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The emergence of non-canonical degree modifiers in non-standard varieties of Dutch: A constructionalization perspective

Muriel Norde, Bernard De Clerck & Timothy Coleman

1 Introduction

Degree modifying adverbs have been subject to extensive linguistic discussion as they constitute a class that is very prone to language change: in studies with a (historical-) sociolinguistic perspective, the class is often portrayed as being in more or less constant flux, as initially hyperbolic new members are subject to rapid pragmatic wear-and-tear and in their turn give way to even newer members (see, e.g., Bolinger 1972; Partington 1993; Peters 1994; Paradis 2000; Lorenz 2002; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Macaulay 2006). While it remains to be seen whether all instances of degree modifiers are truly the result of hyperbole, what is for certain is that new members to the class are recruited from various linguistic sources. Cross-linguistically, typical source expressions for the development of new degree modifiers include words meaning ‘true’ (e.g. French *vraiment*, English *very* or *truly*) or ‘terrible’ (e.g. German *furchtbar*, English *awfully*), for instance, but also *quantifying* expressions (e.g. Italian *molto*, Portuguese *muito*, Czech *velmi* and Swedish *mycket*, all of which mean ‘very’ as well as ‘much’).

The extent to which quantifying expressions may be used to fulfil modifying functions differs widely between languages, however. In Dutch, according to Klein (1998: 31-39), expressions of high quantity do *not* double up as boosters, i.e. modifying adverbs which scale a property upwards: whereas prototypical low quantity expressions such as *weinig* ‘few’ and *een beetje* ‘a bit’ can function as downtoners —i.e., modifiers scaling a property downwards (e.g. *Hij is weinig intelligent* ‘He is not very intelligent’, *Ik was een beetje dronken* ‘I was a bit drunk’)— the prototypical high quantity expression *veel* ‘many’ cannot be used as a booster (e.g. **Ze is veel mooi* ‘She is very pretty’). Instead, Dutch boosters are recruited from a variety of other lexical sources, including expressions of completeness (e.g. *heel* lit. ‘wholly’), modal adverbs (e.g. *echt* ‘really’, *bepaald* ‘definitely’), deictics (e.g. *zo* ‘so’) and, especially, qualitative adjectives (e.g. *erg* lit. ‘awful’, *knap* lit. ‘handsome’/‘tight’, *vet* lit. ‘fat’, *zwaar* lit. ‘heavy’, *vreselijk* lit. ‘gruesome’, *ongelooflijk* lit. ‘unbelievable’, *verbluffend* lit. ‘baffling’, etc.) (see Klein 1998: Chapter 2 for extensive discussion). While the above observation on *veel* ‘many’ is correct, the generalization purported by Klein is too strong, as there are several (admittedly, less prototypical) high quantity expressions which do seem to be developing into degree modifiers.¹ Norde (2006) and De Clerck and Coleman (2013) noted the emergence of intensifying uses of the indefinite quantifier *tig* ‘umpteen’ in informal Netherlandic Dutch and of the quantifier noun *massa*’s ‘masses’ in western non-standard varieties of Belgian Dutch, respectively, see (1) and (2) for attested examples in which the items in question are used to grade qualitative adjectives. Additional instances of expressions of high quantity which double up as degree modifiers in (non-standard varieties of) present-day Dutch include *duizend* ‘thousand’ and *een partij* ‘a set, a batch, a lot’, as illustrated in (3) and (4), respectively.²

- (1) *Die van mij zijn nu 4 maanden oud, en zijn ook al **tig** groot :lol:*
 those of me are now 4 months old and are too already umpteen big
 ‘Mine are four months old now, and they’re already real big, too, lol.’
 [www.venividivissie.org]
- (2) *Maar dat van die prophecy vind ik wel maar **massa**’s belachelijk hoor. Ik hou meer van ‘echte’ spionage dan van die hooky spooky bullcrap.*
 but that of that prophecy find I PART PART masses ridiculous
 ‘But I think the prophecy thing is bloody ridiculous. I like ‘real’ espionage better than that hooky spooky bullcrap.’
 [www.fkserv.ugent.be]
- (3) *Zo forum was even **duizend** traag.*
 so forum was a while thousand slow
 ‘So, the forum was damn slow for a while.’
 [forum.scholieren.com]
- (4) *Hot moddefokking **DAMN!** Dat is me toch **een partij** vet, zeg!*
 that is me PART a plot cool
 ‘Hot motherfucking damn, now that’s totally cool!’
 [forum.fok.nl]

The present paper offers a detailed comparison of the formal and functional properties of these four emerging modifiers, which, from a construction grammar point of view, can be seen as constituting distinct *micro-level constructions* (see Traugott 2008a, 2008b; Trousdale 2010). In addition to laying bare similarities and differences between these cases as different instantiations of the quantifier to degree modifier pathway of change, we will also reflect on the repercussions of the observed micro-constructural changes on higher levels of the constructional hierarchy, i.e. at the *macro-* and/or *meso-level*. We will argue that all cases are examples of grammatical constructionalization (Traugott and Trousdale 2013).

The empirical data for the investigation will be mainly drawn from online discussion forums and message boards such as the discussion forums of some 15 to 20 different Ghent University student organizations at <fkserv.ugent.be> and the Dutch forums <forum.scholieren.nl> and <forum.fok.nl>. These data sources are particularly suited to this kind of investigation as they contain large amounts of highly informal language, a large majority of which is contributed by people in their teens or early twenties. The examples above are pretty representative for the kind of linguistic contexts in which we typically find these emerging modifiers. By comparison, none of the modifying uses in (1) to (4) is represented in conventional corpora of written Dutch such as the 38-million-word-corpus of the Institute for Dutch Lexicology and the CONDIV corpus, which are (mostly) made up of texts representing more formal registers of language and dating back to the 1990s or even

earlier, which simply fails to grasp recent developments in the class of degree modifiers. The second of these drawbacks also applies to the Corpus of Spoken Dutch, the data for which were compiled in the period 1998-2004. What is more, even informal corpora sometimes fail to provide sufficient examples for these constructions. Constructions featuring *tig* as a degree modifier, for instance, (see section 2.5) are even difficult to find in gigatoken web corpora such as COW (Schäfer and Bildhauer 2012). The Dutch section of this corpus contains over 2.47 billion tokens in randomly selected sentences from 1.6 million documents, yet the number of hits for *tig* as degree modifier in this corpus is substantially lower than the number of hits using specific Google queries (see section 2.5).³ While the latter method does allow retrieval of a fair number of relevant constructions, one of the obvious restrictions of this approach is that data drawn from a non-restricted corpus impedes the use of advanced statistical methods (as applied to constructional changes in Hilpert 2013, for instance), nor does it allow to trace diachronic developments that underlie synchronic variation and collocational scatter.

2 Four case studies

2.1 Introduction

In order to account for the degree modifying uses of *massa's*, *duizend*, *een partij* en *tig*, we will trace and document their development from their purely lexical uses to the currently attested instances of modification. It will be argued that, despite the different origins of these elements (a plural size noun, a numeral, a singular size noun and a suffix, respectively) they all go through similar stages in their development from quantifier to degree modifier. *Massa's* and *een partij* furthermore go through a similar shift from binominal construction to quantifying construction: lexical uses tick over into quantifying uses which in turn lead to subsequent degree modifying functions. The first part of this development, i.e. from lexical to quantifying is a well-documented process of grammaticalization, which, especially in the case of size nouns, has been attested in many a language (see Keizer 2001; Brems 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Denison 2005; De Smedt, Brems, and Davidse 2007; De Clerck and Coleman 2013; Langacker forthcoming; Traugott in press, to name but a few). In these cases, a semantic extension or delexicalization motivates changes in the distribution which can eventually lead to a complete syntactic reanalysis, involving rebracketing (reversal of head positions), functional shifts of N1 into modifier, host-class expansion from concrete to abstract N2s, synchronic layering and cross-linguistic replication (cf. Traugott 2008a). Within this context Brems (2011) distinguishes two major functions in English of these non-lexical uses: a quantifier use (as in *loads of people*) and a valuing(-quantifying) use in which the referent is evaluated rather than quantified (as in *a load of crap* or *a bunch of liars*). In Dutch, too, similar uses and similar processes can be attested. Doetjes (1997: 99), for instance, observes a process in which the size noun, e.g. *een hoop* (a heap), *een berg* (a mountain), *tonnen* (tonnes), *een paar* (a pair), etc.) “turns from an expression indicating a specific amount only [...] into an expression which can also be used to indicate a non-specific quantity, which is either relatively big (a lot) or small (a bit)” (see also Joosten 2003; Joosten et al. 2007). In addition to purely hyperbolic quantifying uses, valuing quantifying uses are attested as well: non-lexical, diminutive uses of *stelletje* (originally ‘couple’) and *zoo(i)tje* (originally ‘stew’), for instance, are subject to “functional crystallization” (Brems 2007a: 215) and only function as valuing-quantifiers with a negative semantic prosody in binominal constructions, e.g. *een stelletje amateurs* (a bunch of amateurs), *een zootje flauwe moppen* (a bunch of lame

jokes). Since all of our cases involve quantifiers, each of the sub-sections below will first of all briefly sketch this development from lexical to (valuing)-quantifying uses.

Most of the attention, however, will be devoted to the second stage in the development, i.e. the further development from quantifying to degree modifying uses. Actual frequencies and contexts of use (e.g. possible host class expansion from adjective to adverb and verb, or vice versa) of the attested degree modifying uses of *massa's*, *een partij*, *tig* en *duizend* will be examined more closely and subjected to individual comparison. This general trend in which quantifiers develop into degree modifiers (a trend which can also be observed in colloquial English, e.g. *heaps funny*, *loads better* as shown in De Clerck and Brems in press) will be captured within a construction grammar framework. Following De Clerck and Brems (in press), who show that the degree of expansion of modifying uses is partially influenced by the degree of grammaticalization of quantifying uses (cf. *piles* vs. *loads* as degree modifiers), individual differences will be explained on the micro-constructional level resulting from differences in grammatical constructionalization (see section 3 for a more elaborate discussion).

2.2 *Massa's*

As shown in De Clerck and Colleman (2013), *massa's* features in both lexical and quantifying uses as the result of ongoing grammaticalization processes. In the latter uses, the fully lexical meaning of the noun *massa* 'mass', i.e. 'a body or quantity of matter, usually considerable in size or volume, but without a determinate or specified shape' is semantically bleached and lends itself easily for quantitative interpretations in N1 N2 constructions, in which N1 expresses a large quantity of N2. Lexical uses are shown in (5) and (6) and illustrate that the body of matter itself can either be a coherent body or lump of (pliable or malleable) raw material (e.g. jelly), not yet moulded into a definite shape; or it can consist of a dense aggregation of objects (and even human beings) having the appearance of a single, continuous body. The singular concord in (5) also illustrates the head status of *massa* in the NP. The quantifying uses illustrated in (7) to (12) show that there seem to be very few restrictions on the noun filling the N2 slot, which may be countable, uncountable, concrete, abstract and human. This may partially be caused by the original meaning of *massa*, whose semantically vague nature —unlike *stelletje* (a pair of matching items), *zooitje* (a stew), *pile* or *bunch*, it neither expresses a specific quantity nor a specific shape — may have facilitated processes of delexicalization.

- (5) *Jam is een geleachtige massa van met suiker gekookte vruchten.*
'Jam is a jelly-like mass of fruit boiled with sugar.'

[www.datisjammie.nl/page/2]

- (6) *Veelal moeten clematissen worden gesnoeid omdat ze anders nogal vlug een wilde massa hout vormen.*
'In many cases, clematis needs pruning because they have a tendency to turn into a wild mass of wood.'

[www.groen.net/Article.aspx?id=7612]

- (7) *Een **massa** mensen was getuige van de show, maar niemand viel iets buitengewoons op.*
 ‘A mass of people witnessed the show, but no one noticed anything out of the ordinary.’
 [www.kloptdatwel.nl/.../ufo-video-uit-chili-bewijst-t-ze-hebben-zes-p...]
- (8) *Allez, ze krijgt er toch **massas** stress van.*
 ‘Well, it does give her loads/?masses of stress.’⁴
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (9) *De periode 1874-1914 kende **massa's** aanslagen (ook in België)*
 ‘The 1874-1914 period witnessed loads of attacks (also in Belgium)’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (10) *Wat een dilemma, ik ga al **massa's** activiteiten hebben volgend schooljaar én eu hopelijk een thesis enzo.*
 ‘What a dilemma, I’ll already have masses of activities next academic year and uhm hopefully a Master thesis and such.’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (11) *[...] en heb ik wraak genomen door het laatste uur **massa's** drank weg te geven en mensen gelukkig te maken.*
 ‘[...] and I took revenge by giving loads of free booze during the last hour and making people happy.’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (12) *Ik hoop dat er door de crisis **massa's** scholieren en studenten keihard buizen, zodat ik deze zomer dik betaald bijles kan gaan geven.*
 ‘I hope the crisis will cause masses of students to fail miserably so I can earn loads by teaching extra lessons.’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]

However, uses of *massa* and *massa's* are not restricted to pure quantification within the N1 N2 size noun construction. Closer analysis of the data reveals other contexts of use, outside the size noun construction, in which *massa* and *massa's* function as degree modifiers. When used as degree modifiers, their meaning is still associated with and can still be paraphrased as ‘much’ or ‘a lot’ but now pertains to the degree to which a quality described is present (in combination with comparative adjectives and adverbs as in 13 and 14), or to the frequency of an action in combination with verbs, as in 15 and 16).

- (13) *Uhu, het kapsel is ook **massas** beter nu ze!*
 ‘Uhu, the haircut is loads better now, believe me!’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]

- (14) *Toen ik extra uitleg vroeg, kreeg ik enkel als antwoord dat iedereen **massa's** meer moest betalen.*
 ‘When I asked for further explanation, the only answer I got was that everyone had to pay loads more.’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (15) *Heb ik in de grote vakantie nog **massas** naar gekeken toen ik thuis bij mijn vader in Aruba was (Amerikaanse zenders en al).*
 ‘I watched it loads during summer holidays while staying with my father on Aruba’.
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (16) *We knuffelen toch al **massa's**.*
 ‘We do hug loads, don’t you think?’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]

In addition to these degree modifying uses which are still quantificational, in a sense, a fair number of unambiguously intensifying uses can be attested where *very* or *really* rather than *much*—or in Dutch *erg* rather than *veel*—is the best paraphrase. Such uses have been attested with verbs, adjectives and adverbs, even in non-comparative form, as illustrated in (17)-(20) below. Note that in examples (19) and (20), focus is on the intensity of the event expressed by the verb, not the frequency of it (as in examples 15 and 16). Also, it should be noted that such unambiguously intensifying uses are limited to the plural form *massa's*: building on Brems’s (2007a) account of English *loads* etc., De Clerck and Colleman (2013: 158) attribute this to the fact that the plural number adds to *massa's* hyperbolic value.

- (17) *hihi een vriendin van mij werkt daar ook, zo interviews regelen en zo, en die heeft et **massas** druk, maar ze doet het indd ook graag ...*
 ‘Hihi a friend of mine also works there, setting up interviews and such, and she is really busy, but she likes doing it....’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (18) *Die dudes die gewonnen hebben waren **massa's** cool*
 ‘Those dudes that won were really cool.’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (19) *Donderdagen en vrijdag suckn **massas** tzal wè kerl*
 ‘Thursdays and Fridays totally suck, you bet.’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]
- (20) *Nog volk da **massa's** gaat buizen?*
 ‘More people that are going to fail big time?’
 [fkserv.ugent.be]

While some other Dutch size nouns also allow for degree modifying uses with comparative adjectives or adverbs, as in *bakken/hopen/tonnen/stukken* + *meer/beter/mooier* ('loads/heaps/tons/lots' + 'more/better/nicer'), uses in which these size nouns are combined with *non-comparative* adjectives etc. are much rarer if not absent. In English, too, uses with *loads, bunch, a lot* and *heaps* have been reported on with comparative adjectives (cf. Brems 2007a; Traugott 2005; Quirk et al. 1985 and Langacker 2010), though not with *masses*. Table 1 below gives an overview of the degree modifying and intensifying uses (as opposed to purely quantificational uses in the N1N2 size noun construction) in the different formal contexts as attested in the Ghent University student weblogs and discussion boards at <fkserv.ugent.be> (see De Clerck and Colleman 2013 for more information on data retrieval).

Table 1: Quantifying and intensifying uses of *massa's* in Ghent University student weblog data

	#	%
Lexical uses	13	8,1
Ambiguous lexical/quantifying uses	6	3,8
Quantifying uses	68	42,5
Ambiguous quantifying/intensifying ⁵	13	8,1
Intensifying uses	66	41,3
Modifying a verb	7	4,4
Modifying an adjective	39	24,4
Modifying an adverb (incl. <i>veel</i> 'much')	16	10,0
Unclassified	4	2,5
Total	160	100

The table shows that degree modifying uses are by no means a marginal phenomenon in these data (unlike the fairly rare uses attested for English size nouns, or for any of the other size nouns in Dutch for that matter). With 66 out of 160 instances, intensifying uses account for no less than 41% of the *massa's* instances culled from the Student weblogs, which testifies to the

frequent and productive use of such instances in the represented language variety. In addition, uses such as (21) below where *massa's* modifies *weinig* 'few'—which, obviously, does not tally well with the original lexical semantics of *massa's*—underscore the substantial semantic bleaching and advanced grammaticalization as a degree modifier.

- (21) *Verbruikt massa's weinig, heeft overschot van power en is ook nog eens exclusief!*
'Consumes very little, has loads of power and is exclusive on top of that.'

[<http://www.bimmerboard.be/forum/index.php?topic=4805.205;wap2>]

However, while these uses are entrenched in the idiolects of the language users in our data, they are generationally and regionally restricted. While more sociolinguistic research will need to throw more light on amplitude and possible expansion, our data suggest that such uses are typical of the language of the western part of Dutch-speaking Belgium, i.e. the province of West Flanders and large parts of the neighbouring province of East Flanders. They are mainly used by young speakers in informal language, but instances have been reported of a knock-on effect on parents' language as well (see De Clerck and Colleman 2013). This actual spread outside the peer group may trigger its actual demise as routinization and frequency affect both the hyperbolic nature of new degree modifying expressions as well as their exclusive nature as markers of group identity. In passing, no such uses were attested in Netherlandic Dutch <fok.nl> data at all, so it seems to be a strictly Belgian Dutch phenomenon.

2.3 *Duizend*

The example in (22), where the speaker clearly does not want to associate Burundi with literally one thousand problems and opportunities, illustrates the frequent use of the word form *duizend* 'thousand' as an indefinite quantifier denoting an unspecified (very) large quantity rather than as a cardinal numeral.⁶

- (22) *Ik vertrek morgen naar Burundi ... Land van de totale chaos en dus van duizend mogelijkheden, duizend problemen en duizend kansen.*
'I'm leaving for Burundi tomorrow, the land of total chaos and hence of a thousand opportunities, problems and chances.'

[<http://www.corduwener.nl/weblog/?m=200804>]

This *duizend* presents another example of a high quantity expression that has been recruited as a degree modifier in informal varieties of Dutch. Examples can easily be found through Google queries for the exact string of the word form *duizend* immediately followed by a frequent adjective or adverb. *Duizend* grades a comparative adjective in (23), adjectives in the positive degree in (24) and (25), and a qualitative adverb in (26).

- (23) *[A]lleen vond ik de kits altijd **duizend** mooier dan de merchandise figuurtjes.*
 ‘It’s just that I’ve always found the kits loads nicer than the merchandise figures.’
 [aniway.nl/forum]
- (24) *Ik was echt **duizend** blij toen ze zei: “...”*
 ‘I really was totally glad when she said: “...”’
 [ikbenkarelpti.blogspot.com/2007_12_01_archive.html]
- (25) *En zoals je ziet ben ik vrij curvey, dus dit is **duizend** moeilijk voor me haha.*
 ‘And as you can tell I’m quite curvy, so this is damn difficult for me, haha.’
 [forum.girlscene.nl]
- (26) *Ik weet heus wel dat dat Wikkie de Viking is, dat keek ik vroeger **duizend** vaak*
 ‘I know very well that it is Wicky the Viking, I used to watch that programme very often.’
 [forum.scholieren.com]

In addition, *duizend* is used to grade the quantifier *veel* ‘many’ (27) and, like *massa*’s and *tig*, it is even found with *weinig* ‘few’ (28), a combination which testifies to the high degree of semantic bleaching *duizend* has undergone.

- (27) *Het is geen ongelooflijk schone citytrip naar het buitenland geweest, waar ik **duizend** veel foto's heb getrokken.*
 ‘It wasn’t an unbelievably nice city trip abroad during which I took loads of pictures’
 [laviedunereveuse.blogspot.com/2012_03_01_archive.html]
- (28) *Ik heb ook **duizend** weinig zin in school de laatste tijd.*
 ‘Also, I totally don’t feel like going to school lately.’
 [forum.scholieren.com]

We have also found a small number of examples of *duizend* grading verbs, as in (29), but such uses are quite marginal, it seems. Google queries for *duizend* in combination with a number of usual suspects of verbs which are prone to being modified in this way—e.g. *meevallen* ‘turn out better than expected’, *zich amuseren* ‘to have a good time’, *dansen* ‘dance’, *slapen* ‘sleep’, *schrikken* ‘be startled’, etc.—produce no more than a handful of examples.

- (29) *Borrel was mooi, heb echt **duizend** geslapen daarna!*
 ‘The drink was nice, I really slept very well afterwards.’
 [damestwaalf09.mygb.nl/]

Unlike in the case of *massa's* and *tig*, the use of *duizend* as a degree modifier does not appear typical of either Belgian or Netherlandic Dutch. If the URLs of the attested examples are anything to go by, the intensifier *duizend* has pockets of use in both Belgium and the Netherlands: the examples in (24) and (27) are from Belgian weblogs, the remaining of the above instances are from Dutch forums. In this respect, we can point towards an interesting metalinguistic discussion on <<http://kringbabylon.be/forum>> on 19-20 October 2009 (last accessed 25/03/2011), the discussion board of language students at the University of Leuven, where a student who, according to his profile, is based in Alkmaar in the west of the Netherlands expresses his surprise at the use of *duizend* as an intensifier in a post from a fellow student based in Wuustwezel, in the Belgian province of Antwerp, as he was under the impression that intensifying *duizend* was typical of the language of student fraternities in Groningen, in the north of the Netherlands. The Belgian student replies that she has taken over intensifying *duizend* from a friend and now uses it all the time, and another student joining the discussion says that he knows quite a lot of Belgians who use *duizend* in that way and thinks that it may originally be a Ghent thing. All of this suggests that intensifying *duizend* is a typical group language phenomenon, which has pockets of use in several regions of the Dutch language area. It also suggests that we may be dealing with a phenomenon that is very much above the level of consciousness, i.e. a kind of lexico-grammatical stereotype in the Labovian sense (Labov 1972), though we must of course not lose sight of the fact that the participants in the online discussion are students of *linguistics*.

Many of the occurrences found on Belgian websites use the non-standard forms *duust* or *duusd*, spellings which are meant to reflect the typical monosyllabic pronunciation found in south-western dialects (i.e., in West Flemish and East Flemish), with a monophthong /y/ rather than the standard diphthongic pronunciation /œy/ and with a reduced final syllable. (30) and (31) are cases in point.⁷⁻⁸ Note that (31) displays several lexical, morphological and phonological features of West Flemish dialect. The verb in question, for instance, is *zich jeunen*, a typically West Flemish expression for 'to have a good time'.

(30) *Ik wil ook keigraag een kat. Maar ik ben **duust** allergisch aan alles, dus ook aan katten.*

'I would very much like to have a cat, too. But I'm highly allergic to everything, including cats.'

[www.fkserv.ugent.be]

(31) *Ken me **duust** gejeund, mo 'k peizen dak te vele gezopen en.*

'I had a really good time, but I think that I drank too much.'

[club.studiant.be/moedergietut/db/galspuwer.asp]

The very high frequency of *duizend* as a cardinal numeral precludes a preliminary quantitative investigation of this form along the lines of the other case studies in this paper, but this is less of an obstacle in the case of the south-western regional variant *duust*. In order to get some sense of the relative frequency of the various uses, we used the same source as we did for *massa's*, viz. the Ghent University student weblogs and discussion boards at <fkserv.ugent.be>. The manual filtering of the results from a query for all occurrences of the

exact word forms *duust* and *duusd* on this website launched on 08/12/2010 produced 387 instances, only nine of which are unambiguous instances of degree modifier use—by comparison, indefinite quantifier uses similar to the use of *duizend* in (22) above account for 362 out of 387 instances. The set of nine intensifying uses includes five cases where *duust* grades an adjective, three cases in which it grades the comparatives *meer* ‘more’ or *minder* ‘less’ and one case of *duust veel* ‘very much’. In addition, there is one ambiguous example in which *duust* either functions as an indefinite quantifier or as a degree modifier (32). As in the case of *tig* (see 2.5), such uses may have provided a bridging context for the development of intensifying from quantifying uses.

(32) *Muse heeft toch **duusd** betere nummers dan dit, ik snap het niet.*

‘Muse has a lot of songs that are better than this, I don’t get it.’

‘Muse has songs that are a lot better than this, I don’t get it.’

[fkserv.ugent.be]

The conclusions that can be drawn from this small-scale quantitative investigation are (i) that the use of *duust* as a degree modifier is much less widespread among students at Ghent University than the use of *massa’s* as a degree modifier, as shown by the difference in token frequency (cf. the 66 occurrences of intensifying *massa’s* in the same material, see section 2.1) and (ii) that *duust* is still much more frequently used as a quantifier than as a degree modifier.

As a final observation, consider the instances in (33) and (34), which show that *duizend* was used as a degree modifier in 18th and early 19th century Dutch, too.

(33) “*Zie Hendrik*”, zeide hij “*het is een aardig meisje [...] Jammer, **duizend** jammer! dat zy niet van ons Geloof is.*”

‘See, Hendrik’, he said, “she is a nice girl ... It is a shame, a dire shame, that she is not of our faith.”

[Wolff & Deken, *Historie van mejufvrouw Sara Burgerhart*, 1782]

(34) *Hoor nu eens, wat hij van u zeide: “T is wel **duizend** 'jammer, THOMAS, „dat zulk een knappe jongen een' pennelikker, „en geen braaf Soldaat is.*

‘Now hear what he said about you: “It is a dire shame, Thomas, that such a smart boy is a pen-pusher and not a brave soldier.”

[*De gevallen van Rudolf Reybridge*, 1815]

Exactly how widespread this use was at the time is still an open question: there is no mention of it in the extensive discussion of *duizend* in the *Dictionary of the Dutch Language* (WNT), and, so far, we have been able to find examples for the specific combination *duizend jammer* (lit. ‘thousand shameful’) only, mostly from plays or from quoted speech passages in novels.⁹ Anyhow, it is clear from these examples that the potential of *duizend* as an intensifier has

been tapped into in earlier language stages as well. The present-day instances found on the Internet might be relics from this older language stage. However, given that the intensifying use of *duizend* was apparently not frequent or productive enough in 18th and 19th century language to be noticed by the compilers of the WNT and given the kind of web sources the modern examples spring from (weblogs and discussion boards rather than genres with a tendency for archaic language), it seems much more likely that we are dealing with a case of what Geeraerts (1997: 64) labels *semantic polygenesis*, i.e., “[the phenomenon in which] a particular reading of a word may crop up several times in the history of the item, on independent grounds, and with a remarkable temporal hiatus”. The discussion in Geeraerts (1997: 62-68) stresses that semantic polygenesis involves the application of general mechanisms of semantic extension: typically, polygenesis involves transient metaphorical readings which do not subsist over time, while the readings which served as the source for the metaphorical extension do subsist over time. Applied to the phenomenon under discussion here, the extension from *duizend*'s well-established use as an indefinite quantifier to its novel use as a degree modifier use seems to have occurred several times in the history of the item. As such, *duizend*'s history lends added proof to the hypothesis that the development of degree modifiers from indefinite quantifiers presents a natural pathway of change in Dutch.

2.4 *Een partij*

In its original lexical meaning *een partij* (derived from French *partie*, which in itself is related to the verb *partir/partager*, i.e. ‘to share’) refers to ‘a part of something’, ‘a part of a larger whole’ or ‘something that was divided into several parts’, as shown in (35).

- (35) *De stadt Veronis ..., zynde met eenen houten muur omringt, maer verdeelt in drie partyen.*
 ‘The city of Veronis..., surrounded with a wooden wall, but divided into three parts.’
 [V. RIEBEECK, Dagverh. 1, 21 [1652]]

Other and related shades of meaning that fall under the umbrella of purely lexical uses include uses in which *partij* refers to ‘a group of people forming a unit’, ‘a group of people that share the same political views’, ‘a celebration organized by a group of people’, ‘a part of a musical composition’, ‘one sequence of a particular game’ (e.g. *een partijtje schaak*, ‘a game of chess’) or ‘one of two in a married/engaged couple’.

All of these lexical uses share the ‘partitive’ meaning which provides fertile soil for the development of quantitative uses in those cases where *partij* is followed by an N2 denoting what the part actually consists of. In (36) below, *partij* still refers to a part of a larger whole but gets an additional quantitative interpretation as ‘a set of X number of items/a quantity of something available as one unit’ (normally in a sales situation). Fed by frequent collocations with N2s referring to ‘bulk’ - or spatial N2s (such as land, property, etc.) as shown in (37), the partitive/quantitative lexical meaning also fuelled expressive quantitative readings in which the expression of pure quantity or a large part of something is ‘subjectified’ into a reading that labels the attested quantity as ‘a lot’. Expressive uses of this kind allow for

collocational scattering and a spread from concrete (un)countable to abstract (un)countable N2s, as shown in (38) to (41).

- (36) *Ik heb me vorige week een partij onderbroeken op de markt gekocht: 15 stuks in de aanbieding in mijn normale maat.*

‘Last week I bought a batch of knickers on the market: 15 items on offer, my size.’

[FOK.nl]

- (37) *Wie er geïnteresseerd is in een partij diamanten graag ff hier posten.*

‘Anyone who’s interested in a batch of diamonds, please post here.’

[FOK.nl]

- (38) *We schrijven bijna half november en ze staan er nog steeds, hele partijen mais.*

‘It’s almost mid November, and there they still are: large plots of corn.’

[<http://melancholia.typepad.com/melancholia/2012/11/mais.html>, accessed 7 October 2013]

- (39) *Afijn, ik trek dat ding open, GVD EEN PARTIJ RANZIGHEID!*

‘Anyway, I pull the thing open, Jesus Christ, a load of filth!’

[FOK.nl]

- (40) *Waar krijgt deze gozer GVD voor betaald. Omdat ie een partij dreunen aan elkaar kan draaien, zonder enige melodie?*

‘What is this guy getting paid for? For mixing a load of beats without any melody whatsoever?’

[FOK.nl]

- (41) *Maar tijdens het googlen werd ik spontaan misselijk, wat een partij schotwonden op het internet zeg, GADVERDAMME MAN*

‘While surfing I got nauseous spontaneously, what a load of bullet wounds on the internet! JESUS!’

[FOK.nl]

As was the case for *massa*’s, the trajectory leading to these grammaticalized quantitative uses is not a very long one: first, as opposed to other size noun constructions (e.g. *pile*, *bunch*, etc.) the original lexical meaning of *partij* needs to shed little semantically specific meaning that might hamper quantitative readings. Second, the N2s in its original meaning could either be countable, non-countable, human or non-human. Once spread to abstract uses, both ‘positive’ (e.g. fun) and ‘negative’ (e.g. pain) N2s can be attested, so there seems to be no clear manifestation of obvious semantic prosody.

As a next step, reference can be made to those uses in N1 N2 constructions that display a fairly ambiguous reading between quantifying (a lot) and intensifying (very) readings, especially in those cases where Dutch allows both *erg(e)* en *veel* as modifiers of these N2s, as in (42) to (44), where the gradable gravity of a condition is modified. Another ambiguous instance is (45), where *een partij zweetvoeten* could either refer to ‘a set/pair of

smelly feet’, which would be similar to the lexical uses in (36) to (41) above, or to ‘very smelly feet’, i.e. an intensifying use.

- (42) *Zeg ik heb er toch **een partij** zin in!*
‘Hey, I am very much/really/so in the mood for it!’

[FOK.nl]

- (43) *Yo, ik heb me toch **een partij** pijn in me oor!*
‘Yow, my ear freakin’ hurts/hurts a lot.’

[FOK.nl]

- (44) *Dat moet toch wel **een partij** herrie gegeven hebben.*
‘That must have produced heaps of noise.’

[FOK.nl]

- (45) *Ik heb me **een partij** zweetvoeten, heerlijk ik zit echt te genieten hier.*
‘What an awesome pair of smelly feet I have. Lovely, I am having such a great time.’

[FOK.nl]

Unambiguously intensifying uses are illustrated in (46) to (50). Such intensifying uses are by no means rare and occur in combination with adjectives and adverbs in the positive degree as well as with verbs, as shown in the examples. Table 2 below provides an overview of the attested uses and presents the actual proportion of quantifying, degree modifying and intensifying uses, as gleaned from the FOK.nl student discussion forum (accessed 16/03 2011).

- (46) *Ik ben me toch **een partij** moe.*
<I am me a part tired.>

‘I am so freakin’ tired’

[FOK.nl]

- (47) *Wow! Het is toch **een partij** donker buiten!*
‘Wow! It’s really pitch dark outside!’

[FOK.nl]

- (48) *ik heb mezelf net een paar aangeschaft. en ze zitten me toch **een partij** lekker!*
‘I’ve just bought myself a pair and they fit very nicely.’

[FOK.nl]

- (49) *in de bus naar A'dam Noord zat er een vrouw voor mij die rijstwafels aan het eten was en het vervolgens wegspoelde met yogidrink. Dat stonk me toch **een partij**!*
‘In the Amsterdam North bus there was a lady eating them rice waffles which she washed down with a yoghurt drink afterwards. What a stench that was.’

[FOK.nl]

- (50) *tjeziz gisteren bij mijn ex geweest (kinderen hé) maar die zat me toch een partij te zeiken snap niet waarom ben een hele aardige kerel wat mot ik nou met z'n k*twijf.*
'Djesus had to go to my ex yesterday (kids) and she was nagging like hell, don't know why, am a nice guy; what am I going to do with such a b*tch.'

[FOK.nl]

Table 2: Quantifying and intensifying uses of *een partij*

	#	%
Lexical uses	327	67,4
Ambiguous lexical/intensifying uses	6	1,2
Quantifying uses	37	7,6
Ambiguous quantifying/intensifying	13	2,7
Degree modifying uses	71	14,6
Modifying a verb	27	5,6
Modifying an adjective	33	6,8
Modifying an adverb	5	1,0
Modifying a noun	1	0,2
Ambiguous	5	1,0
Total	485	100,0

A number of interesting tendencies are revealed. First, lexical uses still account for most of the data, which, in view of *partij*'s polysemous nature (even if used in a purely lexical sense) is probably not surprising. In addition, a lot of the data stem from discussions on political topics with references to political parties. Second, - although not visible from the table - degree modifying uses with comparative adjectives are rare in the data we examined (as

opposed to *massa's* for instance), though examples do occur, as shown in an example from additional web queries in (51).

- (51) *wat word[sic] dit fietsje toch een partij mooier zonder die tudbuster.*
'This bike really is a lot nicer without the tudbuster.'

[www.mountainbike.nl, accessed 7 October 2013]

Third, quantifying uses are outnumbered by degree modifying uses, many of which – and contra the *massa's* and *duizend* data – occur with verbs as well.

Again, these data show that such uses are very much entrenched for these language users, i.e. uses of non-standard varieties of Northern Dutch. They have not standardized yet, nor have instances of such uses been attested in non-standard varieties of Belgian Dutch (at least not in the data we consulted). As a fourth observation, special attention should also be drawn to the frequent co-occurrence of intensifying *een partij* with the discourse marker *toch* and/or the ethical dative construction with *me*, both of which are markers of expressive language. *Toch* occurs no less than 64 times in total, 51 of which occur with degree modifying uses, 13 of which occur with quantifying and ambiguous uses. The ethical dative construction with *me* occurs no less than 61 times, 59 of which in combination with degree modifying uses. Interestingly, the occurrence of the ethical dative and *toch* in combination with *een partij* seems to trigger or favour a degree modifying interpretation. In fact, one could actually raise the question which portion of the expressive force of the entire utterance is actually covered by the ethical dative, by *toch*, and by the use of *een partij*, respectively. Pushing the envelope even further, one may even argue that both the ethical dative and *een partij* belong to a larger constructional pattern that triggers this hyperbolic, expressive meaning (see also the comment on *boel* below), further fuelled by *toch*, which has often been described as a reinforcing modal particle, expressing surprise, fear or counterexpectation (see Vismans 1994; Vandeweghe 2004; Snel 2011).¹⁰ Ethical datives, too, are known to add emotional colouring by introducing a 'non-argument affectee' (Horn 2008: 188), see also Lamiroy and Delbecque (1998), Cuervo (2003), and, specifically on Dutch, Vandeweghe (2004). In fact, the addition of the extra argument in the ethical dative construction and the additional expressive emphasis it imports is not unlike the effect of "intensifying ditransitive constructions" such as *zich een aap/bult/hoedje schrikken*, *zich blauw betalen* (lit. 'to scare oneself a monkey/bump/hat', 'to pay oneself blue') discussed in Cappelle (this volume), which also add an extra argument and intensify the degree to which the added argument (co-referring with the subject) is affected by the state of affairs. In these cases, the element filling the non-reflexive object slot normally carries negative semantic prosody and triggers a degree modifying reading (as 'a lot' or 'very').¹¹

Summing up, *een partij* is a clear example of "synchronic divergence" (see Hopper 1991: 23-24) with both lexical, quantitative and intensifying uses, the latter of which have fairly easily developed out of a lexical meaning that particularly welcomes quantitative interpretations and hence constitutes a useful resource for innovative quantitative N1 N2 uses and subsequent developments.

As a final remark, it should be noted that *een partij* is not unique in this sense and similar uses of, for instance *een boel* ‘a lot’, *een potje* ‘a (little) jar’ or *stapels* ‘heaps’ can be attested as well, as shown below:

- (52) *Soms is een beetje ordinair een boel lekker.*
 ‘Sometimes a little tacky can be very hot.’

[FOK.nl]

- (53) *Dat gezicht van Rooney is me een potje lelijk, maar met een Manchester shirt aan lijkt zelfs Rooney minder lelijk.*
 ‘My, that face of Rooney’s is really ugly, but in a Manchester shirt even Rooney looks less ugly.’

[www.fmbel.be]

- (54) *Ik ben er nog steeds stapels blij mee.*
 ‘I am still really happy with it.’

[www.nl.facebook.com]

However, the data do seem to show a special preference for *een partij* with intensifying uses, especially in combination with the ethical dative construction: additional queries (17 January 2013) on “me toch een partij” yielded 1,749 hits, whereas “me toch een boel” only yielded 28 hits, most of which were quantitative uses. This may be due to a blocking effect of the more fashionable *een partij*, and/or *een boel* may not have reached the same degree of collocational scatter and semantic expansion. We leave it to future research to verify this.

2.5 Tig

Dating back to Proto-Indo-European **dékṃ* ‘ten’, Dutch *tig* ‘very’ boasts a long and complex history, which can be schematized as follows (Norde 2006: 33):

- | | | | | |
|------|------------|---|-------------------|-------------|
| (55) | PIE ‘ten’ | > | PGmc ‘unit of 10’ | > |
| | PGmc ‘x10’ | > | Du ‘umpteen’ | > Du ‘very’ |
| | free | > | bound | > free |
| | | | | > free |

In Proto-Germanic, the PIE numeral had developed into a noun, **texu-* / **tezu-*, which inflected as an u-stem (Ross and Berns 1992:602ff.).¹² This noun, meaning ‘unit of ten’, could be used in complex numerals, e.g. Gothic *fimf tigjus* ‘five units of ten > fifty’ (Van Hamel 1923: 114), from which it gradually developed into a numeral suffix, e.g. Dutch *vijftig* or English *fifty*. In German, Frisian and Dutch, this suffix came to be used independently as a

context-dependent, indefinite quantifier comparable to English *umpteens*, or *zillion*. These changes were accompanied by an increase in phonetic substance—as quantifying *tig*, unlike the suffix *-tig*, is invariably stressed, its pronunciation changes from [təx] to [tix]. Such a shift from bound to free morpheme is quite rare cross-linguistically, and has been characterized as a case of degrammaticalization in Norde (2009: 213ff.). Language users appear to be aware of the suffixal origin of *tig*, because they sometimes spell it <-tig>, both in quantifying and intensifying contexts. This instance of degrammaticalization appears to be largely confined to Netherlandic Dutch, but a handful of examples occur in the Belgian part of the CONDIV corpus nevertheless (cf. Table 3 below).

The history of *tig* has not been discussed at great length in the literature, with the exception of two brief papers dating from 20 years ago or more (Hamans 1993; Van Marle 1985) and a more recent, empirical study by Norde (2006). Its origin has been disputed—it is generally assumed that independent *tig* was borrowed from German in the second half of the 20th century (Van der Sijs 2001: 266, 505), but according to Van Marle (1985: 147n.) this is unlikely, as none of his informants using *tig* were aware of the German equivalent. We disagree with Van Marle on this point however, because it is of course perfectly possible that his informants adopted the usage from other speakers who did know the German construction. As this is informal usage, it is not inconceivable that independent *tig* is (much) older than has been assumed thus far, but the age of the construction is a topic that falls outside of the scope of this paper and will not be addressed further.

Data for this case study were partly drawn from the same sources as *duizend* and *massa's* (cf. section 1). For *tig* we used the CONDIV corpus as well as *Scholierenforum*, an internet discussion forum for secondary school pupils, and *Studentenforum*, a similar forum aimed at students in tertiary education.¹³ From the *Scholierenforum*, all postings containing *tig* were excerpted on December 14th, 2010, using the forum's own search tool. This resulted in a very coarse list of data, from which all irrelevant constructions and doubles (in quotations of earlier postings) were deleted manually. This yielded only three unambiguous examples of *tig* as a degree modifier, so in order to find more examples of *tig* as a degree modifier, a Google search was performed on March 10-11, 2011. Because of the sheer size of the Google corpus, we chose to search for collocations of *tig* and a specific list of adjectives and adverbs, both positive and comparative.¹⁴ This list consisted of 39 adjectives and adverbs that had been found to collocate with the “vanilla” intensifiers *heel* ‘very’ and *erg* ‘very’ most frequently in the USENET subcorpus of CONDIV (on the CONDIV corpus, see Grondelaers et al. 2000). In these queries, we only used the base form of the adjective (both positive and comparative). The inflected form of the adjective in Dutch, with the suffix *-e*, would have yielded too many ambiguous examples. For example, the form in *-e* is used with plural nouns, which also frequently co-occur with *tig* as a quantifier. Thus, in the examples (56) and (57) below, it is not possible to establish whether *tig* functions as a quantifier or a degree modifier. Given that *tig* as a quantifier is very frequently used on the internet, it would be very time-consuming to disambiguate all examples, because in each case the (larger) context would have to be considered. We will return to these ambiguous constructions below.

- (56) *tig mooie foto's*
tig nice pictures

‘many nice pictures / really nice pictures’

- (57) *tig mooiere foto's*

tig nicer pictures

‘many nicer pictures / much nicer pictures ’

In all, we made 76 separate Google queries, and again, the irrelevant constructions were removed.¹⁵

Table 3: Total number of relevant *tig* constructions in the corpora used

	Scholierenforum	Studentenforum	CONDIV				
			NL:IRC	NL:Krant	NL: usenet	FL: IRC	FL: Usenet
Quantifier	288	21	30	4	60	1	4
Ambiguous	2	1					
Degree Modifier	3						
Noun	1						
Adjective	1				2		
Total	295	22	30	4	62	1	4

As was mentioned above, the use of *tig* as a quantifier appears to be a relatively recent phenomenon, at least as far as written recordings go. For example, *tig* is not mentioned as an independent morpheme in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT); it would have had to be included in volume XVII, which was written between 1941 and 1960. The second most extensive dictionary (*Van Dale*)¹⁶ does have an entry for *tig* (both as quantifier and as degree modifier), but notes that it is informal.

Tig as a quantifier has focalizing function, expressing that the amount of the NP it quantifies is exceptionally high. Thus, the meaning of *tig* ranges from (approximately) less than five in (58), to billions, as in (59). It is also frequently used to express annoyance, as in example (60) (for usage of *tig* as a quantifier see further Norde 2006 and Norde 2009: 213ff.).

(58) *Studenten zijn ook wel weer een luie bevolkingsgroep en daarbij zijn onze keukentjes vaak klein, dus geen plek voor **tig** afvalverzamelingsdingen.*

‘Students are admittedly a lazy part of the population, and moreover our kitchens are often small, so [there is] no room for dozens of garbage thingies.’

[forum.scholieren.com]

(59) *ik vind liever geen vieze beesten met **tig** bacterieen en virussen in hun lijf tussen mijn food.*

‘I’d rather not find dirty bugs with dozens of bacteria and viruses in their bodies among my food.’

[forum.scholieren.com]

(60) *Dat heb ik die mensen al **tig** keer uitgelegd.*

‘I have explained it to those people dozens of times already.’

[CONDIVNL_KRANT]

The use of *tig* as an intensifier was first noted in Van Marle (1985: 146) and, as we saw above, it has been included in the *Van Dale* dictionary. In Norde’s (2006) study of *tig* in newspaper texts, no examples were found in national newspapers, and only three examples were found in the regional newspapers (from three different regions), the oldest dating from 1999. All examples involved the phrase *tig meer* ‘many more’.

In the corpus used for this study, it is extremely rare as well – it only occurs three times in *Scholierenforum*, all with the quantifying adjective *veel* ‘many’ as R1. The Google searches produced more examples, which are given in (61) to (65). Adjectives or comparatives that did not co-occur with *tig* as degree modifier have been excluded from these tables (see footnote 15 for a full list of queries).

Table 4: Google results of *tig* + adjective / adverb collocations

Type	Total	Type	Total
<i>veel</i>	186	<i>duur</i>	2
<i>lang</i>	20	<i>moeilijk</i>	2
<i>vaak</i>	14	<i>duidelijk</i>	1
<i>ver</i>	4	<i>erg</i>	1
<i>groot</i>	3	<i>hard</i>	1

<i>weinig</i>	3	<i>leuk</i>	1
<i>anders</i>	2	<i>mooi</i>	1
<i>blij</i>	2	<i>tevreden</i>	1
Σ	244		

As far as adjectives and adverbs in the positive degree are concerned, it is clear that the quantifying adjective *veel* ‘many’ is by far the most frequent R1: *tig veel* may be followed by a plural count noun as in (61), or by a mass noun as in (62). It may also be followed by a comparative, e.g. *tig veel meer* ‘very many more’ in (63), or *tig veel leuker* ‘very much nicer’ in (64). Finally, *veel* can be used as a head, with *tig veel* meaning ‘very much’ (example 65).

- (61) *Het eerste winkeltje wat we in gingen had **tig** veel schoenen van alle bekende merken.*
‘The first shop we entered had very many shoes of all known brands.’

[www.roberto-online.nl/?p=163]

- (62) *Het ligt vast aan je pc dan, ik heb er ook **tig** veel muziek in en geen probleem.*
‘It must be your pc then, I have very much music on it as well and no problem.’

[http://www.wmcity.nl/forum_topic.php?id=509087&ppp=20&page=2]

- (63) *de mensen die dit leuk vinden kopen het toch wel. Al helemaal als er **tig** veel meer liedjes bij zitten.*
‘People who like this will buy it anyway. Especially if it comes with very many more songs.’

[www.gamer.nl/review/1790/singstar-pop]

- (64) *"De nederlandse Abercrombie" maar dan nog **tig** veel leuker!*
‘“The Dutch Abercrombie, but very much nicer!’

[<http://webstore.scotch-soda.com/>. <http://www.nickyroeg.com>]

- (65) *want heb net **tig** veel van je zitten lezen maar ik ga niet overal commentaar opgeven.*
‘because I have just been reading very much of yours but I am not going to comment on everything.’

[www.verhalensite.com/index.php?s=st&ss=r&id]

Apart from *veel*-collocations, the Google search produced examples with other gradable adjectives (examples 66-67), adverbs (example 68), or the quantifying adjective *weinig* ‘little, few’ (example 69).

- (66) *Ze zijn **tig** duur, maar van een geweldige kwaliteit.*
 ‘They are really expensive, but of great quality.’
 [<http://jegsynesblog.wordpress.com/2006/04/26/hanami-en-nooit-afgeleerde-jongensstreken/>]
- (67) *Nee maar ik vind Duits **tig** moeilijk en heb met me mentor besproken dit maand nog proberen en als het niet lukt dan kan ik ermee stoppen.*
 ‘No, but I think German is really difficult and have agreed with my mentor that I try this month and if I do not succeed I can quit.’
 [<http://www.gamersnet.nl/phpBB/viewtopic.php?p=377520>]
- (68) *Voor het laatst dronken: Lang geleden. ‘**Tig** lang geleden.... Ik drink nooit.*
 ‘Last time drunk: “Long ago. Really long ago I never drink.’
 [<http://www.dekrant-info.nl/persoonlijk/21601-persoonlijk.html>]
- (69) *Maar geloof me het het zijn er maar **tig** weinig.*
 ‘But believe me there is only very few of them.’
 [<http://www.ed.nl/regio/7265062/%27Bureaucratie%27-rond-ex-sstraatprostitutie.ece>]

Table 5: Google results of *tig* + comparative collocations

Type	Total	Type	Total
<i>meer</i>	382	<i>harder</i>	4
<i>beter</i>	62	<i>moeilijker</i>	4
<i>minder</i>	32	<i>sterker</i>	4
<i>duurder</i>	18	<i>verder</i>	4
<i>groter</i>	17	<i>liever</i> ¹⁷	3
<i>mooier</i>	10	<i>kleiner</i>	2
<i>sneller</i>	10	<i>lager</i>	2
<i>goedkoper</i>	8	<i>lekkerder</i>	2

<i>belangerijker</i>	7	<i>eenvoudiger</i>	1
<i>hoger</i>	7	<i>gemakkelijker</i>	1
<i>langer</i>	5	<i>slechter</i>	1
<i>leuker</i>	5	<i>kortere</i>	0
<i>vaker</i>	5	<i>normaler</i>	0
<i>erger</i>	4	<i>aardiger</i>	0
Σ	600		

As shown in Table 5, the Google queries involving comparatives yielded far more tokens, which might be taken to imply that comparative constructions were the bridging context for the reanalysis of *tig* as a degree modifier (we will return to this issue below). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most frequent R1 was *meer* ‘more’ (comparative of *veel* ‘many’). Just like *tig veel*, *tig meer* may modify different types of NPs – the plural form of count nouns as in (70), the singular of mass nouns as in (71), or it may be used independently (i.e. without an NP head) as in (72). Example (73), finally, is of particular interest because it contains a kind of pleonastic comparative.¹⁸

(70) *Je hebt **tig** meer wapens zoals een weerwolf catapult die weerwolven recht op je vijand afschiet.*

‘There are many more weapons such as a werewolf catapult that launches werewolves straight to the enemy.’

[www.bol.com > Home > Games > PC]

(71) *Tiens, ik meende altijd dat er '**tig** meer gevaar uitgaat van neo-fascisten en neo-liberalen.*

‘Right, I always thought that neo-fascists and neo-liberals posed much more danger.’

[forum.politics.be/showthread.php?p=496377]

(72) *Ik heb nog maar een paar minuutjes gezocht, maar er zullen er vast nog **tig** meer zijn.*
‘I have only been searching for a couple of minutes, but there will surely be many more.’

[www.singsnap.com/snap/forum/topic/ac27d98]

- (73) *Het is vlak in de buurt waar wij naar toe zouden gaan alleen **tig** meer luxer en mooier, kijk dat is niet mis.*
'It is close to the area where we would be going, only much more grander and better-looking, look that's not bad.'
[www.reismee.nl/reisblogs/.../costa-rica/]

As regards other collocation types there is clearly more variation than with positive adjectives. Some examples are given in (74)-(78):

- (74) *en dat zegt een BMW freak ja, spijt me maar hij is gewoon **tig** mooier dan X3.5.*
'Says a BMW freak, yes, I'm sorry but it is just much better-looking than X3.5.'
[www.autojunk.nl/2008/07/audi-q5-in-valencia]
- (75) *Doe anders gewoon een tafelkleed over je tafel (heb ik ook) ziet er **tig** beter uit.*
'Otherwise, just put a table cloth on your table (I have one too), looks a lot better.'
[www.licht-geluid.nl/forum/.../3571-bovenbouwfeest-20-6-2002-a-3.html]
- (76) *Resultaat: de treinkaartjes worden **tig** duurder.*
'Result: the train tickets will be far more expensive.'
[www.nujij.nl/betaalt-u-straks-vier-euro-voor-een-liter-benzine.11567369.lynkx]
- (77) *Dit is **tig** belangrijker dan wat belastinggeld, jullie geloofwaardigheid staat op het spel.*
'This is much more important than a bit of tax money, your credibility is at stake.'
[mickbook.blogspot.com/2007/.../pepijn-versus-nederland.html]
- (78) *Huntelaar had **-tig** minder kansen nodig dan Luis.*
'Huntelaar needed much fewer chances than Luis.'
[www.ajaxshowtime.com/.../-barcelona-volgt-suarez-.html&page=10]

As we have shown above, quantifying *tig* does not merely refer to an unspecified large amount, it also underscores that the quantity is exceptionally large in the given context. This emphatic function may have facilitated the reanalysis from quantifier to intensifier. In what follows we will discuss three constructional contexts in which the shift from quantifier to degree modifier may have occurred: ellipsis, reanalysis in bridging contexts and contamination.

The first scenario is rooted in the observation that as a quantifier, *tig* is most frequently found in the phrase *tig keer* 'dozens of times' (cf. example 60). This phrase, in turn, can be used to intensify comparatives, as in *tig keer beter* 'umpteen times better'. A possible path of development, then, would be from the comparative construction in (79) to the elliptical construction in (80a). Once the elliptical construction has become entrenched, speakers may cease to regard it as elliptical and reinterpret *tig* alone as degree modifier.

(79) *het origineel is tig keer beter*
 the original is umpteen times better

[<http://www.axclub.net/phpbb3/viewtopic.php?p=210272>]

(80) a. *het origineel is tig (keer) beter*
 the original is umpteen times better

b.' *het origineel is tig beter*
 the original is much better

[<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-3655390.html>]

Secondly, as suggested by Norde (2006, 2009: 218), the use of *tig* as a degree modifier may have originated in so-called “bridging contexts” (Heine 2002), i.e. ambiguous constructions where *tig* precedes a comparative adjective and a plural noun, as in example (81). In this construction, *tig* can either be interpreted as a quantifier (reading a) or a degree modifier (reading b). Note that the hierarchical structure of the Noun Phrase is different -- in (81a), *tig* takes scope over the following NP, whereas in (81b) it only takes scope over the adjective.

(81) *Emigreren naar dubai en dan nog een vent vanuit hier meenemen in je koffer?? Hell no...!! Daar heb je **tig leukere mannen**...!!*
 ‘Emigrating to Dubai and then taking a guy from here with you in your suitcase? Hell no!

a. There are dozens of nicer men over there!!’

b. There are much nicer men over there!!’

[<http://www.maroc.nl/forums/wie-schrijft-blijft/287061-zakelijke-aanbieding-2.html>]

This reinterpretation was possible because in Dutch, the adverb *veel* is used both as a quantifier meaning ‘many’ and as a degree modifier of comparatives.¹⁹ As a result, the semantic extension and categorial reanalysis of *tig* may have been modelled on the two functions of its near-synonym *veel*, as an example of proportional analogy (Hock and Joseph 1996: 160f.):

<i>veel oplossingen</i>	:	<i>tig oplossingen</i>	
<i>veel beter(e)</i>	:	X	(> <i>tig betere</i>)

In constructional terms, the *tig* and *veel* micro-constructions already share a link to the higher level abstract schema (the quantifier construction) which invites an analogical link (see Figure 1 in section 3 below). On the basis of this analogy, the *tig* micro-construction also forms a link with the degree modifier of comparatives construction, which is the second abstract schema that the *veel* micro construction may be sanctioned by. In other words, because of analogical alignment on the micro-level, *tig*-constructions are attracted to the schematic degree modifier construction. We will return to this issue in section 3.

It seems likely that, once reanalysed as a degree modifier, *tig* spread to comparative constructions with singular NPs, where there is no such ambiguity. However, the occurrence of *tig* as degree modifier of positive adjectives and adverbs cannot be the result of analogy with *veel* constructions, as pointed out by Doetjes (2008).

Norde assumes that the first step of the change was the analogy between *veel* and *tig*, both of which can modify plurals. As *veel* is also used with comparatives, the use of *tig* would have been extended to that context via syntactic reanalysis of [*tig* [*betere oplossingen*]] ‘a very large number of better solutions’ to [[*tig betere oplossingen*] ‘far better solutions.’ This, in turn, might have been the source of the use of *tig* as an intensifier. As shown above, degree modification of adjectives and of comparatives is not similar in Dutch, so a change from a modifier of comparatives into a modifier of adjectives is not based on an analogy similar to the one causing the first step in the change. (Doetjes 2008: 133)

However, Doetjes is not quite correct in assuming that positive and comparative adjectives cannot select the same degree modifier in Dutch. This may be the case for traditional degree modifiers (cf. *heel leuk* ‘very nice’ vs. *veel leuker* ‘much nicer’), but it is not true of degree modifiers deriving from quantifiers. As we have shown in this paper, *massa’s*, *duizend*, *een partij* and *tig* can all be used with both positives and comparatives. The same is true by the way for downtoners – it is possible to say, for instance, *een beetje dom* ‘a bit stupid’, as well as *een beetje dommer* ‘a bit more stupid’, or *enigszins intelligent* ‘somewhat intelligent’, as well as *enigszins intelligenter* ‘somewhat more intelligent’. This suggests these degree modifiers are sanctioned by a more schematic construction which does not distinguish between positive and comparative forms (cf. Figure 1 in section 3). Therefore, there is no reason to assume that usage as a degree modifier cannot spread from comparative to positive constructional contexts.

Doetjes herself (2008: 133) offers a third analysis, which is that the phrase *tig veel* is probably rooted in a contamination of *tig* ‘terribly many’ and *ontzettend veel* ‘terribly much / many’. For example, the constructs *tig mensen* ‘dozens of people’ and *ontzettend veel mensen* ‘very many people’ may have “blended” into a construct *tig veel mensen*. Thus, Doetjes suggests that the intensifying usage of *tig* may have spread from *tig veel* collocations to other gradable adjectives, such as *leuk* ‘nice’, or comparatives such as *sneller* ‘faster’.²⁰ However, it is not immediately clear why and how such a contamination should have arisen, or indeed why a construction involving another intensifier such as *ontzettend* ‘terribly’ would have to be presupposed at all. It is also conceivable that *tig veel mensen* is simply a contamination of *tig mensen* and *veel mensen*, possibly rooted in a kind of emphatic tautology similar to constructions as *never nooit niet* ‘never never not’. Such tautological constructions are not uncommon in the quantifier/intensifier domain. For example, *een boel* ‘a lot’ (cf. examples

55-56) may also collocate with *veel*, as in example (82), sometimes with deletion of the indefinite article, as in example (83):²¹

(82) *Ik heb alle paarden vanaf 2002, en nog een boel veel oudere paarden.*

‘I have got all horses from 2002 up till now, and still a lot of many older horses / a whole lot of older horses.’

[<http://www.everyoneweb.com/schleichverzameling>]

(83) *Joene kent boel veel mensen van fok*

‘Joene knows many a lot of people from Fok forum / Joene knows a whole lot of people from Fok forum.’

[forum.fok.nl/topic/71488]

To conclude, on the basis of the available data it is not possible to establish exactly how *tig* developed into a degree modifier. Based on frequency of *tig*-collocations however, which show that *tig keer meer* ‘tig times more’ is by far the most frequent collocation, coupled with the observation that *tig* + comparative is far more frequent than *tig* + corresponding adjective, it seems likely that the reanalysis as a degree modifier occurred in both these contexts. Spread to non-comparative adjectives may have been facilitated by tautological constructions, but that would require a more fine-grained empirical analysis, and seeing that these constructions are very informal it is questionable whether sufficient diachronic data is available.

3 Theoretical discussion

In this section, we will outline how the empirical observations in the preceding sections can be accounted for using a Diachronic Construction Grammar (DCxG) approach. Diachronic Construction Grammar (DCxG), like any diachronic linguistic approach, is dynamic by definition. In very general terms, the basic research question in DCxG is: “How do languages acquire constructions?” (Noël 2007: 178), which paraphrases the basic research question in usage-based approaches to grammaticalization, which is: “How do languages acquire grammar?” (Bybee 2003: 145-146). Thus, the alignment of grammaticalization studies and construction grammar (Booij 2008, 2013; Langacker 2005; Noël 2007; Traugott 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Trousdale 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2012; Trousdale & Norde 2013) seemed only a matter of time, because they have similar views on grammar. To be sure, constructions have featured as input for grammaticalization at least since Givón (1979), as pointed out by Traugott (2008a: 23), but they were often not clearly defined, if at all. For the most part, ‘construction’ was used more or less as a synonym of ‘collocation’, ‘string’ or ‘context’. However, with the arrival of construction grammars of various kinds, it has become possible to refine the notions of ‘construction’ and ‘constructional change’ in current theorizing about grammaticalization and lexicalization (Traugott 2008a: 23).

In the functional-typological approach which prevails in most grammaticalization theorizing, language change is typically regarded as gradual. On this view (e.g. Brinton & Traugott 2005:6; Hopper and Traugott 2003:49), a change typically looks like (84):

(84) A > {A / B} > (B)

The cline in (84) acknowledges that change is not the abrupt substitution of one structure for another, but always involves variation, with older and newer forms coexisting side by side. In other words, change is gradual, and this may result in (synchronic) gradience (Traugott & Trousdale 2010). We find gradience in the case studies discussed in this paper as well—*een partij* and *massa*'s still function as both lexical NP heads and quantifying constructions, and *duizend* and *tig* continue to be used as quantifiers.

One of the basic concepts in DCxG is *constructionalization*, i.e. the rise of new form-meaning pairings. Such new signs arise through a series of small-step neo-analyses of formal and semantic features. This results in new nodes in a constructional network as well as new links between those nodes. In Traugott and Trousdale's (2013) definition:

Constructionalization is the creation of form_{new}-meaning_{new} (combinations of) signs. It forms new type nodes, which have new syntax or morphology and new coded meaning, in the linguistic network of a population of speakers. It is accompanied by changes in degree of schematicity, productivity, and compositionality. The constructionalization of schemas always results from a succession of micro-steps and is therefore gradual. New micro-constructions may likewise be created gradually, but they may also be instantaneous. (Traugott and Trousdale 2013: 22)

Constructionalization may affect a single construction or entire networks of related constructions (on networks see below). There are basically two kinds of constructionalization: *grammatical constructionalization* and *lexical constructionalization* (Trousdale 2012). In grammatical constructionalization, constructions come to serve a more procedural function. For example, some [NP of NP] constructions in English have developed into complex determiners/quantifiers (Traugott 2008a): (*a kind of a problem, a bit of a liar, (not) a shred of honour*). In lexical constructionalization, constructions come to serve a more referential function, e.g. the development of monomorphemic forms from historically complex forms involving productive suffixes (*winsome* 'attractive' < OE *wynn* 'joy' + OE *-sum*, or *buxom* 'plump and comely' < OE *bug(an)* 'bow' + OE *-sum*) (Trousdale and Norde 2013).²²

A second important concept in DCxG is the concept of *taxonomic hierarchy* (Croft 2001: 25), a network which connects constructions at different levels of schematicity. Traugott (2008a: 30, 2008b: 236) has coined the following terms for constructional levels, at decreasing degrees of schematicity:²³

(i) *macro-constructions*: form- meaning pairings that are defined by structure and function;

(ii) *meso-constructions*: sets of similarly behaving constructions; often there is more than one meso-level (see below);

(iii) *micro-constructions*: individual construction types

(iv) *constructs*: the empirically attested tokens

For example (Traugott 2008c), the ditransitive is a macro-construction which is maximally schematic. Meso-constructions are sets of similarly behaving, partially substantive constructions, e.g. [<V> <subj, obj1 to obj2>] or [<V> <subj, obj1 for obj2>]. micro-constructions are individual construction types, e.g. *give* <subj, obj1 to obj2>] or [*buy* <subj, obj1 for obj2>]. Constructs, finally, are individual tokens (spoken or written).

Applying this four-level model to the degree modifiers discussed in this paper, we note the following. The constructs are the attested tokens in our corpus, as represented in Table 6. These tokens are instantiations of micro-constructions, or types. For example, there are 382 instances of the construct *tig meer* ‘much more’, and there is only one of *tig eenvoudiger* ‘much simpler’. These constructs are instantiations of partially schematic micro-constructions, which in turn are instantiations of a higher level of schematic meso-constructions, where the part of speech of the intensified item is not specified. The macro-construction, finally, is the *Degree Modifier Construction*, which is the parent construction of the degree modifiers that feature in this paper, but also of other degree modifiers, such as *erg* ‘very’, *heel* ‘very’, *enorm* ‘enormously’, or *vreselijk* ‘terribly’.

Table 6: Examples of meso-constructions, micro-constructions and constructs

meso-construction	micro-constructions	constructs
[<i>massa's</i> X]	[<i>massa's</i> <ADJ _{POS} >]	<i>massa's cool</i> ‘really cool’
	[<i>massa's</i> <ADJ _{COMP} >]	<i>massa's beter</i> ‘loads better’
	[<i>massa's</i> <V>]	<i>massa's buizen</i> ‘to fail big time’
[<i>duizend</i> X]	[<i>duizend</i> <QUANT>]	<i>duizend veel</i> ‘very many’
	[<i>duizend</i> <ADJ _{POS} >]	<i>duizend allergisch</i> ‘really allergic’
	[<i>duizend</i> <V>]	<i>duizend slapen</i> ‘to sleep very well’
[<i>een partij</i> X]	[<i>een partij</i> <ADJ _{POS} >]	<i>een partij moe</i> ‘really tired’

	[<i>een partij</i> <ADJ _{COMP} >]	<i>een partij mooier</i> ‘much more beautiful’
	[<i>een partij</i> <V>]	<i>een partij stinken</i> ‘tp stink a lot’
[<i>tig</i> X]	[<i>tig</i> <QUANT>]	<i>tig veel</i> ‘very much’
	[<i>tig</i> <ADJ _{POS} >]	<i>tig moeilijk</i> ‘really difficult’
	[<i>tig</i> <ADJ _{COMP} >]	<i>tig duurder</i> ‘much more expensive’

Collectively, the constructions of variable degrees of schematicity form a constructional network, a tiny part of which is represented in Figure 1 below. This figure illustrates constructions involving the NP *betere films* ‘better movies’, which can be either quantified ‘many better movies’, or intensified ‘much better movies’. Assuming that [QUANTIFIER <ADJ_{COMP}>] constructions function as bridging contexts, we hypothesize that the existing ambiguity of *veel betere films* ‘many / much better movies’ coerces a similar ambiguity in other [QUANTIFIER <ADJ_{COMP}>] constructions, e.g. [*tig* <ADJ_{COMP}>] with the result that several other quantifiers come to serve an intensifying function.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 1 reads as follows. The Quantifier Construction and the Degree Modifier Construction are macro-constructions. They are maximally schematic, i.e. the quantifier c.q. degree modifier and other elements in the NP are unspecified. For reasons of space, Figure 1 only features part of the taxonomic hierarchy, but of course there are many more quantifiers (e.g. numerals) and degree modifiers (e.g. *erg*, ‘very’ or *ontzettend* ‘terribly’). One level to the right are the partially schematic meso-constructions, in which the quantifier or degree modifier is specified, but not the other elements in the NP. On this level, too, only a few possible meso-constructions are given, namely meso-constructions in which the NP contains an adjective. In addition, quantifiers nor degree modifiers exclusively occur in NPs, so there are of course other meso-constructions, too. In the quantifier meso-constructions in Figure 1, *veel* and *tig* quantify the NP, whereas in the degree modifier meso-construction *tig* is an adverb modifying the following adjective.²⁴ On the micro-constructional level, all parts of speech have been specified for their grammatical properties (in this case, whether the adjective is positive or comparative) but they have not yet been lexically specified. On the level of constructs, finally, all elements have substantive form – these are maximally specific constructions. The nodes in this network are not only hierarchically related; some of them are also connected to sister nodes on the same level. For example, some nodes may be analogically linked on the basis of semantic/functional similarity, as explained above, this is indicated by the accolades on the micro-level. Bridging contexts are represented by brackets.

Obviously, it is also possible to extend and refine this network and complement it with constructions whose meanings are compatible with the quantifying and degree modifying potential of constructions under discussion. In the case of *een partij*, for instance, which turned out to be an easy bedfellow with the ethical dative construction, one could present the degree modifying construction as a slot in this larger construction, the combination of which would then underscore the expressive nature of the utterance. The ethical dative construction, in its turn, could then be linked to other expressive constructions with an extra argument (e.g. *zich een aap schrikken* ‘to be scared out of one’s wits’) and possibly to a shared macro-construction of intensifying added argument constructions with a form-function fit between the extra arguments that are expressed and affectedness. The architecture of such a network, however, is something we will explore in further research. On the view that constructions of various degrees of complexity, and various degrees of schematicity, are essentially the same (i.e. symbolic form-meaning pairings, see e.g. Croft 2001: 17ff.), constructional change can, in principle, occur on all levels. An interesting question is, therefore, at which level(s) quantifiers came to be used as degree modifiers. On the basis of our data, we suggest the following scenario: because of the existing double inheritance of the quantifier/degree modifier *veel*, some constructs involving other quantifiers aligned with *veel* in that they likewise became ambiguous. Token frequency suggests that the first bridging contexts involved comparatives (notably *meer* ‘more’), followed by host-class expansion (Himmelmann 2004). This may lead to entrenchment of the collocation, with the result that its upper level micro-construction becomes more productive, attracting fully substantive members. Initially, these were probably other comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs, but positive forms came to be recruited as well. This resulted in an increase in frequency (and hence entrenchment) at both construct and micro-construction level. Further, whenever a new link between a micro-level quantifier construction and a micro-level degree modifier construction has been established, this also strengthens the association between the two macro-levels, so that other quantifiers are reanalysed as degree modifiers as well. This may explain why a number of quantifier constructions are going through similar changes more or less simultaneously. In addition, as we have seen in the discussion of *duizend*, the same extension from well-established quantifier uses to novel degree modifier uses may occur several times in the history of an item and *need* not always lead to the entrenchment of the latter: while we found several instances of the construct *duizend jammer* ‘such a shame’ in texts from around the year 1800, there is as yet no sign that there was a productive *duizend* degree modifier construction at the time.

A last issue that remains to be resolved concerns the “birth” of the actual construction, i.e. when constructionalization actually took place. We propose to consider the emergence of non-ambiguous degree modifier constructions as unequivocal evidence of a new node in the constructional network. In the case of *tig*, for instance, predicative constructions such as *ze zijn tig duur* ‘they are very expensive’ or collocations with adverbs such as *tig vaak* ‘very often’ *only* allow for a degree modifier interpretation, so that their occurrence serves as a kind of terminus ante quem: constructionalization of *tig* as a degree modifier must have occurred in order for such intensifying uses to be sanctioned. While we have no diachronic data which document the hypothesized spread of the new intensifiers to various syntactic contexts, it can be observed that all four of them have reached the crucial stage of occurring outside of the NP. (85) to (88) below repeat a number of instances in which they modify a predicative adjective in the positive degree, for instance.

- (85) *Die dudes die gewonnen hebben waren massa’s cool.*
 ‘Those dudes that won were really cool.’

(86) *Ik was echt **duizend** blij toen ze zei: “...”*

‘I really was totally glad when she said: “...”’

[ikbenkarelpti.blogspot.com/2007_12_01_archive.html]

(87) *Ik ben me toch **een partij** moe.*

‘I am so freakin’ tired’

[FOK.nl]

(88) *Ze zijn **tig** duur, maar van een geweldige kwaliteit.*

‘They are really expensive, but of great quality.’

[<http://jegsynesblog.wordpress.com/2006/04/26/hanami-en-nooit-afgeleerde-jongensstreken/>]

4 Conclusions and outlook

Degree modifiers, as we stated in the introduction, form a very productive class of adverbs. While there are several sources speaker can tap from, the current paper focused on expressions of high quantity in present-day Dutch and how these expressions develop into degree modifiers. Four of them were singled out for closer examination, each of which had its own specific features: *massa*’s as a plural noun, *duizend* as a cardinal numeral, *een partij* as a singular NP, and *tig* originally as a numeral suffix (cognate with English *-ty* as in *sixty*). Despite the different nature of the source lexical items, the study shows that they all function as hyperbolic quantifiers in quantifying constructions, denoting an indefinite amount, but one that is exceptionally large in the given context (cf. Traugott and Trousdale 2013). The study further showed that degree modifying uses are attested as well for each of these items, as well as for several other quantifiers (cf. examples 52-54, and the example of *nul* ‘zero’ as a downtoner in note 6). We have argued that degree modifier uses may have come about through processes of reanalysis in (bridging) contexts in which the quantifier that precedes a full NP no longer highlights the amount of the head noun, but the degree of the quality expressed by the adjective modifying the head noun. In other words, scope decreases from the full NP to the adjective (cf. the meso-constructions in Figure 1). Adopting a constructional approach to the changes observed, we have argued that the use as a degree modifier arose in specific constructs (reflected by high token frequency), which lead to the emergence of a partially schematic micro-construction. As these micro-constructions become increasingly entrenched, new constructs (collocations) come to be sanctioned by the micro-construction, but we also hypothesized that it likewise resulted in the formation of similar micro-constructions, in which the degree modifier derives from a quantifier. As intensifiers, all four constructions discussed in this paper acquire a more procedural function, which makes them instances of grammatical constructionalization (Trousdale 2012). We propose to consider the emergence of non-ambiguous degree modifier uses, such as their use in combination with predicative adjectives in the positive degree, as unequivocal evidence of the creation of a new node in the constructional network.

It is interesting to note that recruitment of quantifiers as degree modifiers is not restricted to Dutch. For instance, a degree modifier construction corresponding to *massa*'s is found in Swedish (example 89), the use of 'thousand' as a degree modifier is found in both Swedish and German (examples 90 and 91),²⁵ and German *zig* can be found in constructions similar to Dutch *tig* (example 92).

- (89) *Resan hem var **massor** trevlig.*
'The journey home was really nice.'

[http://www.frida.se/blogg/blogginlägg.php?entry_id=12469]

- (90) *jag hoppas att hon har **tusen** kul därnere.*
'I hope she has it really cool down there -> I hope she's having a great time down there.'

[<http://xannax.blogg.se/2007/june/is-it-yees-its-friday.html>]

- (91) *Und das kuscheln im Auto war **tausend** schön.*
'And snuggling up in the car was really nice.'

[<http://classic.uboot.com/glycerine/board/profile/3/0/>]

- (92) *Die Hotline hat leider nie etwas bewirkt obwohl ich **zig** oft angerufen habe.*
'Unfortunately, the hotline never achieved anything, although I called them really often.'

[<http://forum.digitalfernsehen.de/forum/sky-technik-allgemein/241918-hilfe-sky-veraepelt-mich-4.html>]

The productivity of this kind of degree modifier construction at both micro- and meso-level, in several languages, calls for empirical investigations across larger data sets. It would also be interesting to see whether any of the degree modifiers we discussed will eventually spread to the entire language community, or whether they will be substituted for by new means to express a very high degree.

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¹ A note on terminology is in order here. There are in fact two subtypes of modifiers which denote a scale upwards from an assumed norm: next to *boosters*, which indicate a high point on a scale, there are also *maximizers*, which denote the upper extreme of a scale (e.g. *completely*, *utterly*). *Amplifiers* is sometimes used as a cover term for both subclasses (e.g. in the Quirk et al. 1985 grammar). The converse of amplifiers are *downtoners*, which scale a property downwards and which, since Bolinger (1972), have been divided in three subtypes: *compromisers* (e.g. *rather*), *diminishers* (e.g. *a little*, *slightly*), and *minimizers* (e.g. *barely*). *Intensifier* and *degree modifier* are two overarching terms for all subtypes of boosters and downtoners, which will be used interchangeably in this article.

² In the absence of similar modifiers deriving from quantifying expressions in English, we will often use informal boosters such as *totally*, *dead*, *damn*, or *bloody* in the English translations.

³ For example, of the collocations mentioned in Tables 4 and 5, most do not occur in COW at all, and token frequency of the most common ones is much lower (e.g. 25 for *tig meer* ‘much / many more’ or 5 for *tig veel* ‘very much’ as opposed to 382 and 186 in our own data set).

⁴ The literal translation in English does not sound very idiomatic which may point to the fact that collocational broadening of English *masses* is more limited than Dutch *massa*’s. English multimillion word corpora (such as the BNC and COCA) present only few examples of quantifier uses with the non-countable abstract nouns *fear*, *hope*, *pain*, *grief*, *misery*, etc., instances of which did occur in the considerably smaller sets of Dutch data we

have analyzed. In other words, quantifier uses of some N1 N2 combinations in Dutch may have reached a higher degree of standardization than their English equivalents.

⁵ These are constructions such as examples (13) to (16).

⁶ A comparable example, which cannot be discussed in this paper for reasons of space, is the use of *nul* ‘zero’ as a downtoner:

*Ik heb een vriend die ik al jaren ken en die ik **nul aantrekkelijk** vind.*

‘I’ve got a friend whom I have known for years and whom I find zero attractive.’

[silly73.blogspot.com/2010/08/vriendschap.html]

⁷ Note that the first part of example (30) features another degree modifier that is typical of Southern varieties of Dutch (including the South of The Netherlands), viz. the prefix *kei-* (originally the noun ‘boulder’).

⁸ Occasionally, we also find the spelling *duzend* or *duuzend*, which reflects a pronunciation with a more general southern and eastern regional distribution, viz. with the monophthong vowel but without the reduction of the final syllable, as in the example from the website of a ladies’ football team based in the North Brabantian town of Bergen op Zoom, in the southern part of the Netherlands.

*Ik ben morgen van de partij, lekker ballen word echt **duuzend** lekker weer!!!*

<www.doskodames.nl>

‘Count me in for tomorrow, nicely playing ball, it will be really nice weather!’

⁹ For information on WNT see <http://www.inl.nl/onderzoek-a-onderwijs/lexicologie-a-lexicografie/wnt>.

¹⁰ Interestingly, such uses of the ethical dative often occur in combination with the historical present, as in (50), which adds to the liveliness of the account. See Janssen (2002) for an elaborate account on the praesens historicum.

¹¹ Even uses of diminutives (cf. *hoedje*) in the resultative *zich (een) X schrikken*, do not affect the hyperbolic interpretation. Attested examples on the web also include *zich een apenootje/een rotje schrikken*, while instances like *zich dood/een ongeluk/een hartaanval schrikken* (lit. ‘to scare oneself to death/an accident/a heart attack’) emphasize the hyperbolic expressiveness of the construction. In most cases one would find illnesses in this slot (especially in Northern Dutch); *de tyfus* (typhoid), *de klerie* (cholera), *de pleuris* (pleurisy), *het lazarus* (referring to the Biblical character Lazarus who had leprosy). See Cappelle (this volume) for elaborate discussion.

¹² This noun is still found in Old Icelandic as *tigr, tegr*, meaning ‘group of ten’.

¹³ URLs: <http://forum.scholieren.com/> and <http://www.studentenforum.nl>

¹⁴ As *tig* also appears to be the name of a welding technique, pages were selected that did not contain the word *lassen* ‘to weld’ or *lasser* ‘welder’. Another thing one has to bear in mind is that *tig* may be a misspelling for *tog* (i and o are adjacent on the qwerty keyboard after all), which in turn is an erroneous spelling of the adverb *toch* ‘still, yet, anyway’ that appears to be popular in informal writing of younger users. Thus, a sentence like *Amsterdam is tig leuker* could mean ‘Amsterdam is much nicer’, but it is perhaps more likely to be misspelled *Amsterdam is toch leuker*, in which case it would mean ‘Amsterdam is nicer anyway’. Such cases, where <tig> could be interpreted as <toch>, have been excluded from the analysis.

¹⁵ The 39 adjectives and adverbs were: *goed* ‘good’, *veel* ‘many’, *leuk* ‘nice’, *mooi* ‘beautiful’, *lang* ‘long’, *duur* ‘expensive’, *populair* ‘popular’, *groot* ‘big’, *moeilijk* ‘difficult’, *tevreden* ‘pleased’, *hoog* ‘high’, *handig* ‘handy’, *belangrijk* ‘important’, *weinig* ‘few’, *benieuwd* ‘curious’, *snel* ‘fast’, *ver* ‘far’, *jammer* ‘sorry’, *simpel* ‘simple’, *slecht* ‘bad’, *laag* ‘low’, *duidelijk* ‘clear’, *sterk* ‘strong’, *lekker* ‘delicious’, *blij* ‘happy’, *graag* ‘willingly’, *makkelijk* ‘easy’, *hard* ‘hard’, *vaak* ‘often’, *erg* ‘very’, *anders* ‘different’, *klein* ‘small’, *ander* ‘other’, *eenvoudig* ‘simple’, *kort* ‘short’, *gemakkelijk* ‘easy’, *normaal* ‘normal’, *goedkoop* ‘cheap’, *aardig* ‘kind’. Of these, *ander* ‘other’ and *anders* ‘different’ do not have a comparative form, hence there were 76 queries, not 78.

¹⁶ See <http://www.vandale.nl/>.

¹⁷ Note that the attested instances of *liever* are not comparatives of the adjective *lief* ‘sweet’, but of the adverb *graag* ‘eager’.

¹⁸ As in English, there are two types of comparative constructions in Dutch – one synthetic by adding the suffix *-er*, one analytic involving the adverb *meer* ‘meer’. Example (73) appears to be a contamination of both types, possibly for emphatic purposes.

¹⁹ In this respect Dutch differs from English, which uses *many* as a quantifier and *much* to grade comparatives.

²⁰ Doetjes also notes that the collocation *tig bedankt* ‘thanks a whole lot’ might be an example of intensifying *tig*. However, it is difficult to find convincing examples of this, as *tig* in those cases might be interpreted as a misspelling for the adverb *toch* (see footnote 14), e.g. in the example below, where the use of the adversative conjunction *maar* ‘but’ actually makes the second interpretation more plausible.

*Eigenlijk morgen pas maar **tig bedankt** jonge*

1: ‘Tomorrow, actually, but thanks a lot pal.’

2: ‘Tomorrow, actually, but thanks anyway pal.’

[rheren3.mygb.nl/?page=26]

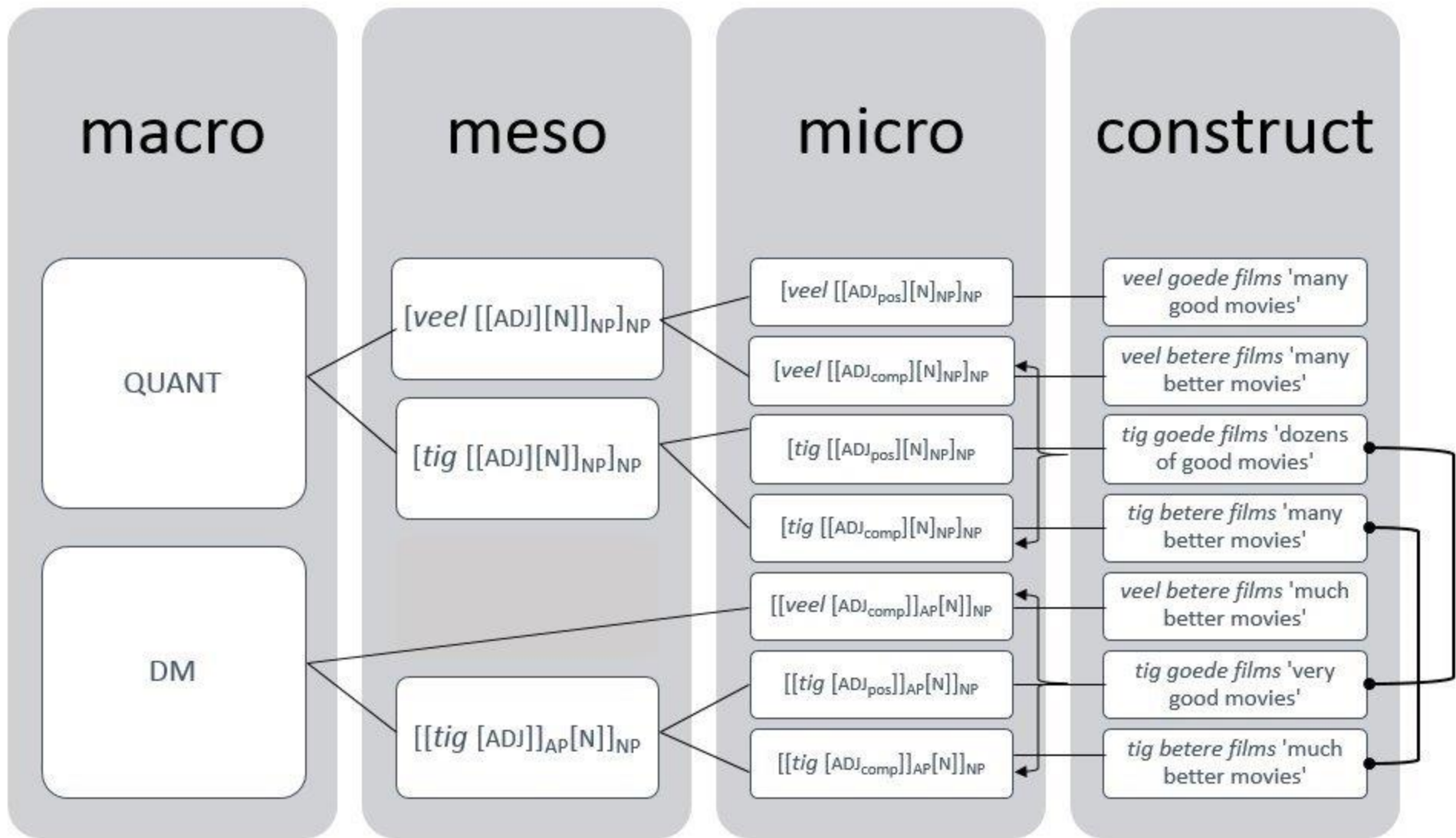
²¹ It should be noted that this kind of contamination is possible only if both quantifiers are relatively schematic and productive; very specific quantifier constructions with low type frequency hardly ever combine with *veel* in constructions similar to (82) and (83). For example, *lots of rain* can be translated into Dutch as, for instance, *veel regen* ‘much rain’ (515,000 raw Google hits), or *bakken regen* ‘cisterns of rain’ (33,400 raw Google hits), but *bakken veel regen* occurs only once. (Search performed November 1, 2012.)

²² It is important to recognize that the terms grammatical and lexical constructionalization are not synonymous with grammaticalization and lexicalization respectively. Grammatical constructionalization does not only encompass grammaticalization, but some types of degrammaticalization as well. In the same way, lexical constructionalization encompasses lexicalization, but some (other) types of degrammaticalization too (for examples of the latter see Trousdale and Norde 2013).

²³ Note that Traugott and Trousdale (2013) use the terms *schema* and *subschema* instead of *macro-* and *meso-construction*.

²⁴ Note that there is no [[*veel* [ADJ]]_{AP} [N]]_{NP} meso-level, because *veel* can only collocate with comparative adjectives, not positive ones.

²⁵ Note also that the degree modifying use of ‘thousand’ is not restricted to Germanic languages. Modern Greek, for instance, features a prefix *xilio-* with intensifying function, e.g. in *xilioforeménos* (lit. thousand worn) ‘much worn’ (Gavriilidou 2013).



SCHEMATIC



SPECIFIC