

Language Dynamics in the Dutch Golden Age¹

linguistic and socio-cultural aspects of intra-author variation

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Overview

- 16th and 17th century Dutch: linguistic variation and change
- This project: **intra-author variation**, variation within individual, influential language users
- Three main approaches:
 1. Theoretical linguistics
 2. Literary and socio-cultural analysis
 3. Computational linguistics
- **Data:** P.C. Hooft, Stevin, Coornhert, Vondel, ...
- **Method:**
 1. Corpus selection, cleaning, annotation
 2. *Close reading* for linguistic and literary analysis
 3. Extracting morphological features
 - negation, case, infinitival clauses, ...
 - use, improve and/or create tools for automatic analysis
 4. Identifying sociological features
 - location, genre, audience, gender, ...

1 Theoretical linguistics

Consider as an example the following text, printed in 1630:

**zelve lichtheyt / zonder al der menschen hulpe, te-
ghen alle geweld der menschen / ende valscheyd
des logens : zo dat zy onder 't verdrukken hoger
opryft / ende door des loghens anvechtinghen/
des te dooluchtigher verschynt / ende te byceder**

Figure 1: Fragment from *Zedekunst (ethica)* by Dirck Coornhert, Ch. 7 §18

This fragment shows variation in the use of genitive markers. In Examples (1) and (3) the genitive modifier is placed before the noun, known as a *pre-genitive*. In contrast, Example (2) shows the more modern order in which the genitive modifier is placed after the noun, called a *post-genitive*.

- (1) zonder al der menschen hulpe
without all the.GEN people.GEN help
without any human help whatsoever
- (2) teghen alle gheweld der menschen ende valscheyd des loghens, zo dat zy onder 't verdrukken hoger opryft
against all violence the.GEN people.GEN and falsehood the.GEN lie.GEN, so that she under it oppression higher rises
against all violence of the people and falsehood of the lie, so that she rises higher under oppression
- (3) door des loghens anvechtinghen des te dooluchtigher verschynt
through the.GEN lie.GEN challenge ever to majestically rises up
and challenged by the lie it will rise ever so majestically

A bit of theory

- in the Golden Age the case system in the nominal domain is in decline
- genitives are gradually replaced by *van* and *-s* since the 13th century [1]
- word order became more rigid
- the relationship between word order and case is debated [2, 3, 4]
- **the current project aims to contribute to this debate**

[1] Fred Weerman and Petra de Wit. The decline of the genitive in Dutch. *Linguistics*, 37(6):1155–1192, 1999.

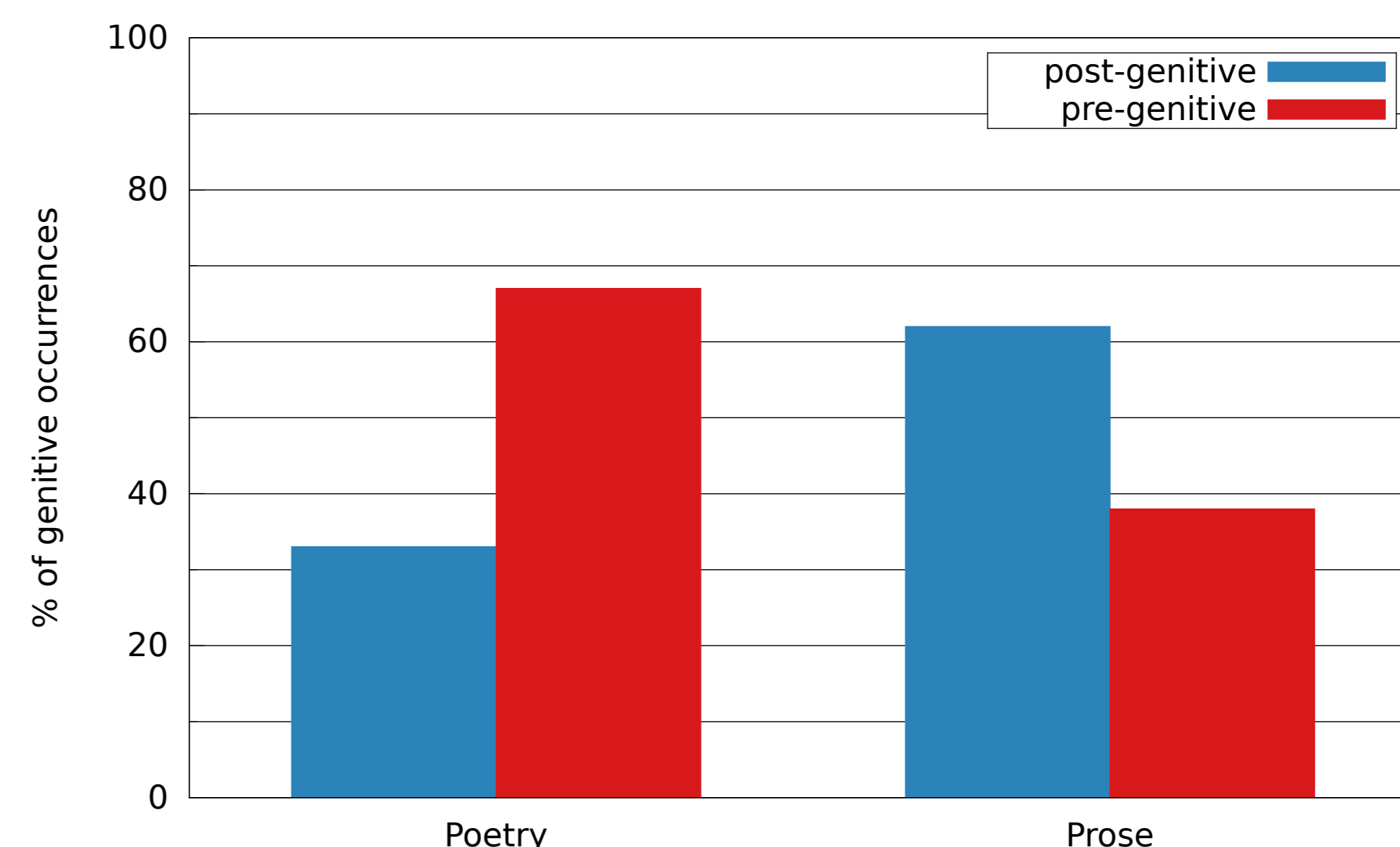
[2] Ad Neeleman and Fred Weerman. *Flexible syntax: a theory of case and arguments*. Springer, 1999.

[3] Jonathan Bobaljik and Susi Wurmbrand. Case in gb/minimalism. In *The Oxford Handbook of Case*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

[4] Marcel den Dikken. Ditransitieven en het nut van hiërarchische structuur en derivatie. *Nederlandse Taalkunde*, 17(3):362–379, 2012.

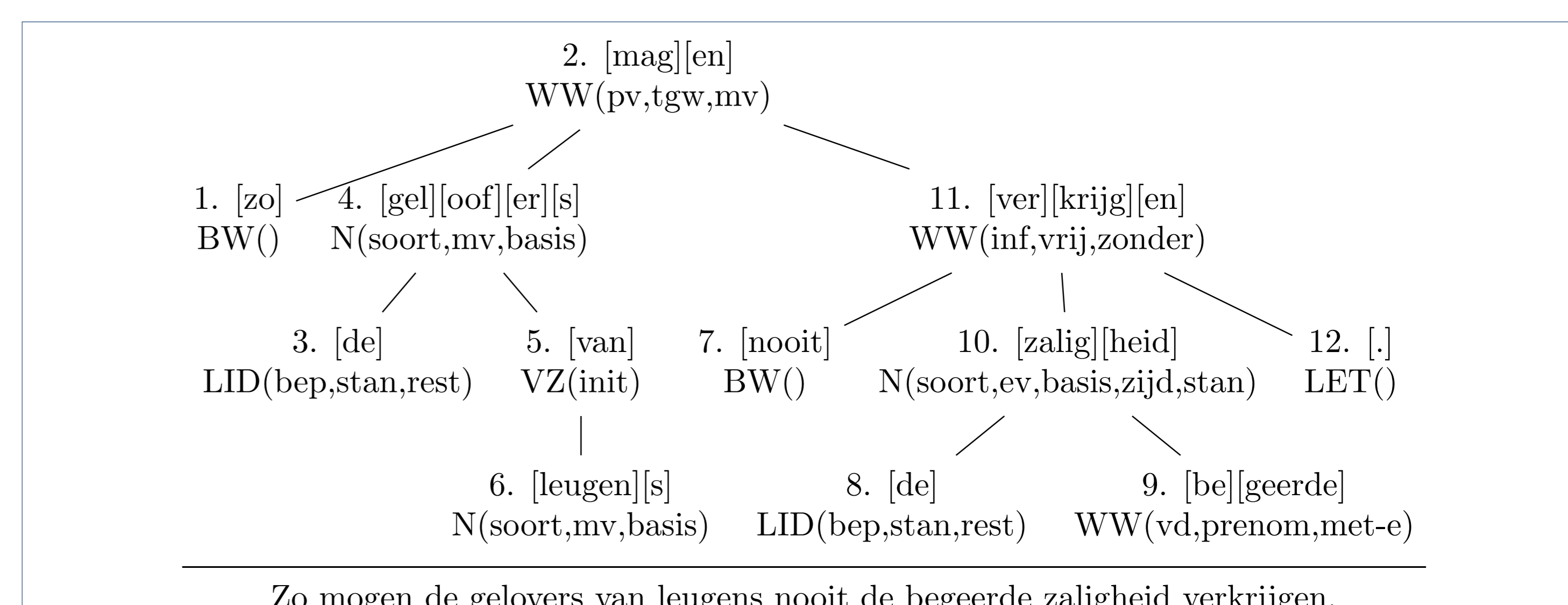
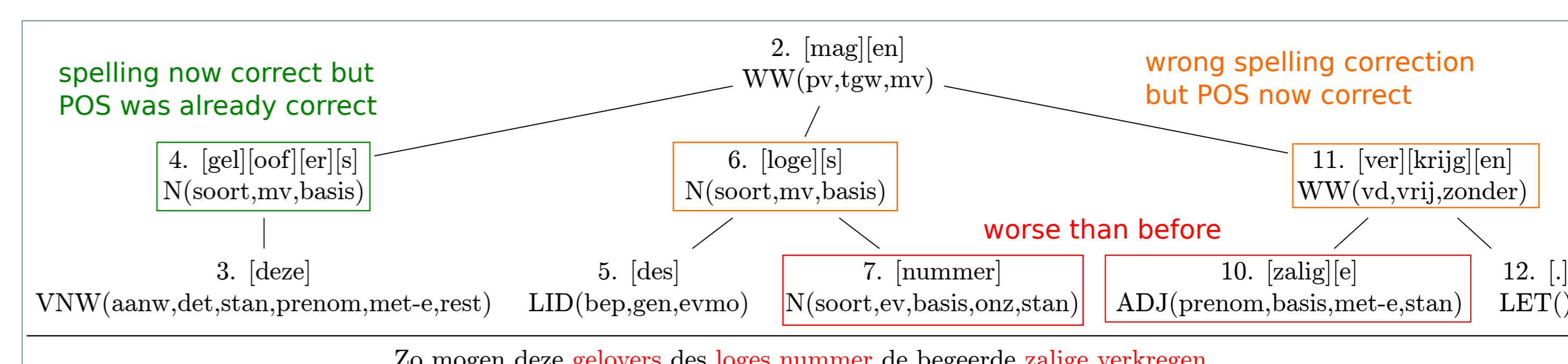
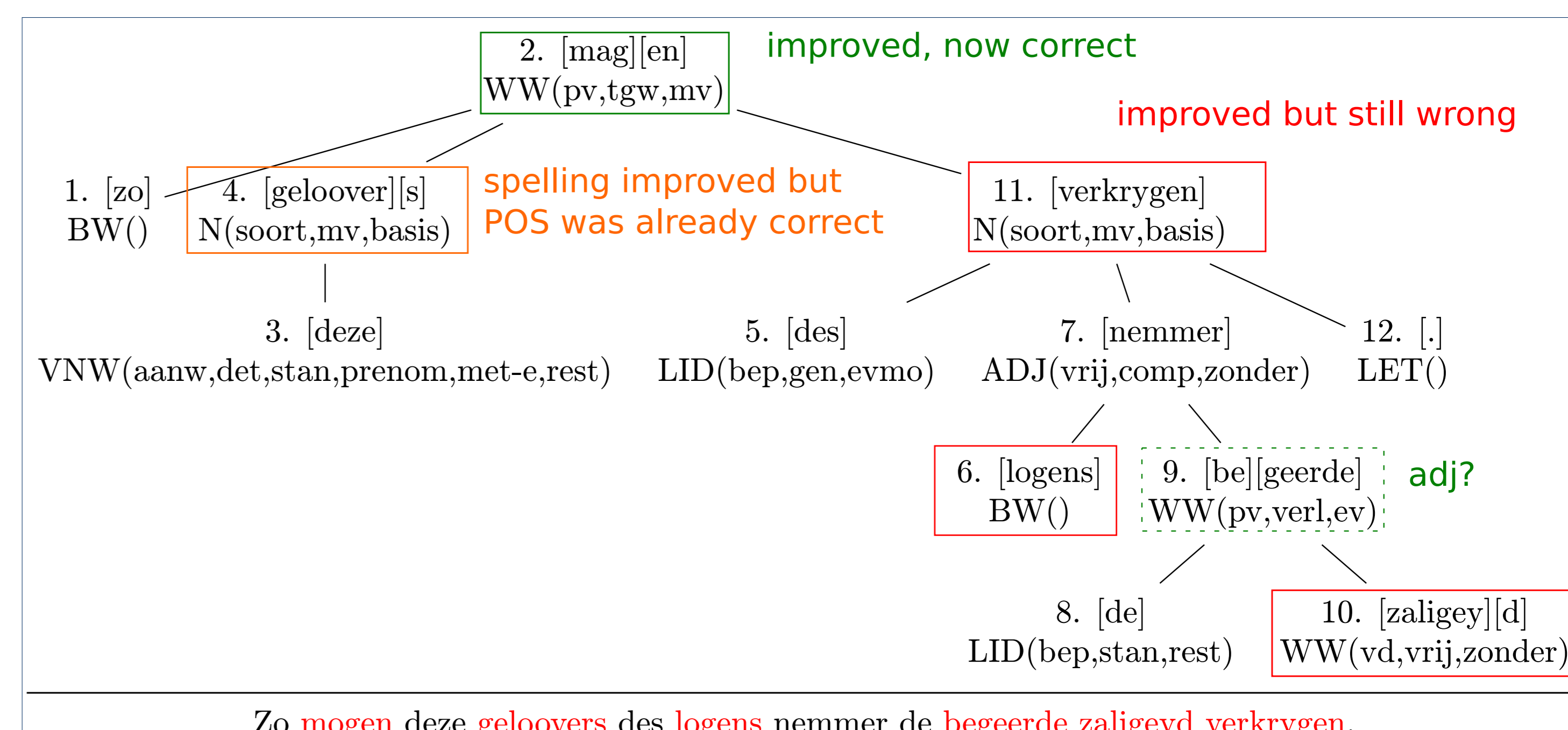
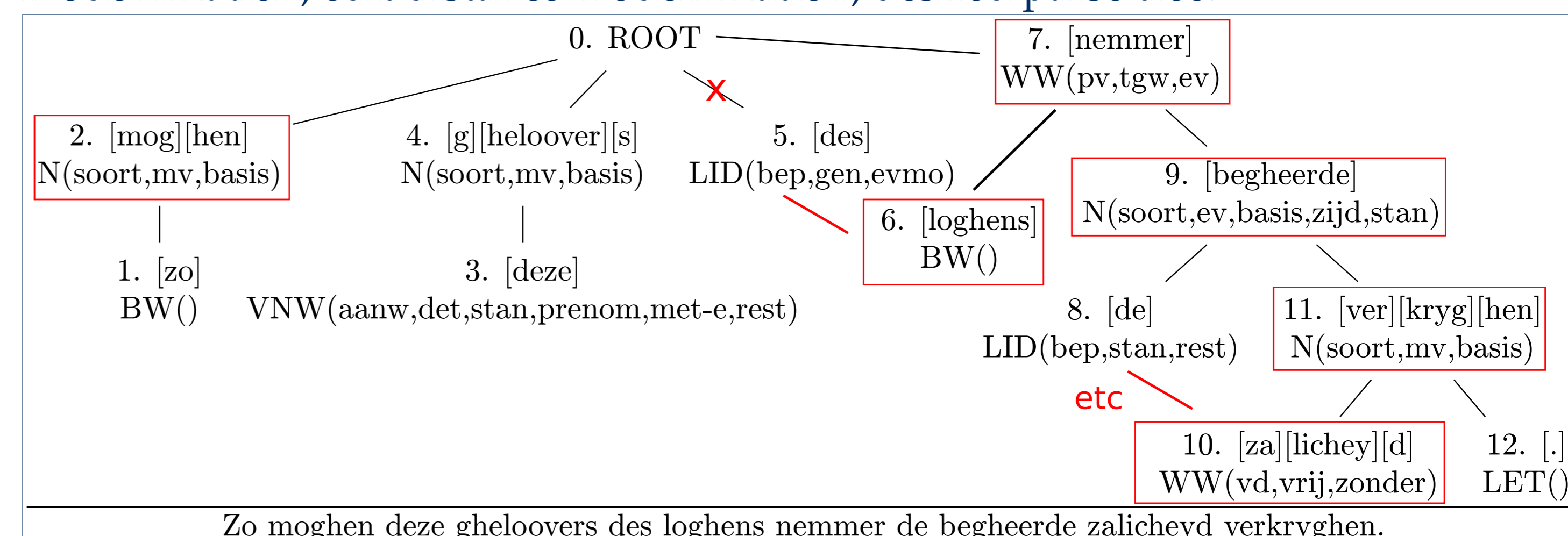
2 Literary and socio-cultural analysis

As an example, the following graph shows the use of post- and pregenitive by Dirck Coornhert, in poetry (458 samples, 3 works) and in prose (378 samples, 5 works).



3 Computational linguistics

Quantitative analysis of syntax benefits from automatic parsing. However, parsers for modern Standard Dutch do not work properly on historical text. Output of the Frog parser on *Zedekunst*, Ch. 8 §12: original parse tree, rule-based phonetic modernization, edit distance modernization, desired parse tree.



Acknowledgements



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¹and also a bit before that