

Change, contact and conventions in the history of Dutch

Gijsbert Rutten & Marijke van der Wal

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Abstract

The paper discusses variation and change in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch, reviewing the importance of two types of explanation, the first focusing on dialect contact resulting from immigration as the locus of change, the second stressing the importance of writing conventions. Using a unique corpus of private letters from all social ranks, we discuss various phonological and morphosyntactic variables. We argue that ego-documents offer unique opportunities for historical (socio)linguistics, providing an unprecedented view of the vernacular. At the same time, writers did not consistently put their local dialect to paper. Writing practices such as morphological and syllabic orthographic principles caused the written code to move away from the vernacular. Supralocalization and graphemization, which are topics at the core of historical sociolinguistics, have to be taken into account by anyone interested in the communicative strategies which ordinary people used when they needed to write. At the same time, since supralocalization and graphemization may impede research on spoken language phenomena, they should also be addressed by researchers primarily interested in spoken language phenomena such as dialect contact.

Keywords: language variation, language change, language contact, contact-induced change, writing conventions, supralocalization, Dutch

1. Introduction¹

The present paper discusses variation and change in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch, reviewing the importance of two types of explanation, the first focusing on dialect contact resulting from immigration as the locus of change, the second stressing the importance of writing conven-

tions. While it is uncontested that dialect contact shapes and reshapes the form of old and new dialects (e.g. Trudgill 1986, Kerswill 2002), it is a matter of debate to what extent spoken language interactions between speakers of different dialects can be investigated on the basis of written documents from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Rutten & van der Wal 2011). This means that it is conceivable and even plausible that dialect contact resulting from immigration has shaped urban vernaculars in the western parts of the Northern Netherlands, as argued by Boyce Hendriks (1998), Goss (2002), Goss & Howell (2006), and Howell (2006). It is uncertain, however, in the absence of spoken language materials, whether this can be investigated using written language. In any case, the possibly interfering influence of supralocal writing conventions should be taken into account. Focusing on these issues, we link up with discussions in the historical sociolinguistic literature on the status of so-called ego-documents such as private letters and diaries (e.g. Martineau 2013), in particular, on their ‘degree of orality’. We will argue that ego-documents are not so much unique sources because they offer direct access to the spoken language, but because they are the complex and interesting result of mainly local, or localizable linguistic features, and supralocal conventions primarily linked to the written code.

As a consequence of their ‘hybrid’ nature (Martineau 2013), ego-documents bring us closer to the spoken language than any other text type. At the same time, however, they may conceal the vernacular by their adherence to writing conventions. In studies focusing on dialect contact and immigration, this hybrid nature of ego-documents has not been fully explored. The existence of writing conventions, supralocal practices (cf. Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2006), or *Schreiblandschaften* (Von Polenz 2000: 159) is of particular importance from the perspective of dialect contact and koineization, as they all entail the divergence of the spoken and the written codes. Therefore, we may consider the question whether writing conventions may hamper research on dialect contact and koineization.

In section 2, we will introduce the sources used for the present paper. In sections 3 and 4, we will discuss a series of phonological case studies focusing on the relation between local and supralocal linguistic features. We will argue that research on dialect contact is seriously impeded by the existence of writing conventions, many of which are supralocal. In section 5, we zoom in on a morphosyntactic feature that has been claimed to change under the influence of dialect contact resulting from immigration. We will show that our data do not lead to the conclusion that immigration was a decisive factor in this particular change.

2. The data

The data for this paper are taken from a corpus based on the collection of so-called *sailing letters*. The *sailing letters* collection, kept in The National Archives in Kew, London, comprises many different text types, from ships' journals, plantation accounts and lists of slaves to private and commercial correspondence. These documents, mainly written in Dutch, were aboard ships that were taken by privateers during times of war in which England and the Dutch Republic stood at opposite sides. Private letters, selected from this collection, are at the core of the *Letters as Loot* research programme, directed by the second author.² The original manuscripts of the letters were photographed, on the basis of which a corpus of diplomatic transcriptions has been compiled at Leiden University.

The *Letters as Loot* corpus currently comprises approximately 2,000 Dutch letters (mainly private letters) from all social ranks, men as well as women. They date from two periods, the 1660s/1670s, the period of the second and third Anglo-Dutch Wars, and the 1770s/1780s, the period of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War and the American War of Independence.³ These letters were mostly sent to and from seaport towns such as Amsterdam in North Holland, Rotterdam in South Holland, and Middelburg and Vlissingen in Zeeland, but addressees and senders were also found in smaller towns such as Enkhuizen and Hoorn in North Holland, and Harlingen in Friesland. Most of the letters in the *Letters as Loot* corpus are linked to North Holland, Amsterdam, South Holland and Zeeland, with additional substantial portions of letters linked to Flanders and Friesland. A map of the main dialect areas within the present-day Dutch language area is presented in Figure 1.

Amsterdam, which is geographically and dialectologically part of Holland, and which is located in the south of the present-day province and dialect area of North Holland, is kept apart in our research for its unique demography. The city attracted many immigrants, throughout the Early and Late Modern periods, from both the Southern Netherlands and from the East and North-East, i.e. from the Northern Netherlands and from the German and Scandinavian language areas (Howell 2006: 214). Successive waves of immigration turned Amsterdam into a metropolis, with, for instance, c. 175,000 inhabitants in 1650, when other cities in the Northern Netherlands such as Rotterdam, Leiden and Middelburg counted between 30,000 (Rotterdam, Middelburg) and 67,000 (Leiden) inhabitants (Howell 2006: 213).



*Figure 1 The main dialect areas within the present-day Dutch language area, based 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*

The detailed make-up of the subcorpora used for the case studies presented here will be given in the appropriate sections.

3. Local phonology and supralocal orthographic traditions

It has been claimed many times before that ego-documents, and in particular private letters, offer an unprecedented view on the colloquial language of past periods. As traditional language histories are often ‘primarily concerned with unification and standardization processes’ (Elspaß 2007: 3), and are often mainly based on literary texts, the language of large parts of the

population remains unknown to us. The approach to language history ‘from below’, on the other hand, focuses on non-literary, everyday language, presumably found in ego-documents such as letters and diaries from lower and middle-class writers. The language of these ego-documents is considered to be as close to spoken language as possible (e.g. Elspaß 2005, 2012, Elspaß et al. 2007). But how close is “as close as possible”? In recent research into sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch on the basis of ego-documents, the traditional account in terms of unification and standardization has been criticized. Drawing on theories of dialect contact and koineization (Trudgill 1986, Kerswill 2002) and using letters and diaries from immigrant families and their offspring, studies such as Boyce & Howell (1996), Boyce Hendriks (1998), Boyce Hendriks & Howell (2000), Goss & Howell (2006), and Howell (2006) tried to reconstruct the formation of new Dutch urban vernaculars in the western part of the Netherlands, mainly in the province of Holland (Amsterdam, The Hague). Since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were characterized by mass immigration from people from other dialect and language areas to Holland, dialect leveling and koineization obviously took place. The studies mentioned used ego-documents in order to trace the ongoing leveling and focusing of variants. Dialect leveling, focusing, and koineization are, however, the result of contact between speakers, i.e. they are spoken language features which, in these studies, were investigated as they occur in writing. The ego-documents, therefore, were assumed to have been written ‘in pure Holland dialect’ (Boyce Hendriks & Howell 2000: 273) and were considered as ‘vernacular letters’ (Howell 2006: 219). Nevertheless, it was admitted that ‘certain orthographic traditions originating in the southern Netherlands continued to influence the written language in Holland’ (Howell 2006: 210). We would like to stress that just these orthographic traditions may veil dialectal variation in written texts of the past.

In a previous study on what we call the degree of orality of private letters (Rutten & van der Wal 2011), we have argued that the private letters in our corpus are indeed closer to the spoken language than any other known source of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch, which renders them excellent material for historical (socio)linguistics. The letters appear to reveal earlier orthographical practices, well-known from Middle Dutch manuscripts, but generally not found in Early and Late Modern Dutch texts. The variables discussed in Rutten & van der Wal (2011) include:

- 1 the representation of reflexes of Germanic *sk*, e.g. in *schrijven* ‘to write’, with either the supralocal grapheme <sch> in the onset representing [sχ], or with <sc> or <sk> representing the North Holland pronunciation [sk]

- 2 the representation of lengthened [a:] from West-Germanic short vowels (e.g. *water* ‘water’) as opposed to reflexes of Proto-Germanic *ē* (e.g. *schaap* ‘sheep’), and a few other vowels, mainly before [r] (e.g. *daar* ‘there’), which are palatal in North Holland (e.g. *geet* ‘goes’, *deer* ‘there’), whereas these have merged with lengthened [a:] in supraregional Dutch (e.g. *gaat* ‘goes’, *daar* ‘there’)
- 3 the realization of the past participle with either the supralocal prefix *ge-* (e.g. *gekomen* ‘come’), or with reduced *e-* (e.g. *ekomen*) or a zero prefix (e.g. *komen*) in North Holland
- 4 the representation of reflexes of the Germanic laryngeal, either supralocally with <h> (e.g. *hemel* ‘heaven’) or without <h> (e.g. *emel*), representing the pronunciation characteristic of many southern dialects, including those of Zeeland, where *h* is not a phoneme.

Instances of localizable spellings related to variables 1-3 were found in private letters linked to North Holland:

- 1 In letters sent from Enkhuizen and Monnickendam in the 1660s and 1670s, we found examples such as *scrief* ‘writes’, *scijnt* ‘appears’, *scijp* ‘ship’ and *vrienscap* ‘friendship’.
- 2 In letters sent from Hoorn, Enkhuizen and Monnickendam in the 1660s and 1670s, examples occur such as *geet* for *gaet* or *gaat* ‘goes’, *seet* for *saet* or *saat* ‘seed’, and before [r] or [r] + dental, *deer* for *daer* or *daar* ‘there’, *meert* for *maert* or *maart* ‘March’, and *steert* instead of *staert* or *staart* ‘tail’ were found.
- 3 Past participles with reduced prefixes also occur in seventeenth-century letters from Enkhuizen, for instance *haeldt* ‘got’ and *weest* ‘been’, both lacking the prefix *ge-*.

In letters sent to and from Zeeland, we found four types of orthographical effects related to the non-phonemic status of *h* in the dialect of the letter writer:

- 4 a) The first and foremost of these is prevocalic deletion of <h> as in *andt* instead of *handt* ‘hand’, *adde* instead of *hadde* ‘had’, *uswrouwe* for *huswrouwe* ‘housewife’, and *eel* for *heel* ‘whole’. As prevocalic deletion of <h> in orthography points to deletion of [h] in pronunciation, these instances are clear cases of localizable spellings.
- b) The second type is prosthesis of <h> before vowels, for instance *hacht* instead of *acht* ‘eight’, *houde* for *oude* ‘old’, and *hueren* for *ueren* ‘hours’. Although there is some lexically diffuse variation in present-day dialects (de Wulf et al. 2005: map 216), indicating that a prevocalic

'hypercorrect' [h] sometimes turns up in spoken language, prosthesis of <h> is also (and maybe mainly) an orthographical phenomenon. Prosthesis of <h> thus indicates the influence not only of local or dialectal phonology but also of supralocal orthographical practices.

c, d) The third and fourth types are the substitution of <h> for <a> and of <a> for <h> as in *hpril* instead of *april* 'April', *hl* instead of *al* 'all', *aebben* instead of *hebben* 'have', and *aoe* instead of *hoe* 'how'. As letters of the Dutch alphabet, <a> is pronounced [a:] and <h> as [ha:], but in case of an *h*-less dialect, <h> is pronounced [a:] as well, with two possible orthographical results representing the same sound. In these cases of substitution, letter writers did not use their local dialect, but the orthographical effects are due to the learning of the alphabet on the basis of dialectal *h*-less phonology.

At the same time, the degree to which these localizable spellings turned up in the corpus appears relatively low. Whereas 64% of the letters sent to and from Zeeland showed at least one of the orthographical effects related to *h*-dropping, the letters linked to North Holland contain fewer localizable spellings, occurring in only 8 to 15% of the letters researched. In the case of variable 2, it is of particular interest that the writing system employed by letter writers from North Holland was not phonological, let alone phonetic, but appeared to be syllabic, with the choice of grapheme depending on the syllable being either open or closed. Abstracting away from the vowel quality and focusing on syllable structure, syllabic writing systems are typically written language phenomena. This means that the local spoken language is not directly represented in the written language, where instead a supralocal writing system is used. Private letters from the seventeenth century, therefore, appear to be at the cross-roads of local and supralocal language. To disentangle the local and supralocal elements in written documents from the past is one of the challenges of historical sociolinguistics in general. For our purposes, it is important to conclude that ego-documents in Early and Late Modern Dutch do not give direct access to the local language used. In the next section, we will present our first case study to explain this further.

4. Case study 1: Long *e*'s in Zeeland

In this first case study, we will examine the interplay of local phonology and possibly supralocal orthography, focusing on the orthographical repre-

sentation of the so-called softlong and sharplong *e* in open syllables. Many Dutch dialects, especially in the south of the language area, maintain the phonological difference between lengthened \bar{e} from originally short vowels in open syllables, and \hat{e} from the Westgermanic diphthong **ai*. In Dutch historical linguistics, the lengthened \bar{e} is traditionally called softlong, while \hat{e} is called sharplong. The softlong \bar{e} developed through lengthening of the short vowels [ɛ] and [ɪ]. Examples are the vowels in the first syllables of *leven* ‘live’, *rekenen* ‘count’, and *hemel* ‘heaven’ (cf. German *leben*, *rechnen*, *himmel*). Sharplong \hat{e} from the Westgermanic diphthong **ai* is found in e.g. *steen* ‘stone’, *een* ‘one’, *heten* ‘be called’ (cf. German *Stein*, *ein*, *heißen*).

In present-day standard Dutch, the two different phonemes have merged into one long [e:]. This merger dates back to at least the end of the sixteenth century, and probably started in Amsterdam (Rutten 2009). Dialects from Zeeland distinguish the two long *e*’s even to the present day, along the lines of most dialects that distinguish both *e*’s, with softlong \bar{e} being rather monophthongish (e.g. [e:]), and sharplong \hat{e} being a diphthong (e.g. [ɪə]), cf. van Bree 1987: 103-104). According to Goossens et al. (2000, map 21), softlong *week* ‘week’ has a homorganic diphthong [ei], and sharplong *steen* ‘stone’ (map 128) has a centring diphthong [eə].⁴ Apart from the quality of the vowel, what is most important for our purposes is simply the existence of a phonemic difference. The signs most frequently used to represent either phoneme are <e> and <ee> throughout the history of Dutch.

In the sixteenth century, a writing tradition came into existence that distinguished the two historically different phonemes, especially in open syllables. This phonologically-based writing tradition spread from the south of the language area to the north, and was eventually codified in 1804 in the first official spelling of Dutch (Siegenbeek 1804; cf. Rutten 2009). It was widely used in published texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Other, morphological and syllabic writing practices, however, also existed, as shown in Table 1, which presents an overview of the spelling of softlong and sharplong *e*’s in open syllables according to the various writing systems.

Table 1 Softlong and sharplong *e*’s in open syllable in different writing systems

	Phonological	Morphological	Syllabic 1	Syllabic 2	PDZ
\bar{e}	<i>hemel</i>	<i>hemel</i>	<i>hemel</i>	<i>heemel</i>	<i>hemel</i>
\bar{e} + analogy	<i>leven</i>	<i>leeven</i> (sing <i>leef</i>)	<i>leven</i>	<i>leeven</i>	<i>leven</i>
\hat{e}	<i>steenen</i>	<i>steenen</i> (sing <i>steen</i>)	<i>stene</i>	<i>steenen</i>	<i>stêênen</i> <i>steênen</i>

The first column distinguishes softlong \bar{e} in open syllable, softlong \bar{e} in open syllable with a possible analogy with closed syllables, and sharplong \hat{e} in open syllables. The phonological system distinguishes \bar{e} represented by <e> from \hat{e} represented by <ee>. The morphological system uses <ee> also for softlong \bar{e} when there is an analogical form in closed syllable, usually the singular form. The syllabic systems employ one grapheme, either <e> or <ee>, for any e in open syllable. Syllabic system 1 equals the present-day standard system. It should be noted that the morphological and syllabic systems depend on graphematic principles, and render the relation between phonology and spelling less immediate. The right-most column gives the distribution used in present-day orthographies of Zeeland dialects, where the phonological difference is also maintained.⁵

In what follows, we will investigate to what extent the phonological difference between softlong en sharplong e , which we assume to have been part of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Zeeland dialects, is represented in private letters linked to Zeeland. We hypothesize that this difference is maintained in these letters, which would be in line with both the evidence we have of the spoken language and the phonology-based supralocal writing tradition. Consequently, we expect to find <e> for \bar{e} in open syllables, and <ee> for \hat{e} in open syllables.

We compiled a subcorpus of letters linked to Zeeland, covering both periods that the *Letters as Loot* project focused on (Table 2).⁶

Table 2 Zeeland subcorpus used for Case Study 1

Period	N letters	N words
1660s/1670s	99	45,000
1770s/1780s	28	13,000
Total	127	58,000

In this subcorpus of Zeeland letters, we investigated the representation of softlong and sharplong e 's in open syllable. We extracted all words with a long e in open syllable, and then divided the data according to both the etymological origin of the vowel (either \bar{e} or \hat{e}) and the orthographical representation (either <e> or <ee>).⁷ For the 1660s/1670s, this resulted in 1238 tokens. Figure 2 gives the proportions and the absolute numbers of <e> and <ee> for both phonemes.

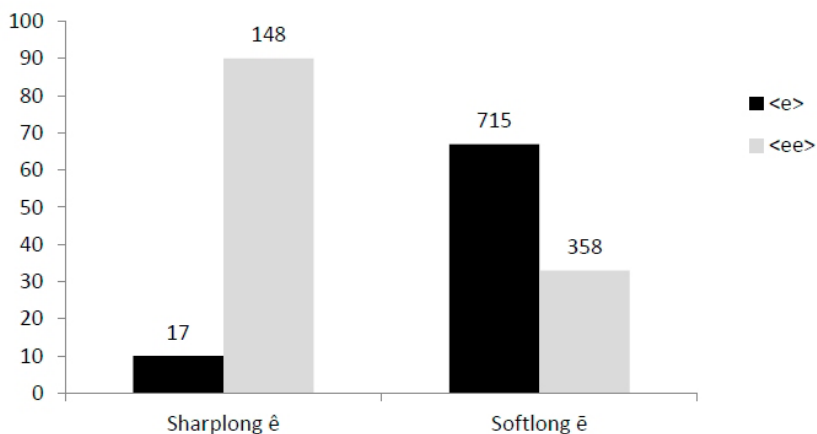


Figure 2 Softlong and sharplong e's in open syllable in the Zeeland subcorpus (1660s/1670s)

The results for sharplong *ê* are very clear: nine out of ten are spelled <ee>. For softlong *ē*, figures are less straightforward, yet two thirds of all tokens have <e>. The phonological distinction, which we assume to have been present in Zeeland dialects and which is founded on the etymological difference between the two *e*'s, is fairly well represented in the spelling; moreover, it is in line with the supralocal phonological writing system.

Considering these general results for the seventeenth-century subcorpus, however, it remains undecided to what extent writers wrote in accordance with local dialect phonology, or rather adhered to supralocal writing practices. To solve this problem, we will zoom in on the writing systems in individual letters. As explained above, we have to reckon not only with phonological spelling systems, but also with morphological and syllabic systems and, moreover, with a writing system that might be termed variable. We refer to the spelling system as variable in cases in which writers apparently randomly distribute <e> and <ee> over both long *e*'s.⁸

Of the 99 letters in the seventeenth-century part of the subcorpus used here, 72 letters contained enough forms to enable us to draw reliable conclusions on the writing system used. We have only taken into consideration letters with examples from both categories, that is, from both softlong *ē* and sharplong *ê* in open syllables. If one of the categories was empty, the spelling system was left undecided. Of these 72 letters, 51 could be allocated to phonological, syllabic and morphological systems. Another 21 did contain many forms, but could not be categorized. The writers of these letters distributed the graphemes seemingly randomly across the phonemes.

Indeed, as Boyce Hendriks (1998: 184) claims, for these writers the notion that variation should be suppressed did not exist, and we categorize their writing systems as variable.

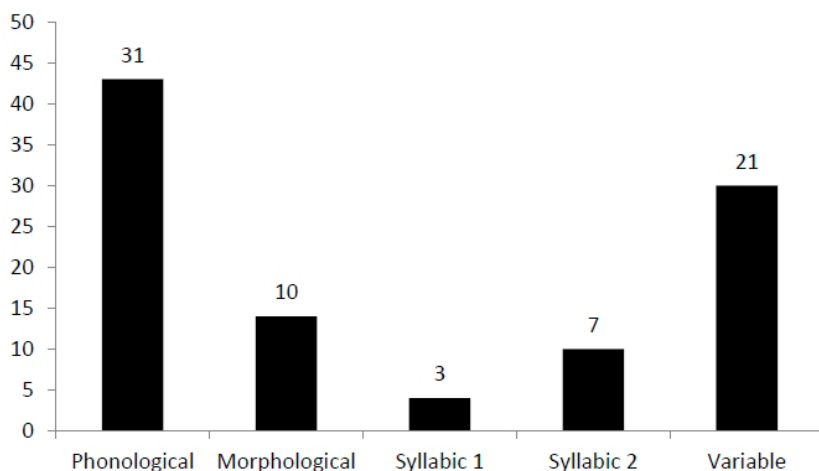


Figure 3 Different writing systems attested in the Zeeland subcorpus (1660s/1670s)

The phonological system was found with a considerable number of writers: it is found in 31 letters (43% of 72 letters). This is the only writing system revealing local phonology in a straightforward way. We thus conclude that as many as 43% of the writers in our seventeenth-century Zeeland subcorpus employed the phonological writing system that was both supralocal and closest to the phonology of their spoken language. At the same time, and despite the assumed presence of the phonological distinction in their base dialects, quite a number of letter writers use other systems, either morphological, syllabic or variable. Morphologization and syllabification are unambiguously linked to and arise from the written code. They represent the so-called *graphemization* of writing systems, that is, the reduction of phonological considerations and the increase in choices directly linked to the written code. Turning to the eighteenth century, we will see that this graphemization of the writing system increased over time.

For the eighteenth-century part of the Zeeland subcorpus used here, we carried out a similar analysis of the distribution of <e> and <ee>, compared to softlong and sharp long *e* in open syllable. This resulted in 443 tokens. Figure 4 gives the proportions and the absolute numbers of <e> and <ee> for both phonemes.

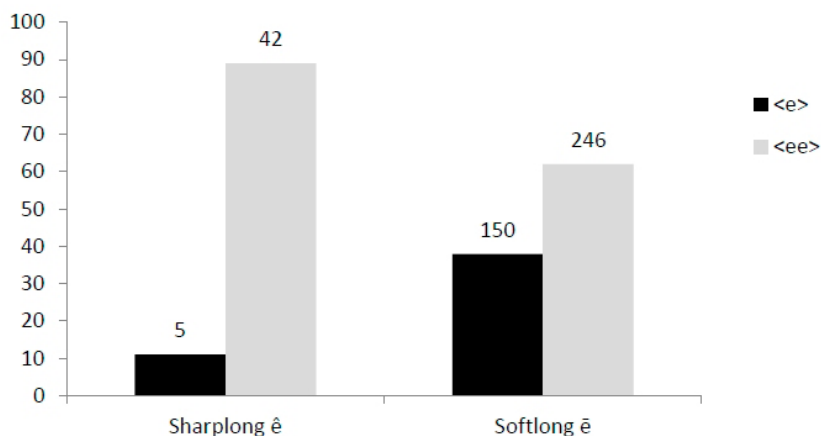


Figure 4 Softlong and sharplong e's in open syllable in the Zeeland subcorpus (1770s/1780s)

The pattern for sharplong *ê* in open syllable is very stable, with 90% <ee> in the 1660s/1670s (Figure 2), and 89% in Figure 4 representing usage in the 1770s/1780s. The pattern for softlong *ē*, however, is reversed. Whereas the seventeenth-century results provided 67% <e>, the main variant has become <ee>, which is used in 62% of all softlong *ē*'s in open syllable. This means that in the eighteenth century, both long e's are spelled <ee> in most cases, which runs counter the phonological difference between the phonemes in most Zeeland dialects. It is also not in line with the phonology-based supralocal writing tradition. For an explanation of this remarkable difference, we have to turn to the writing systems in individual letters.

As above, we have only taken into account letters with examples from both categories, that is, from both softlong *ē* and sharplong *ê* in open syllables. In so doing, we were able to determine the writing systems of 25 (out of 28) letters from the eighteenth-century part of the Zeeland subcorpus, distinguishing between phonological systems, systems with clear morphological or syllabic influence, and variable systems. Figure 5 presents the results.

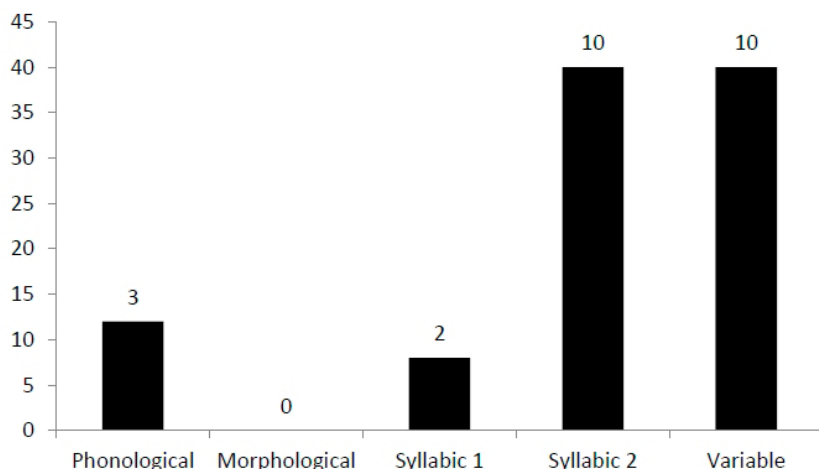


Figure 5 Different writing systems attested in the Zeeland subcorpus (1770s/1780s)

Apart from the large number of letters in which a variable system was attested, there is a striking difference between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. While the phonological system was in use in 43% of the seventeenth-century letters, it is only used in 12% of the eighteenth-century letters. At the same time, syllabic systems, and most prominently the presence of <ee>, rise from 14% in the seventeenth century to 48% in the eighteenth century. Phonological spelling seems to give way to syllabic spelling. The written language graphemicizes in that a prototypical aspect of the written code prevails against the phonological differences of the spoken code. Since both long *e*'s are still distinguished in most Zeeland dialects today, the change in writing systems cannot be interpreted as the orthographical reflex of an ongoing change in the spoken language. The phonological difference being maintained in the spoken language, this graphemization of the writing system implies that the written code is moving away from the spoken language, and that the extent to which the spoken language is represented in the written language decreases.⁹

To establish the relation between local phonology and possibly supralocal orthography, the present case study leads to the following conclusions. First, local dialect phonology may be represented in the spelling in a fairly straightforward way. This is the position linguists such as Howell and Boyce Hendriks take, and the seventeenth-century results for Zeeland letters clearly seem to corroborate this position, with the vast majority of sharp long *e*'s being spelled <ee>, and the majority of soft long *e*'s spelled <e>. In other words, there is an orthographic distinction that is in accordance with the

phonemic distinction. Second, there was a strong supralocal writing tradition, originating in the south of the Low Countries in the sixteenth century and spreading northwards. This writing tradition was phonology-based, i.e. founded on the same phonological difference between softlong and sharplong *e*'s. This implies that the phonological distribution in the Zeeland letters was backed up by supralocal writing conventions, as a result of which it is difficult to decide whether letter writers used the phonological system for phonological reasons, or because they had acquired it when learning to write. Third, there are also other principles, i.e. conventions related to the written code such as morphological and syllabic writing systems, which differ from the phonological writing system as well as from local dialect phonology. Interestingly, the importance of these other principles increased over time, which we interpreted as the ongoing graphemization of the written language. Significantly, the difference between softlong and sharplong *e*'s was much less clear in the eighteenth-century data, both phonemes preferring <ee> in open syllable. In sum, while it is obvious that writing in the Early and Late Modern periods took place independent from norms similar to present-day standard language norms, it is equally obvious that dialect phonology is often not at all systematically represented in the spelling – on the contrary.

5. Case study 2: Language contact and negation

In the second case study, we will evaluate to what extent language change can be shown to result from dialect contact. We will focus on a morpho-syntactic change, viz. the change from bipartite to single negation, not just because there is a well-established research tradition on negation, but also because it has been claimed that this particular change was promoted by dialect contact between Hollanders and immigrants from the north-east of the Netherlands and German-speaking areas. We should note from the outset that it is likely that dialect contact, leveling and koineization took place in the urban centres in Holland in the Early Modern period, and especially in Amsterdam. As has been argued many times in the historical sociolinguistics of Dutch (e.g. Boyce-Hendriks 1998, Goss 2002, Howell 2006), the influence of especially immigrants from the north-east of the Netherlands and from the German language area on the language of speakers from Holland may have been significant for various phonological, morphological and syntactic features. The question we want to focus on here, however, is to what extent we can demonstrate this on the basis of

written sources. After all, dialect contact takes place between speakers, and it is far from evident that speakers put their dialect to paper when writing. We will first introduce the change from what we refer to as bipartite to single negation, then discuss previous research, and finally present and discuss our results.

Changes in negation patterns are well-known from many languages and equally well-researched (e.g. Willis et al. 2013). We will focus on the final stage of the so-called Jespersen's cycle in the history of Dutch, i.e. the shift from bipartite (1) to single negation (2), taking into account both clausal and local negation.¹⁰ The bipartite negation in (1) consists of the preverbal negator *en*, which dates back to Old Dutch, and the newer postverbal negator *niet*. Note that the terms preverbal and postverbal refer to the position vis-à-vis the finite verb taken by the negators in main clauses. Examples (3-5) contain other, less frequent negators such as, in present-day spelling, *geen* 'no' (3), *niemand* 'nobody' (4) and *nooit* 'never' (5).

- (1) *ick en verget v niet in mijn gebedt*
I NEG forget you NEG in my prayer
'I won't forget you in my prayer'
- (2) *ick vergeet het sterven mijn leven niet*
I forget the dying my life NEG
'I won't forget the dying in all my life'
- (3) *ick en sal mijn moeder gen droefheijdt aendoen*
I NEG shall my mother NEG sadness cause
'I will not hurt my mother'
- (4) *Iegemwoordigh jsser niemant die maelt*
at present is-there NEG who cares
'at present nobody cares'
- (5) *tabago dat sij nu noijt meer sien sal*
Tobago that she now NEG anymore see will
'Tobago, which she will not see anymore now'

In the literature on the changes in negation patterns in Dutch (i.a. van der Horst & van der Wal 1979, de Haan & Weerman 1984, Burrridge 1993, Hoeksema 1997, Goss 2002, Rutten et al. 2012, Vosters & Vandenbussche 2012), a wide variety of internal and external variables have been discussed. From the literature, we deduce that region and construction type appear to be the most important variables. It has been argued by many (e.g. van der Horst & van der Wal 1979, Burrridge 1993, Rutten et al. 2012, Vosters & Vandenbussche 2012) that the change from bipartite to single negation spread from north to south in the Low Countries, affecting different semantico-syntactic

construction types at a different pace. The critical moment of this change appears to have been North Holland in the seventeenth century, where single negation became dominant around 1650, while bipartite negation was much longer in use in more southern areas. The constructional constraint entails that V1 clauses such as directives, as in (6), were more progressive in adopting single negation than V2 main clauses as (7), which were in turn more progressive than V-final (8) subordinate clauses (van der Horst & van der Wal 1979, Burridge 1993, Vosters 2011).

- (6) *ende en verkert altijd in geen herbergen*
 and NEG be always in no taverns
 ‘and never go to taverns’
- (7) *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’
- (8) *dat het de koninck niet hebben en wilt*
 that it the king not have NEG want
 ‘that the king does not want it’

Both the regional and constructional variables are corroborated by present-day dialect data, which show that bipartite negation is mainly, though not exclusively, used in Southern (Flemish) dialects in subordinate clauses.¹¹

Goss (2002: 138-181) mentions, among other factors, immigration as an important factor, particularly immigration from the north-east of the Netherlands and from Germany, where single negation was much more wide-spread. Note that the change from bipartite to single negation took place much earlier in most German dialects than in Dutch (cf. Goss 2002: 146). Goss argues that ‘the influence of immigration in disrupting internal linguistic developments by introducing competing linguistic innovations was shown to be crucial in the development of the negation marking system in The Hague’ (2002: 180), which means that the ongoing change from bipartite to single negation was speeded up by the influx of speakers from *en*-less dialects, i.e. dialects with only single postverbal negators. The change from bipartite to single negation is, in other words, interpreted as an example of simplification resulting from dialect contact (Goss 2002: 14). In addition, and somewhat surprisingly given the many studies confirming the importance of the different types of construction, Goss questions the relevance of the semantico-syntactic context, arguing for the importance of phonology instead. Here, she draws on de Haan & Weerman (1984: 183-186), who argued that the historical preverbal negator *en* did not occupy a syntactic slot, which means that there can be no syntactic or constructional

constraints affecting it. As a mere clitic, its disappearance was (or: must have been) triggered by the phonetic environment.

Burridge (1993), who elaborated on the suggestion that the phonetic environment was decisive, and Vosters (2011) present evidence that the left context <n> may promote deletion of the preverbal negator *en*. Hoeksema (1997), however, only found this effect of the lexeme *men* ‘one’, and this is also the strongest predictor of single negation in Vosters (2011). Following Burridge (1993), we distinguish three left contexts possibly favoring deletion of the negator, viz. <n>, <en> and *men* ‘one’. The following examples (9–11), taken from Burridge (1993: 195–196, exx. 24, 27, 28), are all from fourteenth-century Holland. They are early examples of single negation, which would be due to the phonetic left context.

- (9) *dat helpt wel den ghenen die siin spise niet verduwen ø mach*
 that helps well the one who his meal NEG digest NEG can
 ‘that greatly helps those who cannot digest their meals’
- (10) *men ø sal den saffraen niet tevele besighen*
 one NEG shall the saffron NEG too-much use
 ‘don’t use too much saffron’
- (11) *die boonen ø sien niet goed te verduwen*
 the beans NEG are NEG good to digest
 ‘beans are hard to digest’

Our corpus offers a unique opportunity to test these various claims. Elsewhere, we have argued that the change from bipartite to single negation arose above the level of social awareness, and that, consequently, the upper ranks of society switched to single negation at a faster pace than the lower ranks (Rutten et al. 2012). In the present case study, we will first evaluate the importance of what have been considered to be the main variables affecting changes in negation patterns in the history of Dutch, i.e. region and construction type. We will then discuss the influence of the phonetic environment, and finally zoom in on the influence of immigration, more specifically of the assumed dialect contact resulting from immigration. The present case study is based on a subcorpus of seventeenth-century private letters, the make-up of which is presented in Table 3.¹² Contrary to the subcorpus used for the previous case study, we have taken letters from all regions represented in our source material.

Table 3 The subcorpus used for Case Study 2

Period	N letters	N words
1660s/1670s	549	228,000

We extracted all negations from the subcorpus used, mainly by searching for postverbal negators in various spellings, including *niet* ‘not’, *geen* ‘no’, *niemand* ‘nobody’, *nimmer* ‘never’ and *nooit* ‘never’. This search resulted in 2,307 tokens, 1,501 (65%) of which were instances of single negations, while 806 (35%) were bipartite negations. We allocated these 2,307 negations to the appropriate regions. Figure 6 gives the regional distribution of the incoming variant, i.e. the proportion of single negation.

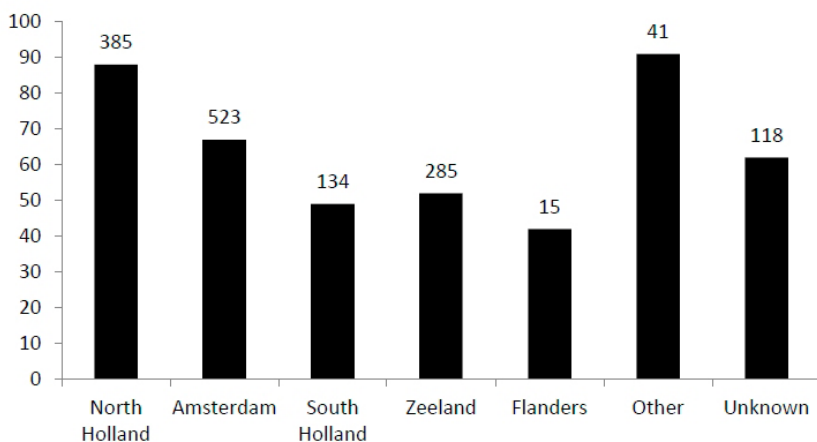


Figure 6 Single negation across region (in percentages and absolute numbers)

The regional differences established in the research tradition so far are neatly borne out by our results. In addition, we are able to detail the regional picture, which so far had mainly consisted in the general observation of north-south differences. Figure 6 shows that, traveling along the coast from the north to south, from North Holland to Flanders, the proportion of the incoming variant single negation steadily drops. In North Holland, single negation peaks at 88%, dropping to 67% in Amsterdam, to 49% and 52% in South Holland¹³ and Zeeland, and to 42% in Flanders. A fair number of negations could not be allocated to any region. With its 62% single negation, this category of Unknown patterns is in accordance with the overall results of 65% single negation. We will return to the category Other below.

The constructional constraints that were identified are also corroborated by our results. 1,973 out of 2,307 were either V1 clauses, such as (6), V2 main clauses (7) or V-final subordinate clauses (8). Figure 7 plots the proportion of single and bipartite negation across construction type.

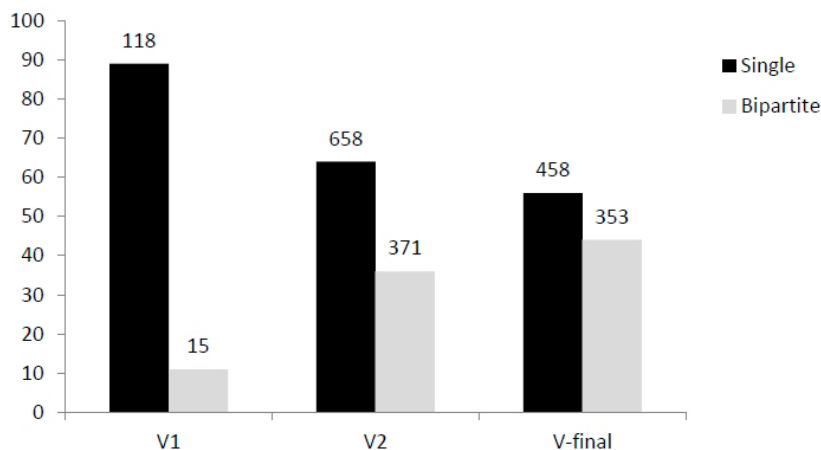


Figure 7 Negation across construction type (in percentages and absolute numbers)

Figure 7 shows that V1 contexts are very progressive, attracting 89% single negation. V2 main clauses have 64% single negation, while V-final subordinate clauses are the most conservative context, preferring only 56% single negation. As we have shown in Rutten et al. (2012), these patterns are stable when cross-tabulated, meaning that V1 is the most progressive context in any region, and V-final the most conservative.

We now move on to discuss the variables that have been put forward by Goss (2002) as acting as decisive factors, focusing first on the phonetic-left context. Building on Burridge (1993) and Vosters (2011), we distinguish five different phonetic-left contexts: vowels as in *wij* ‘we’ in (12), consonants (but not <n>) as in *tijt* ‘time’ in (13), <n> (but not <en>) as in *man* ‘man’ in (14), <en> (but not the lexeme *men*) as in (15), and finally the lexeme *men* ‘one’ as in (16).

- (12) *want wij en zijn het nijet weerdijgh vanwegen onse menijgh vuldijghe sonden*
 for we NEG are it NEG worthy for our mani fold sins
 ‘for we are not worthy of this for our many sins’
- (13) *want Jck geen tijt en hadden*
 for I NEG time NEG had
 ‘for I had no time’
- (14) *die man en wilde het gelt niet geeve*
 that man NEG wanted the money NEG give
 ‘that man did not want to give the money’
- (15) *capmessen met houtte heften en zijn niet goet*
 chopping-knives with wooden hafts NEG are NEG good
 ‘chopping-knives with wooden hafts are not good’
- (16) *men en weet nijet ofte wij het lant sullen mogen houden*
 one NEG knows NEG whether we the land shall may keep
 ‘one does not know whether we will be allowed to keep the land’

Excluding both V_i-clauses, where the left context is a clause boundary, and ambiguous examples from the analysis, we were able to assign 2,095 negation tokens to the five different phonetic-left contexts. Figure 8 shows the proportion of the incoming variant single negation across left context.

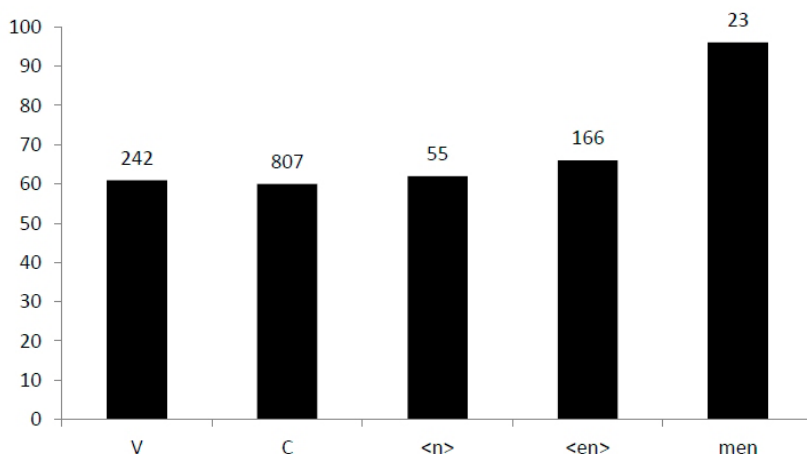


Figure 8 Single negation across phonetic context (in percentages and absolute numbers)

As is shown in Figure 8, there is hardly any difference between preceding vowels, consonants, <n> or <en>. With single negation occurring in 60-66% in these cases, this is completely in line with the overall pattern of 65% single negation. This means that the phonetic-left context does not act as a decisive factor for the negation type. Only the lexeme *men* constitutes a very progressive context with 23 out of 24 tokens co-occurring with single

negation. This means that there is a so-called haplological effect on the level of the lexemes.

Apart from the phonetic context, Goss (2002) also argues for the importance of dialect contact (as a result of immigration) as a factor influencing the negation type. In the dialect contact situation, the structurally simpler option of single negation is assumed to have developed into the preferred option for most speakers. As most immigrants came from dialect areas where single negation had already become dominant, they are supposed to have promoted the use of single negation, speeding up the change from bipartite to single negation. Although Goss (2002) focuses on The Hague, it is the city of Amsterdam that attracted most immigrants, and that was the topic of studies such as Boyce Hendriks (1998). Table 4, founded on Goss & Howell (2006: 63), lists the growth of major cities in the north-western parts of the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Table 4 The population of major cities in the north-west of the Netherlands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

	1550	1600	1650
Alkmaar	8,000	11,000	15,000
Amsterdam	30,000	65,000	175,000
Delft	14,000	20,000	24,000
Dordrecht	11,000	15,000	20,000
Gouda	11,000	13,000	15,000
Haarlem	14,000	30,000	38,000
The Hague	6,000	10,000	18,000
Leiden	12,000	25,000	67,000
Middelburg	7,000	20,000	30,000
Rotterdam	7,000	13,000	20,000
Zaandam	10,000	16,000	24,000

Building on the work of social historians, Goss & Howell (2006: 62) and Howell (2006: 212) point out that during the Early Modern period mortality rates in urban centres were usually very high due to various circumstances such as poor hygienic conditions and poor diet. In fact, mortality rates were often higher than birth rates, which implies that the population would decrease over time. Consequently, the exponential growth of Dutch cities, and of Amsterdam in particular, must have been caused by large numbers of immigrants. If immigration to the north-western parts of the Netherlands was very high in general, it may be difficult to establish quantitative differences resulting from immigration between the various cities. The

development of Amsterdam, however, was absolutely unique compared to that of the other cities. Moreover, Howell (2006: 214) shows that the Amsterdam marriage records of the period 1578-1650 reveal that approximately 80% of the immigrants originated from the Northern Netherlands (42%), Germany (34%) and Scandinavia (5%), while only 10% came from the Southern Netherlands, and another 8% from elsewhere.

With regard to negation, we would hypothesize on the basis of these data that the change to single negation had progressed further in Amsterdam than in other areas, and that this difference should also be visible in our data, which date back to the 1660s/1670s. In order to find this out, we will return to the regional distribution presented above in Figure 6. This Figure shows that Amsterdam, which by far attracted most immigrants, is not exceptionally progressive compared to the other regions. In fact, it perfectly fits into the overall north-to-south pattern: it is less progressive than North Holland, and more progressive than South Holland. The most progressive region is North Holland, which did attract immigrants, but not as many as Amsterdam. What Figure 6 shows, in other words, is regional diffusion, which is undoubtedly the result of contact between speakers of the different regions. Apart from the indicated north-to-south pattern, and the category Unknown, Figure 6 also plots the results of the category Other. To this fairly small category (41 tokens), we have allocated letter writers that could not be linked to one of the other regions, and that provided too few tokens to allow for a separate category. This means that the category Other contains the results of writers with very different backgrounds. Interestingly, however, most of them can be linked to Friesland, to German-speaking areas and to Norwegian-speaking areas. As expected, these writers are very progressive with 91% single negation. We may, of course, hypothesize that their progressive behavior speeded up the ongoing change when they came into contact with speakers from Holland and Zeeland. This is, however, not shown in the results in Figure 6.

It is perhaps impossible to conclude that German and Scandinavian immigrants did not promote the change to single negation, and from the demographic data, it even appears to be probable that they did play such a role. What we can establish, however, on the basis of our results is that there is no conclusive evidence that they were a major factor. The steady north-to-south pattern shown in Figure 6, which is based on the largest data set used so far for this type of research, is strongly in favor of normal regional diffusion.

In sum, the change from bipartite to single negation seems to be first and foremost regionally and constructionally conditioned, while the influence

of the phonetic environment and of dialect contact remain a matter of debate.

6. Discussion and conclusions

The two case studies that we presented in sections 4 and 5, as well as the case studies summarized in section 3, are examples of supralocalization. Following Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2006: 288), who build on Milroy (1994), we describe supralocalization as an umbrella term to refer to the geographical diffusion of linguistic features beyond their region of origin. In our earlier case studies, we found that the written language of private letters contained both localizable spellings, representing the spoken language, and supralocal features spreading to North Holland and Zeeland, respectively. Thus, we found initial <sk> and <sc>, palatal alternatives to supralocal [a:], past participles without a prefix in North Holland, and *h*-dropping, *h*-prosthesis, and the substitution of <h> for <a> and of <a> for <h> in Zeeland. But we also found, and to a larger extent, the supralocal sign <sch>, spellings with <a> for *a*-like vowels, full prefixes in past participles (*ge*-), and supralocal usage of <h>. With the long *e*'s, reported on in section 4, we established similar results. There is evidence that writers from Zeeland adhered to local phonology in their distribution of <e> and <ee>, but there is also evidence of graphemization. In addition, the rise of syllabic spellings in Zeeland in the eighteenth century may be the effect of an adaptation to writing practices typically found in Amsterdam (cf. footnote 9). With regard to negation, it is important to note that bipartite negation was used much longer in the spoken than in the written language, and that it can be found in the Southern Netherlands up to the present day. Rutten et al. (2012) reported on late-eighteenth century examples from Amsterdam, which were infrequent when compared to single negation, but which nevertheless testify to the occurrence of bipartite negation in Amsterdam in the 1770s/1780s. Again, we are witnessing the adoption of a supralocal linguistic feature, i.e. single negation, which is spreading to areas where it is not in accordance with the spoken language, and where, in other words, the written language diverges from the spoken language.

We have discussed examples of supralocalization in order to argue that ego-documents such as private letters and diaries are far from the pure dialect sources that they are sometimes held to be (cf. Boyce Hendriks & Howell 2000: 273). It is true that ego-documents give an unprecedented view of the vernacular, as we have argued elsewhere, and as many have argued

before us (Rutten & van der Wal 2011; cf. e.g. Boyce Hendriks 1998, Elspaß 2005, 2012). Ego-documents offer unique opportunities for historical (socio) linguistics, and in many respects they invite us to reconsider the traditional history of the language. At the same time, writers did not consistently put their local dialect to paper, and it is even improbable that they tried to do so, given the fact that even among writers who used localizable signs, these were generally outnumbered by supralocal ones (cf. Rutten & van der Wal 2011). Moreover, there were writing practices such as morphological and syllabic orthographic principles, which caused the written code to move away from vernacular phonology. We conclude that supralocalization and graphemization, which are topics at the core of historical sociolinguistics, have to be taken into account by anyone interested in the communicative strategies which ordinary people used when they needed to write. At the same time, since supralocalization and graphemization may impede research on spoken language phenomena, they should also be addressed by researchers primarily interested in spoken language phenomena such as dialect contact.

Notes

1. We would like to thank Mike Olson (Utrecht) and an anonymous reviewer for valuable comments on an earlier draft. 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* (see www.brievensbuit.nl), funded by The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).
2. Cf. the paper by Nobels in the present volume. See www.brievensbuit.nl for more details on the project.
3. See brievensbuit.inl.nl for a lemmatized and POS-tagged version of part of the corpus.
4. Present-day dialects of Zeeland show considerable variation in sharp and soft long *e*'s, with phonological and lexical conditions influencing their historical distribution; cf. e.g. the relevant maps in Goossens et al. (2000).
5. <e> for *ē* is common in Zeeland orthographies. The *Woordenboek der Zeeuwse dialecten* 'Dictionary of Zeeland dialects' (Ghijzen 1959-1964) uses <êê> for *ê* as in *stêênen*. The so-called *Noe*-spelling, created by the periodical *Noe*, prescribes <eê> as in *steênen*, see <http://people.zeelandnet.nl/evenhuis/>.
6. The research for this phenomenon was carried out at an early stage of the project, when fewer letters than those we have at present were available for research. The imbalance of the relative share of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reflects the fact that fewer ships linked to Zeeland were captured in the eighteenth century.
7. <e> and <ee> were by far the most frequent graphemes, though occasionally a different grapheme was used, such as <eij> for *ê*. These were counted as instances of <ee> since they only stress the diphthongal realization of reflexes of *ê*.

8. Phonological and/or lexical conditions could also be at work, cf. footnote 4. One could, for instance, hypothesize that the following consonant influenced the vowel, and that the actual distribution in the spoken language need not be entirely in line with the etymological origin of the vowels. When we focused on following consonants, however, no clear patterns were found. A large number of <ee> spellings occur for softlong *e* followed by a dental, as in *weten* 'know' (30 tokens) and *meede* 'with, also' (18 tokens). But these two lexemes are in any case among the most frequent, and are still found much more often with <e>: *weten* appears 61 times in the letters, *meede* 90 times. Still, we have to make a fundamental reservation with respect to the fact that there may have been phonological variation partly generating the orthographical variation, however unknown to us and not reconstructable on the basis of the available data.
9. We cannot go into the details here, but this superimposition (*Überschichtung*, cf. Elmentaler 2003) of phonology-based writing systems by syllabic strategies is in fact a result of convergence to North Holland writing practices, where the two long *e*'s had already merged, and where the tendency towards the use of syllabic systems began earlier and is more pronounced than in Zeeland. We will take up this matter in the monograph resulting from the *Letters as Loot* project (publication envisaged in 2014).
10. All examples were taken from the corpus introduced below, except when indicated otherwise.
11. Maps 48b, 49a, 49b and 50a in Barbiere et al. (2008) show that bipartite negation in main clauses is maintained only 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 subordinate clauses is maintained in a larger area, covering not just the Flemish dialect areas but also those of the Brabant area in Belgium, with moreover a handful of attestations in Belgian Limburg (cf. Figure 1 above).
12. Parts of this study have also been presented in Rutten et al. (2012) and Nobels (2013).
13. This result is comparable to Goss (2002: 142) who found 40% single negation in her corpus of private letters and journals from The Hague (which is in South Holland), based on a total of 761 negative statements. Her corpus comprises documents from the 1580s to the 1670s.

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About the authors

Gijsbert Rutten

Universiteit Leiden; g.j.rutten@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Marijke van der Wal

Universiteit Leiden; m.j.van.der.wal@hum.leidenuniv.nl