

## Language–internal and –external factors conditioning a grammatical change in the Early Modern Dutch verb ZIJN ‘be’ paradigm.

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**Background:** Dutch exhibits suppletion in the verb root ZIJN 'be' with *b*-roots and *s*-roots merged into a single paradigm (Donaldson 1983: 182). While ZIJN still exhibits different stems in the singular, plural forms have become neutralized to the *s*-root for speakers of most Modern Dutch (MoD) varieties from Middle Dutch (MiD) onwards:

Table 1a. ZIJN paradigm in MiD			Table 1b. ZIJN paradigm in MoD		
	sg.	pl.		sg.	pl.
1	<i>bem/ben</i>	<i>sijn/benne</i>	1	<i>ben</i>	<i>zijn</i>
2	<i>best/bist</i>	<i>sijt/benne</i>	2	<i>bent</i>	<i>zijn</i>
3	<i>es/is</i>	<i>sijn/benne</i>	3	<i>is</i>	<i>zijn</i>

(Donaldson 1983: 182)                      (Donaldson 1981: 139)

According to the principle of analogical leveling, the most “basic” alternate, the alternate with greater usage, provides the pivot for neutralization, to achieve a more uniform paradigm. The third person is the most basic person marking, for example, because it is used with greater frequency in discourse (Hock 1986: 183). Based on this principle, we would expect that neutralization occurs first in the third person before other person marking, and that neutralization occurs to satisfy paradigm uniformity. However, a strictly language-internal analysis may fail to holistically account for a change’s actuation and direction (see Labov 1966; Weinreich et al. 1968). Recently, efforts in historical (socio)linguistics aim to incorporate the social component of language to explain change; analyses by Rutten & van der Wal (2014) and Blas Arroyo (2016) illustrate the influence social factors (e.g. gender, age, and class) have on linguistic change.

**Research question:** I explore whether social factors (gender, age, class) have an impact on the ZIJN plural neutralization Early Modern Dutch (ca. 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century). My prediction is that analogical leveling only partly accounts for this shift, and is furthermore socially conditioned.

**Methodology:** *benne* and *zijn* tokens were gathered from the *Letters as Loot* corpus, a compilation of Dutch 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century private letters exchanged between colonizers/sailors, and their families in the Netherlands (Rutten & van der Wal 2014). The tokens were coded for social factors, e.g. gender, age, and class, as well as their linguistic context, e.g. voice, tense, and aspect. I analyzed the data using the Generalized Estimated Equation test in SPSS software.

**Analysis:** 120 tokens of *benne* and 915 of *zijn* were collected between the years 1664-1669 (P1) and 1774-1780 (P2). Analysis of the variants indicated a highly significant distribution difference over the first and third person (no data for second person):  $\chi^2(1) = 11.81, p < 0.01$ . There is a 0.83 probability of *zijn* selection for the first person, and a 0.92 probability for the third person from P1 to P2. Selection likelihood for *zijn* seems to prevail over *benne* at a faster rate in the third person than first person; this conforms to the leveling principle for the direction of the change. For extra-linguistic factors, the analysis indicated a highly significant distribution difference amongst four social strata:  $\chi^2(3) = 14.05, p < 0.01$ . The likelihood for the selection of *zijn* increased from the lower to the higher strata: (0.79) for Low class, (0.81) for Low-Middle class, (0.89) for High-Middle class, and (0.96) for High class. These results suggest that *zijn* acquires a prestige value; *benne* is disfavoured in order to adopt a more prestigious register by the other classes.

**Conclusions:** While linguistic factors such as number marking influenced the direction of the shift in the ZIJN paradigm, the prestige of the *zijn* form ultimately seems to motivate the elimination of the variation. Results from this paper contribute to the growing understanding that language change must be examined both from a language–internal and –external perspective.

### References

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