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# The Partitive Pronoun *er* with the Numeral 'one' in Two Regional Spoken Varieties of Dutch

## Optionality and Variation

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**Abstract** In standard Dutch, the use of the partitive pronoun *er* is required with an elliptical indefinite noun phrase introduced by a quantifier in object position. Previous research on informal face-to-face conversations from the SONAR corpus, which contains data from Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch, has shown that in the Netherlandic Dutch data the partitive pronoun is much more used with the numeral 'one' than in the Belgian Dutch data, in which, conversely, the use of *er* with 'two', 'three' and 'four' is almost 100%. This paper investigates whether the distinctions between the two regional varieties of Dutch may be a reflection of the influence of local dialects. The results point to a different theoretical analysis of 'one', depending on the variety.

**Keywords** Partitive pronoun. Numeral. Regional variety. Dialect. Dutch.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Use of *er* with Numerals in Two Colloquial Dutch Regional Varieties. – 3 Methodology. – 4 Results. – 5 Discussion. – 6 Conclusion.

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## 1 Introduction

Similarly to Italian, which has the partitive clitic *ne* (Cardinaletti, Giusti 1992), Dutch has the partitive pronoun *er*, which has also been called a quantitative pronoun for Dutch. Cardinaletti (1999) argues that where Italian has clitics, Dutch has weak pronouns. This suggests that partitive *er* is a weak pronoun.[1]

Cardinaletti and Giusti (1992) analyze *ne* as an NP, selected by the functional category Q, as in (1):

(1) *Ne* *ho* *letto* $[_{QP}\,[_{Q}$ *uno* $[_{NP}$ ~~*ne*~~ $]]]$.
PART.CL I.have read one
'I have read one.'

This analysis has been adopted by Kranendonk (2010) for Dutch. In this more recent analysis QP has been replaced by NumP and NP has been replaced by nP:

(2) *Ik* *heb* *er* $[_{NumP}\,[_{Num}$ *één* $[_{nP}$ ~~*er*~~ $]]]$ *gelezen*
I have PART.WK one read
'I have read one.'

Kranendonk investigates, among other things, the occurrence of *er* with numerals in Southern and Northern Dutch dialects. He states that there are Dutch dialects in which numerals in elliptical noun phrases in object position co-occur necessarily with *er*, as in standard Dutch, but that there are also dialects in which this is not (necessarily) the case.

Kranendonk does not distinguish between *één* and higher numerals. He shows, for instance, that in Giethoorn Dutch a schwa shows up on both the numeral *één* 'one' and the numeral *vier* 'four' in an ellipsis construction with *er*.

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Cardinaletti and Giusti (2017, fn. 24) argue, however, that quantitative *er*, differently from other *er*-pronouns in Dutch, might be a clitic as well.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (3) | *Ik* | *he* | *ien* | *boek* | *elezen* | |
| | I | have | one-Ø | book | read | |
| | *en* | *Jacob* | *het'r* | *ok* | *iene* | *elezen.* |
| | and | Jacob | has-PART.WK | also | one-e | read |
| | 'I have read one book and Jacob has read one too.' | | | | | |
| (4) | *Ik* | *he* | *vier* | *boek'n* | *elezen* | |
| | I | have | four-Ø | book-s | read | |
| | *en* | *Jacob* | *het'r* | *ok* | *viere* | *elezen.* |
| | and | Jacob | has-PART.WK | also | four-e | read |
| | 'I have read four books and Jacob has read four too.' | | | | | |

Sleeman (2025) shows that in the spoken Netherlandic and Belgian varieties of standard Dutch (SONAR corpus), a distinction seems to be made between *één* 'one' and *twee* 'two', *drie* 'three' and *vier* 'four' in their use in an elliptical noun phrase in combination with the partitive pronoun *er*.[2]

This paper investigates if there is a difference between the co-occurrence of *er* with the numeral *één* and with some other low numerals, especially in regional Dutch dialects, to see if there could be an influence of the dialect on the regional varieties of spoken standard Dutch in the Netherlands and in Belgium.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, Sleeman's (2025) results of the use of *er* with numerals in the spoken varieties of standard Dutch in the Netherlands and in Belgium are presented. In Section 3 the methodology for the present study on the use of *er* with *één* and higher numerals in Dutch dialects is presented, followed by the results in Section 4. In Section 5 the results are discussed, and a (refined) theoretical analysis is proposed. Section 6 ends the paper with a conclusion.

## 2 The Use of *er* with Numerals in Two Colloquial Dutch Regional Varieties

In Sleeman (2025), the use of the partitive pronoun *er* with the diminutive form *eentje* 'one.DIM' is investigated in the spontaneous face-to-face conversations of Netherlandic Dutch (henceforth: ND) and Belgian Dutch (henceforth: BD) speakers in the Corpus of Spoken Dutch (Corpus Gesproken Nederlands, CGN) of the OpenSoNaR

**2** SoNaR corpus. 2015. Dutch Language Institute. http://hdl.handle.net/10032/tm-a2-h5.

corpus.[3,4] Since the diminutive suffix *-tje* attaches essentially to nouns, the goal of the investigation was to find out if there are speakers who analyze *eentje* as a nominalization instead of an elliptical noun phrase, leading to the omission of *er*. In order to know if the possible omission of *er* could be due to the analysis of *eentje* as a nominalization, the omission of *er* with the non-diminutive form *één* was investigated as well. The results show that the omission of *er* with *eentje* did not substantially differ from the omission of *er* with *één*, in neither of the two regional varieties, suggesting that *eentje* is not analyzed as a nominalization.

An important difference was found between spoken ND and spoken BD with respect to the omission of *er*. In informal ND *er* was omitted with elliptical *één* in object position or predicative position in 21% of the cases and with *eentje* in 28% of the cases. In colloquial BD partitive *er* was omitted with *één* in 57% of the cases and with *eentje* in 61% of the cases, see Figure 1.

To verify whether the possible omission of *er* with *eentje* is a property of informal speech, Sleeman (2025) also analyzed the occurrence of *er* with *eentje* in written texts in the SoNaR-500 corpus (Oostdijk et al. 2013), available in the OpenSoNaR corpus. The results presented in Figure 1 show that *er* in combination with *eentje* is almost not omitted in books.

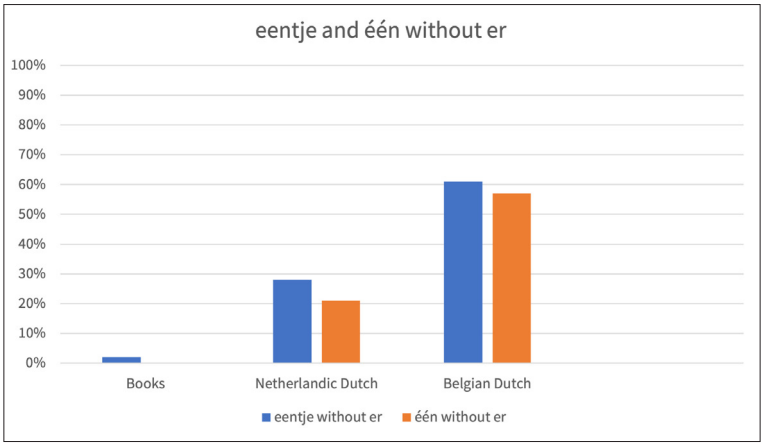



**Figure 1** Percentages of omission of the partitive pronoun with *een(tje)*

**3** Corpus Gesproken Nederlands (2014). Dutch Language Institute: `http://hdl.handle.net/10032/tm-a2-k6`.

**4** OpenSoNaR corpus. 2015. Dutch Language Institute. `https://taalmaterialen.ivdnt.org/download/pp-opensonar-j/`.

To check whether the difference between informal ND and informal BD in the omission of *er* with *één* and *ééntje* is a special property of the numeral 'one' or if it also occurs with other numerals, Sleeman (2025) analyzed the omission of *er* with the numerals *twee* 'two', *drie* 'three' and *vier* 'four' in the spontaneous face-to-face conversations of ND and BD speakers. The results show that in ND the percentages of omission of *er* with *een(tje)* and the higher numerals were quite comparable: 18% of omission of *er* with 'two', 'three' and 'four', versus 21% of omission with *één* and 28% of omission with *eentje*. In BD, however, there was a big difference: 7% of omission of *er* with 'two', 'three' and 'four', versus 57% of omission of *er* with *één* and 61% with *eentje*, see Figure 2.

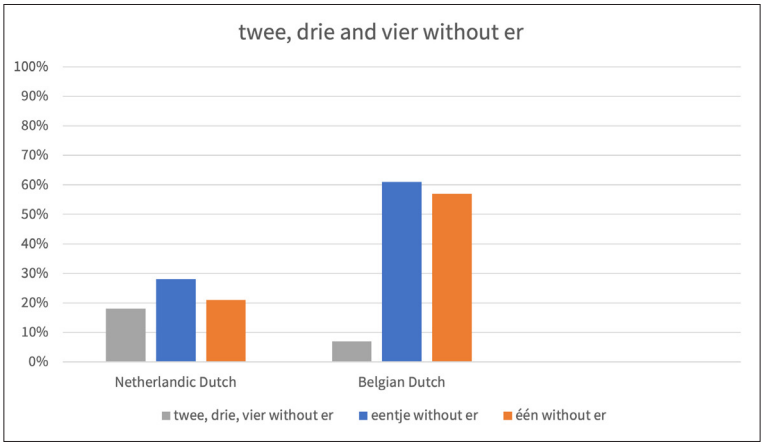



**Figure 2** Omission of the partitive pronoun with various numerals

A question that these results raise is why in the BD results there is almost no omission of *er* with the numerals 'two', 'three' and 'four', whereas the omission of *er* with *eentje* and *één* is considerable and why in the ND data in both cases the percentages of omission are relatively low.

Barbiers (2005; 2007) argues that *één* differs morphologically and syntactically from higher cardinals. Morozova and Barbiers (2024; 2025), based on Russian and additional data from Dutch, also distinguish 'one' from numerals higher than 'one'. They propose a DP-structure containing a lower and a higher classifier. They analyze 'one' as a classifier, more specifically as a low classifier, generated in the head of Class-low. The value of the feature [Unit:_] of the low classifier, e.g., [gender], [person], [place], is provided by its syntactic

environment.[5] Higher numerals, which are called cardinals by Morozova and Barbiers, are generated in the specifier position of the low ClassP, but if the higher classifier structure is available, cardinals are moved to Spec,ClassP-high. These high numerals have a feature [Partitioning:_], the value of which corresponds to the cardinal itself. In Russian, numerals higher than 'one' require genitive case on the noun, whereas 'one' does not do so.

Sleeman (2025) proposed that in spoken ND, *een(tje)* and higher numerals are cardinals, all expressing a partitioning, justifying the combination with *er* in both cases. Originally *er* is a third-person genitive pronoun. Postma (2023) relates the occurrence of *er* with both 'one' and higher numerals to the movement of *er* to the verbal domain, cancelling a paucal effect. For informal BD, Sleeman (2025) proposed that the higher numerals are cardinals, whereas *een(tje)* may function as a classifier with a unit interpretation, as in Morozova and Barbiers' (2024; 2025) structural analysis. In BD, *ene(n)* (or *een*) can be used in the meaning of 'someone' or 'something'. The influence of this pronominal use of *ene(n)* may explain the relatively high percentage of omission of *er* with the numeral *een(tje)*.

Sleeman (2025) suggests that dialectal influence could account as well for the differences between the varieties. Kranendonk (2010, 137) observes variation in the use of *er* with numerals in Northern Dutch dialects, as in Sleeman's results for informal ND, but he claims that in Southern Dutch dialects *er* is obligatorily present, which was not confirmed in Sleeman's data for *een(tje)*.

In a corpus of spontaneous face-to-face conversations in Heerlen Dutch (Cornips 1994), a standard Dutch variety spoken in Heerlen in the south-east of the Netherlands, Cornips and Sleeman (2024) found an omission of *er* of 16.9% with elliptical noun phrases in object position containing a numeral or a weak quantifier, which they attribute to a possible influence of the local Heerlen dialect. This percentage is comparable to the omission of *er* with *een(tje)* and the higher numerals in the spontaneous face-to-face conversations in the SONAR corpus.

A potential influence of dialects on colloquial spoken language is also suggested by Cardinaletti and Giusti (2020), who checked if there is variation among regional varieties of informal Italian in the possible forms of indefinite determiners and if possible variation reflects variation reported in the dialectal database *AIS* and discussed by Cardinaletti and Giusti (2018). To check a possible

**5** In Russian, 'one' exhibits gender concord with the noun. In Dutch, the feature [Unit:_] of the low classifier is valued with [person] in constructions such as *in mijn eentje* 'on my own', litt. 'in my one.DIM'. The feature [Unit:_] of the low classifier is valued with [place] by the preposition in constructions such as *zij kwamen bijeen* 'they came together, litt. 'they came by.one'.

influence of the Heerlen dialect on the optional use of *er* in standard Heerlen Dutch, Cornips and Sleeman (2024) analyzed the answers given by the two speakers of the Heerlen dialect to relevant questions in a questionnaire from the *Diversity in Dutch DP Design* (DiDDD) project (Corver et al. 2011). The answers show that the partitive pronoun is both used (5) and omitted (6) by the two speakers, as exemplified by answers given by one of the respondents.

(5) *Dees kinger hei leëze ging beuk,*
these children here read no books
*mar die doa leëze d'r juus vöal.*
but those there read PART.WK on the contrary many
'These children do not read books, but those, on the contrary, read many.'

(6) *Uëver auto's gekald, deë va d'r Jan is prachtig!*
about cars spoken the.one of the Jan is beautiful
*Ich wil Ø óch zoeë inne.*
I want also such one-e
'Speaking about cars, Jan's car is beautiful! I also want to have one like that.'

In Section 4, the answers given to sentences containing *één* 'one', *twee* 'two', *drie* 'three' and *vier* 'four' in the questionnaires of the DiDDD project will be analyzed. The goal is, on the one hand, to verify if there is a difference between the ND and BD dialects with respect to the omission of *er* with *één*, and, on the other hand, to investigate if there is a difference between 'one' versus 'two', 'three' and 'four' with respect to the omission of *er* in Dutch dialects. In the next section, the methodology will be presented.

## 3 Methodology

In the DiDDD project (Corver et al. 2011), two types of questionnaires were used. The first type only contains some sentences in standard Dutch, which the respondents were asked to translate into their own regional dialect. This type is called "short questionnaire". This questionnaire was filled in by one or two speakers from a large number of ND and BD dialects. The second type is much longer and was filled in by one or two speakers of a smaller group of ND and BD dialects. This type is called "list Negation and Quantification". These questionnaires also contain standard Dutch sentences, but this time with the question "Does this sentence occur in your dialect?", with the options "yes", "no" or "not known". If the respondents answered "yes", they were asked to provide the translation of the sentence into their dialect. If they answered "no", they were asked to provide an

alternative used in their dialect. The option "unknown" was rarely used by the respondents.

The type "short questionnaire" contains two sentences with *één*. Sentence 6 from the questionnaire contains *zo één* 'a similar one', see (7), translated into dialectal Heerlen Dutch in (6). Sentence 23 contains *geen één* 'not one', see (8). The type "short questionnaire" contains one sentence with a higher numeral, namely *vier* 'four'. This is sentence 34, shown in (9).[6]

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (7) | *Over* | *auto's* | *gesproken,* | | *die* | *van* | *Jan* | *is* | *prachtig!* |
| | about | cars | spoken | | that | of | Jan | is | beautiful |
| | *Ik* | *wil* | *er* | | *ook* | *zo* | *één.* | | |
| | I | want | PART.WK | | also | so | one | | |
| | 'Speaking of cars, Jan's car is beautiful! I also want to have one like that.' | | | | | | | | |
| (8) | *Van* | *al* | *deze* | *boeken* | *zijn* | *die* | *dikke* | *het* | *mooist,* |
| | of | all | these | books | are | those | thick | the | beautiful.SUP |
| | *maar* | *ik* | *heb* | *er* | *nog* | *geen* | *één* | *gekocht.* | |
| | but | I | have | PART.WK | yet | not | one | bought | |
| | 'Of all these books, the thickest ones are the most beautiful, but I have not bought a single one yet.' | | | | | | | | |
| (9) | *Hij* | *heeft* | *vijf* | *appels* | *en* | *ik* | *heb* | *(er)* | *vier.* |
| | he | has | five | apples | and | I | have | PART.WK | four |
| | 'He has five apples and I have four.' | | | | | | | | |

The type of questionnaires called "list Negation and Quantification" contains one sentence with *één*, sentence 2e, exemplified in (10). There is one sentence with *twee* 'two', sentence 1a, see (11). A similar sentence, but this time containing *drie* 'three' is 3a, exemplified in (12). An additional sentence containing *drie* 'three' is 2m, shown in (13).

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (10) | *Jan* | *heeft* | *er* | *één.* | | | | | |
| | Jan | heeft | PART.WK | one | | | | | |
| | 'Jan has one.' | | | | | | | | |
| (11) | *Over* | *boeken* | *gesproken,* | *ik* | *heb* | *er* | *twee* | *gekocht.* | |
| | about | books | spoken | I | have | PART.WK | two | bought | |
| | 'Speaking of books, I have bought two.' | | | | | | | | |
| (12) | *Over* | *boeken* | *gesproken,* | *ik* | *heb* | *er* | *drie* | *gekocht.* | |
| | about | books | spoken | I | have | PART.WK | three | bought | |
| | 'Speaking of books, I have bought three.' | | | | | | | | |

**6** It is not clear why *er* is put between parentheses in this question, whereas it is not in the other test sentences.

(13) *Jan heeft twee fietsen en ik heb er drie.*
Jan has two bikes and I have PART.WK three
'Jan has two bikes and I have three.'

For both types of questionnaires, the translations of the sentences were checked on the presence or absence of *er*. It has to be noticed that in informal and dialectal Dutch, *er* can take different forms, like *d'r*, *t'r*, *'r*, as shown in (3)-(5). The results are presented in the next section.[7]

## 4 Results

In this section, the results of the investigation on the use of the partitive pronoun *er* in ND and BD dialects with *een*, *two*, *three* and *four* are presented.

The results presented in subsections 4.1 and 4.2 will be presented in maps making use of the software created by the Meertens Institute and based on Kloeke codes.[8] For a proper interpretation of the data, a map of the Netherlands is provided in Figure 3 and a map of Belgium in Figure 4.[9,10] The Dutch-speaking region in Belgium comprises the provinces of West Flanders, East Flanders, Flemish Brabant, Antwerp and Belgian Limburg. Data for the short list were also collected in the Brussels Capital Region and in Teteghem in French Flanders. Dutch Limburg borders Belgian Limburg to the west, across the Meuse River, and the French-speaking province of Liège to the south.

**7** The analyzed data has been stored on OSF, project *ER with numerals in Dutch dialects* (https://osf.io/58rj6/overview).

**8** Kloeke codes. Meertens Institute, KNAW. https://kloeke.meertens.knaw.nl/.

**9** https://www.freeimages.com/vector/netherlands-subdivision-map-of-europe-5701429.

**10** Created by user Golbez. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Belgium_provinces_EN.png.




**Figure 3** Map of the Netherlands. Source: freeimages.com

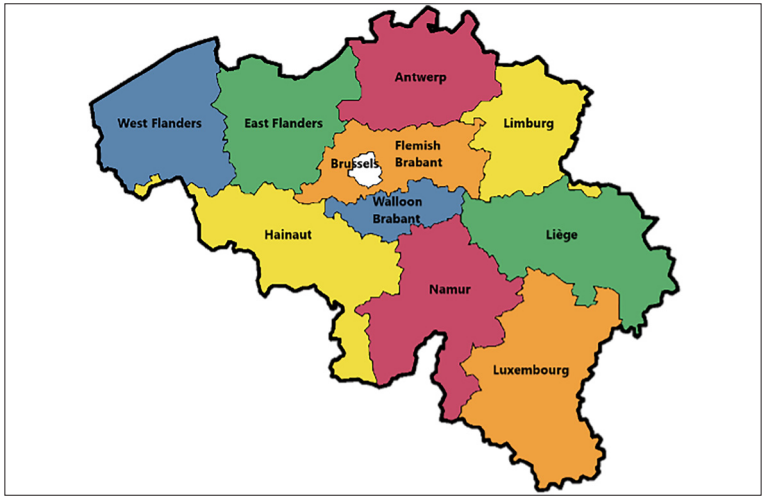



**Figure 4** Map of Belgium. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Created by user Golbez

### 4.1 *Eén*

The short questionnaire was filled in by 235 participants, sometimes by two speakers of the same dialect. The respondents were asked to translate sentence (7) into their own dialect. The results for the use or non-use of *er* with *zo één* are depicted in the geographical map in Figure 5.

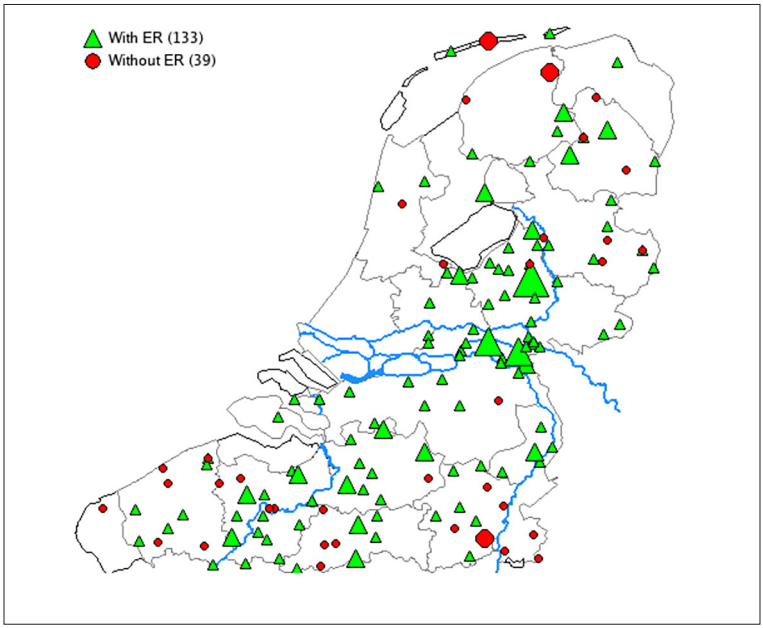



**Figure 5** Use or non-use of ER in the translations of "Ik wil er ook zo één"

In the translations of example (7), 133 times *er* was used and 39 times *er* was left out. In 63 cases another construction was used, namely one with a focalized *zo één* in sentence-initial position, or the relevant part of the sentence had not been translated. These 63 cases were left out of the analysis. In the 172 translations retained for analysis, *er* was left out in 19% of the cases in the ND dialects and in 29% of the cases in the BD dialects.

In the translation of example (8), *er* was used 160 times with *geen één* and it was left out 23 times, as shown in Figure 6. In the dialects of the Netherlands *er* was omitted in 8% of the cases and in the dialects of Belgium in 21% of the cases. In 52 answers, the relevant part was translated in another way or was not translated.

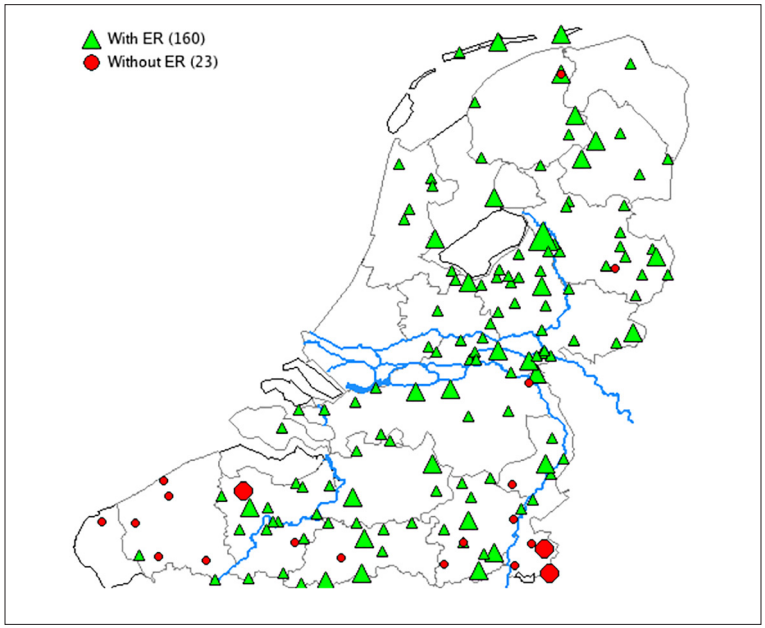



**Figure 6** Use or non-use of ER in the translations of "ik heb er nog geen één gekocht"

The third question containing *één* is a question from the list "Negation and Quantification", exemplified in (10). This long questionnaire was filled in by 53 dialect speakers. In some cases, there is overlap with the dialects of the short questionnaire, but in most cases the dialects are different. As in the case of the short questionnaire, sometimes more than one speaker of the same dialect provided an answer. Whereas most questions of the long questionnaire were yes/no questions followed by a question on the translation of the relevant sentence, in the case of example (10) only the translation into the dialect was asked. The results are shown in Figure 7.

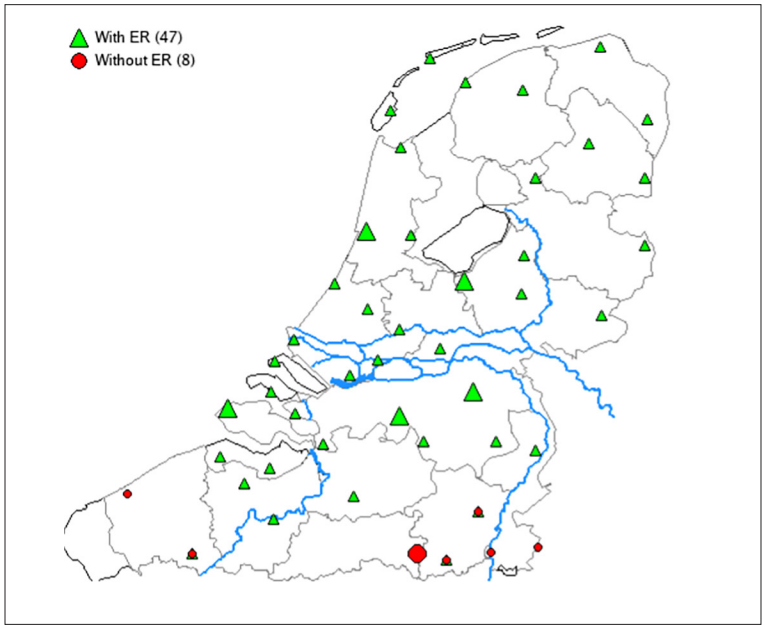



**Figure 7** Use or non-use of ER in the translations of "Jan heeft er één"

In 45 of the translations, *er* was used as the only option. In ND dialects *er* was used 40 times and left out 2 times. In BD dialects the use of *er* occurred 5 times and the omission 4 times. Additionally, in BD there were two optional uses of *er*, counted twice, as a use and as an omission of *er*. The omission of *er* took place in 5% of the cases in ND dialects and in 46% of the cases in BD dialects.

## 4.2 *Twee*, *drie* and *vier*

In Figure 8 the results for the translation of *ik heb (er) vier*, sentence (9), are presented. Since this sentence is part of the short questionnaire, 235 translations were provided, sometimes by several speakers of the same dialect.

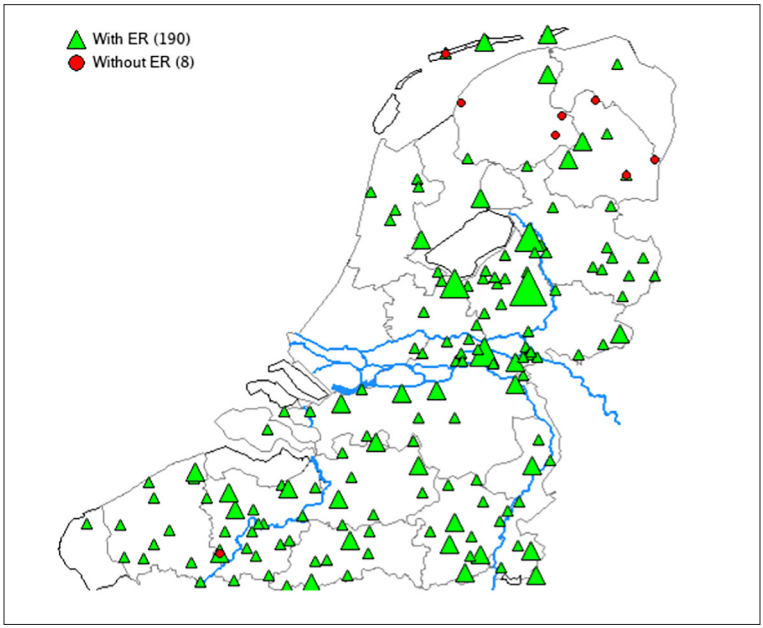



**Figure 8** Use or non-use of ER in the translations of "ik heb (er) vier"

In 39 cases, the dialect speakers gave an irrelevant translation or no translation. The use of *er* showed up 190 times, of which optionally in 2 cases. In 8 cases, *er* was omitted, of which optionally in 2 cases counted twice: as "non-use" and as "use". The optionality was indicated once in a Netherlandic answer and once in a Belgian answer. The omission of *er* took place in 6% of the relevant Netherlandic answers and in 1% of the relevant Belgian answers.

The long questionnaire was filled in by 57 dialect speakers, 43 from the Netherlands and 14 from Belgium. For sentences (11), (12) and (13) in the long questionnaire it is first asked if the sentence occurs in the dialect. Subsequently a translation is asked. The results presented for *twee* and *drie* are based on a combination of the answers to both types of questions.

The results for *twee* are represented in Figure 9. In the ND dialects *er* was used 42 times, among which 8 times optionally. The 8 optional cases are counted both as "use" and "non-use". The respondent of one dialect answered that in their dialect *er* is left out, without providing a translation, however. In the BD dialects, *er* was used 14 times and not omitted at all. In the ND dialects there is 18% of omission of *er*.

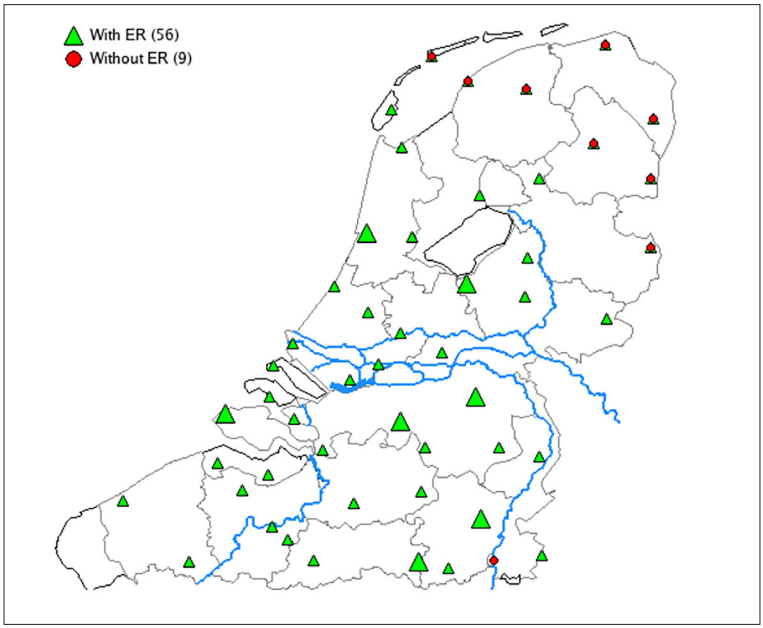



**Figure 9** Use or non-use of ER in the translations of "ik heb er twee gekocht"

The results for the first sentence containing *drie*, sentence (12), are shown in Figure 10. Seven respondents indicated that *er* can be used and can be omitted in the sentence under consideration. One respondent answered that *er* cannot be used. These cases of (optional) omission all concerned dialects in the Netherlands. For 35 respondents from the Netherlands and all the respondents from Belgium the non-optional use of *er* was the only option. This means that in 0% of the cases the omission of *er* in sentence (12) was an option for the BD dialectal speakers. For the speakers of a ND dialect this was 16%, but in most of these cases the omission is optional.

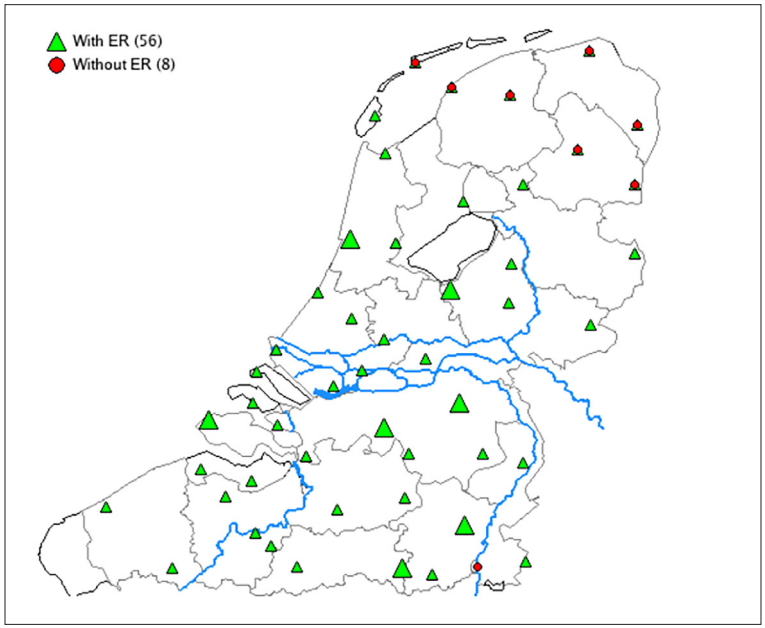



**Figure 10** Use or non-use of ER in the translations of "ik heb er drie gekocht"

Figure 11 shows the results for the second sentence containing *drie*, sentence (13). In the ND data, *er* is used by 56 dialect speakers, although 4 of them indicated that its use is optional and that omission is also possible. For one ND dialect, it was indicated that *er* can only be omitted. For all of the 14 BD dialects, the respondents answered that *er* is used but that it cannot be left out. The ND rate of omission is 11%, including the 4 optional cases of omission.

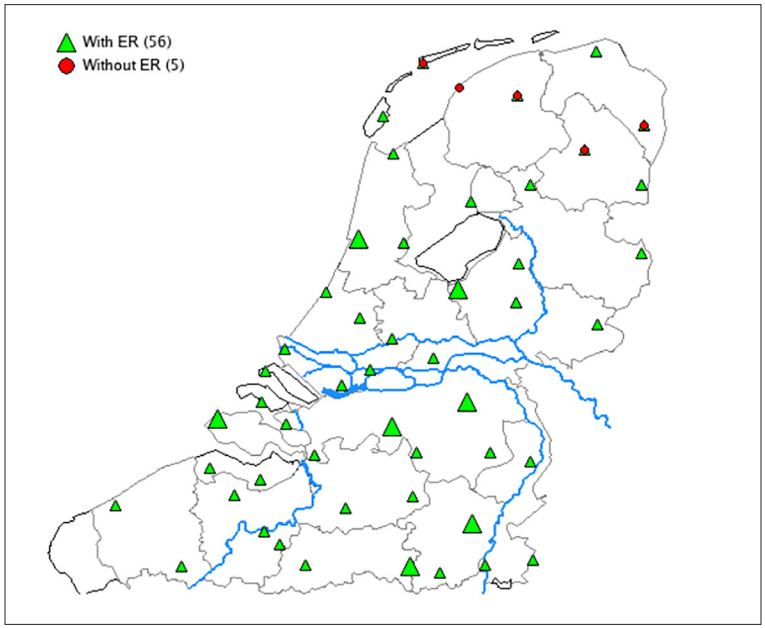



**Figure 11** Use or non-use of ER in the translations of "ik heb er drie"

## 4.3 Comparison of *één* with *twee, drie* and *vier*

The comparison of the average percentage of omissions of *er* with *één* for the three sentences presented in subsection 4.1 and of the average percentage of omissions of *er* with *twee, drie* and *vier* for the four sentences presented in subsection 4.2 yields the results provided in Figure 12.

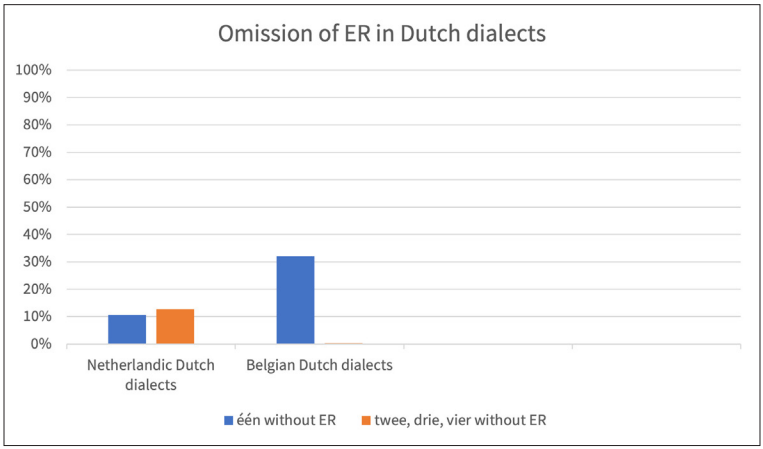



**Figure 12** Omission of ER with low numerals in Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch dialects

Figure 12 shows that with *één er* was omitted in ND dialects in on average 10.7% of the cases, whereas the percentage is 32% for BD dialects. Figure 12 furthermore shows that, whereas in the BD dialects *er* is almost never omitted with *twee*, *drie* and *vier*, namely in 0.25% of the cases (not visible in the figure), for ND the percentage of omission with *twee*, *drie* and *vier* is comparable to that for the omission of *er* with *één*, namely 12.75%.

## 5 Discussion

On the basis of previous results of the combination of *er* with *één* in informal spoken ND and BD, two research questions were formulated at the end of Section 2: in ND and BD dialects, is there a difference with respect to the use of *er* with *één* and does the use of *er* with *één* differ from the use of *er* with *twee*, *drie* and *vier*?

A comparison of Figure 12 and Figure 2 shows that, as in colloquial Dutch, the omission of *er* with *één* in dialects is higher in Belgium than in the Netherlands. In colloquial ND there is 21% of omission and in the ND dialects 10.7%. In informal BD there is 57% of omission and in the Belgian dialects 32%. It should be noted that the results presented in subsection 4.1 do not only concern the bare numeral *één*, but also the combinations *zo één* and *geen één*. If, for a proper comparison, we consider only the bare numeral *één*, as in the informal spoken Dutch results, we see that the percentage of omission of *er* in Belgian dialects increases to 46%. In Netherlandic dialects, the percentage of omission of *er* with the bare numeral *één* is lower than in informal ND, namely 5%. This means that with bare *één* the

regional difference in omission of *er* is even bigger in dialects than in colloquial standard Dutch.

As for the second research question, the results in Figures 2 and 12 show that, as in informal ND, in Dutch dialects the percentages of omission of *er* with *twee*, *drie*, *vier* and *één* are quite comparable. In colloquial ND the percentage of omission of *er* with *twee*, *drie*, *vier* is 18% and with *één* 21%. In the Netherlandic dialects the omission rate with *twee*, *drie*, *vier* is 12.75% and with *één* it is 10.7%. As in Figure 2, in Figure 12 *er* is more often omitted in BD with *één* than with *twee*, *drie* and *vier*. In informal BD there is 7% of omission with *twee*, *drie*, *vier* and 57% of omission with *één*. In Belgian dialects there is 0.25% of omission with *twee*, *drie* and *vier* and on average 32% of omission with *zo één*, *geen één* and *één*, and 46% of omission with the bare numeral *één*.

Based on standard Dutch and Russian, Morozova and Barbiers (2024; 2025) claim that 'one' is a low classifier with a "unit" interpretation, whereas higher numerals are cardinals. Sleeman (2025) argued that in spoken BD 'one' may behave like a classifier under the influence of the homophonous pronoun 'someone' or 'something'. This would account for the relatively high omission rate of *er* with *één*. In dialectal BD *één* may also be analyzed as a classifier, whereas *twee*, *drie* and *vier* are cardinals, since we see the same pattern. In dialectal ND, as in spoken ND, the omission of *er* with all numerals is low, which suggests that all numerals are cardinals, at least in ellipsis constructions. Postma (2023) attributes the cancelling of the paucal effect with quantitative *er* to the movement of *er* to the verbal domain. In Morozova and Barbiers' framework, this would mean that the movement of *er* to the verbal domain would be related to the movement of all numerals, including 'one', from the low classifier position to the high classifier position. As suggested by one of the reviewers, the empty counterpart of *er* would imply vacuous movement of the empty pronoun. The absence of movement of the empty pronoun would then imply that there is no movement from the low classifier position to the high classifier position. In this way the presence or absence of the use of *er* would be related to the position of the numeral in the syntactic structure. If *één* remains in the low classifier position, there is no *er*, which has to move to the verbal domain, either. In this sense, there is no true optionality between the two forms (Cardinaletti, Giusti 2018). The overt partitive pronoun occurs with numerals raised to the higher classifier phrase. The empty pronoun is used with numerals that remain in the low classifier phrase.

The results partly confirm Kranendonk's (2010) observation about the omission of *er* in Dutch dialects: no omission in Southern Dutch dialects and optional omission in Northern Dutch dialects. In the data presented in Section 4, for all numerals we see indeed that there is

variation and optionality in the use of *er* in the ND dialects.[11,12] There are dialects where *er* is used and others where *er* is omitted; whereas one speaker of a dialect indicates that *er* has to be omitted, another speaker of the same dialect indicates that *er* has to be used in the translation of the same sentence; there are also individual speakers who indicate that *er* can be used or left out in the translation of a sentence. Kranendonk's observation that in Southern Dutch dialects there is no omission of *er* is partly confirmed, namely for the numerals *twee*, *drie* and *vier*. In the data there is only one omission and an average percentage of omission of only 0.25%. With *zo één*, *geen één* and, especially with the bare numeral *één*, we saw, however, that there is a relatively high percentage of omission, representing variation between BD dialects and between individual speakers of a dialect and, in some cases, optionality for individual speakers.

Although a fine-grained regional comparison as in Cardinaletti and Giusti (2018; 2020) could not be made, due to the absence of specific local information in the informal Dutch data, the results of the dialectal research presented in Section 4 confirm the suggestion formulated in Section 2 that there could be an influence of the dialect on the spoken variety of standard Dutch: the patterns presented in Figure 12 are quite similar to the patterns observed in informal spoken Dutch presented in Figure 2. Any differences may be due to the fact that the data in Figure 2 are based on face-to-face conversations. Sleeman (2025) suggests that in spoken varieties *er* may be omitted for reasons of economy, the pronoun not being pronounced at PF. Although dialects are also mainly spoken varieties, the answers to the questions in the questionnaires used in the DiDDD project had to be written. Furthermore, the sentences that had to be translated already contained *er*, which may have had a priming effect.

For this reason, the results presented in this paper should be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, in the short questionnaire, the respondents from the Netherlandic province of Gelderland are relatively overrepresented, whereas respondents from the Netherlandic provinces of Zuid-Holland and Zeeland are almost absent. In the long questionnaire, there is a more balanced representation, which may contribute to the validity of the claims made in this section.

**11** According to Cardinaletti and Giusti (2018; 2020), there may not only be an influence of dialects on the colloquial language, but also influence of the standard language on dialects. This is what we see for the Frisian language. Frisian, like English and Standard German, originally does not have the partitive pronoun, but under the influence of standard Dutch, *er* is used in Friesland, as can be seen in most of the maps of Section 4. The optionality may be due to the presence of several coexisting grammars in the speakers' minds (Cardinaletti, Giusti 2018, 144).

**12** The optionality does not only occur in dialects spoken in Friesland. As the maps presented in Section 4 show, among the ND dialects, it also occurs in North-Eastern, Low Saxon, dialects spoken in provinces bordering Germany.

## 6 Conclusion

In this paper, the omission of the partitive pronoun *er* with the numeral *één* was investigated in Dutch dialects to investigate if there is diatopic variation in the omission or *er*. There is much more omission of *er* with *één* in BD than in ND dialects, whereas with the numerals *twee*, *drie* and *vier* there is almost no omission. While in Netherlandic spoken varieties all numerals are cardinals, in spoken BD *één* may be analyzed as a classifier with a "unit" interpretation and higher numerals as cardinals. It was furthermore suggested that there may be an influence of the local dialect on the regional spoken variety. The use of an overt partitive pronoun was related to the movement of the numeral with the feature [Partitioning:_] to a high classifier phrase. The use of an empty pronoun was related to the non-movement of numerals from a low classifier position. In this way, the higher percentage of omission of the partitive pronoun with the numeral *één* bearing the feature [Unit:_] in BD was accounted for. Due to the different syntactic environment, there is no true optionality between the two forms.

More research is needed to confirm the patterns discovered in this research. Furthermore, it could be investigated if the difference between the numerals in BD may have to do with their morphological form, the absence or presence of a schwa. This is also left for future research.

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