N' must share the values for the attributes *num, gen* and *plf,* all these attributes contain references to values, which have been indicated below by arrows to the values. The actual value is specified at one of the attributes. This yields:

(9) $[_{<N',num,gen,plf>}$ $<AP,num,gen>$ $<N,num:sg,gen:n,plf:en>]$
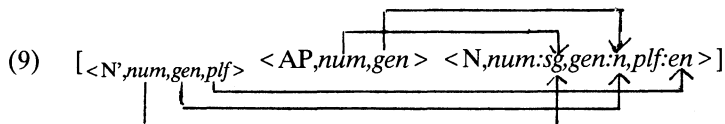
Next, the rule of *Formal Lexicalization* applies. It puts a lexical node on top of the structure. This lexical node is part of the projection line. Semantically relevant number is introduced on this lexical node. If the attribute *num* gets the value *pl* (plural), then all nodes on the projection line will get this value for the attribute *num* (so that the lowest lexical node will also be marked for plural) and the *num* attribute on AP (and its head A) will have this value as well: an adjective that is marked for plural will get the *e*-suffix, so that type-I exceptions have the *e*-suffix in the plural. If the attribute *num* gets the value *sg* (singular), this value will also be shared by the other elements on the projection line and by AP, but in this case there are only vacuous changes. The structure now has the form (7).

An N' is put on top of this structure, in accordance with X-bar theory, and then this structure is combined with a definite determiner (*het*) to form an NP. The *Definiteness Rule* must apply, but cannot relate the determiner to the AP because of the intervening lexical node N. Hence, in singular, type-I exceptions such as *het bijvoeglijk naamwoord* do not get the *e*-suffix: when the adjective is combined with the noun to form an N', it gets no -*e* because the noun is singular and neuter. When the expression is combined with a definite article, the *Definiteness Rule* will not apply because a lexical node interve-

nes.[7] In fact, the AP is not even 'seen' at all by the relevant rule, so that we account both for the fact that the form with -e cannot occur and for the fact that the form without -e can occur.

Independent evidence for the existence of the lexical node can be derived from a number of additional facts. First, adjectives in type-I exceptions cannot be modified (cf. *het erg bijvoeglijk naamwoord 'the very adjectival noun', *het zeer algemeen bestuur 'the very general board'). They could only be modified if the modifier were part of the expression.

Second, type-I exceptions can be modified by other adjectives if these precede. Such adjectives behave completely in accordance with the normal rules of adjectival agreement, creating apparent violations of the uniformity condition on adjectival agreement (cf. het boeiend*(e) bijvoeglijk naamwoord 'the exciting adjective', etc.). Such examples are possible because the leftmost adjective occurs under an N' dominating this adjectival phrase and the phrase dominated by N as in (10a):

(10) a $[_{NP} D [_{N'} AP_1 [_N [_{N'} AP_2 N]]]]$
     b $[_{NP} D [_{N'} [_N [_{N'} AP [_{N'} AP N]]]]]$

The leftmost adjective (AP$_1$), however, modifies the N dominating the N' and is visible to the *Definiteness Rule,* so that it behaves in fully regular manner.

A second adjective can also be introduced as in (10b). In this case, however, the second adjective must be a part of the expression and it is predicted that such an adjective will not allow the e-suffix. Such phrases exist indeed, cf. *het Nieuw Utrechts Dagblad* 'the New Utrecht Daily', *het Nieuw Burgerlijk Wetboek* 'the new civil code', *het Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands* 'Standard Dutch', etc.

Third, an adjective in a type-I exception cannot be followed by a modifying adjective (cf. *het bijvoeglijk zelfstandige naamwoord), which follows because the parts of the type-I exception must be exhaustively dominated by the lexical node.

Fourth, coordination of adjectives in type-I exceptions is only possible if both conjuncts form parts of the whole expression. Hence the analysis accounts adequately for the possible interpretation of an example such as *het bijvoeglijk en zelfstandig naamwoord,* which cannot mean 'the adjective and the

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[7] For those speakers who do allow the e-suffix in singular, it must be assumed that they have incorporated the relevant expressions in their mental lexicons and associated them with an idiosyncratic meaning without a dominating lexical node.

noun', but can only be used as a new term for a part of speech with adjectival and nominal properties.[8]

Fifth, the not-fully compositional meaning of the expressions is accounted for, because the expressions must - being dominated by a lexical node - satisfy conditions on possible meanings of words (e.g. *the Natural Predicate Condition*, see Hornstein and Weinberg 1981). The meaning of type-I expressions is more specific than can be derived compositionally. The expressions are phrasal expressions and as such they do not express a possible word meaning. When dominated by a lexical node they must express a possible word meaning. The interpretation of the expression is something like: a concept x which satisfies the predicates $\|N\|(x)$ and $\|AP\|(x)$, but which is specific instance of concepts satisfying these predicates *and additional properties*. These *additional properties* must be supplied by knowledge of the world or of the relevant domain. Exactly the same mechanism appears to be operative in compounds: they usually have a not fully compositional meaning: the meaning of the whole compound is more specific than one can derive from the purely compositional meaning, and world knowledge must supply the additional information required. Note that the condition on possible word meanings constrains the applicability of *formal lexicalization* considerably: it can apply only when the relevant structure is listed in the lexicon.[9]

Nothing in our analysis prevents a *de*-word from heading a structure as assumed for type-I exceptions. In fact, there is some evidence that such cases actually exist (see below). Such a structure, however, will not cause absence of the *e*-suffix. Hence the restriction of type-I exceptions to *het*-words is accounted for.

Finally, the analysis accounts for the phrasal accentuation of type-I exceptions: type-I exceptions are phrases, hence they get phrasal (final) accentuation. The dominating lexical node does not influence accentuation.

4. Type-III exceptions

In this section the analysis is extended to type-III exceptions. I propose that, in type-III exceptions, *Formal Lexicalization* has applied to a type-II exception. The syntactic structure for type-III exceptions looks like (11):

(11)   [$_{NP}$ [$_D$ de] [$_{N'}$ [$_N$ [$_{N'}$ buitengewoon hoogleraar]]]]

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[8]   The correctness of examples such as *het bijvoeglijk en het zelfstandig naamwoord* must be
      ascribed to the fact that right peripheral ellipsis rules can relate two elements across a
      lexical node, cf. *land- en tuinbouwwerktuigen* lit. 'agri- and horticulture tools'.
[9]   However, also additional restrictions will have to be added to constrain the applicability of
      formal lexicalization properly.

In this structure, a lexical node N dominates the node N', and in this respect it is equivalent to the structure for a type-I exception. The structure dominated by N' is the structure for a type-II exception, while in a type-I exception the structure dominated by N' was the structure for a regular phrase.

No rule applying to elements above the lexical node N will 'see' any element below this node. Hence, these constructions will behave like any normal NP w.r.t. such rules. Plurals can be formed and they can occur in definite NPs (in contrast to type-II exceptions). Adjectives can modify these constructions, creating apparent exceptions to the uniformity condition on adjectival agreement (cf. *de nieuwe wetenschappelijk medewerker* 'the new scientific staff member', *de jonge toeziend voogd* 'the young co-guardian', *de beroemde buitengewoon hoogleraar* lit. 'the famous extraordinary professor'). Even type-II exceptions can be formed on top of a type-III exception (cf. *een goed wetenschappelijk medewerker* 'a good scientific staff member', *een groot algemeen voorzitter* 'a great general chairman'). The analysis predicts correctly that the adjective cannot be modified and that it cannot be coordinated with an adjective (cf. **de graag toeziend voogd* lit. 'the willingly supervising guard', **de heel buitengewoon hoogleraar* lit. 'the very extraordinary professor', **de goed(e) en toeziend voogd* lit. 'the good and supervising guard'). It is predicted that modifying adjectives can occur only to the left, and not between the adjective and the noun. Adjectives can only follow if they are part of an existing idiomatic expression (cf. **de/een toeziend jong(e) voogd* lit. 'the/a supervising young guard', *de waarnemend Hoge Commissaris* 'the acting High Commissionar', *de plaatsvervangend openbare aanklager* 'the acting public prosecutor').[10]

Below the lexical node, the construction is a type-II exception, hence it does not allow the *e*-suffix to be present and it allows it to be absent in singular. The same restrictions as in type-II exceptions determine which nouns can participate in this construction. All nouns that can appear in a type-III exception can also appear in a type-II exception. Accentuation is phrasal because the structure below the lexical node N is a phrase. The meaning is not fully compositional, in manner analogous to type-I exceptions. This can be illustrated with the following examples: a *waarnemend burgemeester* is not someone who is a mayor, but someone who is appointed to take care of the tasks of the mayor during his absence, whereas a *waarnemende burgemeester* is a mayor who takes care of some unspecified tasks. A *behandelend arts* is a doctor who is fulfilling his duties at that time, whereas a *behandelende arts* is

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[10] These examples supply evidence for the presence of a lexical node on top of the structure for *Hoge Commissaris, openbare aanklager*. If there were not such a node, then these examples would violate the uniformity condition on NP internal agreement.

a doctor who happens to be treating you. Such minimal pairs can be constructed for all relevant examples.

Many examples designate functions or titles. With adjectives such as *waarnemend, plaatsvervangend, toeziend, buitengewoon,* 'acting, acting, supervising, extraordinary' new constructions designating new titles or functions can be made quite productively.

As some of the examples already showed and as has been pointed out, plurals for these expressions can be formed. In these plurals, however, the adjectives do not get the *e*-suffix, in contrast to type-I exceptions. This fact requires explicit discussion.[11] Let us discuss in more detail the exact derivation of such phrases as *de buitengewoon hoogleraar* and *de buitengewoon hoogleraren.* First, a type-II exception is formed from an AP and a noun. A type-II exception can only be formed if the head noun is singular. If we want to form a type-III exception, then number marking on N is not semantically relevant so that the attribute *num* has the default value *sg*. So a type-II exception can indeed be formed. A crucial assumption w.r.t type-II exceptions is that I interpret the absence of the *e*-suffix in these constructions as *absence of agreement*. Hence, the attributes *num* and *gen* of the AP have default values (*sg* and *n (neuter)* resp.) and they do not share their values with N. The structure has the form:

(12) $[_{<N',num,gen,plf>}$ $<AP,num:sg,gen:n>$ $<N,num:sg,gen:m,plf:en>]$

This is the same structure as (7) if we abstract from the type-II exception character. Next, a lexical node is put on top of this structure, in accordance with *Formal Lexicalization.* This lexical node is marked for semantically relevant number. If the attribute *num* has the value *sg,* the changes in the structure are vacuous. However, when the attribute *num* has the value *pl,* all attributes *num* on the projection line will get this value. The attribute *num* on the AP, however, will not change its value, because it does not share its value with the *num* attribute of any element on the projection line.

Finally an N' is put on top of this structure in accordance with X-bar theory, and this structure is combined with a definite determiner. The condition that no definite determiner can be combined with a type-II exception does not prevent anything: the determiner and the part of the structure that forms the type-II exception cannot be related to one another because of

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[11]   An anonymous reviewer states that plural forms with -*e* are possible as well (e.g. *de weten-schappelijke medewerkers*). I have no account for the fact that some examples with -*e* are acceptable to some people. Perhaps it is possible to form such plural phrases from regular phrases, because in plural there is no distinction between type-II exceptions and regular phrases.

the intervening lexical node. The definiteness rule will not have any effect on AP either because of the intervening lexical node.

It must be assumed that the attribute *num* reaches the lower node. If this were not the case, it would be impossible to account for the fact that the plural form of these nouns in type-III exceptions is exactly the same as outside these constructions, including all exceptions and pecularities. All kinds of different plural forms occur: *en*-plural (*de buitengewoon gezanten* 'the special envoys'), *s*-plural (*de gevolmachtigd ministers* 'the ministers plenipotentiary') and irregular plurals (*de los werklui* 'the casual labourers', *de sociaal raadslieden* 'the social councillors', *de plaatsvervangend leden* 'the acting members', etc.). The choice between *en*-plural or *s*-plural cannot be made by general rules, but must be specified for each individual word, and irregular plurals such as *-lui, -lieden* for words ending in *-man* or *leden* for *lid* are determined by inherent properties of the relevant items. The lower N-node contains this information and since the plurals in type-III exceptions are formed in accordance with this information, this lower N must count as the head of the relevant projection (cf. Williams 1981).

5. Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis sketched in this paper: (1) In the Grammar of Dutch, there are two separate rules to account for the inflection of adjectives in NPs. One rule deals with agreement between N or N' and the adjectival phrase. A second rule, the *Definiteness Rule*, changes the inflectional properties of an AP if it appears in the context of a definite determiner. (2) Universal Grammar must allow for projections of a lexical category to be dominated by lexical categories. The principle that allows this is called *Formal Lexicalization*. (3) Though no analysis has been given for type-II exceptions, our analysis of type-III exceptions imposes strong boundary conditions on possible analyses of type-II exceptions. In particular, AP and N must form a constituent in which N is the head, and the absence of the *e*-suffix must be interpreted as absence of agreement between N and AP.

The third consequence mentioned makes the analysis sketched in this paper incompatible with the analysis of type-II exceptions by Stuurman (1989). However, there are independent reasons for doubting the correctness of Stuurman's analysis. Stuurman assumes that AP and N do not form a constituent in a type-II exception. If AP and N do not form a constituent in type-II exceptions it is not expected that they can be replaced by so called *quantificational er* together. However, this is possible (cf. *zij zag een moedig man en ik zag er ook een* 'she saw a brave man and I saw one too'). This follows immediately if it is assumed that AP+N form a constituent. Stuurman also assumes the existence of special relation between the determiner (D) and

AP: a type-II exception cannot occur without a determiner. However, all cases where D cannot be absent can be accounted for by independent properties as well,[12] and there are in fact some examples where type-II exceptions can occur without a determiner, e.g. *hij zal - als goed burgervader - alle nodige maatregelen treffen* 'he will - being a good mayor - take all measures required'. I conclude that Stuurman's analysis cannot be considered a problem for my analysis.

Finally, the characterization of agreement as involving sharing of values, requires additional research to investigate whether it can be maintained for a wider range of examples of agreement.

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[12] All nouns are count nouns which require the presence of a determiner in most configurations; predicative NPs can sometimes occur without any article even if the head noun is a count noun, but not when the noun is modified by an adjective (cf. *Hij is soldaat/ *goed(e) soldaat / een goed(e) soldaat* lit. 'he is soldier/ *good soldier / a good soldier').