Negation in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Dutch. A Historical-Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract
The paper discusses the switch from bipartite to single negation in the history of Dutch, where the decisive turning point of this feature is often located in the seventeenth century. Previous studies have mainly focused on internal and, to a lesser extent, regional factors affecting this change. In this paper, we pursue this line of research while introducing a third factor, viz. social variation by examining the so-called *sailing letters*, a unique collection of private letters from people of all social ranks, mainly sent to and from the (north-)western provinces of Holland and Zeeland. Our study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *sailing letters* confirms the internal factors discussed in earlier studies, while identifying an additional internal factor. Furthermore, we are able to detail (and in part correct) the regional variation examined in earlier studies. Finally, we also reveal social variation, showing that the upper (middle) ranks in South Holland and Zeeland use single negation more often than writers from the lower (middle) classes. We suggest that this leveling of writing practices across the northwestern parts of the Northern Netherlands is linked to the high degree of urbanisation in these areas and the concomitant intense traffic in society.

1. Introduction[1]

The history of negation in Dutch shows similarities with developments in many other languages which have often been described in terms of the well-known Jespersen's cycle (Jespersen 1917). One phase of this cycle concerns the switch from bipartite negation to single negation, where the decisive turning point of this feature in the history of Dutch is often located in the seventeenth century. Previous studies have mainly focused on internal and, to a lesser extent, regional factors affecting this change. In this paper, we will pursue this line of research while introducing a third factor, viz. social variation by examining the so-called *sailing letters.* This newly rediscovered source of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century private letters comprises letters from people of all social ranks, and therefore allows a social stratificational approach.

In this paper, we will examine a subcorpus of seventeenth-century letters for the influence of internal factors on the change from bipartite to single negation (section 5.1.), and for establishing both regional and social variation (sections 5.2 and 5.3). After having presented the seventeenth-century conclusions (section 5.4), we will turn to a sample of eighteenth-century letters (section 6). Our results confirm the influence of internal factors discussed in earlier studies, while identifying an additional internal factor. Furthermore, we are able to detail (and in part correct)

[1] The research was carried out at Leiden University within the research programme *Letters as loot. Towards a non-standard view on the history of Dutch*, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). See www.brievenalsbuit.nl.

the regional variation examined in earlier studies. Finally, we will also reveal the influence of social factors.

Before presenting the case studies and the results in sections 5 and 6, we will briefly discuss the historical-sociolinguistic context in section 2. In section 3, we will give an overview of negation in the history of Dutch, and in section 4 the corpus will be introduced.

2. The historical-sociolinguistic context

Historically, we need to distinguish between the Northern and the Southern Netherlands, roughly corresponding to the present-day Netherlands and Belgium, respectively. In this paper, we focus on the Northern Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, often referred to as the Republic of the Seven United Provinces.[2] In the Northern Netherlands, the seventeenth century is usually considered the "Golden Age", both economically and culturally. For the present purposes, we wish to single out one important aspect relating to this so-called Golden Age, viz. the remarkably high degree of urbanisation in the western parts of the Northern Netherlands, especially when compared to other Western European countries. The most important regions demographically were Holland and Zeeland, both on the western coast of the Northern Netherlands. Around the middle of the seventeenth century, about 400,000 (c. 20%) of the almost 2 million inhabitants of the Northern Netherlands lived in the ports of Holland and Zeeland, in cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Middelburg and Vlissingen (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 154). The city of Amsterdam, metropolitan in size with its 175,000 inhabitants, occupies a special place in this highly urbanised environment. At the same time, the Republic as a whole boasted nineteen towns of more than 10,000 inhabitants as opposed to only eight in England, 14 in the Southern Netherlands, 44 in France and 23 in Germany. These towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants comprised 32% of the total population of the Northern Netherlands, whereas this proportion was 21% in the Southern Netherlands, 7% in France and 4.4% in Germany (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 157–158). In the next century and a half, the population remained fairly stable (c. 2 million), and the degree of urbanisation continued to be remarkably high. By 1800, more than one-third of the population (37%) lived in towns of more than 2,500 inhabitants, as opposed to only 12% of the population in France, 17% in Germany and less than 30% in England (Kloek & Mijnhardt 2001: 38).

The main regions of Holland and Zeeland are both on the western coast of the Northern Netherlands. We distinguish between North Holland with its main city Amsterdam, South Holland and its main city Rotterdam, and Zeeland with its main cities Middelburg and Vlissingen. See figure 1, which gives an overview of the

[2] Vosters & Vandenbussche (this volume) focus on the Southern Netherlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

main dialect areas in the present-day Dutch language area, thereby indicating the areas of North Holland, South Holland and Zeeland. It is to and from these regions, and especially to and from the cities mentioned, that most of the letters in our corpus were sent.

Figure 1. The main dialect areas within the present-day Dutch language area, founded on Hoppenbrouwers & Hoppenbrouwers (2001, cf. http://neon.niederlandistik.fu-berlin.de/nl/nedling/langvar/dialects). Nh. = North Hollandic, Zh. = South Hollandic, Ze. = Zeelandic, Vl. = Flemish, Nb.= North Brabantic, Bb. = Belgian Brabantic, Lb. = Limburgian, Sa. = (Lower-) Saxon, Fr. = Frisian

Dialect leveling prototypically occurs in urbanised areas, and this has not been different for the Dutch language in Holland and Zeeland. Although supraregional tendencies can already be found in Late Middle Dutch texts, the development towards a written standard variety took place in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries. In this development, the political, economic and cultural superpower Holland took the lead, thereby overshadowing Zeeland to the extent that the distance between the present-day dialects of Zeeland and standard Dutch is much greater than that between most Hollandic dialects and standard Dutch (Willemyns 1997: 170–175, Van der Wal 1995: 30–36, 2003, Hoppenbrouwers & Hoppenbrouwers 2001: 128–129).

The traditional view of the standardisation of Dutch is largely based on the language of printed texts, mainly written by well-educated upper-class men. Over

the centuries, the language of this small upper layer of society became increasingly uniform, which has given the impression of a standard language gaining more and more ground. From a historical-sociolinguistic perspective, however, the question arises of how standardisation may have affected regional and social variation in the Dutch language area, and vice versa (cf. Van der Wal 2007). To address this question, case studies of linguistic phenomena are required, one of which is negation.

3. Negation in the history of Dutch

In the history of Dutch, we clearly see Jespersen's cycle in the development from Old Dutch (900–1150) to Middle Dutch (1150–1500) and Modern Dutch. In Old Dutch, sentence negation is expressed by the single preverbal negator *en*.[3] In Middle Dutch, negation is commonly expressed by bipartite negation consisting of both the preverbal negation particle *en/ne* and a postverbal negator such as *niet* "not" or *geen* "no"; see (1–4), where the two elements are in boldface. Note that the word order differs in main (1, 2) and subordinate clauses (3, 4), which implies that the term embracing negation, which is also used instead of bipartite negation, actually only applies to main clauses, where the negative elements 'embrace' the finite verb.

(1) *dit* ***en*** *konnen wi* ***niet*** *gheleisten*
this NEG can we not achieve
'we cannot achieve this' [Middle Dutch, from Van der Horst 2008: 516]

(2) *daer* ***en*** *heeft die waerheit* ***gheen*** *toverlaet*
there NEG has the truth no support
'there, the truth receives no support' [Middle Dutch, from Van der Horst 2008: 751]

(3) *so vaste datsi (…) een let* ***niet en*** *mochten roeren*
so fixed that-they a limb not NEG were able to move
'so fixed that they were not able to move a limb' [Middle Dutch, from Van der Horst 2008: 516]

(4) *dat sy* ***gheen*** *soen aengae* ***en*** *souden*
that they no reconciliation accept NEG should
'that they should not accept any reconciliation' [Middle Dutch, from Van der Horst 2008: 751]

[3] See also Vosters & Vandenbussche (this volume) for examples from Old and Middle Dutch.

Apart from bipartite negation, two other negation patterns occur in Middle Dutch, one old and the other new. Single *en* still occurred in Middle Dutch, when combined with specific verbs, and in specific constructions (e.g. Van der Horst 2008: 516–517). More importantly for our purposes, single negation *niet, gheen* etc. had already arisen in the Middle Dutch period in particular syntactic environments, gradually spreading to other syntactic environments from the sixteenth century onward (see section 5). In present-day standard Dutch, only single sentence negation is used.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the final stage of Jespersen's cycle was reached in the written Dutch language of a few Holland-based literary authors. The two best-known poets of the "Golden Age", Hooft (1581–1647) and Vondel (1587–1679), both showed variation of bipartite and single negation in earlier texts, but switched to an almost exclusive use of single negation from about 1640 onward (Van der Wal 1990: 64, Van der Wouden 1998). As we can date this change almost to the year, it must have been a conscious change, that is, from above the level of social awareness. At this point, since we are focusing on Holland and Zeeland, it should be noted that contemporary literary figures such as Cats (1577–1660) and De Brune (1588–1658), who both originated from the province of Zeeland, maintained both variants in their writings throughout their lifetime (Van der Wal 1990: 63–64).

From both the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, there are also metalinguistic texts bearing witness to the fact that negation had risen highly on the scale of social awareness. Only a few years after Hooft's and Vondel's switch to single negation, the grammarian Leupenius (1653) explicitly rejected bipartite negation as illogical. Later linguistic commentators likewise condemned bipartite negation. In 1686, for instance, Vollenhove characterised it as solemn or formal (Van der Horst 2008: 1299). And well into the eighteenth century, the Holland-based schoolmaster Van Belle (1748) argued that two negations result in an affirmation. From Van Belle's comments, we may infer that around 1750 bipartite negation was still in use, although we hardly find any instances in contemporary printed texts. What is more, bipartite negation only rarely occurs in written Dutch from the eighteenth century onward (Van der Horst 2008: 1573, 1941), but it survived in many dialects up to the present day (see section 5).

Another type of polynegation, discussed by Elspaß & Langer (this volume), is the so-called double negation, which often has an intensifying function. Double, or sometimes even triple, negations strongly stressing the negative statement are widely attested in the Germanic languages. Even though it is stigmatised in present-day standard Dutch, examples from modern Dutch are easily found (5). Double negation already occurred in Middle Dutch, sometimes combined with bipartite negation (6).

(5) *Voor ons* ***nooit geen*** *pension meer voor de honden*[4]

For us never no kennel anymore for the dogs

'We will never bring our dogs to a kennel anymore'

(6) *in mijn huus dat gaen, dat comen, da****n*** *was* ***niewerinc niet*** *vernomen*[5]

in my house thatgoing, that coming, that+NEG was nowhere not heard of

'the coming and going into my house, that was truly unheard of'

The origin of bipartite negation, where negative adverbs such as *niet* were added to an already present single negation, was similar to that of double and intensifying negation. The crucial difference, however, is that bipartite negation grammaticalised into the regular pattern of sentence negation, whereas double negations commonly were and still are optional. Therefore, we will focus in our case studies on the variation of bipartite and single negation, not taking into account the irregularly appearing double negations.

The general development of negation in the history of Dutch has become clear from earlier studies of literary and official texts and from comments in grammars. Nevertheless, many details of the change have remained obscure, especially the importance of sociolinguistic aspects such as the social stratification of actual language use, and the development of a supraregional variety in the highly urbanised parts of the Northern Netherlands. Our corpus, however, allows us to study these aspects.

4. The Letters as loot *corpus*

The *Letters as loot* corpus, compiled at Leiden University, comprises seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch private letters from a huge collection of Dutch documents, kept in The National Archives in Kew, London. These documents were confiscated by English war ships and private ships (privateers) authorised by the government to attack and seize cargo from ships owned by the enemy during frequent times of war from the second half of the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries.[6] Privateering was a longstanding legitimate activity, practised by all seafaring European countries and regulated by strict rules. The conquered ship and all its cargo, called a prize, were considered as loot for the privateer, if the regulations had

[4] http://www.hondenpage.com/hondenforum/45736/voor-ons-nooit-geen-pension-meer-voor-de-honden.php

[5] Middle Dutch *Die Rose,* 11794-11795 (see http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/aken002ever01_01/aken002ever 01_01_0010.php?q=).

[6] From 1652 till 1813, four Anglo-Dutch Wars were fought and in various other wars England and the Netherlands were on opposite sides.

been followed scrupulously. In England, it was the High Court of Admiralty (HCA) that had to establish whether the current procedures were properly followed. In order to be able to decide whether the ship was a lawful prize, all the papers on board, both commercial and private, were confiscated and claimed by the HCA. After the legal procedure, the confiscated documents remained in the HCA's archives, and, miraculously, they survived to the present day.

Among the wide range of material, including plantation accounts, ships' journals and lists of slaves, the collection comprises about 40,000 Dutch letters, both commercial and private. The huge number of letters is due to the fact that in very many cases the ships' cargo contained considerably more mail than the crew's own correspondence. Ships frequently took mailbags on board and thus functioned as mail carriers between the Netherlands and remote regions such as the Caribbean, Asia and Africa (Van Vliet 2007: 47–55; Van Gelder 2006: 10–15). It is the 15,000 private letters, in particular, sent by people of all social ranks, men and women alike, that makes this source so interesting for historical linguists. They are excellent material for a historical-sociolinguistic approach, and offer an unprecedented opportunity to gain access to the everyday language of the past.

In order to be able to explore the language of the letters, we have made two cross-sections: one for the seventeenth century (1664–1674), the period of the second and third Anglo-Dutch Wars, and the other for the eighteenth century (1776–1784), the period of the fourth Anglo-Dutch War and the American War of Independence. Letters from both periods have been selected and subcorpora have been composed. Not all dialect regions are equally represented in the corpora, the provinces of Holland and Zeeland prevailing due to the origin of the confiscated letters. This means that the bulk of our letters stem from the highly urbanised areas in the western parts of the Northern Netherlands.

Corpus compilation also involved research into the autograph or non-autograph status of the letters. As part of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century population was illiterate or semi-literate, we had to establish whether or not the letters were written by the senders themselves.[7] In order to deal with this problem, we developed the Leiden Identification Procedure (LIP, see Nobels & Van der Wal 2011). This procedure, which combines script and content analysis, was applied to our whole corpus of seventeenth-century letters. As a result, we have three categories of letters: autographs, non-autographs and letters of unclear status. Non-autographs were written by professional writers, or by friends or relatives (whom we designate as *social writers*). For the eighteenth-century letters, the increasing literacy rates make the identification problem easier to solve, although we still find non-autograph

[7] See section 5.3 below, as well as Frijhoff & Spies (1999: 237), Kuijpers (1997: 501) and Van der Wal (2002: 9-13) for literacy rates and teaching practices in the Netherlands of the seventeenth century.

letters that were not written by the senders, but by professional or social writers (cf. Van der Wal, Rutten & Simons 2012).

For our present research on negation, we examined all seventeenth-century private letters, focusing on internal factors and regional variation, and the subcorpus of seventeenth-century autographs for social variation. We distinguish between lower class (LC), lower middle class (LMC), upper middle class (UMC) and upper class (UC). This division into four social strata is mainly founded upon the writers' occupation and/or the occupation of family members. Our division closely follows the one historians use (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 190–191), the most important exception being that the highest social level distinguished by historians, the so-called patriciate (which includes the nobility) is not represented in our corpus. The LC comprises wageworkers, mainly sailors, servants and soldiers. The LMC covers the petty bourgeoisie, including petty shopkeepers, small craftsmen and minor officials. To the UMC we allocate the prosperous middle classes (storekeepers, uncommissioned officers, well-to-do farmers), while the UC mainly comprises wealthy merchants, shipowners, academics and commissioned officers. The precise number of letters and writers will be mentioned in the appropriate sections below. It is important to note that the seventeenth-century letters were all written after the decisive negation change had taken place in the writings of literary authors such as Vondel and Hooft (section 3). For the eighteenth century, we examined a sample of one hundred autograph letters.

5. Seventeenth-century results

In this section, we report on a series of case studies carried out on the seventeenth-century letters in our corpus. Earlier studies, largely based on printed works if not on literary sources, claimed that the choice of negation type was influenced by internal, mainly syntactic, factors, and by regional factors (Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979, Burridge 1993). To assess these claims, our first two case studies concern syntactic and regional variables. The third case study focuses on social variation, which has not been discussed in much detail before (cf. Goss 2002).

5.1 Internal factors

Earlier studies claimed that the syntactic environment influenced the choice of negation.[8] Focusing on the position of the finite verb, Burridge (1993) in her

[8] The external reviewer asks if common usage verbs such as *know*, *speak* and *think* were also more likely to retain bipartite negation. Similar claims have been made by Burridge (1993) and Hoeksema (1997), and by Bybee & Thompson (2000) with regard to the development of negation in English. In section 3, we noted that a similar group of verbs retained the historical preverbal negation well into the Middle Dutch period. A full discussion of this interesting topic would go beyond the scope of this paper, but we would like to point out that we have not yet found any sign of such a conserving effect on the change from bipartite to single negation (cf. Rutten 2012).

study of texts from Holland and Brabant from the period 1300–1650 distinguished between three syntactic environments: V1, V2 and V-final. In V1-sentences, the finite verb is sentence-initial as in imperatives and yes/no questions (7a).[9] V2 is the common word order of Dutch main clauses (7b), while V-final refers to the word order in subclauses (7c). Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) distinguished two more environments, viz. subject-verb inversion, triggered by the fronting of another part of the discourse (7d), and local negation (7e). To these five environments, we added the (semantico-)syntactic environment where *niet* is not an adverbial negator to other parts of the discourse, but a definite pronoun meaning "nothing" and acting as a part of the discourse itself, viz. subject in (7f). Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) found solely single negations in this context, and therefore did not discuss this environment. We, however, did encounter variation of negation type in this context. Examples (7a–f) all contain bipartite negation; the two elements are in boldface.

(7a) *ende **en** verkert altijt in **geen** herbergen*
and NEG be always in no taverns
'and do not ever go/and never go to taverns'

(7b) *maer godt **en** heeft het soo **niet** gewilt*
but God NEG has it so not wanted
'But God did not want it (to be) this way'

(7c) *dat het de koninck **niet** hebben **en** wilt*
that it the king not have NEG want
'that the king does not want it'

(7d) *soo **en** konde ick ul **niet** naerder schrijven*
so NEG could I you not more write
'Thus I could not write you more'

(7e) *waer op ick tegenwoordich noch **niet** meer als 6000 op betaelt **en** hebben*
where on I to this day yet not more than 6000 on paid NEG have
'of which to this day I have paid not more than 6000'

[9] All examples are taken from our corpus.

(7f) *alhier **en** passert **niet** van merito*
here NEG passes nothing of merit
'Here nothing happens worth mentioning'

A solid result of Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and Burridge (1993) was that V1 clauses are the first to adopt single negation, while subclauses constitute the most conservative syntactic environment. Our first case study was intended to assess the validity of these claims using everyday language from a large number of seventeenth-century letters. The corpus used for this study comprised 545 private letters, written by 430 different letter writers. From these letters, we selected all sentence negations and local negations that were commonly expressed by bipartite negation in Middle Dutch texts. We found 2308 negations in total, of which 808 (35%) bipartite negations and 1500 (65%) single negations. So in the northwestern part of the language area, where most of our letter writers are localised, single negation had surpassed bipartite negation as the main variant. The internal factors identified by Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and Burridge (1993) were corroborated by our results; see Table 1.

Table 1. Single and bipartite negation in the entire seventeenth-century corpus, in absolute numbers and in percentages

	Single negation		**Bipartite negation**		**Total**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Subclause	466	56	362	44	828	100
Inversion	164	57	124	43	288	100
Main clause	508	67	246	33	754	100
Niet 'nothing'	85	77	26	23	111	100
Local	157	82	35	18	192	100
V1	120	89	15	11	135	100
Total	**1500**	**65**	**808**	**35**	**2308**	100

Whereas only 56% of the subclauses showed single negation, 89% of the V1 clauses already had single negation. For possible explanations of the distributional differences between these various syntactic environments, we refer to Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and Burridge (1993). Here, we wish to point out that the results of these earlier studies were confirmed, while adding the context of *niet* "nothing", and, importantly, substantiating why we needed to distinguish between these different environments in the following case studies.

5.2 Regional variation

In a second case study, we used the same corpus but focused on the regional origin of the letters. A possible regional patterning of single and bipartite negation in the history of Dutch has been suggested in the literature (e.g. Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979, Burridge 1993, Paardekooper 2006). Burridge (1993) demonstrated that bipartite negation lasted longer in the south than in the north, that is, she found relatively more bipartite negation in texts from the Brabant area than in texts from the Holland area in her corpus, which ranged from 1300 to 1650. In texts from Holland from around 1650, she found 100% single negation in V1 and V2 clauses, and no less than 99% single negation in V-final clauses, that is, in subclauses (Burridge 1993: 192). These north–south differences are confirmed by present-day dialect data from the syntactic atlas of the Dutch dialects (SAND). Maps 48b, 49a, 49b and 50a in the SAND show that bipartite negation in main clauses is only maintained in Flemish dialects (i.e. French-Flemish, West-Flemish, East-Flemish) in present-day Belgium and the north of France, while map 50b shows that bipartite negation in subclauses is maintained in a larger area, covering not just the Flemish dialect areas but also the Brabant area in Belgium, with moreover a handful of attestations in Belgian Limburg. Nowadays, to sum up, bipartite negation appears almost exclusively in the southern and southwestern parts of the language area.

Turning to the regional distribution in our seventeenth-century corpus, we expect that in the event of salient regional differences, these will be in line with the foregoing. We therefore expect more bipartite negation in the letters from Zeeland than in the letters from Holland. Considering the fact that single negation was almost exclusively in use in Hollandic texts from around 1650 in Burridge's study, we do not expect many bipartite negations in letters from North Holland, especially since our letters date from the 1660s/1670s. We only used letters by writers who could unambiguously be assigned to either Holland or Zeeland. This left us with 450 letters by 330 letter writers. In Table 2, we show the proportion of the incoming variant 'single negation' per region. We distinguish four major regions: 1: Zeeland with its important cities Vlissingen and Middelburg (81 letter writers), 2: South Holland with Rotterdam as the main city (48 letter writers), 3: North Holland – Amsterdam (121 letter writers) and 4: North Holland – Other (80 letter writers). Traveling from south to north, and beginning in Zeeland, these are the four main regions one encounters. Amsterdam is kept apart from the rest of North Holland for geographical as well as demographic reasons. Amsterdam is located in the south of North Holland, separated from the northern parts of North Holland by water. Amsterdam was also a highly urbanised metropole, attracting many immigrants from the rural areas of Holland and from other provinces of the Netherlands, as well as from abroad, mainly from German-speaking regions. Both the geographical and the demographic situations have influenced the Amsterdam dialect to such a degree that it differs from the more northern dialects of North Holland in various respects (e.g. Commandeur 1988).

Of the 1500 single negations in the total corpus (cf. Table 1), 1322 were assigned to one of the four major regions mentioned.[10]

Table 2. Proportion of single negation per region in the entire seventeenth-century corpus

	Zeeland		**South Holland**		**North Holland - Amsterdam**		**North Holland - Other**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Subclause	79	39	41	44	150	55	142	86
Inversion	37	50	14	32	60	67	37	80
Main clause	100	57	46	48	179	70	121	88
Niet 'nothing'	10	59	9	75	33	77	18	90
Local	35	70	14	77	48	86	39	97
V1	25	81	6	86	51	93	28	100
Total	**286**	**52**	**130**	**49**	**521**	**67**	**385**	**88**

As becomes clear from Table 2, there are strong regional differences. In the 'other' parts of North Holland, the incoming variant never drops below 80%, reaching even in the conservative context of the subclause an impressive proportion of 86%, while VI main clauses show single negation in 100% of all cases. In Amsterdam, however, these numbers are consistently lower, with 93% single negation in V1 clauses, but only 55% in subclauses, where, in other words, single and bipartite negation are almost equally frequent. This means that bipartite negation is far more common in our corpus than in Burridge's (1993) corpus. This may be explained by the fact that her subcorpus of Hollandic texts from around 1650 mainly comprised published and edited texts, written by well-educated men (Burridge 1993: 266–268).

In South Holland and Zeeland, the numbers for the incoming variant are again lower than in Amsterdam. In the two most conservative contexts, subclauses and main clauses with subject–verb inversion, numbers even drop below 40% in Zeeland and South Holland, respectively. The total proportion of single (and bipartite) negation is in both Zeeland and South Holland about 50%. In Amsterdam, single negation appears in two-thirds of all cases, and in the other parts of North Holland in 88% of all cases.

From the well-ordered regional distribution, we conclude that single negation spread from the north to the south, affecting different (semantico-)syntactic environments at a different pace. Somewhat surprisingly, the metropole of

[10] Letters related to other regions (e.g. Friesland) and those without any established regional link, all included in the study on internal variables in section 5.1, were not taken into account in the present study.

Amsterdam neatly fits into this north-to-south spread, and does not show any sign of increasing speed of change due to its special status. The results suggest that Holland-based literary authors and grammarians who consciously selected single negation in the course of the seventeenth century (section 3) picked up on a trend steered in the first place by regional and internal factors (cf. Tristram & Ayres-Bennett, this volume). Futhermore, the results suggest that bipartite negation must still have been fairly well-rooted in the base dialect of speakers from Zeeland and South Holland, while this must have been much less so for speakers from North Holland, where moreover negation was brought to a higher level of social awareness among literary authors and grammarians. The question rises whether negation also reached a higher level of awareness among non-elite language users such as our letter writers, in particular in those areas where bipartite negation was still a common feature of the base dialect, and where consequently the highest number of bipartite negations is found. In our third case study, we therefore focus on possible social variation in the letters from Zeeland and South Holland.

5.3 Social variation

For the case study on social variation in Zeeland and South Holland, we used only established autographs in order to ensure that the social class variables related to the actual letter writers (see section 4). The corpus comprised 114 private letters by 79 different writers. We focused on the two syntactic contexts that provided the largest number of tokens, notably subclauses and main clauses, so as to render the results as reliable as possible. In Table 3, we present the results for the negated subordinate clauses in autograph letters from Zeeland and South Holland, distributed per social class. There were 127 negated subclauses from Zeeland, and 44 from South Holland. As explained in section 4, we distinguish four social strata, viz. lower class (LC, 4 letter writers), lower middle class (LMC, 13 letter writers), upper middle class (UMC, 48 letter writers) and upper class (UC, 12 letter writers).

Table 3. Single and bipartite negation in subclauses in the seventeenth-century autographs from Zeeland and South Holland, in absolute numbers and in percentages, and per social class

	Subordinate clauses							
	Zeeland				**South Holland**			
	Single		**Bipartite**		**Single**		**Bipartite**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
LC	–	–	–	–	2	29	5	71
LMC	4	21	15	79	4	22	14	78
UMC	43	42	59	58	3	43	4	57
UC	5	83	1	17	5	42	7	58
Total	**52**	**41**	**75**	**59**	**14**	**32**	**30**	**68**

The results in Table 3 strongly suggest that there was social variation in the use of single and bipartite negation. The incoming variant is preferred by the Zeeland UC, while the Zeeland UMC and the South Holland U(M)C use it in over 40% of the tokens. In the LC and the LMC, however, we find less than 30% single negation in both Zeeland and South Holland, with bipartite negation even reaching almost 80% in the LMC. There is also a remarkable difference between Zeeland and South Holland. Whereas bipartite negation drops to no less than 17% in the Zeeland UC, it remains fairly stable at 58% in the South Holland UC, not very different from the UMC score in that region. Before we discuss possible explanations for this difference, we will first look into the distribution of the historical and the incoming variant in main clauses.

In Table 4, we give the results for main clauses in the same selection of letters from Zeeland and South Holland. There were 123 negated main clauses from Zeeland, and 49 from South Holland. As explained above (Section 5.1, Table 1), main clauses more rapidly adopted the incoming variant, which also becomes clear when comparing the results in Table 4 with the results in Table 3. In Zeeland, for instance, the proportion of single negation rises to 63% in the UMC (compared to 42% in subclauses), and to 100% in the UC (compared to 83% in subclauses).

Table 4. Single and bipartite negation in main clauses in the seventeenth-century autographs from Zeeland and South Holland, in absolute numbers and in percentages, and per social class

	Main clauses							
	Zeeland				**South Holland**			
	Single		**Bipartite**		**Single**		**Bipartite**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
LC	–	–	–	–	6	60	4	40
LMC	5	26	14	74	4	25	12	75
UMC	64	63	37	37	4	67	2	33
UC	3	100	0	0	2	12	15	88
Total	**72**	**59**	**51**	**41**	**16**	**33**	**33**	**67**

The results in Table 4 confirm those in Table 3 in that there seems to be social variation, with the U(M)C using the incoming variant to a greater extent than the L(M)C. This is especially clear from the Zeeland results. For South Holland, the results are less obvious and call for discussion. As in Table 3, it is mainly the score for the UC in South Holland (88% bipartite negation) that comes as a surprise, since it strongly differs from the Zeeland UC score (no bipartite negation), and is also much higher than the South Holland UMC score (33% bipartite negation).

Concentrating on the South Holland UC score, it becomes apparent that the results are produced by two female letter writers, one of them using bipartite

negation exclusively, and the other in only 39% of all cases. Moreover, the writer who uses bipartite negation exclusively is an older woman, while the other writer is a younger woman. Two possible explanations present themselves. The change from bipartite to single negation was clearly in progress, and the older writer adhered to her base dialect where bipartite negation was still the preferred variant, thereby strongly influencing the South Holland UC score. Rather than an age difference, however, it could also be a case of gender variation, considering the fact that the very low scores for bipartite negation in the Zeeland UC, both in main clauses and in subordinate clauses, are produced solely by male writers. Breaking down the scores even further in terms of age and/or gender would reduce the scores per cell in many cases to such small numbers that a definite answer may not be found. What we do know, however, is that gender differences appear to be more salient in our seventeenth-century corpus than age differences (e.g. Nobels 2011), which relates to the idea that writing experience is a crucial variable in historical sociolinguistics (Vandenbussche 1999, Elspaß 2005). In Rutten & Van der Wal (2012), we argue that writing experience is also an important factor in our research, as it helps explain variational patterns in the use of formulaic language in our corpus. Writing experience concerns the degree to which individuals are involved in the written culture through their profession/occupation and/or education. It is well known that there were clear-cut gender differences in the Early Modern period with regard to schooling opportunities, literacy levels and an orientation to writing work. It is, for instance, estimated that 60 to 70 percent of all bridegrooms marrying in Amsterdam around 1650 were able to write their names, whereas 40 to 50 percent of the brides were able to sign, and only 22 percent of the brides originating from outside the Netherlands (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237). Similarly, women's existence was in general more limited to the private domain than men's, and many school types were not even open to girls (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 190–192). Women, in sum, were generally less involved in the written culture. While these gender differences may have persisted throughout the lifetime, educated writers oriented towards writing work kept developing their writing practices when they aged, thereby reducing the influence of age as a relevant variable.

5.4 Conclusions

In this section, we have shown that the seventeenth-century variation of single and bipartite negation can be explained with reference to both internal factors and regional and social variables. Internal, (semantico-)syntactic factors determined in earlier studies proved to be important in our corpus, subclauses constituting the most conservative context and V1 clauses the most innovative. The change from bipartite to single negation also followed a well-ordered north-to-south pattern. In South Holland and Zeeland, bipartite negation must have been a base dialect feature for many speakers. At the same time, social variation was found in these regions in that the upper (middle) classes switched to single negation to a greater

extent than the lower (middle) classes. Considering the fact that single negation was the preferred variant in all contexts in the letters from North Holland, and, moreover, that single negation had been selected for the written language decades before by literary authors and grammarians, we suggest that the impetus for the social distribution found in the letters from Zeeland and South Holland came from convergence to North Hollandic writing practices. It has been claimed many times previously that the Dutch supraregional variety was largely founded on Hollandic writing practices, and from there spread over the language area (e.g. Van der Wal 1995 and the references there); we have also established this for the language of our letter corpora (Rutten & Van der Wal 2011). In the case of negation, upper (middle) class writers from Zeeland and South Holland were probably more involved in the written culture than lower (middle) class writers, and therefore became aware of the fact that single negation was becoming the preferred variant in supraregional written Dutch. Finally, the social variation found in Zeeland and South Holland implies an increasing divergence of spoken and written varieties of Dutch in those areas. The leveling of writing practices in the western parts of the Northern Netherlands paralleled the development of urbanisation in these areas, whereby North Holland took the lead both demographically and linguistically.

6. Eighteenth-century results

Our eighteenth-century letters date from around 1780, which means that they are about 110–120 years younger than the seventeenth-century letters used for the previous section. Bipartite negation being on the demise in seventeenth-century Dutch, and single negation being the preferred variant in most contexts, it is not surprising that our eighteenth-century letters contain only a few instances of bipartite negation. This is in line with the overall impression of eighteenth-century Dutch: while bipartite negation may still have been more widely used in the spoken language, it was infrequent in the written language, although it is interesting to note that even grammarians and literary authors sometimes used it (Van der Horst 2008: 1573, Vosters & Vandenbussche, this volume).

From our eighteenth-century letters, we selected 100 letters by 100 different letter writers for a random check, albeit that we strove for a fairly equal distribution over the different social classes. This was impossible for the lower classes, as we have only a handful of eighteenth-century LC letters. The corpus used for the present study comprised 35 UC letters, 35 UMC letters, 23 LMC letters and 7 LC letters. Of the 100 letters, 56 are linked to North Holland, 16 to South Holland, 7 to Zeeland and 21 to other regions.

In these 100 letters, we found only twelve instances of bipartite negation in six letters, with either *en…niet* or *en…geen* (8a,b). Compared to the 465 instances of single negation with *niet* “not”, and to the 141 instances of single negation with *geen* “not, no(ne)”, this is a truly meagre score of 2%.

(8a) *Zoo ik myn broer hier* ***niet en*** *had*
So I my brother here not NEG had
'If I did not have my brother here'

(8b) *dat u edele nog* ***geen*** *beroep* ***en*** *hadt*
that your honour yet no profession NEG had
'that your honour did not yet have a profession'

Focusing on the twelve instances, it appears that the same variables affecting the seventeenth-century distribution are relevant for the eighteenth-century language use. The internal syntactic variable holds to such an extent that eleven out of twelve instances occur in a subclause (8a,b). There is also one example in a main clause with inversion (8c), the second most conservative context in the seventeenth century (cf. Table 1).

(8c) *Partekelier niuws* ***en*** *weet ik* ***niet*** *teschrijve*
Particular news NEG know I not to write
'I do not know/have any particular news to write'

As for the regional variable, it is interesting to note that only two out of 56 letters from North Holland, both from Amsterdam, contain bipartite negations, which amounts to 4%. There are, however, three letters out of 23 letters from South Holland and Zeeland with bipartite negations, amounting to 13%. The numbers are low, but the 'southern', that is South Holland and Zeeland predominance in the use of bipartite negation appears to be confirmed. In terms of token count, on the other hand, it appears that no less than eight out of twelve tokens are produced by the two Amsterdam letter writers, and seven of these tokens are found in just one letter.

The social variable which appeared to be important in the seventeenth-century distribution is also important for the eighteenth-century results. There is one token in a UC letter; the other eleven tokens are all found in L(M)C letters.

It is clear from our results that bipartite negation was a fairly infrequent phenomenon in the written Dutch of the eighteenth century, not just in published and edited works, but also in private letters by people from the (relatively) lower ranks. It is equally clear, however, that there were language users, also in North Holland, for whom bipartite negation was probably still a common feature of their base dialect, especially in subclauses. In fact, it was so common that they used it in written language as well. For these language users, bipartite negation will not necessarily have been informal or dialectic, but rather an acknowledged feature in their variant of supraregional written Dutch (cf. Van der Horst 2008: 1573).

7. Conclusions

In this paper, we have examined the use of negation in Dutch private letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from a historical-sociolinguistic perspective. The change from bipartite to single negation, which characterises this period in the history of Dutch, has been shown to take place in accordance with internal and regional variables, most of which have been identified in earlier publications. Bipartite negation lasted longest in subclauses, and single negation spread from the north to the south of the language area. At the same time, we found a remarkable difference from Burridge's (1993) results in that her 1650 data for North Holland showed almost exclusive use of single negation, whereas our data for North Holland, and for Amsterdam in particular, from the 1660s/1670s still showed a considerable proportion of bipartite negation in subclauses. This difference may be explained by the fact that Burridge mainly used published and edited texts by well-educated men, while we used private letters from all social ranks. Single negation may have been selected as the preferred variant in supraregional written Dutch; in relatively oral text types such as private letters bipartite negation remained quite common. Furthermore, we were able to establish the influence of social variation in South Holland and Zeeland, where letter writers from the upper (middle) classes used single negation more often than writers from the lower (middle) classes. This probably means that the preference for single negation in supraregional Dutch, spreading from North Holland, was adopted by the upper (middle) classes in South Holland and Zeeland, where bipartite negation was a stable phenomenon in the base dialects. This convergence towards North Hollandic conventions and the simultaneous leveling of writing practices across the northwestern parts of the Northern Netherlands were probably linked to the high degree of urbanisation in these areas and the concomitant intense traffic in society. So on the one hand our letters are relatively oral and therefore display a lot of bipartite negation, while on the other hand certain groups of writers seem to reduce the letters' orality by converging towards supraregional practices. In the eighteenth century, bipartite negation continued to exist in the written language, even in North Holland, but it had become a minor variant, mainly found in subclauses in letters by writers from the lower (middle) classes.

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