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## (Extra)Ordinary letters

A view from below on seventeenth-century Dutch

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(Extra)Ordinary letters  
A view from below on seventeenth-century Dutch

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door

**Judith Maria Petrus Nobels**

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in 1985

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Some people wonder why others can become fascinated by historical objects that illustrate everyday life of the past. They raise their eyebrows at archeological museums and do not understand how can would spend minutes gazing at a display case which contains, for instance, a flattened and deformed piece of leather that was once a plain seventeenth-century men's shoe. But for other people, realising that this object was once a shoe worn by another human being can be simply mesmerising. When they stand before the display case, they do not merely see a perished shoe, but a physical link between the present and the usually intangible past. Inspired by this single remnant of a man's life, they wonder about this person and his world. What was his name? What did he look like? What did he do for a living? Was he married? Did he have children? And if this onlooker is a historical linguist, by any chance, he or she will also ask different kinds of questions: What was his language like? What would it sound like if we could hear him speak? Could he write? Did he write differently from the way he spoke? Did his language use differ from that of his parents, his wife, his helper or his boss?

At first sight, all these intriguing questions about the late shoe bearer's language seem impossible to answer, for the seventeenth-century texts that have been preserved until this day seldom reflect the spontaneous language of ordinary people. Research on seventeenth-century Dutch is more often than not carried out on the basis of printed works, official texts, or the correspondence and diaries of famous or highly placed persons. However, a recently re-discovered collection of seventeenth-, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dutch private letters has changed this. The so-called *Sailing Letters* provide historical (socio)linguists with a chance to examine the everyday Dutch of the past and to unearth – layer by layer – the linguistic history of lower- and middle-class people.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation is part of the project *Letters as Loot*, which started at Leiden University in 2008. The goal of this project has been to examine the sociolinguistic variation in private letters written by men and women of different social classes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Within

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<sup>1</sup> *Sailing Letters* is a term often used to indicate the letters present in the collection of *Prize Papers* in the High Court of Admiralty archive in the National Archives in Kew, London. Sometimes, the term is used as a *pars pro toto*, referring to the entire collection of *Prize papers*, which does not only contain letters, but also includes other types of documents, such as ship's journals and bills of lading. In this dissertation, I will use the term *Sailing letters* to refer only to the actual letters in the *Prize papers*. In §1.4, the history of the *Sailing letters* will be presented in detail.

the *Letters as Loot* project, the present dissertation has focused on language use of the seventeenth century, more in particular of the period around the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars (1665-1667 and 1672-1674 respectively), which has been examined carefully in six morphological and syntactical case studies.<sup>2</sup>

The theoretical background of this dissertation will be discussed in §1.1 and the research traditions in which it is embedded will be elaborated on in §1.2. Then, in §1.3, the main objective of this study will be disclosed. The spectacular history of the material used for this dissertation is described in §1.4. Finally, in §1.5, the outline of the dissertation will be presented.

## 1.1. Theoretical background

### 1.1.1. Historical sociolinguistics

In what follows, I will briefly sketch the general research tradition in which this dissertation can be situated: historical sociolinguistics. The discipline of historical sociolinguistics studies sociolinguistic variation in the past. Sociolinguistics in general is “an independent sub discipline of linguistics comprising many different approaches and research goals which have the social view of language as their common denominator” (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 11). The best known sociolinguistic approach is variationist sociolinguistics, as first practiced and advocated by William Labov (1972, 2001). It is a quantitative method which examines the relationship between linguistic variables and external social variables such as social class, gender, age, ethnic group membership, and social and geographical mobility (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 11-12).

While sociolinguistics has been a thriving discipline for about half a century already, it has taken historical sociolinguistics somewhat longer to develop, even though languages of the present and the past are expected to vary in the same patterned ways (Romaine 1988: 1454 in Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2012: 25). This similarity follows from the well-known *principle of uniformitarianism*, which states that “human beings as biological, psychological, and social creatures have remained largely unchanged over time” (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2012: 24). According to this principle, if languages from the present can be examined

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<sup>2</sup> The *Letters as Loot* project was funded by NWO (the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research). A second sub-project, entitled *A perspective from below. Private letters versus printed uniformity (1776-1784)* is carried out by Tanja Simons and focused on the eighteenth century. The third sub-project, *Filling the gaps: rewriting the history of Dutch*, is carried out by Gijsbert Rutten and Marijke van der Wal and compares the results for the two different periods among other things.



successfully using sociolinguistic methodology, languages from the past should also be liable candidates for this kind of scrutiny. The first proof that it is indeed feasible to use sociolinguistic methods on historical data was given by Suzanne Romaine (1982) in her book *Socio-historical linguistics* (Nevalainen 2010: 1). Since then, the field of historical sociolinguistics has grown: the diversity and size of the discipline can be gathered from the recently published *Handbook of historical sociolinguistics* (Hernández-Campoy & Conde-Silvestre 2012) and the success of HiSoN, a network of historical sociolinguists.<sup>3</sup>

I have already established that historical sociolinguistics applies the same methodologies as sociolinguistics by and large. However, due to the fact that historical sociolinguistics concentrates on language varieties from the past, the field differs from sociolinguistics in some respects, as Raumolin-Brunberg shows (1996: 17-18). The language material preserved from the past is almost always written material, given that sound recordings have only become widely available in the twentieth century. So while sociolinguists examining present-day languages can observe phonetic/phonological variation and change in a straightforward manner, historical research of phonetic/phonological variation and change is complicated by the medium of writing. The fact that historical sources are all written also complicates researching spontaneous language use, which will be discussed in more detail in §1.1.3. Furthermore, where sociolinguists examining present-day languages can find data for all kinds of people, historical sociolinguists can usually only find data produced by people who were literate. Since in historical contexts, literates were most often men from the upper classes (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 17-18), historical sociolinguists are challenged to find data for women and people from the lower classes. These specifics of historical sociolinguistics ask for a slightly different approach in some cases, as will be amply shown in chapters 2 and 3. For now, let us focus on the sub-discipline within historical sociolinguistics to which this dissertation is strongly linked.

### 1.1.2. (Language) history from below

Until a few decades ago, history seemed to tell us “little about the great majority of the inhabitants of the countries or states it was recording” (Hobsbawm 1997: 201), but much more about the few powerful people at the top of society. History was primarily about world leaders, important politicians, the changes in boundaries and relations between countries and

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<sup>3</sup> The website of the network features (past and future) conferences and summer schools as well as recent historical sociolinguistic publications:  
<<http://www.philhist.uni-augsburg.de/hison/>> [08/11/2012]

states, the major works of the most important artists. However, sometime in the twentieth century, a new approach arose (Hobsbawm 1997: 203). Eric Hobsbawm held a lecture about this changing view of history and the title of the ensuing publication became the name for this new approach: *history from below*.<sup>4</sup>

Sharpe (1991) and Hobsbawm (1997) describe how the interest of historians shifted more and more towards the common people as soon as these common people became “a constant factor in the making of such [major political] decisions and events” (Hobsbawm 1997: 202). This new interest in the lives of the common people seemed to take flight after the Second World War and is now in full swing (Hobsbawm 1997: 203-24). Several historical disciplines that can all be linked to this new interest have come to life over the past few decades (Elspaß 2005: 12); take for instance *microhistory*, which originated in the seventies (Ginzburg 1993). An interest has risen in documents that can offer a view on history through the eyes of ordinary people. Some of these texts are so-called ego-documents, documents “in which an author writes about his or her own acts, thoughts and feelings” (Dekker 2002: 7). Autobiographical documents, such as private letters and diary entries, are typical examples of ego-documents. An inventory of Dutch ego-documents written between 1500 and 1918 which comprises diaries and travelogues is presented by the *Center for the study of egodocuments and history*, established by Rudolf Dekker and Ariane Baggerman.<sup>5</sup> History from below is not only present in academics, it is also translated into a very personal approach of history in museums. At the *In Flanders fields Museum* in Ypres, for example, where the First World War is commemorated, all visitors receive a wristlet with a chip, which enables them to discover four personal stories and to learn about the impact of the events of the Great War on the life of a man, woman or child living or fighting in the area around Ypres at the time.<sup>6</sup>

A similar shift has taken place in the realm of language history. For a long period of time historical linguists, unlike linguists interested in dialect studies, mainly focused on aspects of standardisation and thus on the language of the high culture. However, in 2005 the sub-discipline of language history from below was officially born: Elspaß’s groundbreaking work on nineteenth-century everyday German appeared (Elspaß 2005) and a conference dedicated to language history from below at the University of

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<sup>4</sup> The lecture was first published as a contribution to a Festschrift for George Rudé in 1985. Hobsbawm does not seem to have been the first scholar to use the term *history from below*, however, since Edward Thompson already published an article entitled ‘History from below’ in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1966 (Sharpe 1991: 25).

<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.egodocument.net/egodocument/index.html>> [08/11/2012]

<sup>6</sup> <<http://www.inflandersfields.be/en>> [08/11/2012]

Bristol united various scholars who turned their attention to the history of the everyday language of the lower classes.<sup>7</sup>

Instead of taking a “bird’s eye view”, language history from below can be said to take a “worm’s eye view” in two respects (Elspaß 2005: 13, Vandebussche & Elspaß 2007: 146). Firstly, language history from below wants to focus on the language of the majority of the population, members of the lower ranks of society, instead of on the language use of a small group of high-ranked, well-educated and practised writers. Secondly, language history from below wants to move away from the focus on the prestige-variants of a language, which are language varieties strongly associated with writing and/or printed works. According to the theory of language history from below, language varieties used by the majority of the population and by the less well-educated should be seen as legitimate objects of study (Elspaß 2005: 13, 2007: 155).

It is important to note here that the term ‘from below’ as it is used within this new discipline is not completely equal to the term used by Labov. The Labovian ‘change from below’ and ‘change from above’ are linguistic changes that respectively take place below and above the level of consciousness of the language users (Labov 1994, 2001). While the level of consciousness is crucial for the Labovian interpretation, within language history from below, the origin and direction of a change in society determines whether a change is ‘from below’ or ‘from above’. In this dissertation, the term ‘change from below’ refers to a linguistic change originating in the language use of the lower classes and spreading upwards through society, while ‘change from above’ refers to a linguistic change originating in the language use of the upper classes and spreading downwards through society.

This new theoretical perspective, language history from below, calls for a different type of research material, namely linguistic material produced by people who did not belong to the highest social circles. Types of linguistic material that have been most frequently studied until now – such as literary works and printed texts in general – do not suffice any longer, for they are usually produced by members of the upper classes. Members of the lower social classes have left their linguistic footprints elsewhere. Over the years, linguists have come up with linguistic material of the lower classes in the form of different text types; Vandebussche and Elspaß (2007: 148) list “private letters, chronicles and personal diaries written by farmers, soldiers,

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<sup>7</sup> The proceedings of this conference were published in the volume *Germanic language histories’ from below’ (1700-2000)* (Elspaß, Langer, Scharloth & Vandebussche 2007). An earlier development was seen in the 1970s, when language history started to move away from the potentates, courts, higher education, and literary circles (Besch 1979: 324 in Elspaß 2005: 12-13).

artisans, or housemaids; ‘pauper’ letters in which poor people pleaded with the authorities for material relief; meeting reports/minutes from worker’s organizations, etc.” Most of these texts are ego-documents.

### 1.1.3. Speech and writing

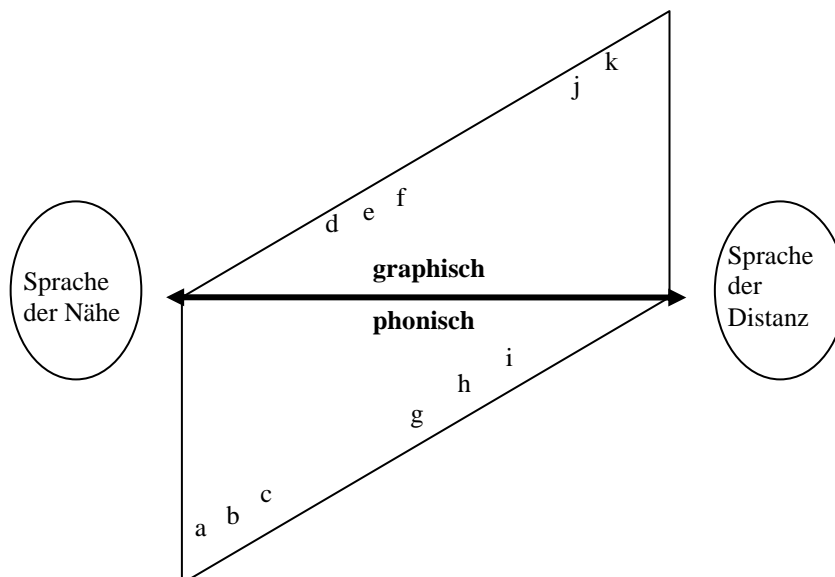
What these neglected documents have in common is that – compared to printed texts – the language varieties which they contain are often more closely associated with speech than with writing (Elspaß 2005: 13). The traditional dichotomy between spoken and written language on the basis of the medium (speech or writing) is not fit to reflect this (Elspaß 2005: 24-27). For instance, think about a sermon. This is spoken language, since the medium to convey the message is sound. However, surely the language variety used in a sermon is not prototypical of spoken language. On the other hand, there are texts like online chat conversations. They are made up of written language, since the medium through which the message is conveyed is writing. However, chat conversations certainly do contain elements of spoken language too, for when chatting, one tends to write more like one speaks (Schlobinski 2005 in Vandekerckhove 2009: 34).

A text can thus contain elements of both written and spoken language at the same time. To be able to address this, Koch & Oesterreicher (1985 in Elspaß 2005: 26-27) proposed a conceptual scale between *Sprache der Nähe* (hereafter referred to as ‘language of immediacy’) and *Sprache der Distanz* (hereafter referred to as ‘language of distance’). ‘Language of immediacy’ is the familiar register, the language variety people spontaneously use with friends and family. The other extreme on the scale is the ‘language of distance’: a formal register, a language variety people use with strangers or superiors. Language of immediacy is typical of situations:

- in which the distribution of the communicative roles is open (e.g. in a spontaneous conversation between two friends in which both persons can act as speaker or listener versus a speech in which one person is the speaker and the rest of the people present are listeners)
- for which the theme of the text/conversation is not fixed (e.g. a diary entry versus a year report about a company’s results)
- that are familiar and intimate (e.g. a conversation between family members versus a job interview)
- that are private (e.g. an e-mail to a friend versus a press release)

- in which the text is created spontaneously  
(e.g. a telephone conversation with a friend versus a presentation learned by heart)
- which are emotional and affective  
(e.g. a column versus a news paper article)

On the basis of these criteria, different text types can be ordered on a scale from immediacy to distance irrespective of whether they are written or spoken. Koch & Oesterreicher (1985: 23) illustrated this with a diagram (fig. 1.1)



**Figure 1.1: diagram representing different text types on a scale between the language of immediacy and the language of distance (adapted from Koch & Oesterreicher 1985: 23)**

The left side of the diagram represents the language of immediacy, the right side represents the language of distance. The top half of the diagram represents written language, the bottom half of the diagram represents spoken language. Although the dichotomy of spoken language and written language is not the same as the dichotomy of language of immediacy and language of distance, the two pairs of concepts are related to each other. This is also illustrated in the diagram by the two triangles. These triangles represent the affinity of the language type (immediacy or distance) with the medium (spoken or written): the top triangle leans to the right, illustrating that language of distance is more closely affiliated to written language. The bottom triangle leans to the left and illustrates that the language of

immediacy is more closely affiliated to spoken language than to written language.

The letters in the diagram represent different text types.<sup>8</sup> Letter *a* for instance refers to a conversation with a trusted person. It is situated at the bottom of the diagram because it is made up of spoken language and to the left of the diagram because the spoken language used in such a conversation would typically consist of language of immediacy. Letter *k* represents an ordinance. Other than letter *a* it is situated at the top of the diagram and to the right. This is in accordance with the fact that such a text type is written and is typically set in a register far removed from language of immediacy. Letter *j* stands for a newspaper article. Like the ordinance, it is situated at the top of the diagram, because it is a written text, and it is situated to the right of the diagram, because it is more closely affiliated to language of distance than to language of immediacy. However, the newspaper article is situated more to the left of the diagram than the ordinance represented by letter *k*, because one would expect a newspaper article to contain fewer elements of language of distance than a formal ordinance would (Koch & Oesterreicher 1985: 23-24).

To conclude, the text types in which the voice of the lower social strata can still be found are very often ego documents, such as private letters. These text types are relatively good environments for language of immediacy: they are at least in part spontaneous, emotional, private, and intimate. So when studying the language use of lower-class writers in ego documents, one is bound to find elements of language of immediacy. This text type is represented in the diagram by letter *f*: it is situated in the top half of the diagram because it is written language, but it is situated somewhere in the middle between language of immediacy and language of distance because it can contain elements of both.

## 1.2. Status quaestionis

### 1.2.1. Studies within the fields of historical sociolinguistics and language history from below

In what follows I will present a selection of studies which were a source of inspiration for the *Letters as Loot* project and this dissertation in particular.

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<sup>8</sup> Letter *a* refers to a conversation with a trusted person. Letter *b* represents a telephone conversation with a friend. Letter *c* is an interview. Letter *d* is a published interview. Letter *e* represents a journal entry. Letter *f* refers to a private letter. Letter *g* refers to an introductory talk. Letter *h* represents a sermon. Letter *i* refers to a lecture. Letter *j* represents a newspaper article. Finally, *k* stands for an ordinance.

These are studies of various languages, among which are German, English and Dutch. Most of these studies are important and influential within the tradition of language history from below; others cannot be characterised as studies within the framework of language history from below in particular, but are fine examples of historical sociolinguistic research and are also related to the research carried out within the *Letters as Loot* project. It goes without saying that this selection can only illustrate a part of the quantity and diversity of historical sociolinguistic research in general and language history from below in particular. Many more studies could have been mentioned.

Let us begin with studies on German: in 2006 Vandenbussche described the impressive tradition of research on the *Arbeitersprache* – ‘the language of the working class’ – of the nineteenth century and listed several studies on the subject. The earliest publication mentioned in this list goes back to 1977, reporting research carried out from 1970 onwards (Bielefeld & Lundt 1977 in Vandenbussche 2006: 440). In just a few decades, several scholars examined the language use of the lower classes and slowly the idea developed that the typical features of *Arbeitersprache* should not be seen as class features, but rather as the results of a low level of writing education (Vandenbussche 2006: 440, 453-454). The chain of studies eventually resulted in Elspaß’s detailed study (2005) of nineteenth-century letters written by German emigrants.

For his research, Elspaß compiled a corpus of as many as 648 private letters, mostly from German emigrants or Germans in the process of emigrating. Rather than on social class, he focused on the degree of education of the writers under examination, following the idea that the level of (writing) education is the most influential factor of the two. Furthermore, the region of origin of the writers was taken into account as well (Elspaß 2005: 40-51; 67-71). The goal of this study was to identify forms and variants in the New-High German everyday language, to identify templates in written German influencing the orally based everyday language in the letters, and to examine how inexperienced writers coped with the tension between their spoken everyday German, and the written German, which they used less often (Elspaß 2005: 20-21).

Elspaß had to conclude that in spite of the nineteenth-century pursuit of unity in the German language, a wealth of variation still existed, especially in the documents of inexperienced writers. However, the variation was not completely random: there were clear norms of usage, often differing between regions. The standardisation of German had thus not reached completion in the nineteenth century. On the contrary, a standard variety was and is still developing (Elspaß 2005: 497-470). Elspaß’ study (2005) is very important for the *Letters as Loot* project from both a methodological and a

theoretical point of view: the study is based on a corpus of historical private letters and one of its focal points is the tension between the striving for linguistic standardisation in a given society and the variation present in the actual language use of lower-class or inexperienced writers.

Not only in German linguistics, but also in English linguistics the field of historical sociolinguistics in general, and language history from below in particular, has provided a large number of interesting studies. A lot of historical sociolinguistic research has been carried out at the Universities of Helsinki and Jyväskylä by the members of VARIENG, a centre for the study of variation, contacts and change in English.<sup>9</sup> One of the VARIENG projects is the CEEC, the Corpus of Early English Correspondence. It contains letters written by people of different social ranks (but mainly of higher social ranks) from the period of Late Middle English to Late Modern English (the early fifteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century). The corpus was initiated in 1993 by Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 1994; Nevalainen 2010: 6). Since then, it has been expanded and several scholars have made use of it to examine the English of the past.

In 1996 a first volume appeared with studies based on the CEEC: *Sociolinguistics and language history: Studies based on the Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 1996). Not only the models for social stratification, gender difference, apparent-time research and regional variation are examined in this volume, but also some specific changes, such as the rise and fall of *methinks*, periphrastic *do* and *be* plus *ing*-form, and forms of address. Several doctoral theses have been based on the CEEC (Nurmi 1999 on periphrastic *do*; Palander-Collin 1999 on *I think* and *methinks*; Nevala 2004 on forms of address; Laitinen 2007 on common-number pronouns; Sairio 2009 on letters in the Bluestocking network) as have been a great deal of other publications. The VARIENG-research sets very good examples of successful analysis of variation in historical corpora of ego-documents and is in this way of high value for the field of historical sociolinguistics in general and the *Letters as Loot* project and this dissertation in particular.

The English language history from below can also be studied using English applications for poor relief. Fairman (2007a) describes the history of these letters. Since the seventeenth century, English parishes were obliged to help their poor. In 1795 the state decreed that the parishes were also obligated to help the poor who had once lived in their parish, even if they did not live in that parish any longer. As a result, poor people began to write letters (or had letters written for them) to their former parishes begging for

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<sup>9</sup> <<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/>> [08/11/2012]



relief. These letters have been kept in the records of individual parishes all over the country. Most of the poor applying for relief can be assumed to belong to the lower classes, which means that the pauper letters that have actually been written by the petitioners themselves can offer an entirely new view on lower-class writing. Tony Fairman has taken on the Sisyphean task of collecting pauper letters from across the country, building a substantial corpus over the years (Fairman 2000, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2008). Sokoll (2001, 2005) has compiled a corpus of pauper letters as well, which contains letters only from Essex. The writing in these letters of (possibly) inexperienced writers and the questions it raises about the ideology of the Standard (Fairman 2007a) may bear a resemblance to what might be found in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus, which also contains letters written by people belonging to the lower social strata, and thus possibly letters written by inexperienced writers.

An important work for historical sociolinguistics and the language history from below in English is also *Alternative Histories of English* edited by Watts and Trudgill (2002). As the title clearly suggests, the book strives to show aspects of the history of English that did not make it into text-books on the history of English, given that these tend to focus on the history of the standard dialect of English in Britain and in the USA. The contributions of different leading scholars paint a fresh picture of the history of English (English(es) around the world, women's language, pragmatics), exactly what this dissertation wants to achieve for part of the history of Dutch.

At first sight, *The Codifiers and the English Language* project that was carried out at Leiden University and led by Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade does not seem to belong in this overview of research related to this dissertation, because it focused on norms (codification and prescription) and grammarians in eighteenth-century England rather than on the language use of 'ordinary' people. However, the way in which the language use of important eighteenth-century grammarians of English was studied by Tieken and her co-workers, does bear a relation to the *Letters as Loot* project. *The Codifiers* project did not only examine grammars of English, but also compared the language used in these grammars with the language use of their authors (and the social networks of these codifiers) in private correspondence (cf. Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2003, 2005, 2006; Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2007; Auer 2008; Fens-de Zeeuw 2011; Straaijer 2011).

Studies of Germanic languages are not the only inspirational sources for the *Letters as Loot* project and this dissertation. For French, for example, Ayres-Bennett (2004) focuses on non-standard and spoken language in the seventeenth century using metalinguistic texts as well as literary texts, pamphlets and correspondence. Lodge (1994, 2004) strives to describe the

sociolinguistic history of spoken French in Paris and combines – just like Ayres-Bennett (2004) – information from metalinguistic texts as well as from more direct sources (literary works, correspondence, and diaries for example). Branca-Rosoff & Schneider (1994) present a corpus of administrative texts from Revolutionary France; these texts have been written by semi-educated people and contain a wealth of non-standard features. Martineau (2007) examined the Canadian French of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the basis of ego-documents (letters and diaries) written by people pertaining to different social classes and created a corpus of familiar French consisting of letters, diaries and accounting books (Martineau 2009: 162-163). For Finnish, two projects are running at the University of Helsinki: *'The Common People'. Writing, and the process of literary attainment in nineteenth-century Finland* and *Reading and writing from below. Toward a new social history of literacy in the Nordic sphere during the long nineteenth century* (led by Lea Laitinen, Anna Kuismin, and Taru Nordlund).<sup>10</sup> Sandersen (2007) describes an interesting corpus of nineteenth-century Danish letters written by private soldiers. She examines the relationship between writing ability and social rank and the relationship between the degree in which a letter writer diverges from the norm and his time and place of birth. At the university of Lissabon, Rita Marquilhas leads several projects that aim at building large corpora of historical private letters: the *CARDS, unknown letters program* (Marquilhas 2012), the *FLY, Forgotten Letters Years 1900-1974 program*, and the project *Post Scriptum: A digital Archive of Ordinary Writings (Early Modern Portugal and Spain)*.

This overview already hints at the extent and the diversity of the research tradition of the language history from below and the field of historical sociolinguistics in general. However, some important volumes still need to be mentioned: they bring together studies on a variety of languages around a theme within historical sociolinguistics in general or within language history from below in particular. They are indispensable if one wants to get acquainted with the research tradition in which the *Letters as Loot* project and – as a consequence – this dissertation are rooted. Elspaß, Langer, Scharloth & Vandenbussche (2007) focuses on the Germanic language history from below between 1700 and 2000. Dossena & Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (2008) comprises articles on Late Modern English correspondence, while Dossena & Del Lungo Camiciotti (2012) broadens the geographical scope with *Letter writing in Late Modern Europe*. Finally, Langer, Davies & Vandenbussche (2012) focuses on the interdisciplinary

<sup>10</sup> <[https://tuhat.halvi.helsinki.fi/portal/en/projects/the-common-people-w\(2dea2809-1c5c-4ca9-9055-8b5ceed510d9\).html](https://tuhat.halvi.helsinki.fi/portal/en/projects/the-common-people-w(2dea2809-1c5c-4ca9-9055-8b5ceed510d9).html)> and <[https://tuhat.halvi.helsinki.fi/portal/en/projects/reading-and-writing\(2ebd7083-1c1b-4a9a-bddd-a7d95b4dcd87\).html](https://tuhat.halvi.helsinki.fi/portal/en/projects/reading-and-writing(2ebd7083-1c1b-4a9a-bddd-a7d95b4dcd87).html)> [15/11/2012]

character of historical sociolinguistics, discussing what historiography can mean to linguistics and vice versa.

Internationally, there are many studies within historical sociolinguistics or language history from below which can serve as examples to the *Letters as Loot* project and this dissertation. But what is the situation like for research on Dutch? In the Dutch-speaking regions of Flanders and the Netherlands, among the first scholars to start exploring the language history from below approach was Vandenbussche, with research on the language of lower-class writers in nineteenth-century Bruges (Vandenbussche 1996; 1999). With this research, Vandenbussche followed in the footsteps of Willemyns who had been examining the linguistic situation and substandardisation in nineteenth-century Flanders and who had pointed out the fact that some common assumptions about this era should be reconsidered (Willemyns 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995). Several dissertations on language in nineteenth-century Flanders have followed in the wake of Willemyns' and Vandenbussche's work: De Groof (2004), Vanhecke (2007), and most recently Vosters (2011).

For research from below on the historical language use in the northern part of the Low Countries, extramural Dutch studies seem to have given the first push. Robert Howell and his team from the university of Wisconsin have examined the Dutch vernacular in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries on the basis of diaries and letters, paying attention to the role of immigrants from the southern part of the Low Countries and from German-speaking regions in the process of language change (Boyce & Howell 1996; Boyce-Hendriks 1998; Boyce-Hendriks & Howell 2000; Goss 2002; Howell 2006; Goss & Howell 2006). However, also scholars from within the Netherlands have taken an interest in the language history from below approach or in texts that would be excellent material for that approach. Van Sterkenburg, for instance, examined the informal written Dutch in the private letters of the seventeenth-century naval officer Elant du Bois (Van Sterkenburg 2003). Van Megen was the first to examine the *Sailing Letters* linguistically on the basis of a modest corpus of about 50 private letters (Van Megen 2001; Van Megen 2002a; Van Megen 2002b; Van Megen 2002c; Van Megen 2006). In her inaugural lecture, Van der Wal (2006) made a case for examining the linguistic history of Dutch from below and for compiling corpora of historical ego-documents, such as the sixteenth-century Van Spulde-letters (Van der Wal 2002a).<sup>11</sup> *The Letters as Loot* project – of which this dissertation is a part – and the publications ensuing from this project can be seen as a direct answer to her plea for a

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<sup>11</sup> The Van Spulde-letters can be found online:  
<<http://www.hum2.leidenuniv.nl/Dutch/Cecilia/>> [08/11/2012]

linguistic history from below for Dutch.<sup>12</sup> But other ego-documents than the *Sailing Letters* have been examined as well since the call: eighteenth-century diaries, for example (Rutten 2008; Rutten 2010).

### 1.2.2. Previous research of seventeenth-century Dutch

Above I have sketched the research traditions in which this study is embedded. It has become clear that the language history from below approach has been standing strong within German and English linguistics for years. For Dutch linguistics, however, the approach is still rather new. A lot of research on seventeenth-century Dutch has been focused – explicitly or implicitly – on the subject of standardisation, and so is its reflection in the various textbooks on the history of Dutch, such as De Vooy (1952), Van der Horst & Marschall (1989), De Vries, Willemyns & Burger (1993), Van den Toorn, Pijnenburg, Van Leuvensteijn & Van der Horst (1997), Van der Sijs (2004) and Van der Wal & Van Bree (2008). In the different descriptions of seventeenth-century Dutch a lot of attention has been given to the works of grammarians, printed texts and texts written by literary authors or members of the upper classes. This is clear, for instance, in the description of the morphology of Dutch in the period of 1650 to 1880 in Van de Toorn, Pijnenburg, Van Leuvensteijn & Van der Horst (1997: 400-405) in which the names of contemporary grammarians and famous writers are omnipresent. This is not to say that scholars have not been interested in spoken Dutch or everyday language use in the seventeenth century, but to describe elements of everyday language they often had no choice but to turn to literary works and other published texts that might reflect everyday language, such as farces (e.g. Crena de Iongh (1959) and Van Leuvensteijn (1985)).

Years of research have resulted in a linguistic profile of the seventeenth century that is generally acknowledged. In this period, regional varieties started to make way for a variety of Dutch spoken in Holland in all sorts of public functions (Van Leuvensteijn 1999: 91). By 1650, the standardisation process that had started in the sixteenth century had consolidated to a certain extent (Van der Wal 1995: 101; Van den Toorn, Pijnenburg, Van Leuvensteijn & Van der Horst 1997: 362). Many important grammars and other works on Dutch had been published in the first half of the seventeenth century (Van der Wal 1995: 29-30). There was a positive attitude towards Dutch in general and the variety of Dutch spoken in the provinces of Holland (with some southern influences) had become accepted

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<sup>12</sup> Nobels & Van der Wal 2009; Van der Wal & Simons 2010; Rutten & Van der Wal 2011; Nobels, Simons & Van der Wal 2011; Nobels & Van der Wal 2012; Van der Wal, Rutten & Simons 2012; Rutten & Van der Wal 2012; Rutten, Van der Wal, Nobels & Simons 2012; Nobels & Simons forthcoming; Rutten & Van der Wal forthcoming; Van der Wal & Rutten forthcoming

as the standard language. However, there was still discussion about the micro-selection: during the remaining part of the seventeenth century and all through the eighteenth century, choices had to be made about the appropriateness of specific linguistic elements. The well-known literary authors Hooft and Vondel came to be regarded as authorities in the field of Dutch and their influence on this micro-selection would reach far into the eighteenth century (Van der Wal 1995: 101).

It is immediately clear from the profile presented here that the development from regional varieties to a more uniform Dutch standard language, i.e. the standardisation process, has been at the core of Dutch historical linguistic research for many decades. More recently, researchers started to focus on the variation that at the same time still existed, as I have described above. It is this variation during the second half of the seventeenth century that I intend to trace and describe in this study.

### 1.3. The objective of this study

A unique source of historical Dutch linguistic material has been rediscovered quite recently: the so-called *Sailing Letters*, a collection of about 38,000 seventeenth-, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century letters, both commercial and private (Van Gelder 2006: 30). Almost 16,000 private letters, as estimated by Van Gelder (2006: 30), were written by men and women of different social strata: from sailors and their wives, through carpenters and entrepreneurs to wealthy businessmen and naval officers. These are not the only Dutch ego-documents stemming from that period, of course, but the collection is absolutely unparalleled regarding its volume, the variety of writers, and the fact that it is all kept in one single archive: the National Archives in Kew, London. In §1.4 I will describe how this collection of letters came into existence. For now it suffices to say that the private letters in particular offer us the chance to uncover a part of the history of Dutch that has not been examined extensively before: the everyday language of ordinary people.

This is exactly what the *Letters as Loot* project aims for. In this five-year project the language use in the seventeenth-century *Sailing Letters* and that in the eighteenth-century ones is examined separately and in comparison to one another. As Van der Wal (2006) explained, until recently the viewpoint adopted in many studies regarding the history of Dutch has been the point of view of standardisation. The important question was how the standard variety of Dutch had developed in the course of time. The focus was often on grammars and grammarians, important authors and literary circles, books, poetry, plays and other printed texts. But over the years the

interest in the variation behind the standard language has grown. What did the everyday language of the Dutch look like? In what respects did the language of ‘ordinary’ people – people who were not grammarians, writers, poets or playwrights or who did not belong to the upper strata of society – differ from the Dutch found in printed texts? The *Letters as Loot* project wants to give an initial impulse to filling in these gaps in the history of Dutch with the help of the extensive collection of *Sailing Letters*.

The main objective of this dissertation is to examine the everyday Dutch of the seventeenth century from a sociolinguistic point of view. Given the fact that it is the first time that this collection of seventeenth-century private letters is examined linguistically on such a large scale, it seemed appropriate for this dissertation to discuss several different linguistic phenomena as a way of exploring the possibilities of the new corpus rather than to focus on one single topic. The case studies were chosen based on discussions and debates in the international literature and in the literature on the history of Dutch. The phenomena examined in this dissertation stem from different layers of the language system: morphology (forms of address, the reflexive pronouns *elkaar* ‘each other’, *mekaar* ‘each other’ and *zich* ‘himself/herself/itself/themselves’, diminutives, and schwa-apocope) and (morpho)syntax (the genitive, negation). Social factors influencing variation in these different areas, as in social class, gender and age, will be central to this study. Occasionally, language-internal factors will also be taken into account. By looking at the everyday Dutch leaning as close to spoken language as possible in the letters of people from different social classes rather than at the Dutch found in printed texts produced by people (mainly men) from the upper social circles, I hope to shed a new light on various aspects of the history of Dutch.

#### 1.4. The origin of the *Sailing Letters*

The material of which this dissertation makes use calls for some further comment. I will briefly describe the origin of the *Sailing Letters* and explain why such a large number of Dutch seventeenth-, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century letters are kept in an archive in London. For this description I rely on the publications by Van Vliet (2007: 47-53) and Van Gelder (2006: 10-17). A more detailed discussion about the British privateering enterprise – although focused on the eighteenth century rather than on the seventeenth – can be found in Starkey (1990).

It all started with the many wars in which England and the Dutch Republic were at opposite sides: the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1664), the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667), the Third Anglo-Dutch War

(1672-1674), the American War of Independence (1775-1783), the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784), and some wars during the French Revolutionary period and the Napoleonic period (1793-1803 and 1803-1813). For the Dutch as well as for the English, privateering was an accepted war tactic and it should therefore not be confused with piracy. Unlike piracy, privateering was a practice supported and controlled by a country's authorities. A government could issue allowances to seize ships, known as 'letters of commission' or 'letters of marque', and with such an allowance in his possession, any ship owner could man a ship and go out to sea to capture enemy vessels.

A captured vessel, however, was not the end to a privateering story, for in England privateering was under the strict control of the Admiralty. Before a captured ship was considered to be a 'lawful prize' and the privateer could sell the ship and its goods, it had to be checked whether the vessel did indeed belong to the enemy and whether it had been captured according to the rules. This fell under the authority of the High Court of Admiralty. In order to judge whether a captured ship could be declared a 'lawful prize' or not, the High Court of Admiralty needed as much evidence as possible. To procure this evidence, captains of captured ships were interrogated and all the paperwork aboard their ships was examined. Ship's journals, bills of lading, other administrative papers, and the personal documents of every person aboard, including all the letters a ship was carrying, were confiscated by the English and used as evidence at the High Court of Admiralty. After the trials, the evidence was stored in a part of the High Court of Admiralty's archives which is now known as the *Prize papers*.

During the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the Dutch Republic was very active overseas. Dutch merchants could be found in many waters, and the Dutch controlled many a trading post and colony in the East- or the West-Indies. Many Dutch people worked on ships or overseas and many Dutch loved ones were thus separated by the oceans. In order to communicate with each other, these men and women had to rely on letters. These could be sent over land, for instance when the absent beloved ones were in France. However, sending letters over land was impossible when letters needed to reach people living overseas or people working on ships that were constantly on the move. Therefore people often relied on ships to carry letters back and forth between the Netherlands and the regions and ships overseas. The letters, whether private or commercial, were also interesting for the English, since they could prove the origin of a captured ship or they might contain information about the Dutch state of affairs, which could be very useful in wartime. That is why letters aboard captured

ships were also confiscated and stored as case files in the High Court of Admiralty's archives.<sup>13</sup>

This extensive collection of seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century documents, the *Prize papers*, had been gathering dust in the archives for centuries when the maritime historian Braunius discovered them in the late nineteen-seventies. He wrote an article in which he advised to make an inventory of the Dutch letters present in the archives and to make them available to scholars (Braunius 1980: 13). It took a while, however, before this advice was heeded. In 2005 the historian Roelof van Gelder spent half a year in Kew on the authority of the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek* (the Dutch Royal Library) and made an inventory of the archives with a focus on the Dutch material, making it easier for scholars to find the letters in the overwhelmingly vast quantity of documents contained in the archive.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.5. Research directions and outline

In order to achieve the general objective of this dissertation – examining seventeenth-century Dutch from below – compiling a substantial electronically searchable corpus of Dutch *Sailing Letters* with metadata about their writers was a prerequisite. Such a corpus had to be built and thus the first step for this dissertation was to compile a corpus of seventeenth-century private letters and to collect metadata about each letter, sender and addressee. In chapter 2 I will go into the details of how this corpus was created.

When examining the writings of lower-class individuals of the seventeenth century the issue of literacy and illiteracy is never far away, nor is the ensuing problem of the authenticity of the writings. One does not always know for certain whether the sender of the letter is also the person who did the actual writing, which can have far-reaching consequences in the case of sociolinguistic research. This writer-sender problem and the solutions to it will be discussed in chapter 3.

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<sup>13</sup> Although the Netherlands and English were not at war with each other during the War of the Austrian Succession (1739-1748) and during the Seven Years' war (1756-1763), the English did capture quite a few Dutch ships during these periods. The *Prize papers* in the archive of the High Court of Admiralty are estimated to contain about 3,000 Dutch letters from these periods (Van Gelder 2006: 30).

<sup>14</sup> The part of the archive containing documents on captured ships is estimated to contain about 4,000 boxes (Van Gelder 2006: 16). The boxes also contain documents in other languages, such as for instance German and Spanish, for it were not only Dutch ships that were captured. Ships from other nations at war with England were seized as well.



In chapters 4 to 9 I will examine different linguistic phenomena that have been the subject of discussion in studies on Dutch or that are very typical of private letters: pronominal forms of address, the reflexive pronouns *zich* ‘himself/herself/themselves’ and *elkaar/mekaar* ‘each other’, negation, apocope of final schwa, diminutive suffixes, and the genitive and its alternatives. The actual research questions will be different for each of these phenomena, but overall the goal will be the same: describing language variation and change in relation to social factors (such as gender, social class and age), regional factors, and – in some cases – language-internal factors in order to shed a new light on the history of Dutch.

In chapter 4, I will discuss a topic very typical of letters, namely forms of address. The goal of this chapter will be twofold. Firstly, it aims to describe and analyse the distribution of different forms of address across different social factors. Secondly, it aims to find out whether the sender-addressee relationship influences the choice for particular forms of address.

Chapter 5 consists of two parts which deal with the theme of reflexivity and reciprocity: the upcoming use of the reflexive pronoun *zich* ‘himself/herself/itself/themselves’ in the seventeenth century and variation in the use of the reciprocal pronouns *elkaar/elkander* and *mekaar/mekander* ‘each other’. These topics were chosen because of discussions in the literature on the history of Dutch. This new corpus will yield several new insights, despite the fact that reflexivity is not a very frequent phenomenon in the seventeenth-century private letters I analysed.

Negation is a prominent topic of both research on Dutch and research on other languages. Therefore, it could not be left out in this dissertation. In chapter 6, I will discuss variation in the use of bipartite and single negation. Changes in the system of negation were in full swing in the seventeenth century and one can thus expect to find much variation. The key questions are: Which factors played a role in the switch from bipartite to single negation in the Netherlands? And did the change take place at the same point in time for handwritten private letters as well as for published texts?

Apocope of final schwa will be the topic of chapter 7. This change in Dutch has been examined before, but until now, the effect of social factors has never been taken into account. The corpus of seventeenth-century private letters offers us the chance to find out whether social factors played a role in the spread of schwa-apocope in seventeenth-century Dutch.

Another morphological issue will be the subject of chapter 8: diminutives. In present-day Dutch there is variety in the use of different types of diminutives. This was similarly the case in the seventeenth century. In chapter 8, the relationship between the use of different types of diminutives and social and regional variables will be discussed. This

examination, however, is hampered by a spelling issue: when looking at the tokens in isolation, in some cases it is impossible to say which of two types of diminutive suffixes was intended. A detailed examination of the spelling habits of each letter writer, however, may help solve this problem.

Chapter 9 will deal with the genitive and its alternatives. It is generally thought that the genitive had been completely lost in the spoken Dutch of the seventeenth century. However, when examining the private letters of the seventeenth-century corpus, the genitive case seems to occur quite often, which is remarkable for a text type that is strongly associated with spontaneous language use. The aim of this chapter is to find out how this is possible and which (social) factors influence the presence of the genitive and its alternatives.

Finally, in chapter 10, I will take stock of the first large-scale linguistic examination of the seventeenth-century *Sailing Letters*. Which gaps in the history of Dutch have been filled? I will recapitulate the findings for each case study and I will draw some general conclusions by answering the following questions: What does this first large-scale linguistic investigation of seventeenth-century private letters reveal about language variation in the seventeenth century? To what extent can we witness traces of spoken Dutch? What is the distribution of different linguistic variants across the different groups of language users? Do these data reveal where particular language changes started: in which region and among which language users? Does this dissertation yield unique data and insights? The answers to all these questions will give proof of the value of this dissertation for historical sociolinguistics and language history from below in general and for the history of Dutch in particular.

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## Chapter 2. Corpus and methodology

The seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus comprises 595 letters written by 441 different writers.<sup>15</sup> These letters were captured against the background of the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars (1665-1667 and 1672-1674 respectively) and were written between 1661 and 1675.<sup>16</sup> The majority of the letters stem from 1664 (47%) and from 1672 (28%). The corpus in its entirety comprises about 245,000 words and is not parsed.<sup>17</sup> The *Letters as Loot* corpus is split up into three sub-corpora. A first sub-corpus comprises all the autograph letters, while a second sub-corpus is made up of letters that are non-autographs. The third sub-corpus contains letters of which I have not been able to establish whether they are autographs or not. These last two corpora will often be combined in the research.

These sub-corpora were created because the status of a document (autograph or not) determines the use that can be made of it in historical sociolinguistic research. This matter will be dealt with in further detail in chapter 3. In the present chapter I will focus on the practicalities of

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<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that a *writer* is not the same as an *individual*. A *writer* is a person of a certain age, with a specific regional background, belonging to a particular social class. During the lifetime of people these characteristics change (e.g. everyone ages, some people rise or fall on the social ladder) so that the same *individual* can represent different *writers* at different stages of his/her life. This will be illustrated in §2.3.1.

<sup>16</sup> The years in which the letters were written do not correspond exactly to the period in which England and the Dutch Republic were officially at war. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, ships had sometimes been under way for a while before they were confiscated and could thus have been carrying letters written before the start of a war. It also happened that people aboard a ship had a personal archive of letters they had once received. This archive could contain letters written several months or even years before the capture of the ship. Furthermore, privateering did not seem to be completely restricted to official times of war. It seems to have taken place during the build-ups and the aftermaths of wars as well.

<sup>17</sup> The term ‘word’ should not be interpreted literally here. We counted as ‘words’ elements separated from each other by spaces. Not all the ‘words’ in the corpus can thus be viewed as proper words. Some are syllables (e.g. when the term *vereenicht* ‘reunited’ is spelled as *ver\_ee\_nicht* ‘re\_united’), some are more random parts of words (e.g. when *je* ‘you’ is spelled as *j\_e* ‘yo\_u’), and some are a combination of words or of a word and a part of another word (e.g. when dealing with clitics). In spite of the fact that the term ‘word’ cannot be interpreted literally in the context of the dimensions of the corpus, I will use this term throughout the dissertation, given that the optional alternative term ‘token’ can be mistaken for an occurrence of a specific ‘type’. The exact number of words in the totality of this corpus is 244,637.

compiling the corpus in §2.1. In §2.2 I will discuss the different independent variables that are of importance for the case studies that will follow. I will briefly describe why they are relevant for my investigations and how they were put into practice. In §2.3 I will describe the contents and structure of the corpus. Some methodological issues will be discussed in §2.4 and the conclusion of this chapter is presented in §2.5.

## 2.1. Developing the corpus

The reliability and quality of my historical sociolinguistic investigations depend to a large extent on the reliability and size of the corpus used. The *Letters as Loot* corpus was therefore compiled with the utmost care and was rendered as large as possible, a process which eventually took two years to complete. In what follows I will describe the procedures that were followed in compiling the corpus. More detailed information about the creation of the sub-corpora will be provided in chapter 3.

### 2.1.1. Preparation

Different steps needed to be taken in order to get from a collection of about 38,000 Dutch letters in the London National Archives to a workable corpus fitted for sociolinguistic research. The letters in the National Archives needed to be selected, photographed, transcribed, provided with metadata and organised in such a way that sociolinguistic research of the letters would become feasible.

#### *Selection procedure and photographs*

Marijke van der Wal visited the National Archives in Kew (London) in 2007 and in 2008 to explore the wealth of letters preserved in the High Court of Admiralty's archives. During these visits she selected a fair amount of letters and photographed them. After these explorations, other members of the *Letters as Loot* team, including the present author, visited the National Archives twice a year in 2009 and in 2010 to pursue this work. For the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus the focus was on the boxes dating from the Second (1665-1667) and Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674).

The letters were selected for photographing based on a number of features: language, text type, and condition of the paper and/or ink. Only letters written in Dutch were selected and priority was given to private letters, although a small number of business letters was included as well. Most of the documents in the *Prize papers* have been preserved remarkably well, although some letters have become difficult to decipher due to tears in the

paper, faded ink or ink eating into the paper. Partly or wholly illegible letters were not selected for photographing. The photographed content of a few High Court of Admiralty boxes was provided to us by the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek* (The Royal Library, KB) who are participating in a project called *Metamorfoze* together with the *Nationaal Archief* (the Dutch National Archives).<sup>18</sup>

#### *Transcriptions*

Back in the Netherlands, these digital pictures were sent to members of the Wikiscripta Neerlandica Project. This project was set up by Marijke van der Wal in 2007 and involved a team of volunteers who provided diplomatic transcriptions of letters from the HCA archives. The transcription protocol and an example of a transcription can be found in appendices A and B.

During various correction phases as many transcription and interpretation problems as possible were solved. The volunteers sent their transcriptions back to the *Letters as Loot* research assistant who carried out a first check. The transcription was compared to the photographs one letter at a time. The transcriptions of seventeenth-century letters were always double-checked meticulously by the present writer and a last correction, aimed at filtering out any remaining problems and illegible fragments, was carried out by Marijke van der Wal. Each letter in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus has thus gone through three phases of correction. The final transcriptions resulting from this project can therefore be considered as accurate and reliable.

#### *The text files*

The final transcriptions were converted into Text files in order to create a corpus that is searchable with the computer program WordSmith, a popular corpus linguistics tool.<sup>19</sup> Deletions, problematic readings, words written in full that were originally abbreviated, and best guesses and suggestions for missing words were all tagged.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The *Metamorfoze* project is a national programme for the preservation of the Dutch paper heritage. The programme was initiated by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Science and is carried out by a joint venture of the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek* and the *Nationaal Archief*. For more information: <[www.metamorfoze.nl](http://www.metamorfoze.nl)> [08/11/2012]. The boxes were HCA 30 226-1, HCA30-227-1, HCA 30-227-2, and HCA 30-223.

<sup>19</sup> WordSmith was developed by Mike Scott from the University of Liverpool. For general information on WordSmith, see <[www.lexically.net/wordsmith/index.html](http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/index.html)> [08/11/2012]

<sup>20</sup> See appendix C for the protocol used to convert transcriptions into Text files.

*The database*

When creating a corpus one needs to be able to store contextual information about the corpus texts. It is also very useful when these texts can be organised in different ways depending on which element the researcher is interested in. Therefore the metadata of the letters need to be searchable. The *Letters as Loot* database provides these facilities. This database was developed by Marijke van der Wal and Coen Zimmerman in 2008 and was adapted slightly throughout the first couple of years in which it was used.

The *Letters as Loot* database contains information about the letters' finding place at the National Archives and the correction process each letter has been through. Furthermore it assembles information about the letter (text type, quality of the handwriting, date of writing, number of words), about the sender and the addressee of the letter (name, whereabouts, occupation, social class, age, religious background, place of birth, relationship with addressee or sender) and about the contents (which people, places and events are mentioned). The *Letters as Loot* database also has a very useful comprehensive search function which allows researchers to look for specific letters or see which fields have not been completed yet. It is of course in the researcher's best interest to gather as much information as possible in the database so that a large and balanced corpus can be created: the more information is known about a letter and its writer, the larger the chances are that they can be categorised successfully according to the different independent variables of importance and that the language in the letter can be used in as many investigations of the influence of various variables as possible. In §2.2 I will show how letters and their writers were categorised. For screen shots of the database, see appendix D.

Some data which were needed to complete the database could be found in the letter itself, but for other information more research was required. At a first stage, the internet was used to find relevant information about the letter's sender and addressee: a number of Dutch archives offer the possibility to do limited research online, many genealogists publish their findings on the web, and there are public databases which contain information about ships and their crew.<sup>21</sup> If neither the letter nor the internet

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<sup>21</sup> Online research is possible with e.g. the online register of baptism of Amsterdam, the notarial archive and the digital registers of marriage, baptism and death of Rotterdam, the online registers of marriage, baptism and death of Vlissingen, and the 'Zeeuwen gezocht' website (<[www.zeeuwengezocht.nl](http://www.zeeuwengezocht.nl)> [08/11/2012]) offering all sorts of genealogical information about people in Zeeland. Information about ships and their crew can be found in a database of VOC ships (<<http://www.vocsite.nl/schepen/lijst.html>> [08/11/2012]), a database of people aboard VOC ships (<<http://vocopvarenden.nationaalarchief.nl/>> [08/11/2012]) and

procured sufficient information, Dutch archives offered a final possibility of finding the details needed. This archival research for the seventeenth century was coupled to archival visits necessary to determine the status (autograph, non-autograph or letter of uncertain authorship) of the letters. More information about the archival research will thus be provided in the chapter which is dedicated to the autograph problem and the Leiden Identification Procedure, chapter 3.

### **2.1.2. Determining the letters' status using the Leiden Identification Procedure**

Information about the sender's gender, social class and region was not enough to create a reliable corpus for the seventeenth century. The letters also needed to be assigned to one of the three different sub-corpora on the basis of their status (autograph, non-autograph, letter of uncertain authorship). Autograph letters are letters that have been written by the senders themselves. Non-autograph letters are letters that have been written for the sender of the letter by someone else. Letters of uncertain authorship are letters for which it is unclear whether they should be classified as autographs or as non-autographs. In order to be able to distinguish between these three different types of letters, the Leiden Identification Procedure was developed. In chapter 3 this procedure will be discussed in detail. For now it suffices to note that each letter was assigned a status (autograph, non-autograph, letter of uncertain authorship) and wherever the true writer of a non-autograph or a letter of uncertain authorship was not identified, a unique code was given to the writer in question.<sup>22</sup>

## **2.2. The independent variables**

One of the elements that makes this dissertation unique in the field of Dutch historical linguistics is the fact that the focus in the case studies presented here is on social variation, and on variation related to social class and gender in particular. However, there are other external factors as well that are taken into account in the case studies of language variation and change in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic in this dissertation, namely text type,

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in the Slave Voyages database (<<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces>> [08/11/2012]).

<sup>22</sup> The codes for writers are constructed as 'X:x'. The capital 'X' stands for a code that indicates the region in which the writer was active (e.g. CAR for the Caribbean islands) and the lower case 'x' is a number or a letter indicating one particular writer for that region.

region, and age of the writer. Finally, in some case studies, language-internal factors are examined as well. In what follows, I will discuss each of the language-external factors that will be of importance for this dissertation and describe how they are operationalised in my research.

In §2.2.1 I will present the variable text type. The independent variable region will be presented in §2.2.2. The most important independent variables, gender and social class, are discussed in §2.2.3 and §2.2.4 respectively. The importance and the operationalisation of the variable age of the writer will be discussed in §2.2.5. Finally, in §2.2.6, I will discuss the factors of education and writing experience. These last two factors will not function as independent variables in my investigations, but they can and will be examined indirectly.

### 2.2.1. Text type

The first independent variable that will be introduced is text type. This variable has two variants: private and business. In chapter 1, it has been shown that text type is related to the extent to which language use in the text can be described as ‘language of immediacy’. The private letters of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus are expected to contain language use more closely related to spoken Dutch than the business letters. It is very important to note here that the case studies in this dissertation are mainly focused on the language use in private letters, given the fact that the objective of this dissertation is to describe several aspects of the everyday Dutch of the seventeenth century. The *Letters as Loot* corpus therefore mainly consists of private correspondence. Some aspects of the language use in the small sub-set of business letters will be brought to attention in chapters 4 (on forms of address), 5 (on reflexivity and reciprocity) and 7 (on apocope of the final schwa).

For seventeenth-century letters, a straightforward decision on the text type is not always possible, for the business and personal lives of seventeenth-century people were more interwoven than it is nowadays (Kooijmans 1997: *passim*). It is not unusual, for instance, that letters between business partners contain references to the health of friends and family members or that the term *vriend* ‘friend’ is used as a form of address. Also, when merchants were overseas, family members at home were sometimes relied on for help in the family business. It thus sometimes occurs that a letter from a merchant to his wife mainly consists of businesslike requests: wives were asked to pay this merchant or that friend, to collect money here or there, or to take care of goods that had been sent to the Netherlands. A consequence of this intertwining of private and business life is the existence of hybrid letters. An example of such a letter is the letter Jan Fransz Doens wrote from Surinam to his wife Neeltje Schuijen in



Vlissingen.<sup>23</sup> After an apology for not having written earlier, Jan turns to business and does not change the subject anymore. The following passage is just a fragment of the business part of the letter:

*Liefste Ick ben met freer Jacob Soetelijck aen  
Mons<sup>r</sup> Jacobes vaader sendende de somme van 10903 lb netto  
Suijcker en daer noch bij de somme van 2619 lb letterhoudt  
Daer noch bij ben Ick aen ul sendende de somme van 3583 lb  
Suijckerbruijt te weeten met de tarra van de vaeten daer  
ul moet van aftrecken: Comt dan netto suiijcker 3222 lb en  
De tarra is netto 361 lb De suiijcker moet ul in stillighheijt door  
Abraham den elt laeten verkoopen en ul moet hier seer  
sekreet in In sijn Jae ul moet het teegen u eijgen susters niet  
seggen of teegen u Eijgen broers want de suiijcker comt  
op Een ander man sijn Risikoe over: Soo drae als Mons<sup>r</sup> van  
Der beke de suiijcker verkocht heeft: soe moet ul de suiijcker  
van ons verkoopen of voor hem soot ul beliet te doen  
En laet Mons<sup>r</sup> vander beke ul dan de gerechte derde part  
van alles wat Ick hem gesonden hebben geven en eijst  
de Rekening wat het goet verkocht is*

‘My dearest, together with brother Jacob Soetelijck I am sending to Mister Jacob’s father the sum of 10,903 lb. net in sugar and with it the sum of 2,619 lb. of letterwood. On top of that I am sending you the sum of 3,583 lb. of sugar cones from which you must deduct the tare of the barrels: that gives you 3,222 lb. of sugar net and the tare is 361 lb. net. You must have the sugar sold in secret by Abraham den Elt and you have to conceal it well. Why, you cannot even tell your own sisters or your own brothers, because the sugar is transported at another man’s risk. As soon as Mister van Der Beke has sold the sugar, you must sell our sugar or sell it just before he does, if you wish. And then have Mister van Der Beke give you the third share – which you are entitled to – of everything I sent him and demand the bill of the goods that have been sold.’

In order to decide on the text type of letter, the following rule of thumb was used: if the sender and addressee of the letter were closely related to each

<sup>23</sup> Letter 17-06-2009 086-087 in the corpus (HCA 30-223).

other (e.g. husband and wife, father and son, cousin and cousin, nephew and uncle) the letter was classified as private, even if it contained information about business. If the sender and intended receiver of the letter were not closely related and if the letter did not contain any private messages other than greetings for the addressee's family and wishes for the addressee's good health, the letter was classified as a business letter.

### 2.2.2. Region

Region is an important factor of influence on language use and language change. First of all, different dialects and regiolects are used in different regions. These dialects and regiolects are not necessarily limited to spoken Dutch, but can influence the (spontaneously) written Dutch as well. Secondly, different regions may have a different socio-economical status. Supra-regional variants and standard languages are usually established in the socio-economical and political centre of a language area and as a consequence often contain relatively many elements of the dialects spoken in this centre. These elements can therefore start to spread to other regions as well. It is thus important to include region as a factor. But how should region be put into practice in the analyses of the *Letters as Loot* corpus?

For practical reasons, letters that were written in the Netherlands were grouped geographically at the level of the current Dutch provinces (see figure 2.1). Admittedly, there is still a large amount of dialectal variation within a province, but seeing the size of the corpus and the number of other factors that will also be taken into account (gender, age and social class), it is more practical to work with a few broad categories rather than with a large number of small categories. The regions that provided us with the bulk of letters are Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland. A few letters can be linked to other provinces of the Netherlands (such as Gelderland and Friesland), but considering their small numbers they were classified under the left-over category of 'Other'. This category also contains letters linked to other present-day countries, such as Norway, Germany, and Belgium. The category 'Unknown' comprises the letters that cannot be linked to a region.



**Figure 2.1: The present-day provinces of the Netherlands**

The region of North Holland is a special case. It is the province that is best represented in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus: almost half of the letters in the entire corpus were written by writers stemming from this province (286 letters out of 595 letters in the entire corpus). The letters linked to North Holland are not distributed evenly across the entire province. More than half of the letters linked to North Holland (182) originate from the province's largest city: Amsterdam. The letters linked to Amsterdam were separated from the letters linked to other towns or cities in the province for several reasons. Firstly, such a large number of letters are related to the city of Amsterdam that this city simply deserves its own category. Secondly, the city of Amsterdam was a very dynamic city: it was an important seaport and it had a large number of inhabitants, among whom many immigrants (Hart 1976: 135-181; Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 154-155, 160-161, 165-168; Sogner & Van Lottum 2007). The language use in this city might therefore differ substantially from the language use in the smaller cities and villages in the

rest of the province due to the contact between different languages and dialects, as has been argued (for Amsterdam and other urban centres in the Netherlands) by Boyce & Howell 1996, Boyce-Hendriks 1998, Boyce-Hendriks & Howell 2000, Goss 2002, Howell 2006, and Goss & Howell 2006. Thirdly, the city of Amsterdam is located in the south of the province of North Holland. The dialects spoken in this area are known to resemble South Holland dialects more closely than West-Frisian dialects, which occur in the villages to which the majority of the rest of the North Holland letters in the corpus are linked. On these last two grounds, one can expect the linguistic data for Amsterdam to differ from the data for the rest of the province of North Holland. If Amsterdam is not treated as a separate category, these potential differences cannot be examined and the data for North Holland can become distorted.

The regions that are distinguished in the case studies of this dissertation are thus Zeeland, South Holland, North Holland (Amsterdam), North Holland (rest of the province), 'Other', and 'Unknown'. How a letter was assigned to one of these regional categories depended on whether the letter was an autograph or not and on whether the letter was a private letter or a business letter. In the remainder of this section, I will discuss the different paths that were followed to identify the regions to which the letters could be linked.

#### *Autograph letters*

For autographs it was attempted to discover the sender's current or last place of residence in the Netherlands, assuming that this was a place in which the sender had his/her roots or to which the sender was strongly linked in any case. For letters sent from the Netherlands, the place from which the letter was sent is usually mentioned in the header of the letter. The writer of an autograph letter written in Middelburg, was thus assumed to have been living in Middelburg at the time of writing. If no counter indications were found, letter writers writing from Middelburg were also assumed to originate from Middelburg. The language use in the letter was then linked to the province of Zeeland.

For letters sent from overseas to the Netherlands, the region was decided upon using the address of the letter as an indication. A sender writing to his family in a Dutch city, had probably been living in this city as well until he or she left. For instance, the above-mentioned Jan Fransz Doens had written his letter himself. He wrote from Surinam, which does not give us much of a clue about his previous place of residence in the Netherlands. However, Jan wrote to his wife, who lived in Vlissingen in the province of Zeeland. He had therefore probably also lived in Vlissingen until he left for

Surinam. Jan's letter was therefore classified as a letter linked to the region of Zeeland.

For *business* letters sent from abroad, the method of using the address to identify the sender's last place of residence in the Netherlands seems somewhat less reliable. Married couples generally lived together, but business partners did not necessarily have to reside in the same city. However, if the contents of business letters sent from abroad did not provide us with any other indications, the address was used as a point of departure for a search online or in Dutch archives. More often than not, the address of a business letter sent from abroad indeed gave away the sender's regional background.

If the letters themselves could not provide the answer, the location of the letters in the archives of the High Court of Admiralty was used as a last resource. If a letter was discovered in a box which only contains letters written from North Holland to Batavia, there is a good chance that the letter is a North Holland one. However, given that the content of some boxes in the archive can be linked to different regions at the same time and given that the content of some of the boxes is jumbled up, extreme caution was asked for. This piece of evidence was therefore only used in order to get a first lead. All of the classifications were always verified when looking for more information about the sender online or in Dutch archives.

#### *Non-autograph letters and letters of uncertain authorship*

For non-autograph letters written in the Netherlands, there are several factors influencing the methods that can be used to link the letter to a region. Whenever the writer of the letter (i.e. not the person who sent the letter and whose message is conveyed, but the person who did the actual writing) was known, his or her place of residence was traced (starting from the place name mentioned in the header of the letter) and this place determined the region to which the letter was linked.<sup>24</sup> If the writer's name was not known

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<sup>24</sup> It only happens occasionally that the name of the writer of a non-autograph letter is known, for instance when this writer is mentioned explicitly in the letter itself. An example of such a letter is given in §3.2.1 in the discussion of content clues. It can also happen that the corpus contains a number of letters that have been written in the same handwriting but that have been sent by different people. Archival research can then show that the sender of one of these letters is also the writer of all of the letters. For instance, archival research carried out by Juliette Sandberg has shown that Elsje Wijbrants, sender of letter vliet-7 in the corpus, was able to write and indeed did write her letter herself. But letter vliet-20 in the corpus, a letter sent by Marte Reijnders, is written in the same handwriting as Elsje's letter. Therefore we know for certain Marte Reijnders has not written her letter herself, but that Elsje Wijbrants is the actual writer of this letter.

or if the known writer could not be linked to a certain region, everything depended on the place where the letter was written.

If the non-autograph letter was written by an unknown writer in the Netherlands, the place name mentioned in the header of the letter was used to determine the region to which the writer of the letter was probably most closely linked. Whenever a place name was not mentioned, information about the sender's place of residence was traced. When found, this information was extended to the writer of the letter for it is plausible that the actual writer of a non-autograph letter lived in the same region as its sender.

This is easy to show: if people could not write, they could ask friends or family to write the letter for them or they could go to a professional writer. There is no reason why these people would have their letter written by someone far away from home. The actual writer was usually someone from their direct environment. The seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus contains numerous examples which illustrate this. There is for instance Maartje Jaspers who wrote a letter for her sister-in-law Annetje Barens. Both women lived in Rotterdam. There is Antheunis Verbrugge who wrote letters for his mother Maaike Andries in Vlissingen. Or Marretie Flipse who wrote letters for her sister Elisabeth Flipse Amelingh in the city of Amsterdam. Of course it is possible that the writer of a non-autograph letter originally came from a different region than the region in which he or she was writing this letter, but it is assumed that such cases are in the minority. Besides, even if some of such writers originated from a different region, they were clearly living in another region at the moment of writing and thus stood in (close) contact with people and the language from this last region.

If a non-autograph letter written by an unknown writer was written abroad, there was no chance to link this letter to a specific region with any certainty. The place in which it was written does not necessarily say anything about the Dutch region it could be linked to. Secondly, it is dangerous to assume that the region to which the sender of the letter is linked is also the region to which the actual writer of the letter is linked: while it is true that on many ships a large part of the crew originated from one and the same city and people writing letters for each other abroad may have been neighbours at home, it is also true that members of a ship's crew could have very diverse regional backgrounds.<sup>25</sup> The same goes for Dutch

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<sup>25</sup> An example of this can be found in letter KB 227-2 010-011 in the corpus (HCA 30 227-2). In this letter, Jan Eghberts, originating from Amsterdam, informs his mother who is living in the same city that he has sent a small keg of oil to the wife of his assistant. This woman lives in Vlissingen. Jan Eghberts and his assistant were workmates – and maybe even friends – working on the same ship. But they were linked to different regions.

people living in the colonies abroad. They could easily befriend other people living in those colonies with very different regional backgrounds. Non-autograph letters written by unknown writers abroad were therefore classified as letters for which the region of the writer is unknown.<sup>26</sup>

Letters of uncertain authorship were handled in the same way as non-autograph letters written by an unknown writer. If they were written in the Netherlands, the place where the letter was written was decisive for the region. If they were written abroad, the letters were treated as letters for which the region is unknown.

#### *Foreign writers*

It sometimes happened that a letter was written in Dutch while I suspected or knew (from elements in the language use or from references in archives) that its writer had a foreign background (e.g. Scandinavian or German). This is not surprising due to the fact that the Dutch Republic – and the large cities in the Dutch Republic in particular – counted a large number of German and Scandinavian immigrants in the seventeenth century (Hart 1976 126-127, 162-171; Kuijpers 1997: 510; Kuijpers 2005: 336, 379; Sogner & Lottum 2007: 155). Some of these immigrants married Dutch people and settled in the Netherlands for good, which explains why these immigrants sometimes wrote letters in Dutch. A fragment from such a Dutch letter written by an immigrant is presented below.<sup>27</sup> It is a fragment from a letter written by Annetie Harms who was born in Bentheim (Germany) to her husband Harmen Gerritsen, a Dutchman who was born in Kampen (in the Dutch province of Overijssel). The couple lived in Amsterdam at the time of writing (November 1664). Annetie's letter is written in Dutch, but her language use differs in some respects from the language use typically found in letters written by people who were born in Amsterdam. A very striking feature of her Dutch is for instance the spelling of the preposition *te* 'to', which she spells as <to> or <tho>:

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<sup>26</sup> Letter 3-1-2008 283-285 in the corpus (HCA 30-228).

<sup>27</sup> Originally, the region for these letters was marked as *neutral* in order to keep these non-autograph letters apart from autograph letters of which the writers could not be linked to a region successfully. However, since these *neutral* letters are treated in the same way as letters for which the region is unknown as far as investigations into regional distributions of certain features is concerned and since the autograph and the non-autograph letters are clearly distinguished from each other in the *Letters as Loot* corpus anyway, I will not use this category in this dissertation in order to avoid confusion.

*en ul schrijft wan daer **tho** komen het welck ijn dese tijt van oerlog  
nijt nijet gheraet saem en ijs en ock met en vrent **to** ghan en en mens  
ijs sterveijcllijck eijn ijck ul nijt en vonde waer sou ijck met mejn  
leve keijnt dan hen en onse leijven her kon mej ock komen **tho**  
haelen so most daet onnosele keijnt swerven van de en plaes ohp de  
andere*

‘And you write me to go there, which is not wise in this time of war.  
And travelling with a stranger. And a human is mortal. And if I  
could not find you there, where would I go with my sweet child?  
And our sweet Lord could come and get me too and then that  
innocent child would have to wander from one place to another.’

For letters such as this one the same procedure as described above was used to determine the region to which the letter was most closely linked. Regardless of the foreign background of the writer, such letters could thus be assigned to one of the Dutch regions, although the letters were marked in the database as letters with foreign influence. Annetie’s letter, for instance, was categorised as a letter linked to North Holland (Amsterdam). I included letters from these foreign writers in my corpus in this manner, because I want to treat speakers of Dutch with another native tongue as full members of the Dutch language community in the seventeenth-century Republic. To exclude them from this study would be in direct conflict with what this dissertation is trying to achieve: to fill the gaps in the sociolinguistic history of Dutch and to present a more complete picture of the variation that was present in the Dutch everyday language of the seventeenth century.

### **2.2.3. Gender**

Gender is the first of the three variables that will only be used in research on letters from the sub-corpus of autograph letters. This social variable has repeatedly proved to be a strong variable in sociolinguistic research (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 110). Although I categorise writers as male or female solely on their biological sex, I prefer to use the term ‘gender’ rather than ‘sex’. The former term emphasises the importance of the specific social roles and practices that come with the two sexes and stresses that “no biological determinism is intended” (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 110; Cheshire 2002: 423-424).

Men and women in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic held different positions in society. They had different economical, socio-cultural and legal roles (De Wit 2005: 61, 2008: 138). For instance, married women were legally not allowed to handle their own affairs; they always needed a



male guardian (De Wit 2005: 61, 2008: 138).<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, although there were jobs that could be done by men as well as by women, there were occupations typical of the particular sexes. Seagoing occupations were typical of men, for instance, while care giving occupations were typical of women (Van Deursen 1988: 7-8; De Wit 2005: 71, 2008: 138). Some guilds even excluded women from membership (De Wit 2005: 71, 2008: 138). According to Van Deursen (1988: 11), a typical women's occupation was an occupation that did not require a large capital or much schooling. This suggests that women typically received less schooling than men, which is confirmed by Kuijpers (1997: 513). This has consequences for women's literacy of course: Van Doorninck and Kuijpers (1993: 14) calculated that about 70% of the men must have been able to write in Amsterdam in 1670, compared to only 44% of the women.

These differences between seventeenth-century men and women could be reflected in aspects of their language use. Therefore, gender was taken up as an important independent variable in the case studies of this dissertation. Luckily, it was easy to determine the gender of the writers of autograph letters based on the sender's name. For the few cases in which the sender's name was missing, it was possible to decide on the gender based on the relationship between the letter writer and the intended receiver or based on information about the sender's activities in the letter. If the sender was writing the letter to 'my beloved husband', for instance, the sender was obviously female. Take the letter written to Adriaen Nousters.<sup>29</sup> The sender never mentions his/her name, but near the end of the letter there is a closing formula that says *bij mijn ul moeder* ('written by me your mother'). The sender was thus obviously female.

#### 2.2.4. Social class

The second social variable that will only be used in research on autograph letters is the variable social class, "a central concept in sociolinguistic research" (Ash 2004: 402, Nevalainen 1996: 57). There are many different definitions of the concept of social class, but the most well-known to sociolinguists is probably the definition used in a study by Labov (1966): "an individual's life chances stated in terms of his relation to the production and acquisition of goods and services" (Ash 2004: 402). Given that the variable social class has been shown time and again to be strongly linked to language use, there is no need to explain in detail why it is deemed to be

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<sup>28</sup> However, for wives of men at sea exceptions could be made. Since their husbands were often absent, these women were regarded as 'occupational widows' and were often capable of contracting all the same (De Wit 2005: 61-62, 71-7; De Wit 2008: 138).

<sup>29</sup> Letter 05-01-2010 080-081 in the corpus (HCA 30-225).

important for this dissertation as well. What is more interesting with respect to the implementation of this variable in the following case studies, is how this variable was operationalised.

In modern sociolinguistic research several characteristics are usually combined to determine a person's social class, such as education, occupation, income, occupation of the parents, and living area (Ash 2004: *passim*). For this historical corpus, however, it is impossible to determine all of these characteristics for each letter writer. Even if all these data had been kept in some archives, it would be a Sisyphean task to trace them. Therefore a simpler method was used: the social class of letter writers was determined on the basis of their occupation, "the single indicator that accounts for by far the greatest portion of the variance" (Ash 2004: 419). Only if more data were readily available, other elements were taken into account, such as the occupation of the writer's father. For female writers, whose occupation is often unknown, the social class of their (late) husbands (if the women were/had been married) or fathers (if the women were not married) was copied. This is in line with the spirit of the age, since the pre-eminence of men in the public sphere was more often than not taken for granted in the early-modern period (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 190). A woman's social status can thus be expected to have been heavily dependent on the status of her male guardian.

The classification of the different occupations into social classes needed to be historically relevant; therefore historians' views upon the social structure in the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century were taken into account. My classification of the different social classes was based on a framework which is commonly used among Dutch historians (Looijesteijn 2012: 221): it is used by Frijhoff & Spies (1999: 189-190), Van Leeuwen (2000: 41-42 in Looijesteijn 2012: 221), Knevel (2002: 219-220 in Looijesteijn 2012: 221), and Bruijn (2008: 16) among others. While some scholars prefer to merge particular categories, the basis of the classification remains the same throughout the publications on the Early-Modern Dutch history (Looijesteijn 2012: 221). I will describe this classification as it is presented in Frijhoff & Spies (1999: 189-190) who identify six different layers in seventeenth-century society. The first group is the patriciate: the nobility and the regents' families. The second layer consists of rich merchants, ship owners, entrepreneurs, large landowners, academics, high ranked officials and officers in the army and in the navy. The third group has amongst its members: small entrepreneurs, well-off farmers, prosperous shop owners, good craftsmen, captains, lower officers, officials, teachers, village chaplains, notaries public and clerks. The fourth group is for small farmers, low officials, small shop owners, craftsmen and modest skippers. The one but lowest group is the group of the labourers in employment,

carriers, seamen, soldiers, servants and the manual labourers. People from this group can easily sink downwards to the lowest group of the beggars, have-nots, vagrants, deserted seamen, deserted soldiers, and day labourers.

For practical purposes the number of social classes in the corpus was kept at four, a number of social divisions that is said to be ideal for sociolinguistic research and is used often in other studies (Labov 2001: 31; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 136-137). The patriciate and the nobility are not represented in the corpus; therefore this layer was left out. The two lowest social categories mentioned by Frijhoff and Spies were merged into one category in my corpus: the lower social class. The table below gives an overview of the social categories I will use in my analyses.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Lower class LC</b>	labourers in employment, carriers, seamen of low rank, soldiers, servants, manual labourers, beggars, have-nots, vagrants, deserted seamen and soldiers, day labourers
<b>Lower-middle class LMC</b>	small farmers, low officials, small shop owners, craftsmen, skippers
<b>Upper-middle class UMC</b>	small entrepreneurs, well-off farmers, prosperous shop owners and craftsmen, captains, lower officers, officials, teachers, village chaplains, notaries public, clerks
<b>Upper class UC</b>	rich merchants, ship owners, entrepreneurs, large landowners, academics, high ranked officials, officers in the army and in the navy

**Table 2.1: The four social categories used in my research**

I will illustrate how the social class of writers in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus was determined with two examples. First, the female letter writer Maertie Nannings. Maertie wrote several letters to her husband, Pieter Pauelsz., but none of those letters clearly states what Maertie did for a living.<sup>30</sup> However, it is known that Maertie's husband, Pieter, was a carpenter on a ship, an occupation that is linked to the lower-middle class. Therefore, Maertie was assigned to the group of lower-middle class writers.

<sup>30</sup> Letters 3-1-2008 091-092, 3-1-2008 093-094, 3-1-2008 097-098, 3-1-2008 099-100, 02-07-2010 206-207, and 16-06-2009 155-157 in the *Letters as Loot* corpus (HCA 30-647).

The letter writer Doede Ennes Star also presents an interesting case.<sup>31</sup> In a letter to his parents, Doede reveals that he had run away from the family he was staying with in Spain and that he has spent the last couple of years partly as a prisoner and partly as a mercenary in the army. At the moment of writing, Doede is working aboard a ship to pay for his crossing back to the Netherlands. On the basis of Doede's recent occupations and adventures, one could be tempted to assign him to the lower class. However, one must take into account that Doede is the son of Enno Doedes Star, a well-known Dutch admiral. Since his father was most likely a respected member of the upper class, Doede was also assigned to the upper class.

Writers whose social class could not be traced were placed in the 'unknown' group. The majority of these writers of unknown social status probably belonged to either the lower or the lower-middle class (as far as I can tell on the basis on their handwriting and the contents of their letters), but could not be placed into one category with certainty on the basis of external information. This is no surprise, for the lives of people from these classes are usually less well documented than the lives of people from the higher classes.

When dealing with these social categories, one must keep in mind that these groups were not completely separated from each other. Family ties often crossed the borders of adjoining categories and there was some social mobility in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 190). Social climbers, people who climbed up the social ladder during their lifetime, were marked in the database. There are only five of them, which is probably far from all of the social aspirers quietly present in the corpus. It is difficult to find them, since one requires knowledge about many years of a person's life to be able to classify them as social climbers. One would need information about the occupation of the person's father (as it would indicate the social class in which the person 'starts' life) and the career of the person him/herself. It was certainly not feasible to unearth this information for every writer in the corpus, if this information was available at all.

Take for instance Arnoud Adriaensen as a typical example of a writer in the database. Arnoud wrote a letter to his wife Jacomijntje Louwers in Vlissingen.<sup>32</sup> Arnoud's occupation is not mentioned in his letter and I can only guess that he is not the captain of the ship he is sailing on and that he has a low or middle rank on board. In a database in the archive of Zeeland I found Arnoud as a petty officer responsible for the supplies of the ship 'The rising sun' in 1668.<sup>33</sup> It is unclear whether this was already a higher rank

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<sup>31</sup> Letter 05-01-2009 025-026 in the *Letters as Loot* corpus (HCA 30-643).

<sup>32</sup> Letter 06-01-2010 160-161 in the *Letters as Loot* corpus (HCA 30-644).

<sup>33</sup> The database in which the information was found is the Poortvliet database (see §3.3.2).

than he had in 1664. Arnoud is not mentioned in this database again; hence I cannot say whether he was appointed to higher positions on his next journeys. Since the Old Notarial Archive of Vlissingen has been lost, no notarial deeds or wills of Arnoud or his family can be traced which may contain information about his occupation in a later state of his life. Who his father was and what he did for a living will remain a mystery as well, since no act of baptism can be found. No further information about the man seems to be available. Therefore, there is no way to tell whether he was a social climber or not. The same goes for the majority of the writers in the corpus. Only the lives of a minority of them are documented well enough to decide whether they are social climbers or not. Therefore, the influence of social mobility on language use in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus will not be examined.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2.5. Age

The social variable age – the third independent variable that will only be used in research on autograph letters – can be linked to two types of linguistic change. “Age stratification of linguistic variables can reflect change in the speech of the community as it moves through time (*historical change*), and change in the speech of the individual as he or she moves through life (*age grading*)” (Eckert 2001: 151). The variable age will be examined with apparent-time research in the case studies of this dissertation. This is because the *Letters as Loot* corpus does not consist of two or more comparable sub-corpora for two or more moments in time, which would be needed for real-time research (Eckert 2001: 153). Admittedly, some letters in the corpus stem from around 1664 and other letters were written around 1672. However, the letters will be treated as letters from the same period, given that the time span between these two moments in time is short (8 years). I will thus treat the letters written around 1664 and the letters written around 1672 as letters stemming from the same period.

For practical reasons, the number of age groups was limited to three plus a group for the writers whose age could not be determined. The three age groups are: younger than 30 years of age, in between 30 and 50 years of age, and older than 50. Some people could be classified based on information in records of baptism or their birth date in genealogical overviews. For people whose year of birth was unknown, their age was estimated based on information about their family situation and their activities.

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<sup>34</sup> This is unfortunate, since earlier research has proven it to be an important factor (e.g. Nevalainen 1996: 73; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 135; Labov 1972: 286 in Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 152).

Men and women with small children or new-born babies or men and women who did not mention any children and whose parents were still alive at the time of writing were added to the youngest age group. This was done based on the impression gained from registers of marriage and baptism that people usually married (for the first time) when they were in their twenties and did not wait long to start a family. Working with this assumption, I can allot to the middle group men and women with a couple of children or with at least one child that seems to be older than five or six years old. People with grandchildren or children old enough to procure them with grandchildren and people who had retired from work or who complained about their old age were allotted to the oldest group.

It is beyond dispute that this method did not offer watertight guarantees. There will always be exceptions: people who marry at a very late or at a very young age, or couples that have their first baby only after ten or more years of marriage. However, these exceptions are not expected to influence the results greatly, given the rather large number of different writers whose language use will be examined.

#### **2.2.6. Education and writing experience?**

Other important independent variables for research on the *Letters as Loot* corpus could be the level of (writing) education and the level of writing experience of the writers, two factors that are closely linked (Elspaß 2005: 46). After all, as was described in §1.2.1, earlier research has proved (writing) education to be strongly linked to certain variables in written language use (Vandenbussche 2006: 440, 453-454, Elspaß 2005: 40-51; 67-71). Furthermore, it is not difficult to imagine that letter writers who wrote and read (letters) frequently wrote differently than letter writers who generally did not need to read or write for their livelihood and only put pen to paper in exceptional cases. This has been shown for nineteenth-century German (Mihm 1998 in Vandenbussche 2006: 453-454) and nineteenth-century Dutch in the city of Bruges (Vandenbussche 2007). Distinguishing between 'labour-oriented' and 'writing-oriented individuals', as Vandenbussche (2006: 454) describes them, may thus be very useful for the analysis of the language use in the *Letters as Loot* corpus.

Regrettably, there is little to no information to be found in Dutch archives on the education of the seventeenth-century writers in the *Letters as Loot* corpus. The relationship between education and language use can thus not be examined directly in the private letters of the corpus. Nor is it possible to determine letter writers' exact level of writing experience, since it would require detailed knowledge about their daily lives. However, the level of education and writing experience can be taken into account indirectly through the variables social class and gender. It is the case that men and

members of the upper classes in general received a better (writing) education and had more writing experience in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic than women and members of the lower social classes did, which is due to the different roles of men and women and the different social classes in society and the cost of writing instruction (Van Doorninck & Kuijpers 1993: 14; Kuijpers 1997: 501, 504, 513; Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237-238). Although education and writing experience will not function as independent variables in the case studies of this dissertation, their influence on language use in the letters can and will be examined indirectly through the variables gender and social class.

### 2.3. The seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus

Above I have described the independent variables that are of importance for my historical sociolinguistic investigations of seventeenth-century Dutch in letters. In what follows, I will describe each of the three sub-corpora of the *Letters as Loot* corpus in general and go into details regarding the distribution of the writers and the letters across the above-mentioned variables. It should not be a surprise that the distribution of the writers across all the different categories in the corpus is not completely balanced. Since this is a historical corpus that will be studied linguistically for the first time and that should therefore contain as many letters from as many different writers as possible, groups of writers that were overrepresented were not reduced to obtain complete balance. On the other hand, there are up to 6 different independent variables that will be taken into account and, as will become clear below, there are more slots to fill than there are different writers in the collection of letters used to build the *Letters as Loot* corpus. The corpus structure is thus bound to show some gaps.

#### 2.3.1. The sub-corpus of autographs

In this sub-corpus of autographs, most letters are private: the sub-corpus includes 260 private letters written by 202 different writers which comprises almost 118,000 words. Apart from these private letters, a small number of business letters is included: 47 business letters written by 41 different writers and comprising about 19,000 words. The complete sub-corpus of autographs contains 307 letters written by 232 different writers. The sum of the writers of private and business letters ( $202 + 41 = 243$ ) exceeds the number of different writers in the entire sub-corpus of autographs (232). This is explained by the fact that 11 writers occur as writers of both private and business letters.

It is also interesting to note that we are dealing with 232 writers, but with 230 individuals. Two individuals wrote letters at different ages so that each of them actually represents two different writers (cf footnote 15). The corpus contains two letters written by the merchant Jan Jacobsen Tinnegieter. One letter was sent in 1664, but the second letter was sent eight years later, in 1672. I believe that Jan was between 20 and 30 years old when he wrote his first letter, but that he was over thirty when writing his second letter. This one individual should therefore be represented as two different writers in the corpus: as *a man younger than thirty* from Zeeland belonging to the upper-middle class on the one hand, and as *man between thirty and fifty years of age* from Zeeland belonging to the upper-middle class on the other hand. The same applies to Lieven de Wever: the corpus contains a letter written by him in 1665 and one written in 1672.

Independent variables of importance for the sub-corpus of autographs are: the sender's gender, class, age, and the region to which the sender is most closely linked. How these variables are represented in the sub-corpus of autographs will be discussed for the private and business letters separately.

#### *Private letters*

The distribution of the writers across the different regions is presented in table 2.2. With sixty-one writers from Amsterdam (NH-ams) and 43 writers that can be linked to another part of North Holland (NH), this province is best represented. The second region in line is Zeeland (*Zee*), with 59 writers. Twenty-two writers were linked to South Holland (SH) and 14 writers come from other regions: Flanders, Friesland and Germany. Three writers were left that could not be linked to a region with reasonable certainty.

	<i>Zee</i>	<i>SH</i>	<i>NH-ams</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<b>Tot</b>
<b>Writers</b>	59	22	61	43	14	3	<b>202</b>

**Table 2.2: The distribution of the writers of private autographs across the different regions**

The writers of the private autographs stem from different social groups. Table 2.3 shows the distribution. Although the largest group of writers is linked to the upper-middle class, the corpus also comprises writers from the lower classes. Ten writers are members of the lower class and 36 were assigned to the lower-middle class. The upper class is represented by 17 writers. A large part of the writers categorised as 'Unknown' probably belong to one of the lower classes as well (see §2.2.4).



	<i>LC</i>	<i>LMC</i>	<i>UMC</i>	<i>UC</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<b>Tot</b>
<b>Writers</b>	10	36	105	17	34	<b>202</b>

**Table 2.3: The distribution of the writers of private autographs across the different social classes**

About a quarter of the private autographs have been written by women. The language use of a total of 59 different women (in 71 letters) is therefore available for research. The rest of the letters (189 letters) have been written by 143 different male writers. The ratio between men and women may not be an ideal 1:1, but this number of seventeenth-century female writers stemming from all sorts of social layers and different regions is already unique in the history of Dutch historical sociolinguistics. The difference between the number of male and female writers in the corpus of autographs is caused by two factors. A first factor is that seventeenth-century women were on the whole less literate than men (Van Doorninck & Kuijpers 1993: 14; Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237-238). A second factor is that it is often harder to determine whether a woman was able to write than it is the case of men, because it is often more difficult to find information about seventeenth-century women and their occupation (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 190-191). This causes a larger share of the letters written by women to end up in the sub-corpus of letters of uncertain authorship. This difference between men and women will also be discussed in §3.2.1.

Table 2.4 shows the distribution of the writers of the private autograph letters across the different age groups. The majority of the writers are under 50 years of age: only thirteen writers are older than 50. Ninety-three writers are younger than 30, 80 writers are between 30 and 50 years old. Sixteen writers could not be assigned to one of these age groups.

	<i>&lt;30</i>	<i>30-50</i>	<i>50+</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<b>Tot</b>
<b>Writers</b>	93	80	13	16	<b>202</b>

**Table 2.4: The distribution of the writers of private autographs across the different age groups.**

To conclude this section, I include table 2.5 and 2.6 which show the distribution of the male and female writers in this sub-corpus across region, class, and age.

Men		Region							
Class	Age	Zee	SH	NH ams	NH	Other	Unknown	Tot Age	Tot Class
LC	<30			1	1			2	5
	30-50		3					3	
	50+								
	Unknown								
LMC	<30	4				7		11	20
	30-50	1	1			2	1	5	
	50+		1	1				2	
	Unknown	1			1			2	
UMC	<30	23	1	10	6		2	42	86
	30-50	18	2	8	5			33	
	50+			2	2			4	
	Unknown			1	4	2		7	
UC	<30			4				4	11
	30-50	1		1	3			5	
	50+				1	1		2	
	Unknown								
Unknown	<30	5				1		6	21
	30-50	2	1	4	1	1		9	
	50+								
	Unknown					6		6	
<b>Total Region</b>		55	9	32	33	12	2	<b>TOT</b>	<b>143</b>

Table 2.5: The distribution of the male writers of private autographs across class, region, and age.

Women		Region							
Class	Age	Zee	SH	NH ams	NH	Other	Unknown	Tot Age	Tot Class
LC	<30		1	1	1			3	5
	30-50			1	1			2	
	50+								
	Unknown								
LMC	<30	1	4	2	3			10	16
	30-50		1	3	2			6	
	50+								
	Unknown								
UMC	<30		1	4			1	6	19
	30-50	2	1	9	1			13	
	50+								
	Unknown								
UC	<30		1			1		2	6
	30-50								
	50+		1	1	1	1		4	
	Unknown								
Unknown	<30		3	4				7	13
	30-50	1		3				4	
	50+			1				1	
	Unknown				1			1	
<b>Total Region</b>		4	13	29	10	2	1	<b>TOT</b>	<b>59</b>

Table 2.6: The distribution of the female writers of private autographs across class, region, and age.

Since I want to take into account four variables (gender, age, class, and region) which each have a number of variants, there is a considerable number of slots within the sub-corpus of private autographs into which writers can be fitted (240 in total). Since this sub-corpus of the *Letters as Loot* corpus only comprises letters written by 202 different writers, it is only logical that some slots remain empty.

*Business letters*

A small sub-corpus of business letters was compiled in order to enable me to compare the language use of private letters with that in business letters. Since this is no more than a sideline in my research, the sub-corpus of business letters was kept small: it contains only 50 letters. Of these 50 letters, 47 letters are autographs and have been written by 41 different writers. Again the variables gender, class, age and region are of importance for these 47 autograph business letters. However, since this sub-corpus of business autographs does not contain any letters written by women or members of the lowest social class, the variable gender will not be dealt with in the following discussion and the lower class will be left out when dealing with the variable social class.

The distribution of the writers across the social classes can be gathered from table 2.7. It is undeniable that the upper-middle class is strongly represented in the business letters. This social class is even more dominant than in the sub-corpus of private letters: 35 of the 41 different writers of business letters belong to this social group.

	<i>LMC</i>	<i>UMC</i>	<i>UC</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<b>Tot</b>
<b>Writers</b>	1	35	2	3	<b>41</b>

**Table 2.7: The distribution of the writers of business autographs across the different social classes.**

When it comes to region, the province of North Holland is best represented, with sixteen writers in total. Almost all of these writers (15) are linked to the Republic's largest city: Amsterdam. Eleven writers are hard to link to a particular region. The region of Zeeland follows closely with ten writers in total. Only one writer is linked to South Holland. That leaves us with three writers related to other regions: two writers who originate from Flanders and one writer, Heinrich Rode, whose name and language use reveal that he must be linked to Germany or a German speaking region.

	<i>Zee</i>	<i>SH</i>	<i>NH-ams</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<b>Tot</b>
<b>Writers</b>	10	1	15	1	3	11	<b>41</b>

**Table 2.8: The distribution of the writers of business autographs across the different regions.**

The distribution of the writers of business letters across the different age groups is shown in Table 2.9. The age of a large group of writers could not be determined. Seventeen men had to be assigned to the 'unknown' group. This can be explained by the fact that business letters do not contain

elaborate references to the writer's private life, while it is exactly this kind of references that reveals the most about a sender's age. Out of the 24 remaining writers, nine were attributed to the youngest age group and fifteen to the middle-aged group.

	<i>&lt;30</i>	<i>30-50</i>	<i>50+</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<b>Tot</b>
<b>Writers</b>	9	15	0	17	<b>41</b>

**Table 2.9: The distribution of the writers of the business autographs across the different age-groups.**

Finally, table 2.10 shows the distribution of all the writers of business letters across age, social class and region. Again, not every slot of the table could be filled, but in this case the overrepresentation of the upper-middle class is particularly striking. When dealing with this sub-corpus of business autographs one needs to be well aware of the fact that it could almost be considered as a sub-corpus of upper-middle-class letters at the same time.

Business		Region							
Class	Age	Zee	SH	NH ams	NH	Other	Unknown	Tot Age	Tot Class
LMC	<30								1
	30-50								
	50+			1				1	
	Unknown								
UMC	<30	3		3			2	8	35
	30-50	5		8			1	14	
	50+								
	Unknown	1	1	2		2	7	13	
UC	<30			1				1	2
	30-50	1						1	
	50+								
	Unknown								
Unknown	<30								3
	30-50								
	50+								
	Unknown				1	1	1	3	
<b>Total Region</b>		10	1	15	1	3	11	<b>TOT</b>	<b>41</b>

Table 2.10: The distribution of the writers of business autographs across class, region, and age.

### 2.3.2 The sub-corpora of non-autographs and letters of uncertain authorship

There are 117 non-autograph letters in total that were written by 77 different writers. The number of words in these non-autograph letters amounts to about 45,600. This leaves 171 letters of uncertain authorship. These letters have been written by 149 different writers and comprise about 62,300 words. Since the sub-corpora of non-autographs and letters of uncertain authorship will both be used in the same way in the various case studies of this

dissertation, they can be combined into a larger corpus of 288 letters. The majority of these letters, 285 of them to be precise, are private letters. There is only one non-autograph business letter, which could not be linked to a region. Only two of the letters of uncertain authorship are business letters: they have been written by two different writers – one linked to Amsterdam and the other linked to the province of North Holland. Given these low numbers of business letters, I will not distinguish between private and business letters in the further description of this combined sub-corpus below. Although, of course, I will maintain the distinction throughout the various investigations presented in this dissertation.

The sub-corpora of non-autographs and letters of uncertain authorship combined contain 288 letters written by 222 different writers. The words add up to about 107,900. Just as in the corpus of autographs, the number of writers in the combined corpus of non-autographs and letters of uncertain authorship (222) is smaller than the sum of the writers of the separate sub-corpora ( $77 + 149 = 226$ ). This is the case because of four writers who appear both in the sub-corpus of non-autographs and in the sub-corpus of letters of uncertain authorship. Take for instance the writer A:Z. This writer is responsible for 4 letters written in Amsterdam: two letters from Liesbeth Ariaans, one letter from Elisabeth Rijnhout-Goskes, and one letter from Annete Klaas. I am certain that Liesbeth Ariaans and Elisabeth Rijnhout-Goskes have not written their letters themselves, so their letters were incorporated in the sub-corpus of non-autographs. But there is still doubt about whether Annete could write. Her letter is therefore incorporated in the sub-corpus of letters of uncertain authorship. The writer A:Z thus features in both sub-corpora.

The sum of the writers of the sub-corpus of autographs and the sub-corpus of non-autographs and letters of uncertain authorship ( $232 + 222 = 454$ ) does not equal the total number of different writers in the corpus given at the start of this section (441). This discrepancy is accounted for by 13 writers who are to be found both as writers of autographs and as writers of non-autograph letters. Take for instance Marretie Flipse. She sent a letter to her brother in law of which we know for certain that it is an autograph since we could retrieve her signature in the Archive of Amsterdam. But Marretie also wrote letters for her sister, Elisabeth Flipse Ameling. Marretie is thus found as a writer in the corpus of autographs as well as in the corpus of non-autographs.

Table 2.11 represents the distribution of the writers of non-autograph letters and the letters of uncertain authorship across the different regions. As always, the region of North Holland has a large number of writers, 104 in total: 64 writers are linked to Amsterdam, while 40 writers are linked to another town or city in North Holland. The regions of South

Holland and Zeeland are almost equally well represented, with 30 and 25 writers respectively. Seven writers were linked to other regions: Germany, Norway, Friesland, Flanders and Gelderland.

	<i>Zee</i>	<i>SH</i>	<i>NH- ams</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<b>Tot</b>
<b>Writers</b>	25	30	64	40	7	56	<b>222</b>

**Table 2.11: The distribution of the writers of the non-autograph letters and the letters of uncertain authorship across the different regions.**

What seems to be surprising is that the second largest group of writers is the ‘unknown’ group of 56 writers. This is very different from the sub-corpus of autographs, in which the number of writers that could not be linked to a specific region was only four. There is a simple explanation for this anomaly which has to do with the fact that the writers of non-autograph letters are often unknown and the writers of letters of uncertain authorship are unknown by definition. When letters pertaining to these sub-corpora were written from abroad, this causes major problems in identifying the region to which the writer could be linked. A more detailed explanation was already given in §2.2.2.

### 2.3.3. Restriction on number of words per writer

The description above has shown that the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus does not contain only one letter per writer. Of several letter writers represented in the corpus I had two or more letters at my disposal before the construction of the corpus, but I stress here that I did not use all available letters in the final version of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus. In order to avoid overrepresentation of linguistic data of certain writers, the number of words per writer in the corpus was restricted to a maximum of about 2000 words. This limit was chosen on the basis of the longest letter in the entire collection of seventeenth-century letters at my disposal which was provided by a writer of whom we only have one letter: the letter of Trijntje Batens to her husband, which counts 1841 words. For writers of whom there is more than one letter available to us, no letters were left out of the corpus if the sum of words of all these letters was lower than 2000. If the sum of words in the different letters exceeded this number significantly, one or more letters were not taken up in the final *Letters as Loot* corpus. Because of this limit, prolific writers do not have a (much) larger share in words than writers of whom the corpus contains only one letter.



### 2.3.4. Summary

Since the structure of the *Letters as Loot* corpus for the seventeenth century is rather complicated, I present a simple overview of the corpus in table 2.12. This overview lists the number of letters, writers and words comprised by each sub-corpus.

<i>Sub-corpus</i>	# <i>letters</i>	# <i>writers</i>	# <i>words</i>
Autographs (private)	260	202	118,000
Autographs (business)	47	41	19,000
Autographs Total	307	232	137,000
Non-autographs (private)	116	76	45,370
Non-Autographs (business)	1	1	230
Non-autographs Total	117	77	45,600
Letters of uncertain authorship (private)	169	147	62,040
Letters of uncertain authorship (business)	2	2	260
Letters of uncertain authorship Total	171	149	62,300
Non-autographs combined with letters of uncertain authorship (private)	285	219	107,410
Non-autographs combined with letters of uncertain authorship (business)	3	3	490
Non-autographs combined with letters of uncertain authorship Total	288	222	107,900
<b>Entire corpus (private)</b>	545	408	225,410
<b>Entire corpus (business)</b>	50	44	19,490
<b>Entire corpus</b>	595	441	244,900

**Table 2.12:** An overview of the structure of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus

## 2.4. A methodological remark

As far as the analysis of the data in the case studies is concerned, I have chosen to use descriptive statistics only. As explained in great detail by Vosters (2011: 218-222), there is much disagreement within (historical) sociolinguistics and the field of language variation and change about the employability of different types of tests. There are some frequently used methods within these fields, namely variable rule analysis (Tagliamonte 2006) and logistic regression (usually performed in SPSS), but the use of these two standard statistical methods in (historical) sociolinguistic research has recently been criticised as well. This is due to the fact that neither of

these methods take into account the variation between different language users (Johnson 2009, Tagliamonte & Baayen 2011). This is important for the case studies of the *Letters as Loot* corpus. In these studies, the social variables are linked to the writers of the letters. It often happens that one letter writer provides several tokens, and in these cases the letter writer “becomes a source of variation that should be brought into the statistical model” (Tagliamonte & Baayen 2011: 143). However, neither the variable rule analysis nor logistic regression treat the writer as a variable, and using these tests would thus produce unreliable results: the tests would show significance too easily.

Given this criticism and the fact that the new statistical methods suggested in Johnson (2009) and Tagliamonte & Baayen (2011) are not feasible yet, I followed Vosters (2011) in using descriptive statistics in the case studies of this dissertation. I will analyse the distributional differences of the linguistic variants under examination with the help of cross tabulation.

## 2.5. Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown how the *Letters as Loot* corpus was built and how the independent variables were operationalised. The next chapter will show why and how the status of the letters, the final independent variable, was determined. Both these chapters combined tell the complete story of the compilation of the corpus. The entire process of transcribing and correcting transcriptions, getting to know the social history of the seventeenth century and tracing the desired information about writers was very time-consuming, but yielded rich rewards in the form of a corpus unparalleled in the history of sociolinguistic research on seventeenth-century Dutch: a corpus of more than 240,000 words in nearly 600 different (and mainly private) letters, written by 441 writers – men *and* women – of all sorts of social backgrounds.

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## Chapter 3. Leiden Identification Procedure<sup>35</sup>

A substantial part of the population of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic was unable to write, so it is not surprising that not all of the letters in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus were written by their actual sender. While the sender of the letter is usually known, it is often unclear who the writer of the letter was: was it the sender himself/herself, was it a family member, a friend or a professional writer? This is problematic for an analysis of the relationship between social characteristics of writers and their language use. It is important to know which letters are autographs (letters that have been written by the sender himself/herself) and which ones are not, so that it is clear whether the social characteristics of the sender of a letter can be safely identified as the social characteristics of its writer. In order to determine this, the Leiden Identification Procedure (LIP) was developed. This procedure combines different form and content indications of a letter with information about its sender.

In this chapter, I will describe the development of the LIP and how it was used for the *Letter as Loot* corpus. By way of introduction, I will briefly describe the seventeenth-century situation regarding literacy in §3.1. In §3.2 the different pieces of evidence that can provide information on the status of a letter will be presented and I will show how these have been combined into a procedure. How the LIP was put into practice will be discussed in §3.3, together with descriptions of the archival sources that were consulted in the search for valuable information about letter senders.

### 3.1. Literacy

#### 3.1.1. The situation in the seventeenth century

Although the rate of literacy in the seventeenth-century Netherlands was high compared to other European countries at the time, there was still a considerable part of the population of the Dutch Republic that could neither read nor write (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237). Some of the seventeenth-century Dutch people who were able to read did not have any writing skills, since reading and writing were usually taught in succession, not simultaneously. Many children quit school before they had reached the writing stage because they had to start to earn their own living. On top of that, the costs of writing instruction were higher than those of reading

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<sup>35</sup> Part of this chapter was also presented in Nobels & van der Wal 2009 and Nobels & van der Wal 2012.

instruction, since ink, quills and paper were expensive (Blaak 2004: 13; Kuijpers 1997: 501; Van der Wal 2002b: 9-13). Not all parents could afford this writing education.

Some of the seventeenth-century people who had learnt to write had little writing experience because they had not received a very long training or because they did not need to write in order to earn their living. When Van Doorninck and Kuijpers (1993: 14) calculate that in 1670 in Amsterdam 70% of the men and 44% of the women could write their own names, we must realise that some of these signers were probably not capable of producing anything more than their signature (Kuijpers 1997: 501; Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237). Illiterates or unskilled writers could ask other people to write letters for them: professional writers (such as ship's writers or public writers) or acquaintances with writing skills (what we call 'social writers').

### 3.1.2. The consequences for the corpus

At the start of chapter 2, I briefly described that the corpus is split up into three subcorpora which will be used for different purposes. In this section I will explain why this make-up of the corpus was used. To do this properly I will first elucidate my use of the terms *sender*, *writer*, and *encoder*. The *sender* of the letter is the person in whose name the letter is written, the person whose thoughts are conveyed in the letter. The *writer* of the letter is the person who performed the mechanical act of writing the letter. In some cases, the writer of a letter is not its sender, e.g. when the sender of the letter was illiterate and had appealed to a professional writer or a social writer to produce the letter. In these cases, we also call the writer of the letter an *encoder*. An *encoder* is a person who wrote a letter for someone else.<sup>36</sup>

With autographs there is a direct relationship between the sender and the language used in the letter. Therefore, autographs offer data that are suitable for sociolinguistic research: it is legitimate to examine how the sender's social variables sex, social status and age are linked to the language in the letter. Research on regional variation is also possible if I succeed in pinpointing a sender's regional background.

For non-autograph letters this possibility of a link between the sender's social variables and language does not exist for the obvious reason that the sender did not write the letter; someone else did. In most of the cases it is not clear who the encoder of a non-autograph letter was, which makes it impossible to find information about this writer's social background. Even when it is known who did the actual writing, it might be too simplistic to

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<sup>36</sup> It is important to note that this use of the term *encoder* differs from the use in Dossena 2008 and in the introduction to Dossena & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008, where *encoder* is used as a more neutral term for each person who writes a letter.

straightforwardly link this writer to the language used in the letter. Note that it is often hard to tell how exactly these letters were produced. Did the sender just mention a few topics that had to be included in the letter or did he or she dictate the letter word for word? In the case of the first scenario, the language data could be linked to the writer's social and regional characteristics. But if the second scenario applies, some aspects of the language use might be linked to the sender's characteristics (e.g. word order), but other aspects (e.g. spelling) to the writer's characteristics. And if the letter came about through both dictation by the sender and independent work by the writer, the situation becomes even more complicated. Therefore non-autograph letters are not suitable for research into the relationship between the social characteristics of the writer and the language in the letter. Non-autograph letters thus need to be separated from autograph ones.

The same goes for the letters of uncertain authorship. Since there is no certainty about the identity of the writer of the letter, these letters cannot be used for every type of research. They too need to be distinguished from autographs. However, this does not mean that non-autograph letters and letters of uncertain authorship cannot play any role at all in my analyses. One element about which I can be relatively certain regarding these two groups of letters is the region in which they were written (see the previous chapter for a detailed explanation). Therefore non-autographs and letters of uncertain authorship can be used for research into regional variation.

To conclude, it is important for the analyses that autographs on the one hand and non-autographs and letters of uncertain authorship on the other are treated separately. An analysis of the letters needs to establish whether or not sender and writer were identical in order to avoid the risk of linking specific language use to the social rank, age or gender of someone who did not write the letter at all. Without such an analysis I would be unable to guarantee the reliability of my results. The LIP was developed to meet these needs.

## 3.2. The Leiden Identification Procedure

### 3.2.1. The evidence

The LIP combines different pieces of information in order to determine the status of a letter. These pieces of evidence can be found in the content of a letter, the handwriting in which it is rendered and in information about the life of the letter's sender. The combination of these different indications can provide straightforward evidence for the status of a letter or can allow the researcher to make educated guesses. In what follows, I will first discuss

each indication separately and then show how they can be combined in §3.2.2.

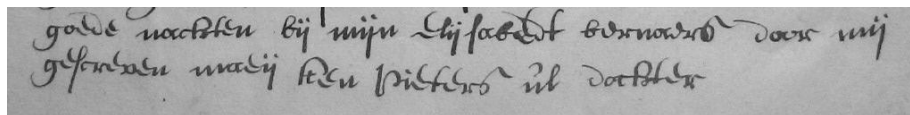
#### *Content*

An explicit reference to the writing process in a letter is a first and an obvious content indication; one which does not, however, occur very often. A good example can be found in the letter written by T. Saman to her mother Magdalena Simons De Luck in 1665.<sup>37</sup> She writes:

*Jck hadde v l wel voor deese geschreeuen maer jck hebbe gewacht om ul meteen de eeuarentheijt mijner penne te laete zijen*

‘I would have written to you earlier, but I have waited so that I can immediately show you how experienced I have become in writing.’

While this letter irrefutably shows that it is an autograph, other letters prove that they are definitely not autographs. An example of such a letter is one written on behalf of Elisabeth Bernaers.<sup>38</sup> The letter to her husband is written in the first person singular and signed with the name of Elisabeth Bernaers, but next to and below this signature one finds the lines that identify the true writer: *door mij gescreven maeij ken pieters ul dochter* (‘written by me, Maaïke Pieters, your daughter’). This evidence is conclusive enough to assign this letter to the corpus of non-autograph letters.



**Figure 3.1: The explicit reference to the writing process in the letter of Elisabeth Bernaers.**

#### *Same writer, different sender*

The second indication applies if two or more letters are found that have been written in the same hand, but that were sent by different people. In this case at least one of the letters is a non-autograph. Illustrative examples are two letters written on 10 December 1664 in Saint-Kitts, in the roadstead of Basseterre.<sup>39</sup> Although the first letter (figure 3.2) was sent by Claeijs Pietersen and the second (figure 3.3) by Jan Lievensens, the handwriting and lay-out of the letters are so similar that both of them must have been written

<sup>37</sup> Letter 3-1-2008 057-058 in the corpus (HCA 30-647).

<sup>38</sup> Letter 3-1-2008 129-130 in the corpus (HCA 30-223).

<sup>39</sup> Letters 3b-1-2008 187-188 and 3b-1-2008 203-204 in the corpus (HCA 30-644).

by one and the same person. Since the content of the letters does not indicate that one of the senders is better educated or of higher rank than the other, and since the letters have been written aboard a ship, in a very neat and professional handwriting that does not seem to match the low social class to which both senders belong, it is assumed that a third person (maybe the ship’s writer, the clergyman or one of the petty officers) wrote the letters for both Claeijs and Jan. In any case, it is clear enough that these letters should not be marked as autographs.

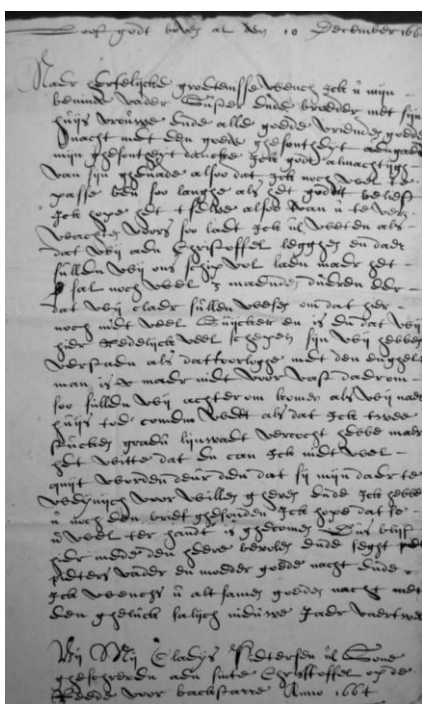


Figure 3.2: The letter sent by Claeijs Pietersen

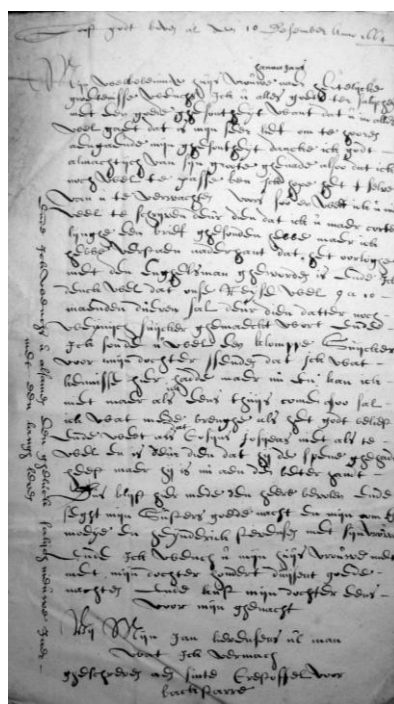


Figure 3.3: The letter sent by Jan Lievensens

One has to bear in mind that this ‘same hand evidence’ can only be applied if there are other letters available for comparison that were written around the same time in the same area. Furthermore, it is important to realise that this indication cannot give a decisive answer about the status of those letters which are written in a unique handwriting: letters that do not have a ‘twin’ are not necessarily free from suspicion. I have to allow for the possibility that letters from a different sender and written by the same writer have not survived or have not been discovered yet, or that writers sometimes wrote only one letter for someone else.

*The Groningen Intelligent Writer Identification System (GIWIS)*

Since comparing the handwriting of different letters takes up a considerable amount of time, I was fortunate to benefit from the expertise of a team of artificial intelligence specialists at the University of Groningen. This team, under the direction of Lambert Schomaker, has developed a computer program that is able to compare a sample of handwriting to a large set of samples and identify matching ones. This program, called the Groningen Automatic Writer Identification System (GRAWIS), was originally meant for forensic purposes, but with a few modifications it can also be applied to historical texts (Bulacu 2007; Bulacu & Schomaker 2007a; Bulacu & Schomaker 2007b; Brink 2011: 117-124). A modified version of this program, called GIWIS (Groningen Intelligent Writer Identification System), was developed for the use of *Letters as Loot* by Axel Brink of the University of Groningen (Brink 2011: 117-124).

GIWIS allows one to compare the handwriting of one specific letter to an entire set of letters. After the necessary preparatory work (which involves uploading pictures into the program and selecting sections of the pictures that are suitable for processing), GIWIS lists the ten samples that most closely resemble the handwriting under investigation. The program can compare different hands using several features, such as the slant of the script and the thickness of the quill strokes. At this stage, the powers of perception of the researcher come in, for the program *always* lists samples that are supposed to show a similar handwriting, even if the overlap between samples is very small to almost non-existent. It is thus the researchers' responsibility to check whether one of the listed 'matches' is a real match. Although human beings are still undoubtedly better at recognizing matching handwritings, computers are quicker at scanning large sets of examples. Using the GIWIS program has saved a lot of time without negatively affecting the reliability of the conclusions about the status of letters.

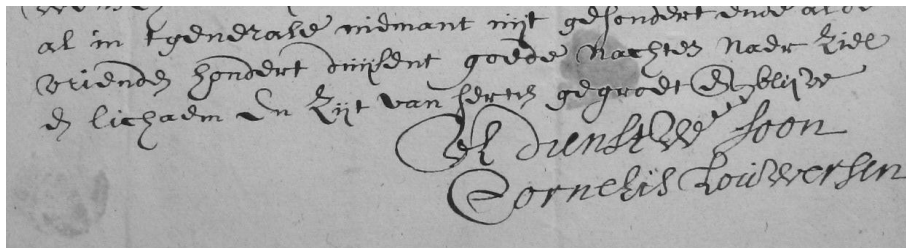
*Handwriting and signature*

Not only the handwriting *across* letters can be compared in order to establish whether the letter is an autograph or not, but also the handwriting *within* one and the same letter can be scrutinised. If the sender's name or signature at the bottom of the letter differs noticeably from the hand used in the body of the letter, the sender may not have written the letter him/herself. This is certainly the case if the handwriting in the letter itself is neat and steady while the signature shows an inexperienced hand. It is very likely – because of the educational circumstances – that there were people whose writing experience was just sufficient to sign their name, but who were not able to produce an entire letter (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237). And apparently, some of these senders wanted to sign the letters that had been written for them,



maybe from a point of honour, as a proof of authenticity, or as a more personal sign of life. To researchers, these signatures are a sign that a letter is not an autograph.

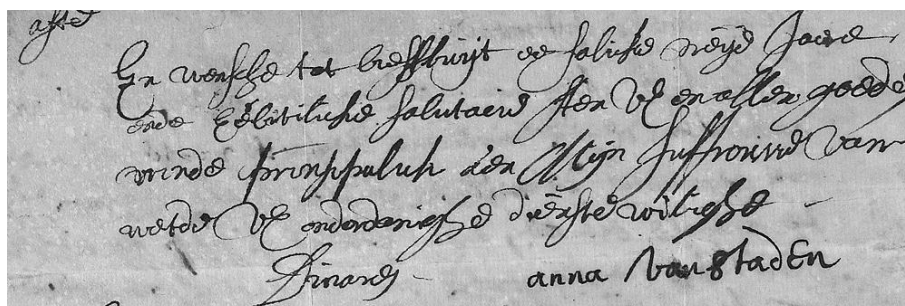
Although a signature can sometimes offer convincing proof of the non-autograph nature of a letter, it is to be handled with caution, for experienced writers sometimes used a larger or different handwriting for their name or signature as part of their stylistic habit.<sup>40</sup> A different handwriting in the sender's signature therefore does not always point to a different identity for sender and writer. An example of this is shown in figure 3.4. One can only be certain that one is dealing with a non-autograph only if the signature seems to have been written by a less experienced writer than the person who wrote the body of the letter. Figure 3.5 below shows a signature that suggests a less experienced writer than the hand in the body of the letter does. This letter sent by Anna van Staden is indeed a non-autograph letter. The comparison of the handwriting in the body of the letter with that of other letters shows that the letter was written on behalf of Anna by Benedictus Marius.



**Figure 3.4:** Part of a letter sent by Cornelis Louwersen (letter 3-1-2008 059-060 in the corpus, HCA 30-647). The signature is rendered in a larger hand, but does not suggest an unskilled writer.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. the letter model written by the seventeenth-century writing-master Hendrik Meurs (Croiset van Uchelen 2005:37).



**Figure 3.5:** Part of a letter sent by Anna van Staden (letter KB 227-2 040-041 in the corpus, HCA 30-227-2). The signature is rendered in a hand that suggests less experience at writing than the hand used in the body of the letter.

#### *Handwriting and occupation*

This section will deal with the fourth and the fifth piece of evidence, since they are closely linked. The fourth indication is related to the occupation and social status of the writer. If a letter's contents reveal enough about the life of the sender for me to determine his/her occupation, I can estimate how likely it is that the sender of the letter was an experienced writer. Captains, helmsmen, salesmen, doctors, lawyers, book keepers, clergymen and ship's writers for instance had to master writing in order to study or carry out their respective professions (Van Doorninck & Kuijpers 1993: 46-50, 58-61).<sup>41</sup> Therefore, when I encountered senders with one of these occupations, I assumed that they had written their own letter, unless there was any evidence suggesting otherwise.

The occupation of male senders is often easy to discover. Men often mention their occupation in the address of the letters they send to their wives or they describe their daily activities in the letters themselves.<sup>42</sup> The occupation of men is sometimes recorded in notarial deeds, in registers of marriage, or in registers of baptism. There is a lot of information about

<sup>41</sup> Captains and helmsmen are assumed to be able to write because they needed to be able to read and sign bills of lading, to keep the ship's log, to plan their route and read maps, and they had to correspond with their principals and clients. Furthermore, Bruijn (2008:135) reports that from the seventeenth century onwards some chambers of the Dutch East-India Company demanded candidates for a helmsman's or captain's position to pass a written exam.

<sup>42</sup> The occupation of the sender sometimes occurs in the address because the women to whom the letters were to be delivered were often described in relation to their husbands. An example of such an address is: *Aen neeltien sicpkcs huis vrou van schipp' broer Jochemsz in de corte doele steegh tot Enchuisen* 'To neeltien sicpkcs, wife of skipper broer Jochemsz on corte doele lane at Enchuisen' (from letter 3b-1-2008 159-160 in the corpus, HCA 30-642-1).

men's occupations, but what their wives, mothers or daughters did to earn money is rarely mentioned. Occupation seemed to have been a less important aspect of the identity of women (Schmidt 2005: 11, 17). This makes it difficult to discover what women did to earn a living. We may assume, however, that most of the women were engaged in domestic work, manual labour or the retail trade (Van Deursen 1988: 8-13; Schmidt 2005: 8; De Wit 2008: 147-149). Most of the women probably did not need any writing skills in order to make a living in this manner. This does not mean that these women could not write, but it implies that one can almost never say for certain that a woman could write based on her occupation. This renders it difficult to determine the status of letters sent by women based on what is known about their occupation.

If someone's occupation is unknown or if it does not come with the necessity of him/her being literate, not all is lost for this indication. For example, letters from female senders who were married to a captain or a skipper are readily marked as autographs unless counter-evidence prevented me from doing so. The reason for this is the fact that in many cases the wives of captains and skippers looked after their husbands' businesses when they were at sea (De Wit 2008: 161-163; Bruijn & Van Eijck van Heslinga 1985: 117; Bruijn 1998: 67).<sup>43</sup> It was a great benefit to these women if they were able to read and write in order to take care of all the financial and organizational aspects of this duty. Furthermore, people of a high social rank were also likely to be experienced writers, because it is plausible that their parents were wealthy enough to offer them an education that included the costly writing instruction (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 238). So if senders are believed to be members of the upper classes – through (family) relations with other people from the upper classes, for instance – it is assumed that they could write. How I made decisions on people's social ranks was described in the previous chapter.

The fifth indication is very closely related to the previous one; it is in fact an elaboration upon the fourth one. If one can find out a sender's social status, one can compare the level of experience of the handwriting to the expected level of education.<sup>44</sup> Neatly written letters of low ranking

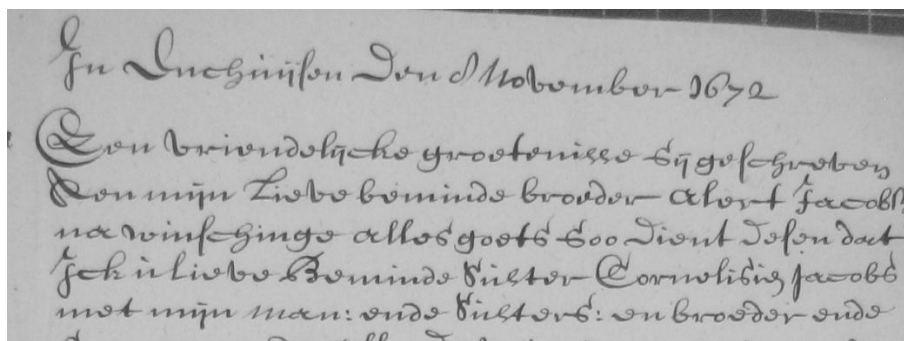
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<sup>43</sup> Evidence for this is also to be found in some letters in the corpus. Cf. the letters of Katelijne Haexwant to her husband Leendert Ariensen Haexwant, rear admiral, in which she informs him about financial matters (Van Vliet 2007: 314-333). Or cf. the letters Elisabeth Flipsen Amelingh sent to her husband Lucas Pruijs. In one of the letters she includes a list of things she bought for her husband's journey (letter 06-01-2009 243-245 in the corpus, HCA 32 1845-2) and she repeatedly mentions other financial affairs of which she is taking care.

<sup>44</sup> The level of experience of a writer is a subjective criterion to some extent. However, it seems to be possible to distinguish different levels of experience based

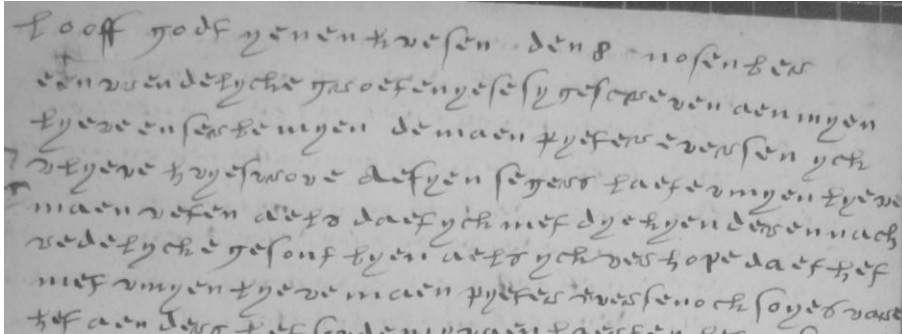
senders are of particular interest: they may well be non-autographs. However, this evidence may present us with problems if we do not take into account two important facts. Firstly, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between an experienced, but sloppy hand and an inexperienced one. Secondly, a person's occupation and social status may change. It might be possible, for instance, that the son of a captain (belonging to a middle-high social rank by birth) starts out his career as a sailor of low rank. The neat handwriting in his sailor's letter would then not be oddly out of place.

An example of a letter that is categorised as a non-autograph on the basis of a discrepancy between the quality of the hand and the expected quality of the handwriting based on the sender's social class is a letter sent by Cornelisje Jacobs. Cornelisje writes to her brother, Alert Jacobsz, who is a petty-officer's assistant. On the basis of Alert's occupation, both brother and sister are placed in the lowest social category. But Cornelisje's letter is not rendered in a hand that is normally associated with this group. Her letter is written in a neater, more refined and more experienced hand than one would normally expect to find. Figure 3.6 below shows the handwriting in Cornelisje's letter. Figure 3.7 shows a handwriting that is typically associated with handwriting of members of the lower social classes: the graphemes seem to have been formed one by one in a rather awkward manner, the lines are sloping and capital letters are rare. Considering these differences, Cornelisje's letter was assigned to the non-autograph letters.



**Figure 3.6: The handwriting in Cornelisje's letter (letter 17-06-2009 289-290 in the corpus, HCA 30-223).**

on various features, such as whether the letters have been drawn graph by graph or not, the regularity of the handwriting in form and size, and the slope of the lines. For more information about different styles of handwriting and different levels of writing experience, see for instance Fairman (2000, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2008) and Dury (2008).

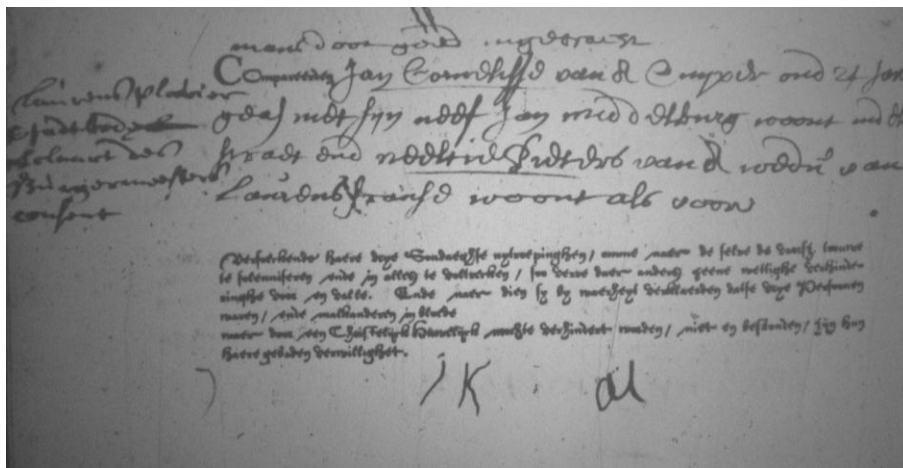


**Figure 3.7: The handwriting of a typical lower- or lower-middle-class writer (letter 17-06-2009 244-246 in the corpus, HCA 30-223).**

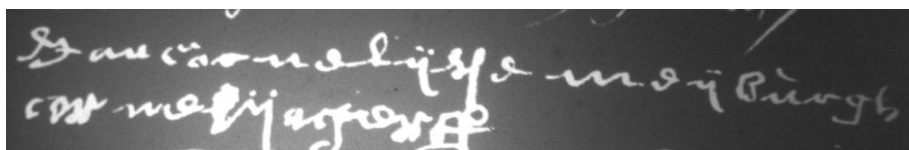
#### *Signatures in archives*

The last – and often the only – way to determine with certainty whether a letter writer and sender are identical is to compare the handwriting and/or signature used in the letter to other samples of the sender's handwriting that are known to be authentic. It is not always easy to find these samples, but it is certainly possible. For particular cities that have accessible and searchable archives, one can retrieve a surprising number of such samples with the help and advice of archivists.

Authentic samples of handwriting can be found in registers of marriage, notarial deeds or in petitions. When these documents show a mark or a sign instead of the signature of a letter's sender (as in figure 3.8), it is highly likely that the sender of the letter could not write and had someone else write his/her letter. If these documents show a signature for the letter's sender (as in figure 3.9), this signature needs to be compared to the signature and the handwriting in the letter itself.



**Figure 3.8:** The certificate of marriage of Jan Cornelissen and Neeltje Pieters (Municipal archive Amsterdam, DBT Amsterdam) showing two signs at the bottom of the certificate – a squiggly abbreviation for Jan Cornelissen (Kornelissen) at the left and an indefinable sign for Neeltie Pieters at the right – indicating that neither husband nor wife could write.

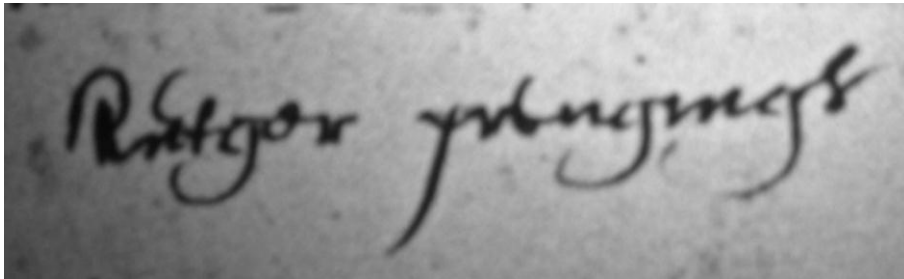


**Figure 3.9:** Signatures at the bottom of the will of Jan Cornelisz Meijburgh and Cornelia Gerrits (Municipal Archive of Rotterdam, ONA Rotterdam).

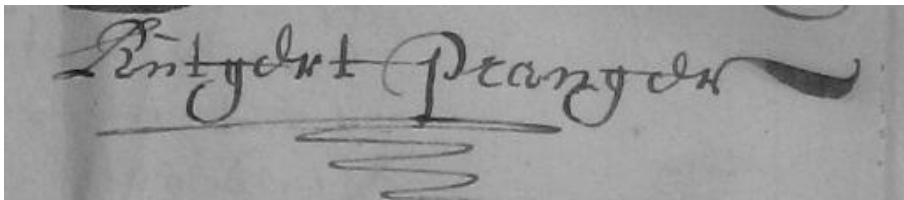
These official documents often present researchers with very compelling evidence as to the authenticity of a letter, but there are three elements that complicate this working method. The first problem is that not every archive is easy to search through, which may cost a researcher a considerable amount of time and thus limits the number of people that can be tracked down.

Another problem has to do with names in the seventeenth century. Seventeenth-century surnames were often patronymic and some first names – like Jan, Cornelis, Claes, Pieter and Jacob for men, and Trijn, Mary, Neel, Guurt, Griet and Anna for women – were very frequent (Van Deursen 2006: 31-33). The use of patronymics coupled with little variety in first names produced a huge number of namesakes. This makes it difficult to successfully track down people with popular names like ‘Jan Pietersen’ or ‘Trijntje Jans’ if one does not have more detailed information at one’s disposal.

The third obstacle is that the letters and the signatures in official documents may be years apart from each other. If these signatures differ, this does not necessarily mean that they were not written by the same person. A person's handwriting can change over time due to practice, lack of practice, or ailments. Take for example Rutger Pranger: the signature on his marriage certificate from 1643 is not identical to the signature on Rutger's letter, but this does not have to mean that he did not write his own letter. Since there are 30 years between these two signatures, it is possible – even likely – that Rutger's handwriting changed over time.



**Figure 3.10: Rutger Pranger's signature on his marriage certificate dating back to 1643 (Municipal Archive Amsterdam, DTB Amsterdam)**

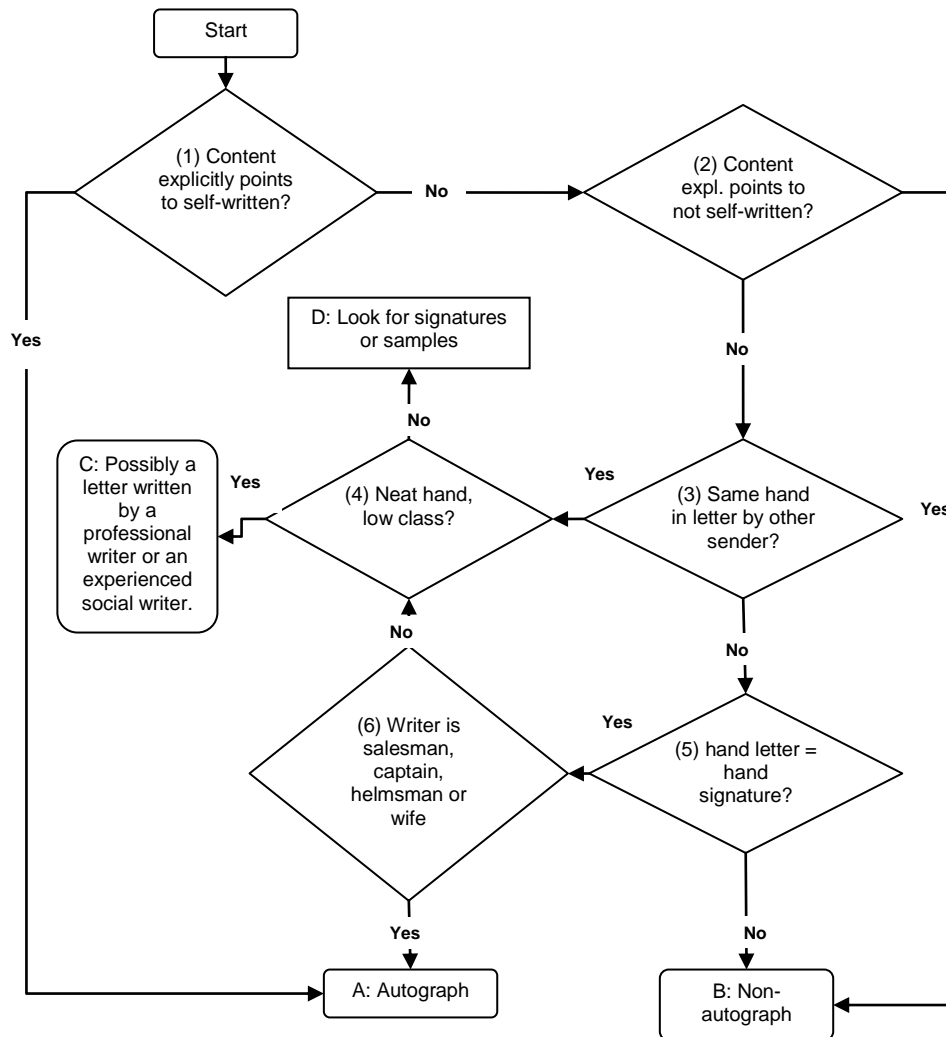


**Figure 3.11: Rutger Pranger's signature on a letter sent by him in 1673 (letter 3b-1-2008 240-242 in the corpus, HCA 30-645).**

### 3.2.2. A flow-chart

Most of the indications presented here do not offer 100% certainty about the status of a letter and should be handled with care. But when used carefully and combined whenever possible, these pieces of evidence may furnish clear proof for the authenticity of the corpus data or may enable researchers to make at least educated guesses about the status of seventeenth-century letters.

Some of the above-mentioned indications are very telling, while others only become important if a number of other indications cannot provide conclusive results. In order to visualise this, I transformed the list of indications into a flow chart (figure 3.12) which takes into consideration different priorities and allows us to examine every letter thoroughly, as well as efficiently.



**Figure 3.12: The flowchart**

The flow chart starts with the content of the letter. If a letter mentions explicitly that it is an autograph or a non-autograph (box 1 and 2), one need not look for further evidence and can go straight to the relevant conclusion (A or B). If the content does not offer any information about the writing of the letter, the corpus must be checked for letters written in the same hand, but sent by someone else (box 3). If there are such letters, it must be checked whether they were all sent by people of low status, but written in an experienced hand (box 4). If this is the case, chances are high that we are dealing with letters written by a professional writer or possibly with letters



written by a social writer belonging to the upper-middle or upper class (C). If they are not all neatly written letters sent by people of low status, one can only learn more about the potential writer by looking for signatures or handwriting samples of the senders concerned (D).

If the letter is the only letter in the corpus which shows a certain hand, the signature must be scrutinised (box 5). If it is not written in the same hand as the body of the letter and if it seems to be written in a less experienced hand, we are probably dealing with a non-autograph letter (B). If the hand in the signature does not seem to be different from that in the rest of the letter, it is time to take into account the occupation and social status of the sender (box 6). As I have explained above, if the writer is a salesman, a captain, a helmsman, a lawyer, a doctor, a clergyman, a ship's writer, or someone of high social status, it is quite likely that the letter is an autograph (A). If the sender of the letter falls into neither category, the only option left is to compare the sender's handwriting with what one would expect of someone with the sender's status (box 4). If the handwriting is very neat, while the sender is of low status, it might be possible that a professional writer or a friend who was an experienced writer interfered (C).<sup>45</sup> If the handwriting does not seem to be very deviant from what could be expected, the letter might be self-written. But because the writer could have been a non-professional writer as well, the only way to find out for certain is to look at authentic samples of handwriting or signatures, (D). The letters that fall into category A are identified as autographs, those of categories B and C as non-autographs. The letters in category D might prove to be either autograph letters, non-autograph letters, or letters of uncertain authorship, depending on the authentic handwriting samples or signatures that can be traced.

Two further remarks have to be made about the procedure. Firstly, if particular striking indications for a specific letter are clear at first sight, there is no harm in skipping steps in the flowchart. The chart's chief purpose is to help analyse letters that do not immediately signal whether they are autographs or not. Secondly, it is not always possible to be one hundred percent certain about the status of a letter without the evidence of authentic handwriting or signature samples.

### 3.3. Using LIP in practice

However neatly arranged the Leiden Identification Procedure may be, putting it into practice with a corpus of nearly 600 letters required some

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<sup>45</sup> Other indications that suggest an experienced or even a professional writer are: names in the text or in the signature written in a slightly larger hand, embellishments and flourishes in the margins, and a cursive hand.

extra organisation. In this section I will briefly describe how the process was brought to a favourable conclusion.

### **3.3.1. Classification based on place of writing and first analyses**

The first step of the entire process consisted in grouping all the letters based on the place where they were written. I benefited from this classification in that it greatly diminished the number of letters that each letter needed to be compared to in order to determine whether the handwriting in this letter occurred in other writings as well, since it is most likely that letters written by the same writer have been sent from one single place or region. This decrease in the number of comparisons needed increased the chances of GIWIS listing an identical handwriting in its top ten of similar handwritings.<sup>46</sup>

Each sub-group of letters was handled separately. First, every letter pertaining to one sub-group was studied using all the indications from the LIP except for the 'same writer different sender' evidence and research in archives. Then the digital photographs belonging to the letters were fed into the GIWIS program and adapted. If the sub-group contained fewer than fifteen to twenty letters, the GIWIS program was not used and the handwritings were compared manually. The results of the comparisons were added to the findings of the first check.

### **3.3.2. Archival research**

Determining the letters' status and the completion of the database were not finalised just yet, however. In order to dot the i's, the number of letters of uncertain authorship needed to be restricted and this could be done by comparing different hands to authentic signatures or handwriting samples in archives. For this purpose, the letters were re-grouped according to the city or village in the Netherlands to which the sender of the letter could be linked. For instance, to the group of letters written in the city of Middelburg I added letters that were written abroad but that were sent by people originating from Middelburg.

Based on the preliminary results of the LIP, a decision was made on which senders were to be handled with priority in the archives: these were senders of letters of uncertain authorship or senders of letters that had been appointed to the corpora of autographs or non-autographs on the basis of an

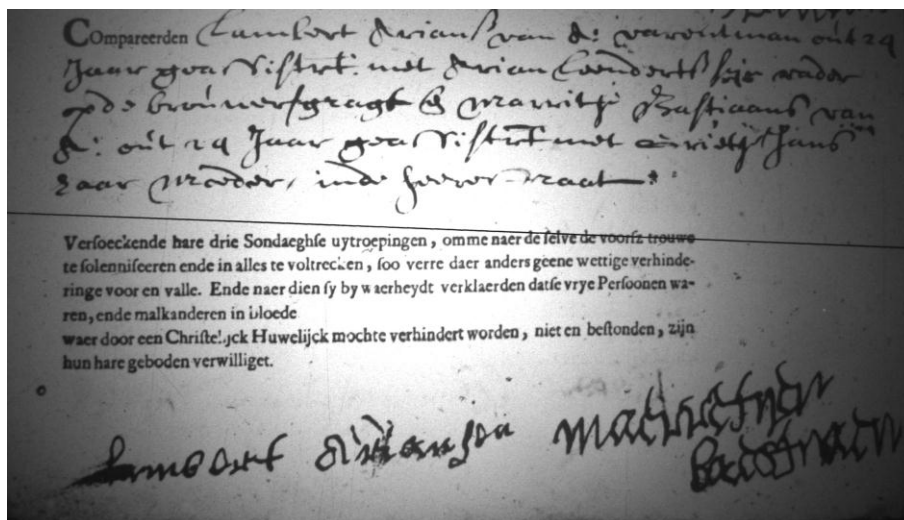
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<sup>46</sup> This was confirmed by Axel Brink, one of GIWIS' designers, in private correspondence [10/02/2011]. If the program needs to compare a sample of handwriting to 600 letters instead of to 60 letters, the chances that the true identical handwriting will be listed in GIWIS' top ten of similar handwritings are smaller. Therefore keeping the number of letters that need to be compared as low as possible increases the reliability of the program.

educated guess. The archives that offered a fair chance of finding signatures and to which a substantial number of senders could be linked were given priority: the Municipal Archive in Amsterdam, the Municipal Archive in Rotterdam, the West-Frisian Archive in Hoorn, the Archive of Zeeland in Middelburg, the North Holland Archive in Haarlem, the Regional Archive in Leiden and the Regional Archive in Alkmaar. In what follows, I will briefly explain which sources were used in each archive.

#### *Amsterdam*

The register of marriage in the Municipal Archive of Amsterdam (*Stadsarchief Amsterdam*) contains a wealth of signatures, since newly weds in the seventeenth-century Dutch capital were requested to sign this register. A signature, mark or sign is thus bound to be discovered when one manages to trace a sender's certificate of marriage. On top of that, the certificate of marriage almost always contains information about the bride and groom's age, occupation and place of origin. These registers are easily accessible and therefore offer a good chance of finding new information. The figure below shows the certificate of marriage for Lambert Ariansen and Marritje Bastiaans.



**Figure 3.13: The certificate of marriage of Lambert Ariensz and Marritje Bastiaans (Municipal Archive of Amsterdam, DTB Amsterdam)**

Their signatures can be seen at the bottom of the picture. The written part of the certificate reads:

*[Compareerden] Lambert Ariansz van A: varentman out 29 jaar geassistrt met Arian Leendertsz, sijn vader op de brouwersgragt ende marritje Bastiaans van A: out 29 Jaar geassistrt met Grietje Jans haar moeder, inde heerestraat*

‘[appeared as a party:] Lambert Ariansz from A(msterdam) sailor 29 years of age assisted by his father Arian Leendertsz, (living) on the Brouwersgracht and Marritje Bastiaans from A(msterdam) 29 years of age assisted by her mother Grietje Jans (living) on the Heerestraat’

The notarial archive in Amsterdam is not easily accessible, since it has not been indexed for person. The notarial archive is actually a collection of archives of individual notaries public. The extent of the corpus combined with poor accessibility renders this notarial archive unsuitable for a search for handwriting samples and signatures.

#### *Rotterdam*

In Rotterdam, unlike in Amsterdam, signatures cannot be found in the register of marriage since newly-weds were not requested to sign it. A good source for signatures, signs or marks does, however, exist in the form of the extensive Old Notarial Archive (ONA) in the Municipal Archive of Rotterdam (*Gemeentearchief Rotterdam*). This archive has been indexed for persons and part of the archive is even digitally searchable. Especially when a person can be traced in the digital database (which can be consulted online), it becomes fairly easy to find the appropriate microfiche in the Municipal Archives and look for signatures, signs or marks. For instance, I found one of the senders in my corpus, Francois Pennenburg, in the digital database of the ONA in Rotterdam (see figure 3.14). The matching microfiche showed Francois’ signature (figure 3.15) which matched the signature and the handwriting in his letter and thus showed that Francois wrote his letter himself. Depending on the type of notarial act, some extra information about senders or addressees could be gathered from this archive.

Notariële Akten

Resultaat (uittreksel)

<b>Akiesoort</b>	testament
<b>Datum</b>	21/11/1701
<b>Archief</b>	ONA Rotterdam
<b>Inventarisnummer</b>	1659
<b>Aktnummer/Blz.</b>	111/263
<b>Notaris</b>	D. Vos van Weel

Bij bestellen    gewenste vorm   

**Inhoud**

Francoijs Pennenburgh, meesterkleermaker, wonende op de Kleermarkt, benoemt zijn kinderen Josijntje, Catharina en Christiaen Pennenburgh ieder voor 1/3 part tot zijn erfgenamen.

Vorige    Volgende    Opnieuw zoeken ←    Terug naar resultaat scherm ←

Printen     Bestellen kopie akte 

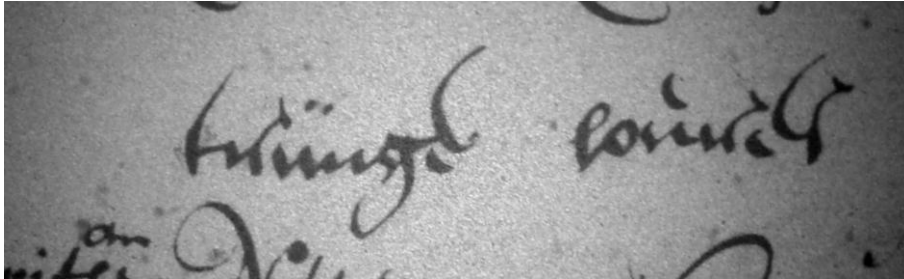
**Figure 3.14:** A result from the online database of Old Notarial Acts in Rotterdam, showing information about the will of Francois Penneburg, one of the senders in the *Letters as Loot* corpus.



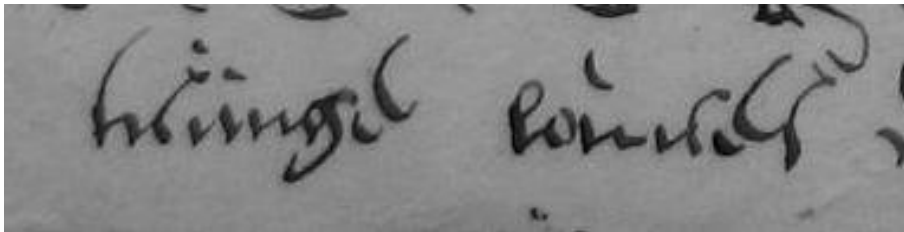
**Figure 3.15:** Francois Pennenburgh's signature at the bottom of his will (ONA Rotterdam).

### Hoorn

The West-Frisian Archive (*Westfries Archief*) in Hoorn was consulted as well. The sought-after signatures of people linked to Hoorn, Enkhuizen and Medemblik are almost literally hidden in its large notarial archive. Like the notarial archive in Amsterdam, the notarial archive of the West-Frisian Archive has not been indexed for persons. It consists of numerous small archives of single notaries public. Some of these notaries provided indexes to their archives, others didn't. To find notarial deeds of letter senders from this region, one can only systematically run through the different archives that stem from a relevant period, starting with the indexed ones. Although it is like searching for a needle in a hay-stack, some deeds containing information about a sender from the corpus were identified and signatures were discovered (see figures 3.16 and 3.17 for the surprisingly identical signatures of Trijntje Lourens).



**Figure 3.16:** Trijntje Lourens' signature in a notarial deed in the West-Frisian Archive in Hoorn.



**Figure 3.17:** Trijntje Lourens' signature in letter 3-1-2008 230-231 of the corpus (HCA 30-228).

### *Middelburg*

The fourth archive I visited in order to complete the corpus was the Archive of Zeeland (*Zeeuws Archief*), which is based in the town of Middelburg. Due to a fire in the nineteenth century and a bombing during the Second World War, large parts of the archive of Zeeland have been lost. The remaining registers of marriage do not contain any signatures and the notarial archives of Vlissingen and Middelburg for the period of interest no longer exist. Two possible sources of signatures and sender information remain, however.

The first source is the archive of the Audit Office of Zeeland, part C. The Audit office of Zeeland took care of the financial matters of the Admiralty of Zeeland. Among other things it kept records of the expenses. Salesmen who had delivered goods for the admiralty and family members of men who were at sea for the admiralty could request money (see figure 3.18). If the petition was approved, the creditor could come and collect the money and he or she had to sign for receipt (on the same document that had originally been handed in as a petition). The archive of the Audit Office is enormous and lacks a detailed index, but recently a small part of the archive has been indexed. This limited index was put at my disposal and was used to look for senders linked to Vlissingen or Middelburg.



The second source that was used in the Archive of Zeeland is the Poortvliet database. This database is still being developed by Mr. P.F. Poortvliet. It contains all kinds of information about seamen linked to Zeeland. The database refers to different sources - among which the archive of the Audit Office - which only occasionally contain a signature. Although this database has not yielded any signatures so far, it has proved useful in providing information about the occupation and the career of some senders.

#### *Haarlem*

Information on people living in the villages of Akersloot, Graft, Schermerhorn, Oude-Niedorp, Egmond-aan-zee and on people living in the town of Haarlem can be found in the North Holland Archive (*Noord-Hollands Archief*). For Haarlem, the registers of marriage, baptism and death as well as the old notarial archive are available. For the other villages, only the old notarial archive is kept in Haarlem; the registers of marriage, baptism and death can be consulted in the Regional Archive of Alkmaar. The Old Notarial Archive of Haarlem has been indexed, which facilitates the searching, and yielded a couple of useful signatures.

#### *Leiden*

The Regional Archive of Leiden (*Regionaal Archief Leiden*) offers the facility to search through the seventeenth-century registers of baptism, marriage and death and a part of the Old Notarial Archive online. The registers do not contain any signatures, but the notarial deeds occasionally do. However, at the time of this phase in the research, the digitization of the Old Notarial Archive (which allows one to search for and view a notarial deed online) had not yet been completed and the original documents in the archive were not indexed for person (only for period and notary public).<sup>47</sup> For that reason, no signatures could be discovered of the few senders linked to the city of Leiden.

#### *Alkmaar*

The last archive that was consulted was the Regional Archive of Alkmaar (*Regionaal Archief Alkmaar*). As mentioned above, the registers of marriage, birth and death for the villages of Akersloot, Graft, Schermerhorn, Oude-Niedorp and Egmond-aan-zee are kept here. The archive also contains the registers of marriage, birth and death and the Old Notarial Archive of Alkmaar. In the registers of marriage, birth and death some extra information

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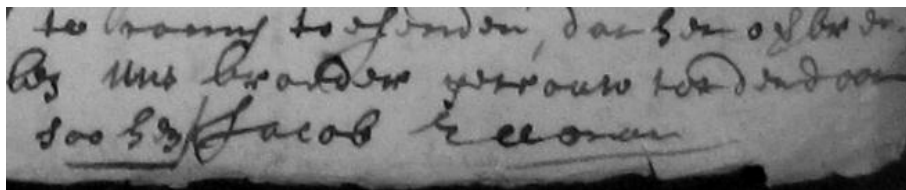
<sup>47</sup> At the present time of writing [October 2012], however, the notarial archive of the city of Leiden is much more accessible. It has been indexed for persons and is now searchable online. Pictures of the original notarial deeds can also be viewed online.



could be found on the families of the Reverend Johannes Bruno from Egmond-aan-zee and Bartholomeus Cornelisz from Alkmaar. The indexes which contain information about the notarial archives dating back before the year 1700 produced information about and signatures of a couple of senders, e.g. the signature of Jacob Zeeman (figures 3.19 and 3.20).


 A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on aged paper. The signature reads 'Jacob Zeeman' in a cursive script, with a large, sweeping flourish underneath. Above the signature, some faint, illegible text is visible.

**Figure 3.19:** The signature of Jacob Zeeman in a document found in the Old Notarial Archive in the Regional Archive of Alkmaar.


 A photograph of the bottom portion of a handwritten letter. The signature 'Jacob Zeeman' is written in cursive at the end of the text. Above it, the words 'By the order of your obedient servant' are partially visible in a similar script.

**Figure 3.20:** Jacob Zeeman's signature at the bottom of his letter (letter 05-01-2010 225-229 in the corpus, HCA 30-228).

### 3.3.3. Finalisation

On the basis of new information and signatures discovered in these archives, the status of some letters could be confirmed or – whenever necessary – changed. New information obtained during the ransacking of the archives was saved in the database. With these last two steps the execution of the Leiden Identification Procedure was completed for the letters analysed here and the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus could take on its final form.

In this chapter, I have explained why it is important to distinguish autograph letters from non-autograph letters in the light of the sociolinguistic analysis that will be carried out on the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus. I have described the indications that are helpful to distinguish between autograph and non-autograph letters and how these pieces of evidence were combined to form the Leiden Identification Procedure (LIP). In §3.3 I have shown how the LIP was applied to the corpus. Because of the progress that is being made in the digitisation of Dutch archives at present, it

is possible that after the publication of this dissertation, new documents and new information will be discovered that shed a different light on the status of certain letters that were categorised in the corpus as letters of uncertain authorship. In its current form, however, the corpus is as complete and as sound as it could possibly be with the information that was available at the time of its compilation.

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## Chapter 4. Forms of address<sup>48</sup>

### 4.1. In search of the larger story

Forms of address have been a topic of many linguistic studies. The bulk of studies on the Dutch forms of address published during the previous century tried to identify the origin of personal pronouns that arose between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, viz. *u* (2<sup>nd</sup> person singular and plural) in subject position, *jullie* (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural), and *jij* (2<sup>nd</sup> person singular).<sup>49</sup> However, there have also been studies of the sociolinguistic background of the forms. Daan (1982), for instance, examined how forms of address were used in letters written by several well-known seventeenth-century authors and members of the upper classes. More recently, Van Leuvensteijn (2000; 2002a; 2002b) has shown to share this interest in his study of forms of address in the correspondence of the seventeenth-century patrician Maria van Reigersberch (1589?-1653), in the correspondence of the eighteenth-century authors Betje Wolff (1738-1804) and Aagje Deken (1741-1804), and in Wolff and Deken's epistolary novel *Sara Burgerhart* (1782).

This type of research fits in with an international tradition of sociolinguistic investigation of address forms in letters (Taavitsainen & Jucker 2002: 9). Within this tradition, not only research on modern-day forms of address is popular, but also research from a diachronic or historical perspective.<sup>50</sup> Research of English forms of address is well represented by several publications, but forms of address in other languages have also been studied.<sup>51</sup>

However sound the sociolinguistic studies of seventeenth-century Dutch forms of address by Daan (1982) and Van Leuvensteijn (2002a) may be, they reveal only a part of the sociolinguistic history of seventeenth-century Dutch. This is due to the nature of the sources that have been used: they consist of correspondence of a few individuals - only members of the

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<sup>48</sup> Part of the research reported on here is also presented in Nobels & Simons forthcoming.

<sup>49</sup> See for instance: Vor der Hake 1908; Kern 1911, 1927; Muller 1926a, 1926b; Heeroma 1934; De Vooy 1939, 1943; Kloeke 1941, 1948a, 1948b; Verdenius 1946; Paardekooper 1948, 1950; Michels 1950, 1952, 1967; Mak 1967; Kuijper 1972; Van den Toorn 1977; Berteloot 2003; Aalberse 2004.

<sup>50</sup> For instance Hope 1994, Hunt 2002, Burnley 2002, Nevala 2004.

<sup>51</sup> For instance: Simon 2002 for German, Betsch 2002 for Czech, Bentivoglio 2002 for Spanish, Bishop & Michnowicz 2010 for Chilean Spanish, Sepänen 2002 for Finnish, and Hakanen & Koskinen 2009 for Swedish.

upper circles in society. The language use of the members of the lower and middle classes in society was thus inevitably obscured from Daan's and Van Leuvensteijn's views. In this chapter I want to extend Daan's (1982) and Van Leuvensteijn's research (2002a) by examining a large number of letters written by several seventeenth-century men and women of different social ranks, ages and regional backgrounds. The main purpose of this study is to refine our knowledge about how forms of address were used across the social ranks of the Dutch society in the second half of the seventeenth century. My second goal is to find out whether the *Letters as Loot* corpus can also show if and how the relationship between sender and addressee was linked to the use of certain forms of address in the seventeenth century.

The present study fits well into the research tradition described above, since it is of a sociolinguistic nature and involves a corpus of letters. At the same time, it will deviate from earlier approaches in that the social characteristics of the writers will be taken as the starting point rather than the relationship between writers and addressees. I certainly do not disagree with the idea that the relationship between writer and addressee influences a writer's preference for a certain form of address. However, I also believe that one can only fully understand why a writer chooses a particular form of address for a particular addressee if one knows which forms of address the writer has at his disposal to begin with. If this list of forms of address is not the same for every writer in a specific corpus, this can distort the results of an examination that only takes into account the writer-addressee relationship. In this chapter I will therefore first examine whether this list of forms of address a writer can choose from may depend on a writer's social background, before I turn to the writer-addressee relationship.

When examining the relationship between writer and addressee, I will not analyse my data in compliance with Brown and Gilman (1972), nor with the politeness theory devised by Brown and Levinson (1987). My main objections against using Brown and Gilman's concepts of power and solidarity are firstly that particular relationships cannot be interpreted easily in terms of either power or solidarity and secondly that the five different forms of address in seventeenth-century Dutch cannot easily be divided into T- and V- pronouns. What is more: it is not just a problem of applying the concepts, but also of questioning them. I refer to Taavitsainen and Jucker (2002: 11) who criticize Brown and Levinson's politeness theory for not leaving "any room for an unmarked middle ground, for utterances that are conventionally appropriate to the current speech situation, that do not adopt any politeness strategies in order to alleviate a potential or real face-threat and that are not rude or impolite either." Since letter-writing is a form of communication which is likely to be influenced by writing conventions, we

should thus leave ample room for forms of address that are not especially polite or impolite, but just conventional.

Before investigating the use of forms of address in §4.3 and §4.4, I will discuss in §4.2 the different forms of address that are known to have been present in seventeenth-century Dutch. I will focus on the pronouns *gij*, *u*, and *jij* and its inflected forms, and on two abbreviations of nominal forms of address which are used pronominally: *ul* and *UE*. I will give a short description of each form and its history based on the literature.

## 4.2. Forms of address in the seventeenth century

### 4.2.1. Epistolary forms: *ul* and *UE*

The forms *ul* and *UE*, both abbreviations of nominal forms of address, are typical of letters. *Ul* is the abbreviation of an old form *u liefde* or *uwe liefde* (literally translated ‘your Love’ or ‘your Kindness’ and resembling English ‘my love’ or ‘my dear’) according to the WNT (*Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal* ‘The Dictionary of the Dutch Language’, s.v. *liefde*), which can be used in the singular as well as in the plural. When *ul* is used to address more than one person, it can also be understood as the abbreviation of the form of address *ulieden* (literally translated as ‘you people’) which could be used as a form of address for the second person plural (WNT, s.v. *ul* and *ulieden*). *UE* is the abbreviation of *u edele* or *uwe edelheid* (‘your Honour’, ‘your Worship’) (WNT, s.v. *ue*). This form stems from the chancery and was adopted by the upper-middle classes in the sixteenth century (Van Leuvensteijn 2002a: 289-290).

As abbreviations of noun phrases, *ul* and *UE* were originally indirect ways to address a person. Instead of directly addressing someone with a second person singular pronoun, a noun (*liefde* ‘love’ or *edele/edelheid* ‘nobility’ or ‘honour’) was used to create distance, as if one was talking about a third person. The forms of *ul* and *UE* were therefore not only congruent with pronouns and verb forms of the second person singular, but also with pronouns and verb forms of the third person singular (Van Leuvensteijn 2002a: 290). Compare the following fictional examples:

- 1) **Zie je dat ik jouw boek niet heb?**  
‘Do you see that I do not have your book?’
- 2) **Ziet UE dat ik zijn/haar boek niet heb?**  
‘Does Your Honour see that I do not have his/her book?’

Both *ul* and *UE* occurred as personal and possessive pronouns (WNT, s.v. *liefde* and *ue*). Cf. some examples from the corpus:

- 3) *en wensche **u l** een geluck saligh nieuwe jaer*  
‘and I wish **you** a happy new year’
- 4) *heden 8 daghe was mejn lesten aen **VE***  
‘my last letter to **you** was eight days ago’
- 5) *en groet **ul** susters en mijn moeder oock*  
‘and greet **your** sisters and my mother as well’
- 6) *verhoope euenwel **VE** goede dispositie*  
‘I nevertheless hope for **your** good health’

*UE* did not remain a form reserved for written Dutch: it came to be used in spoken Dutch as well, pronounced as [y'ʋe] or ['yʋə] (Van den Toorn 1977: 524-525; Van der Sijs 2004: 474-475; Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 267). In subject position, this form probably developed into the present-day Standard Dutch polite form of address for singular and plural: *u*.<sup>52</sup>

#### 4.2.2. *Gij* and *u*

It is assumed that *gij* (restricted to subject position) and *u* (for all other positions) were pronouns of the second person plural (spelled differently, for instance as *ghi* or *gi*) before the Early Middle Dutch period. However, already in Early Middle Dutch texts dating back to the thirteenth century, *gij* and *u* were also used as (polite) forms of address for a single addressee (Van den Toorn 1977: 522; Berteloot 2003: 205).<sup>53</sup> It is often assumed that this usage became so popular that *gij* and *u* ousted *du* and its inflected forms as the standard pronouns for the second person singular. Aalberse (2004) claims that the disappearance of *du* was not only caused by competition with *gij*, but also by the loss of the second person singular verbal ending *-s* – which was strongly linked to the pronoun *du* – in favour of the ending *-t*. Whatever the cause may have been, in sixteenth-century texts from the south-western regions of the Dutch language area, *du* and its inflected forms were mostly reserved for utterances expressing strong emotions, such as anger and religious or worldly love (Muller 1926a: 82). Later *du* was felt to be old-fashioned or vulgar. The fate of *du* in written language was sealed in the seventeenth century, which is illustrated by the fact that *gij* and *u* were chosen as the pronouns for the second person singular in the Dutch authorized version of the Bible in 1618 (Van den Toorn 1977: 522-523; Van

<sup>52</sup> Van den Toorn 1977 gives an excellent overview of the different theories about the origin of *u* in subject position. Kern 1911, Muller 1926a, Kloeke 1941, 1948a, Paardekooper 1948, 1950 and Michels 1952 all somehow support the claim that the originally written form *UE* also became used in spoken language.

<sup>53</sup> Using the second person plural as a polite form of address is a well-known phenomenon. See Brown & Gilman 1972 and Brown & Levinson 1987.

der Sijs 2004: 468-469; Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 266).<sup>54</sup> *Gij* and *u* were thus ambiguous forms that could be used for the singular and the plural at the same time (cf. English *you*). To stress the plural, the noun *lieden* (‘people’) could be added to *gij* or *u*, when addressing more than one person (Van Leuvensteijn 2002a: 289).

#### 4.2.3. *U* in subject position

At the end of the sixteenth century, *u* started to appear in subject position. Various explanations for the rise of this usage have been given, as shown in Van den Toorn (1977). Van der Sijs (2004: 474-476) lists three types of explanations of which two are plausible.<sup>55</sup> As mentioned above, one explanation is that *u* in subject position stems from the form *UE*. This explanation also accounts for the occurrence of the subject *u* with both second person singular and third person singular finite verbs, since *UE* could occur with either of the conjugations, as explained in §4.2.1. A second explanation is that the subject *u* was merely an expansion of *u* in object positions (Van der Sijs 2004: 474-476). Similar expansions are not rare at all.<sup>56</sup> Of course, it is also possible that a combination of these two factors resulted in the first occurrences of *u* in subject position.

#### 4.2.4. *Jij*, *jou(w)*, and *je*

*Jij* is a personal pronoun for the second person singular which first emerged in writing in the seventeenth century, replacing *Jij* is the subject form of the personal pronoun, *jou* is its object form and *jou(w)* the possessive pronoun. *Je* is the weak form of *jij* and can be used as a personal pronoun in all positions, as a possessive pronoun, and as a general pronoun comparable to English ‘one’, meaning ‘everyone, anyone in general’.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> The choice for *gij* in the Dutch authorized version of the Bible did not completely bring the matter to an end, however. Well into the seventeenth century the discussion about *gij* and *du* continued among grammarians and language lovers, as is illustrated by the fact that the Dutch grammarian Allard Kók still presented *du* as the only form of address for the second person singular in 1649 (Kók 1649: 19).

<sup>55</sup> The theory put forward in Paardekooper 1948 is less plausible, because it presupposes that *gij* and *u* did not exist in the northern Netherlands until the southern immigrants brought it along in the seventeenth century.

<sup>56</sup> There are many examples to be given, stemming from different periods and different languages. I restrict myself to a well-known example from Dutch. In contemporary Dutch substandard as it is spoken in the Netherlands, the object form of the personal pronoun of the third person plural, *hun*, also occurs in subject position, cf. Van Bree 2012: *Hun hebben dat gedaan*. (‘They did it.’ instead of ‘They did it.’)

<sup>57</sup> This latter meaning probably came into use in the first half of the eighteenth century (Van der Sijs 2004: 473).

There are two assumptions about the origin of *jij*. The first one is discussed extensively in Muller (1926b) and maintains that the pronoun has always been around in spoken language as a dialect form of *gij* in Holland and that it only showed up in writing in the seventeenth century. A second assumption was put forth by Verdenius (1924, 1930) and suggests that *jij* developed from an enclitic *-i* or a full form *ji*, even though such a form has not been found (Van den Toorn 1977: 523).

Van der Wal & Van Bree (2008: 266) state that *jij* and *gij* occur in seventeenth-century northern Dutch texts without any differences in use and that *jij* is therefore merely the spoken form of *gij*. *Gij* and *jij* eventually developed in such a way that *jij* came to be used in contexts of familiarity and *gij* in contexts of distance. However, this development is hard to pinpoint in time and probably occurred gradually, at different moments in time for different people (Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 267-271).

### 4.3. Sociolinguistic variation

#### 4.3.1. The variables

In this section I will discuss the relationship between social variables and the distribution of the forms of address in seventeenth-century letters. Before zooming in on the social variation, however, I will first present a general overview of the frequency of the different forms of address in the entire corpus and in the sub-corpus of private autographs (see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus) in table 4.1. There are 7781 forms of address in the entire seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus, of which there are 3289 occurrences that were found in private autographs.

	<i>Entire corpus</i>		<i>Private autographs</i>	
	N	%	N	%
<b>ul</b>	3862	50	1488	45
<b>UE</b>	827	11	468	14
<b>gij</b>	1290	17	560	17
<b>u (non-subj)</b>	1623	21	705	21
<b>u (subj)</b>	25	0.3	13	0.4
<b>Jij</b>	154	2	55	2
<b>TOT</b>	7781	100	3289	100

Table 4.1: The frequency of the different forms of address in the entire corpus and in the sub-corpus of private autographs



The variable social class appears to play a major role in the distribution of the different forms of address, as can be seen in table 4.2 below.<sup>58</sup> Since the variable gender proved to be important as well, I will focus mainly on the influence of the variables social class and gender and show how they affect the distribution of the different forms of address. Age and region did not yield insightful information and will not be treated in the remainder of this chapter.

	<i>ul</i>	<i>UE</i>	<i>jij</i>	<i>gij</i> ( <i>subj</i> )	<i>u</i>	<i>N total</i>
<b>LC</b>	53%	0%	5%	23%	18%	150
<b>LMC</b>	46%	2%	5%	22%	26%	705
<b>UMC</b>	42%	22%	1%	14%	21%	1629
<b>UC</b>	30%	20%	0%	16%	34%	292

**Table 4.2: the distribution of the forms of address in all positions possible per social class in the private autograph letters**

Although this dissertation focuses on seventeenth-century Dutch in private letters, I decided to take the sub-corpus of autograph business letters into account as well in the discussions of the influence of social variables in §4.3.2 to §4.3.6. After all, forms of address are often linked to politeness, so the comparison of private letters with business letters could yield some very telling results. This comparison should be considered as an excursion, however.

#### **4.3.2. A fossilized abbreviation: *ul***

The form of address *ul* is very common in the entire seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus. It occurs no fewer than 3862 times with 88% of the writers (390 writers out of 441).<sup>59</sup> In examining whether *ul* correlates with any social variables, I focus on the sub-corpus of private autograph letters (see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus).<sup>60</sup> This sub-corpus clearly shows that considerably fewer upper-class writers in the corpus use the form than lower-class writers do. Table 4.3 below shows that only 41%

<sup>58</sup> The table shows the distribution of all the forms of *ul*, *UE*, *jij* and *u* occurring in all possible positions (subject, object, indirect object, reflexive, following a preposition). *Gij* can only occur in subject position.

<sup>59</sup> *Ul* is spelled in different ways in the corpus: with or without capitals, with or without punctuation marks, with *u* or *v* as the first grapheme, and with or without spacing. The most current spelling form (without capitals, punctuation marks and with *u* as the first grapheme) is used throughout the chapter to represent this form of address.

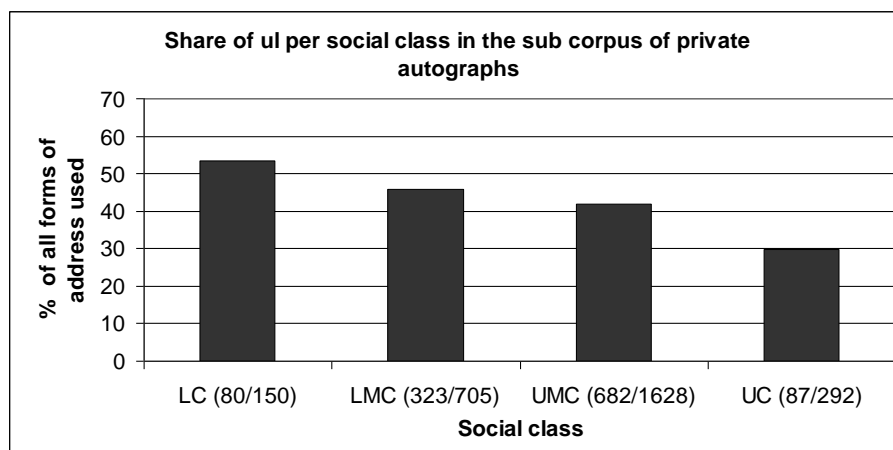
<sup>60</sup> See chapter 3, §3.1.2.

of the upper-class writers use *ul* at least once in their letters, while all of the lower-class writers, 83% of the lower-middle-class writers and 76% of the upper-middle-class writers do:

<i>Writers using ul</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
LC	10	100%
LMC	30	83%
UMC	80	76%
UC	7	41%

**Table 4.3:** share of writers who use *ul* per social class in the sub-corpus of private autographs

The conclusion seems straightforward: *ul* is a popular form of address with the lower and middle classes, but it is used less often by members of the upper class. However, table 4.3 does not show *how often* writers from each class use this form of address. If the lower-class writers each use *ul* only once and the upper-class writers use it more frequently per writer, this would change our view of *ul*. I have therefore considered how often each social class uses *ul* compared to other available forms of address, cf. table 4.2. The results in figure 4.1 show the same decline as table 4.3 does: the higher up the social scale, the less *ul* is used proportionally. *Ul* has a share of 53% in the lower class which drops to a share of 46% and 42% in the lower-middle class and the upper-middle class respectively. *Ul* is used in only 30% of the cases in letters of upper-class writers.



**Figure 4.1**

The number of writers using *ul* at least once also hints at a gender difference: 75% of the male writers use it compared to 83% of the women. Also the number of occurrences of *ul* used by men and women compared to the occurrences of other forms of address suggest that *ul* is favoured slightly more by women: *ul* occurs in 42% of the cases in private autograph letters written by men, while it occurs in 50% of the cases in private autograph letters written by women.

The distribution of *ul* is also dependent on the variable type of letter. A comparison between the proportion of *ul* in business autographs written by upper-middle-class men and the proportion of *ul* in the private autographs written by this same group shows that both groups use *ul* differently. There are relatively fewer upper-middle-class male writers of business autographs who use *ul* (63% of the letter writers) than upper-middle-class male writers of private letters who use it (76% of the letter writers). But if business writers use *ul*, they seem to use it more frequently than the writers of private letters: while the upper-middle-class men use *ul* in 49% of the cases in business letters, they use it in 40% of the cases when writing private letters.

Remarkably, the full form *u(we) liefde* does not occur: not even one instance was found in the entire seventeenth-century corpus. This result questions whether the familiar sixteenth-century form of address *uwe liefde* was still used in full in the seventeenth century. This does not necessarily mean that *ul* did not once originate from *u(we) liefde*, but it suggests that it was not felt to be the abbreviation of *u(we) liefde* any longer at the time when the letters in the corpus were written. Two other full forms that could be linked to the abbreviation *ul*, however, are present in the corpus, occurring 148 times in total: *u lieve* and *ulieden*. These two full forms will be examined in the following sections. I note here that the large number of occurrences of *ul* (3862) compared to the relatively small number of full forms (148) suggests that the abbreviation *ul* had become fossilised by the second half of the seventeenth century.

*U lieve: a form of address or a misleading adjectival phrase?*

There are only 38 instances of *u lieve* in the entire seventeenth-century corpus. *U lieve* is used consistently by only two writers: one middle-aged woman from the lower-middle class living in the province of North Holland and one unknown writer from Amsterdam. Together these two writers provide 21 tokens of the word of which two are presented here as examples:

- 7) *ick heb mar een brief van u lijjeue gekregen en ick heb al twee nae u lijjeue gestert*  
 ‘I only received one letter from **dear you** and I have already sent two letters to **dear you**’

- 8) *of ghy hel syeck mochte vorden daet daer gen aender met v lyeven goet der gaet*  
 ‘... if you were to fall ill, that nobody would run off with the goods **of dear you**’

There are a few other writers who use *ulieve*, though less consistently: it appears 17 times in the letters of 11 other writers, most often in opening and closing formulae. However, these tokens should be handled with care, for all of the 17 occurrences are used ambiguously. They can be analysed as forms of address (FoA) on the one hand, but they can also be analysed as a possessive pronoun (Poss) *u(w)* in a noun phrase (NP) containing the adjective (A) *lieve* (‘sweet’ or ‘kind’):

- 9) *niet meer teschrijve als dat d heer valckenborgh [u lieve]<sub>FoA</sub> man noch gesont was...*  
 ‘I have nothing more to write except that Mr. valckenborgh, [**your**]<sub>FoA</sub> husband, was still in good health...’
- 10) *niet meer teschrijve als dat d heer valckenborgh [u<sub>Poss</sub> lieve<sub>A</sub> man]<sub>NP</sub> noch gesont was...*  
 ‘I have nothing more to write except that Mr. valckenborgh, [**your**]<sub>Poss</sub> **kind**<sub>A</sub> **husband**]<sub>NP</sub>, was still in good health...’

#### *A plural out of place?*

The form of address *ulieden* is commonly acknowledged to be a form reserved for the plural.<sup>61</sup> But in spite of the plural noun *lieden* (‘people’) being part of the form, *ulieden* occurs no fewer than 110 times in contexts in which only one person seems to be addressed.<sup>62</sup> Twenty-two different writers use it and the form cannot be linked to a certain gender or class. It is notable, however, that it does not occur in business letters. Some examples are given below:

<sup>61</sup> Forms of address spelt as *uld* and *ul den* were treated in the same way as the full forms of *ulieden*, since the presence of the letter *d* strongly suggests the full form *ulieden*. There were 27 of these occurrences in total.

<sup>62</sup> It is of course not always possible to determine whether a token of *ulieden* is directed to one or several addressees at the same time. If a sender had meant his letter for his entire family, there is no reason why he could not use the form of address *ulieden*. However, some examples – such as example 10 – irrefutably show that *ulieden* was used in addressing one person. In deciding whether the tokens of *ulieden* were singular or plural, I looked for clues in the sentence or in the immediate context that could indicate how many persons were addressed at the same time. Questionable tokens were left out.

- 11) *By myn steven Jorressen **ulijden** man*  
‘Written by me steven Jorressen **your** husband’
- 12) *seer waerde maen pitter cristeiaense ick laet **u lide** weten als dat  
ijaen gerlijsse noch nit ghekome en is*  
‘dear husband pitter cristeiaense I let **you** know that ijaen  
gerlijsse has not come by yet’
- 13) *waer uit verstaen dat **ulijeden** noch in goede gesontheijt was*  
‘from which I have gathered that **you** are still in good health’

As example 13 shows, *ulieden* is also used in subject position (by four writers), while the expected form for subject positions would be *gijlieden*. However, in the seventeenth century *u* started to be used in subject positions (see §4.2.1 and §4.2.3) and the use of *ulieden* in subject position could be related to this new use of *u*.

One could suggest, based on the study by Brown & Gilman (1972), that using *ulieden* to address one person was a new way of expressing politeness with a plural form of address. However, the letters containing *ulieden* do not seem to be overtly polite in other aspects and most of them are letters addressed to close members of the family. Therefore such a politeness strategy is less likely to be the reason behind these examples. The only conclusion can be that – at least for some writers – the plural meaning of *ulieden* had been lost by the second half of the seventeenth century, which made the originally plural form of address *ulieden* available for use when addressing a single person.

### *Conclusions*

It is possible that in the second half of the seventeenth century the frequently occurring form of address *ul* was no longer understood as an abbreviation for *uwe liefde*, since this latter form of address could not be found in the corpus. Just a few writers seem to use *u lieve* instead of *ul* and some writers use *ulieden*. Through the loss of the plural meaning of the compound *lieden*, the latter form had become available for addressing a single person by 1664.

Since *ul* is a form of address typical of letters and thus a form not part of the spoken Dutch, one might expect that its use had to be learned (not necessarily only through formal teaching, but also through exposure to letters) and that people who were well trained in writing, i.e. writers from the upper classes and men in general, would use it more often than writers from the lower classes and women. However, the results show the opposite pattern. Apparently, the practice of using *ul* as a form of address in letters had spread through the entire society by the second half of the seventeenth century. Although *ul* was used most frequently by members of the lower classes, it does not seem to be a form of address that was frowned upon, however,

since it still occurred quite consistently in business letters. The fact that the upper classes in society use this epistolary term of address less often than the lower classes may be linked to the emergence of a new epistolary form of address: *UE*.

#### 4.3.3. *UE*: reserved for the upper classes

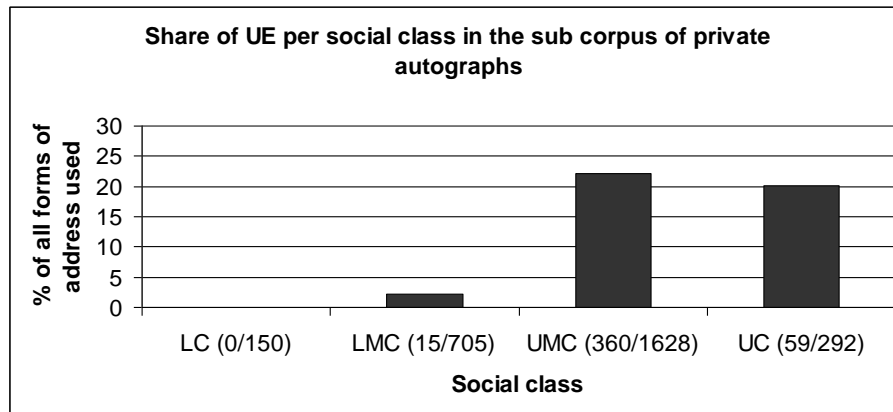
The form of address *UE* occurs less often in the entire *Letters as Loot* corpus than *ul* does. There are 827 instances of *UE* in the letters of 24% of the writers (104 writers out of 441).<sup>63</sup> When examining the sub-corpus of private autograph letters, it becomes clear that *UE* is linked to particular groups of writers. As table 4.4 shows, more upper-middle-class and upper-class writers use this form of address than writers from the lower classes. The percentage of writers that use *UE* shows a steady increase from the lower to the upper classes. Lower-class writers do not use it while nearly half of the upper-class writers make use of this form of address.

<i>Writers using UE</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>LC</b>	0	0%
<b>LMC</b>	6	17%
<b>UMC</b>	42	40%
<b>UC</b>	8	47%

**Table 4.4: share of writers who use *UE* per social class in the sub-corpus of private autographs**

Comparing these data to the relative frequency of *UE* per social class, it is obvious that the presence of *UE* not simply increases higher up on the social ladder. Figure 4.2 shows that *UE* occurs as often in the letters of upper-middle-class writers as in the letters of the upper-class writers: *UE* has a share of 22% in the upper-middle class and a share of 20% in the upper class. But while *UE* occurs in about one fifth of the cases in the letters of the upper-middle and upper class, *UE* occurs almost never in the writings of the lower- and lower-middle-class writers. *UE* is clearly typical of the two upper classes.

<sup>63</sup> *UE* is spelled in different ways in the corpus: with or without capitals, with or without punctuation marks, with *u* or *v* as the first grapheme, and with or without spacing. The most current spelling form (with capitals, without punctuation marks and with *u* as the first grapheme) is used throughout the chapter to represent the form of address.



**Figure 4.2**

The writers of the upper and upper-middle class seem to have been among the first to use *UE*, which is most likely related to the fact that this form of address originated in the chancery – by which is meant the administrations of nobles, cities and public or private associations – and in official jargon, with which the upper-middle- and upper-class people were more likely to come into contact (Van Leuvensteijn 2002a: 289-290).

The fact that *UE* originated in these types of texts may also explain why *UE* occurs more often in business letters. Of the upper-middle-class men who write private autograph letters, 44% use *UE*, while more than half (60%) of the upper-middle-class men who write business autographs use *UE* at least once. *UE* takes up 27% of the forms of address used in these writers' private letters and it takes up 41% in their business letters.

Additionally, more men than women use *UE*: 36% of the male writers in the corpus of private autograph letters use *UE* at least once in their letters compared to 17% of the women. *UE* takes up a fifth of the forms of address in the private autograph letters written by men (21%), while it is good for only 4% of the forms of address used in private autograph letters written by women. It is interesting to point out that these figures are consistent with the findings of Daan (1982) and Van Leuvensteijn (2002a). These studies both noticed that Maria van Reigersberch's husband and brother used *UE* in their letters to Maria before Maria herself started to use *UE* in her letters to them (Daan 1982: 122-123; Van Leuvensteijn 2002a: 293). In accordance with my data, this finding suggests that men were indeed using *UE* earlier than women. This should not come as a surprise, since *UE* was first used in administration. The people employed in such administration and professional writing in the seventeenth century were mainly men.

No full forms of *u edele* or *uwe edelheid* are present in the entire seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus. *UE* was used so systematically instead of these full forms that it is no surprise that in time it became lexicalised: it started to appear in spoken language in the form of *Uwee* or *Uwe* ([y'ue] or ['yuə]) (Van den Toorn 1977: 524). These forms are actually nothing more than the pronunciation of the two letters *U* and *E* one after the other and shows that *UE* had become an acronym.<sup>64</sup>

To conclude, contrary to *ul*, *UE* is a form of address linked most strongly to the upper classes of society and to men. The following form of address under investigation, *jij*, behaves completely differently.

#### 4.3.4. Fit for the spoken language: *jij*, *je*, and *jou(w)*

The personal pronoun *jij* and its inflected forms and the possessive pronoun *jou(w)* are rather rare in the entire *Letters as Loot* corpus. They occur only 154 times in letters written by 31 different writers (7% of the total number of writers). When one looks at the sub-corpus of private autographs, it becomes clear that *jij* is more strongly related to the lower classes than to the upper classes: 10% of the lower-class writers and 17% of the lower-middle-class writers use them, compared to 4% of the upper-middle-class writers and no one from the upper-class writers.

<i>Writers using jij</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>LC</b>	1	10%
<b>LMC</b>	6	17%
<b>UMC</b>	4	4%
<b>UC</b>	0	0%

**Table 4.5: share of writers who use *jij* per social class in the sub-corpus of private autographs**

The number of times the form of address *jij* is actually used per social class also shows that *jij* is less popular with the upper classes than with the two lower classes, although the difference between the classes is rather limited due to overall low percentages. Figure 4.3 shows that *jij* and its inflected

<sup>64</sup> An example of one of these forms seems to be present in the corpus. Johannes Du Pire, a young upper-middle class man from Amsterdam, uses *uwe* in a letter to his cousin in 1664 (letter Vliet-45 in the corpus): *ende wij hebben [...] verstaan u ghesontheyt welvaren en couragie op see, daarbij dat uwe ons huijsghesin met veel gheluck ende heijl syn groetende* ‘and we have understood your health, well-being and courage at sea, and we have understood that **you** are greeting our family with a lot of wishes of goodluck and welfare.’



forms take up about 5% of the occurrences of all forms of address in the lower and lower-middle class letters respectively, while they take up no more than 1% and 0% of the forms of address respectively in upper-middle- and upper-class letters.

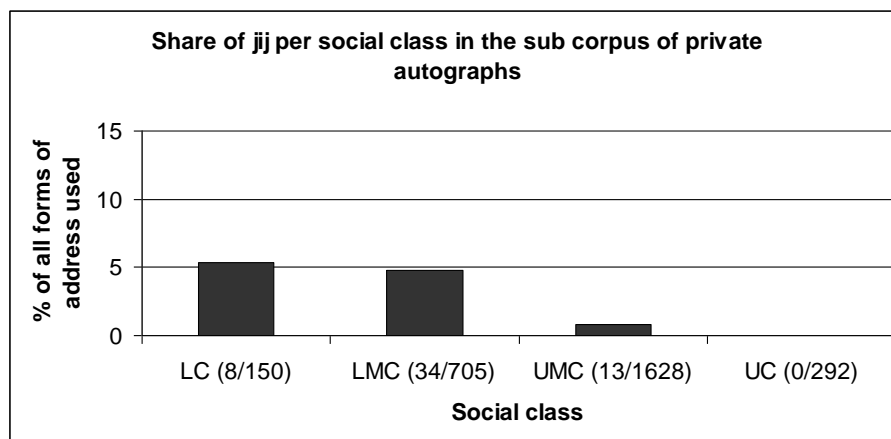


Figure 4.3

There is also a difference between the use of *jij* by men and women, albeit quite small. More women than men use *jij* (8% vs. 4%) and *jij* occurs more often (30 times, which is in 2% of the cases) in private letters written by women than in private letters written by men (25 times, which is less than 1% of the cases).

*Jij* occurs only once in business letters and 55 times in private letters, but it is impossible to say whether this is due to the low use of *jij* in the upper-middle class in general (almost all of the business letters have been written by upper-middle-class men) or by the influence of the type of letter. In any case, there is no clear difference between the presence of *jij* in business letters written by upper-middle-class men and its presence in private letters written by this same group.

In short, *jij* and its inflected forms do not occur often in the corpus of seventeenth-century letters. This coincides with the idea that in the seventeenth century, *jij* was a spoken form that was just beginning to emerge in writing. That lower-class writers and female writers seem to use it slightly more often than male writers and writers from the upper classes may be understood by taking their different writing experience and education into account. Lower-class writers and women usually had less experience in writing than upper-class people and men in general and can thus be assumed to be less familiar with particular conventions of written Dutch (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237-238).

### 4.3.5. A clear split down the middle of the social scale: *Gij*

#### *Gij* for lower classes and women

*Gij* as a form of address for the singular occurs 1290 times in the entire seventeenth-century corpus. It is used by 269 different writers, which is 61% of the total number of writers. In the sub-corpus of private autographs, *gij* shows a distribution across the social classes which suggests a split between the lower classes (lower and lower-middle) and the upper classes (upper-middle and upper) as shown in table 4.6.

<i>Writers using <i>gij</i></i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>LC</b>	9	90%
<b>LMC</b>	30	83%
<b>UMC</b>	48	46%
<b>UC</b>	10	59%

**Table 4.6: share of writers who use *gij* per social class in the sub-corpus of private autographs**

Almost all of the lower-class writers (90%) use *gij* at least once in their letter. This form of address in subject position is also quite popular with the lower-middle-class writers: 83% of them use it. The members of the upper-middle and of the upper class use it less often: for the upper-middle class 46% of the writers use *gij* and 59% of the upper-class writers use it. This suggests that the border between a large number of writers using *gij* and a smaller number of writers using *gij* runs down the middle of the social scale.

The relative frequency of *gij* per social class in the sub-corpus of private autographs shows the same picture, although the differences are less outspoken: figure 4.4 shows that the lower- and lower-middle-class writers use *gij* more often than the upper-middle- and upper-class writers do. *Gij* occurs in 23% and in 22% of the cases in the lower class and in the lower-middle class respectively, while it takes up 14% and 16% in the upper-middle class and in the upper class respectively.

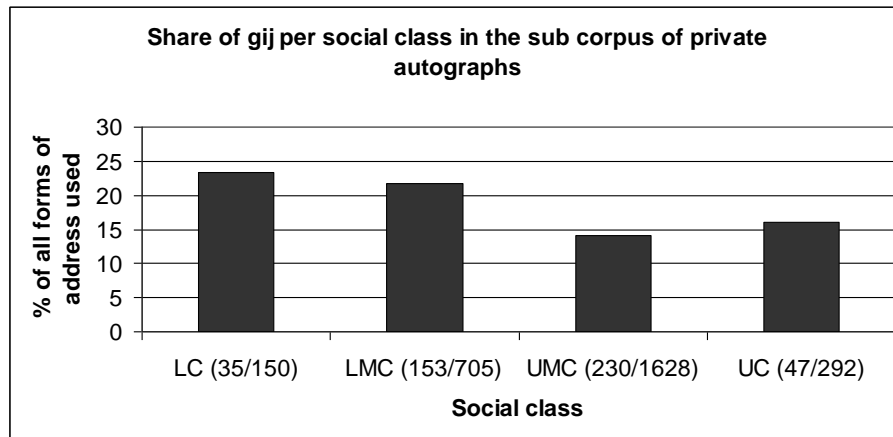


Figure 4.4

The members of the upper classes are thus less inclined to use *gij* as a form of address in their letters than members of the lower classes. Just as with *ul* and *UE*, gender is also a factor of importance. Half of the male writers of private autograph letters use *gij* compared to 73% of the female writers. Not only do more women use *gij* at least once in their letters, but women use *gij* more often as well: *gij* makes up 21% of the forms of address in letters written by women, while it makes up 15% of the forms of address in letters written by men.

And again, type of letter plays a role here as well. *Gij* was evidently deemed fitter for personal communication than for business letters. In the private autograph letters of upper-middle-class men, *gij* takes up 12% of all the forms of address, while it takes up 5% in the business autographs of this same group of writers. And while no more than 26% of the upper-middle-class men who write autograph business letters uses *gij*, 42% of the upper-middle-class men who write private letters use the form.

In conclusion, *gij* is a form of address used more often by lower classes than by upper classes and used more often by women than by men. These groups of writers were typically less educated, were not so much dependent on being able to read and write and were thus probably less familiar with the different norms for spoken and written language. This may be why they used the general form of address *gij* – which also occurred in spoken language – more often than the better educated and more experienced groups of writers did. Writers from the upper classes seemed to prefer epistolary forms of address, such as *ul* or *UE*, to the plainer *gij* in subject positions, as will be discussed in §4.3.7. It is thus no surprise that *gij* was used more often in private letters than in business letters, for writers were in

all likelihood even more concerned with writing conventions when writing to business partners than when writing to close friends or family members.

#### *Gijlieden as a form for the singular*

Apart from *gij* as a form of address for the plural, *gijlieden* – the explicitly plural form of address based on *gij* – is present as well in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus. So is *gijlieden*, the explicitly plural form of address based on *gij*. Seven writers use it to address several people at the same time. However, there are also six writers who seem to use *gijlieden* as a form of address for the singular, as shown in the following examples:

- 14) *en wy zien mijn zeer lieue soon alle uren int gemoedt **gij lieden** zyt noch jongh en hebt noch vrij wat van doen*  
‘and we are always ready to welcome my dear son home. **You** are still young and need a lot of things...’
- 15) *en hij is heel verstoort dat **ghij l** hem noit en groote in v.l. breefe*  
‘and he is very upset about the fact that **you** never say hello to him in your letters’
- 16) *Bij mij u Lieden Huijsvrouwwe Martijntje Jakops soo **gij lieden** niet schrijven en kont,*  
‘Written by me your wife Martijntje Jakops. If **you** cannot write, ...’

Again we see how an originally plural form is used to address one single person. *Gijlieden* is used less frequently in this singular way than *ulieden* (possibly since it can only occur in subject position), but the same conclusion arises. For some writers, the form *lieden* must have lost its plural meaning. Sadly enough, the letters in which the special use of *gijlieden* occurs are all non-autographs, which makes it impossible to determine the age, gender or social class of the writers.

Two of the writers who use *gijlieden* also use *ulieden*. Both writers use the former form only in subject positions and the latter form only in non-subject positions. Apparently for them *ulieden* was not a full form for *ul* that could be used in all positions, but rather a combination of the pronoun *u* reserved for non-subject positions and *lieden*.

#### **4.3.6. U in different positions**

##### *U in subject position*

To describe the use of *u* properly, I must distinguish its use in subject position from its use in other positions. As mentioned above, *u* in subject position was a relatively new phenomenon in the second half of the

seventeenth century, which is reflected in the number of occurrences in the entire corpus: *u* as a subject can only be found 18 times in the private letters of eight different writers and 7 times in the business letters of two different writers. The use of the pronoun *u* as a subject seems to be typical of letters written by men from the upper-middle class (5 writers) and men from the upper class (one writer).<sup>65</sup> One of the upper-middle-class writers, a certain J.A. Weijers, a middle-aged man from the province of Zeeland, uses it quite frequently, namely fifteen times in three different letters. He uses *u* in subject position in both business and private letters, cf. the following examples:

- 17) *verhoop dat u hem niet qualyck neme suldt*  
 ‘I hope **you** won’t blame him’
- 18) *wandt de ringh die u my gegeven hebdt daer oock bij js*  
 ‘Because the ring **you** have given to me is in that lot as well’

The fact that men from the upper-middle class seem to be the first (or among the first) to use *u* in subject position is interesting with respect to theories about the origin of the use of *u* in subject position. A widely supported theory about the origin of *u* in subject position is that it arose from the form of address *UE* (Van den Toorn 1977: 524-525; Van der Sijs 2004: 474-475; Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 267). Given the results on *UE* listed above, upper-middle-class men can be seen as the most fervent users of *UE*. Since the group of writers most strongly linked to *UE* is also the group of writers who show the first examples of *u* used in subject position, this would support the theory that *u* in subject position evolved from *UE*. However, it must be noted that the data for *u* in subject position are too scarce to draw very strong conclusions.

#### *U in other positions*

*U* in non-subject positions occurs 1623 times in the letters of 252 different writers (57% of the writers) in the entire seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus. *U* occurs as direct object (19), as indirect object (20), as possessive pronoun (21), as reflexive pronoun (22) and following prepositions (23):

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<sup>65</sup> The other writers are unknown encoders and a writer whose social class could not be determined. There is the possibility that *u* in subject position is mostly found in the letters of the upper-middle class men because this group of writers is overrepresented in the corpus of private autograph letters. Since *u* in subject position is a new phenomenon and therefore occurs quite rarely, it is possible that we cannot detect it in the groups of the lower and lower-middle class because there are simply fewer writers in these groups.

- 19) *begroete u duijsent mael wt gront van mijn herte*  
‘I greet **you** a thousand times from the bottom of my heart’
- 20) *en ick wensch u hondert duisent goede nachte*  
‘and I bid **you** one hundred thousand times good night’
- 21) *Seer waerde Neef Dirck Pijl Ik heb u brief ontfangen*  
‘Dear Cousin Dirck Pijl, I have received **your** letter’
- 22) *doch versuijm daer geen tijt prest u ende soeckt een korte reijs te maken*  
‘but do not waste any time there, hurry (**yourself**) and try to make a short journey’
- 23) *ick hoop in mej of in juny bij u te zyn*  
‘I hope to be with **you** in May or June’

Since social class has been shown to correlate with the distribution of forms of address, it is interesting to have a look at how *u* in non-subject positions is spread across the social scale in the sub-corpus of private autograph letters. The distribution of this feature vaguely resembles that of the form of address *gij*. Table 4.7 shows how the percentage of writers using *u* in non-subject positions steadily drops from the lower to the upper-middle class. The upper-class writers, however, seem to use this *u* more often than the members of the upper-middle class: 65% of them uses it in their letters.

<i>Writers using u in non- subject positions</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>LC</b>	8	80%
<b>LMC</b>	24	67%
<b>UMC</b>	55	52%
<b>UC</b>	11	65%

**Table 4.7: share of writers who use *u* in non-subject positions per social class in the sub-corpus of private autograph letters**

If we take a look at the relative frequency of *u* in non-subject position in the sub-corpus of private autographs in figure 4.5, the picture drifts further away from that of *gij*. *U* in non-subject positions occurs in 18% of the cases in letters written by lower-class members. It occurs relatively more often in lower-middle-class letters: *u* in non-subject positions has a share of 26%. However, the share of this form of address drops again to 20% in the upper-middle class, while it is more popular again in letters written by upper-class writers, occurring in 34% of the cases.

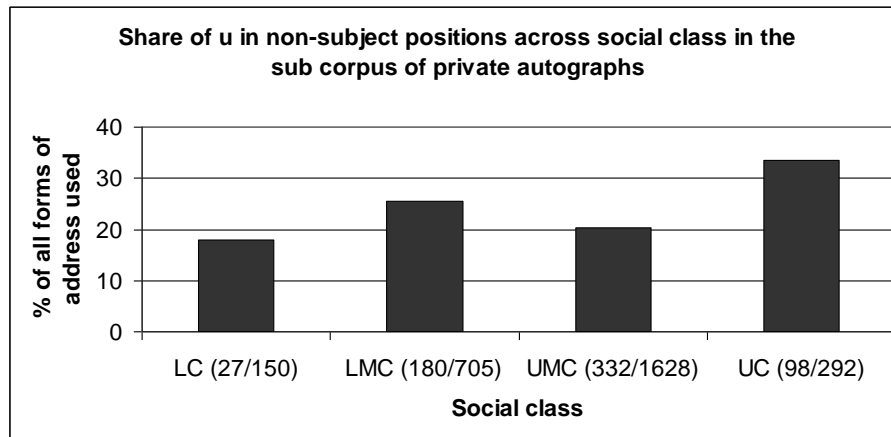


Figure 4.5

It is hard to explain this pattern of *u* in non-subject positions based on what is already known about the distribution of the forms of address in seventeenth-century letters. The occurrences of *ul*, *UE*, *jij* and *gij* all drop or increase steadily with each step higher up the social ladder and a common explanatory factor is difference in education and writing experience. But the occurrences of *u* in non-subject positions fluctuate with each step higher up in society and this is difficult to link to these two factors. Furthermore, it is difficult to come up with a new factor that can explain this fluctuating pattern. Therefore, I can only conclude that *u* in non-subject positions is only indirectly related to social class. The fluctuations in the pattern of *u* are likely caused by changes in the use of the other forms of address.

There is a small effect of gender on the use of *u* in object position. Relatively more women use *u* in non-subject position than men: 63% of the female letter writers of private letters use *u* in non-subject positions compared to 50% of the male letter writers of private letters. However, there is no difference in the share of *u* in non-subject positions between letters written by men and women: *u* in non-subject positions occurs in 21% and in 22% of the cases respectively. The women who use *u* in object position, seem to use it less frequently than their male peers.

There also seems to be a significant relation between the use of *u* in non-subject position and the type of letter: it is used by fewer writers and less often in the sub-corpus of business letters. While 50% of the male upper-middle-class writers who write private letters use *u* in non-subject positions, only 29% of the upper-middle-class writers of business letters use *u* once or more in the non-subject position. *U* in non-subject positions takes up 19% of the total forms of address used in private letters written by upper-

middle-class men, while it takes up only 5% of the total forms of address used in business letters written by upper-middle-class men.

However, since the puzzling results for social class suggest an indirect influence, I must consider the possibility that these effects of gender and letter type are caused indirectly as well. These data may be nothing more than the result of how *UE* and *ul* are distributed over private and business letters.

#### *U and gij*

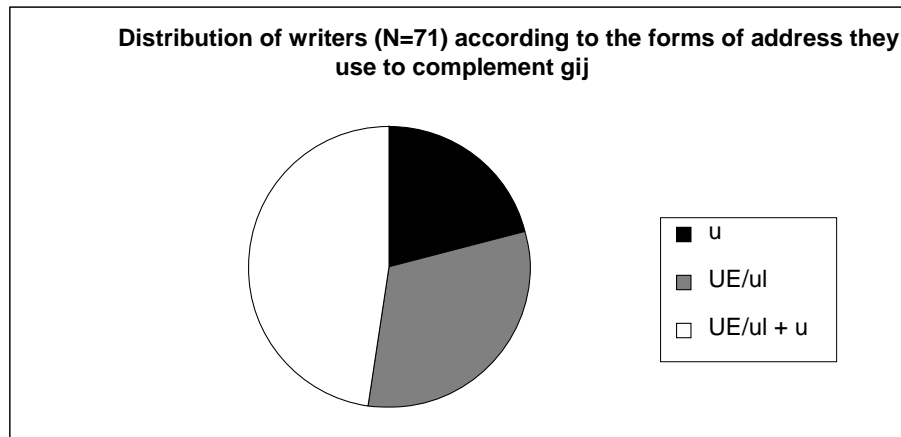
As was indicated above, *u* is supposed to be the variant of *gij* fit for all non-subject positions. However, the data for *gij* and *u* suggest that these forms cannot be put on a par. A closer look at the patterning of *gij* in subject position and *u* in non-subject positions reveals that there is no such thing as a fixed relationship between these two forms of address and that it is wise to keep *gij* in subject position and *u* in non-subject positions apart.

That *gij* and *u* do not form a watertight system in the seventeenth-century corpus can be illustrated by two pieces of evidence. First, *gij* in subject position is not always complemented by *u* in non-subject positions in seventeenth-century letters. Very often *ul* and, to a lesser extent, *UE* show up as non-subject forms if *gij* is the only subject. To examine this, I focused on the private autograph letters and – for practical reasons – restricted myself to the letter writers that have written either only one letter, or more letters intended for the same addressee. The pie chart below shows that if *gij* occurs as the only subject in these letters (with 71 writers), it is certainly not exclusively accompanied by *u*.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> It sometimes happens that *ul* or *UE* occurs exclusively in the signature of a letter while *u* is consistently used as a form of address in non-subject positions elsewhere. If this was the case, the form of address which occurred as the exception was ignored.



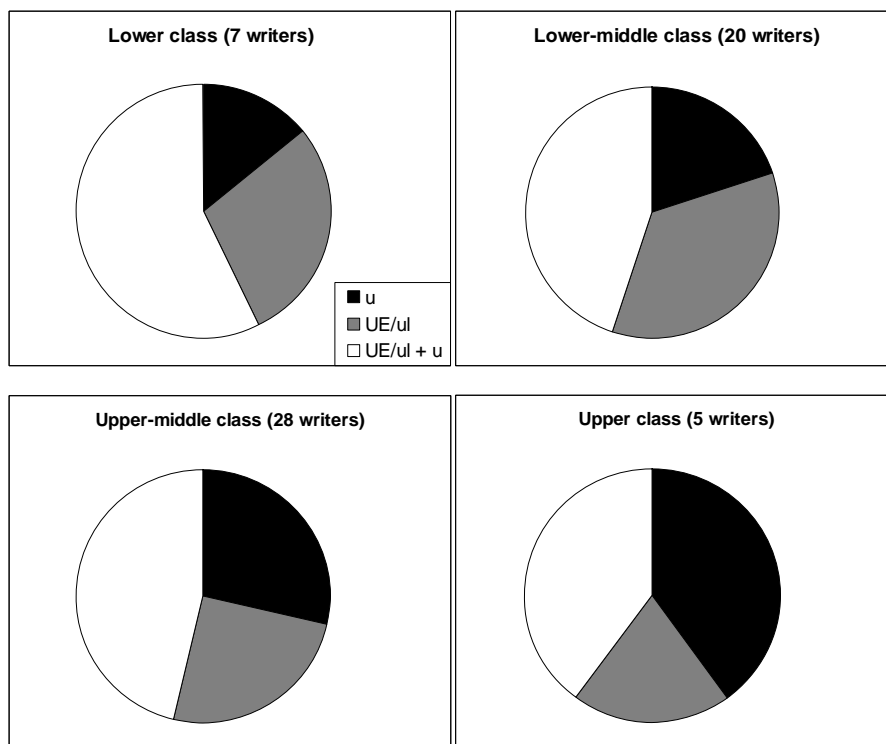


**Figure 4.6**

Fifteen out of the 71 writers (21%) who use *gij* as the only subject systematically complement it with *u* as a non-subject form. These writers treat *gij* and *u* as parts of the same system. However, more writers, 22 to be precise (31% of the writers), complement *gij* with *ul*, *UE*, or a combination of these two forms of address. And finally, almost half of the writers (48%) who only use *gij* as a subject form use *ul* or *UE* in other positions together with *u* seemingly without a difference. These last two groups of writers do not treat *gij* and *u* as inseparable elements, but allow for *ul* or *UE* to join in.

Interestingly, if this overview chart is broken down into four different charts (as in figure 4.7), one for each social class, a pattern emerges. The higher the social class, the larger the proportion of writers is who complement *gij* with *u* in non-subject position.<sup>67</sup> While about ten percent of the lower-class writers use only *u* as a form of address in non-subject positions when using solely *gij* as a form of address for the subject position, more than 40% of the upper-class writers complement *gij* with *u* and *u* alone. From lower to upper class the number of writers complementing *gij* with only *u* rises steadily while the number of writers using an epistolary form (*ul* or *UE*) or a combination of such a form and *u* drops from about 30% to 20% and from about 60% to 40% respectively. However, in each social class the share of writers who use both *u* and *ul* or *UE* to complement *gij*, remains very large (always more than 50%). In each social class, *gij* and *u* are thus not considered to be a fixed pair for the majority of writers.

<sup>67</sup> The charts contain data for the 60 letter writers (out of the previously mentioned 71 writers) whose social class was clear: 7 writers belong to the lower class, 20 writers belong to the lower-middle class, 28 writers belong to the upper-middle class, and 5 writers belong to the upper class.



**Figure 4.7: The distribution of a selection of the writers of private autograph letters per social class who use only *gij* as the form of address in subject position according to which form(s) of address they use in the non-subject positions.**

The second piece of evidence that shows that *gij* and *u* are not inextricably bound up is the fact that *u* as a non-subject form can also occur with forms other than *gij* in subject position. Even if *gij* is often the only subject when *u* is present as one of the object forms (with 48 writers), *u* as an object form can also occur when *ul* is the only subject form (with 10 writers), when *UE* is the only subject form (with 5 writers) and when there are several different subject forms (with 21 writers).

#### *Conclusions*

In this section, I have shown that *u* in subject position was indeed a new phenomenon in Dutch letters written in the second half of the seventeenth century for it occurs in the letters of only a few writers. These data suggest

that the upper-middle-class men were early users, or maybe even the innovators, of this form of address in subject position.

Not only the data for *u* in subject position, also the data for *u* in non-subject positions provide us with new information: *gij* in subject position and *u* in non-subject positions do not really form a solid system in the letters of the seventeenth-century writers from the corpus. There is a very large amount of variation: *gij* is often complemented with *ul* or *UE* and *u* in non-subject positions can also occur with *ul* or *UE* as subjects.

The distribution of *u* in non-subject positions across the social classes seems difficult to explain at first sight. However, this is not a problem if we assume that the correlation of *u* in non-subject positions with social class is indirect. *U* seems to be a default form of address for non-subject positions that was used more or less often depending on the presence of the other forms of address in the letters of different social groups.

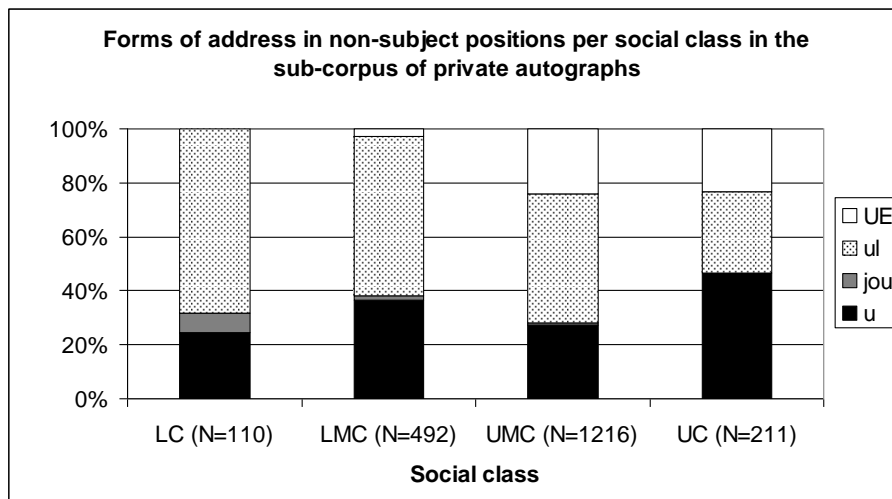
#### 4.3.7. The broader picture

By way of conclusion of section 4.3, I will show the distribution of the different forms of address for the variables social class and gender in the sub-corpus of private autographs. I will present each overview in two parts, one overview for forms of address in subject position and one overview for forms of address in non-subject positions.

##### *Social class*

Figure 4.8 shows the distribution of the different forms of address in non-subject positions across the four different social classes. The graph shows how the different forms of address are distributed proportionally per social class based on the number of occurrences of each form. For instance, in letters stemming from lower-class writers *ul* takes up almost 70% of the forms of address used in object position. *Jou* takes up less than 10% and *u* is good for 25%.

These data clearly show how the distribution of the different forms of address is related to social class. The form *UE* is clearly related to the upper classes, while the forms *jou* and *ul* occur less often in the upper class than in the other classes. The presence of *ul* diminishes higher up the social ladder as the form *UE* becomes more popular.



**Figure 4.8**

Based on figure 4.8, one could be tempted to conclude that *ul* is considered to be an old-fashioned form of address by the upper class. However, figure 4.9 – the overview for the forms of address in subject position per social class – proves this wrong. Contrary to the results for the forms of address in object position, *ul* in subject position occurs more often in the upper classes, rather than in the lower classes. This may be a consequence of upper-class writers preferring either one of the epistolary forms (*ul* and *UE*) over the more general form of address for the subject position *gij*. Again we see that *UE* definitely belongs to the language of the upper classes, while *jij* and its inflected forms are restricted to the lower-middle class. These two relatively young forms of address – that would become more popular in the future – originated at opposite sides of the social scale and would diffuse through social class in different directions: the introduction of *UE* in private letters can be seen as a change from above and the introduction of *jij* in private letters as a change from below. *U* in subject position is typical of the upper-middle class, as was shown earlier, and appears once as well in the upper class. *Gij* occurs quite often with writers from all social classes, but it is most popular in letters written by the lower classes.

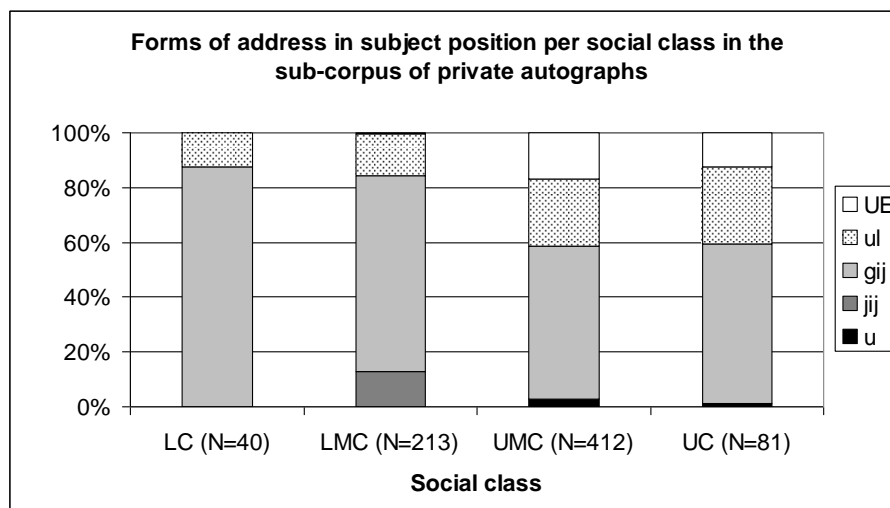


Figure 4.9

### Gender

When looking at the distribution of the forms of address in non-subject positions for male and female writers, there is little or no difference in the distribution of epistolary forms (*ul* and *UE*) and forms that are not typical of letters in general: both men and women use the forms typical of letters, *ul* and *UE*, in about 70% of the cases. However, there is a clear difference between the genders regarding how *ul* and *UE* are used separately.

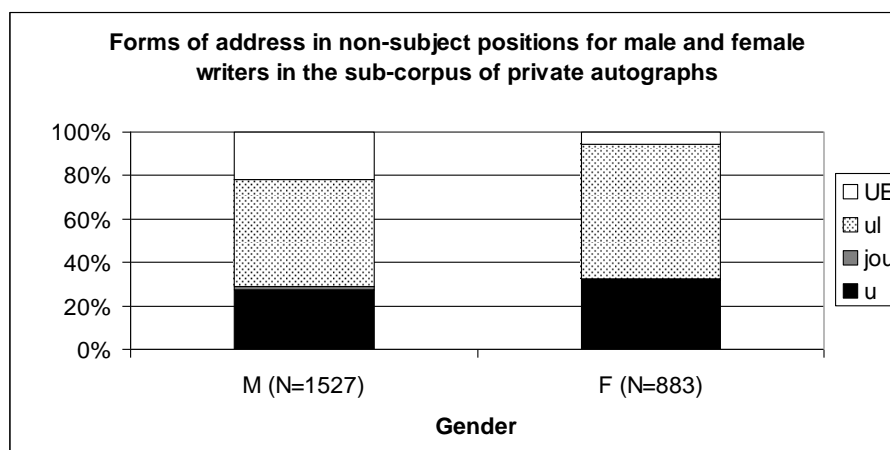
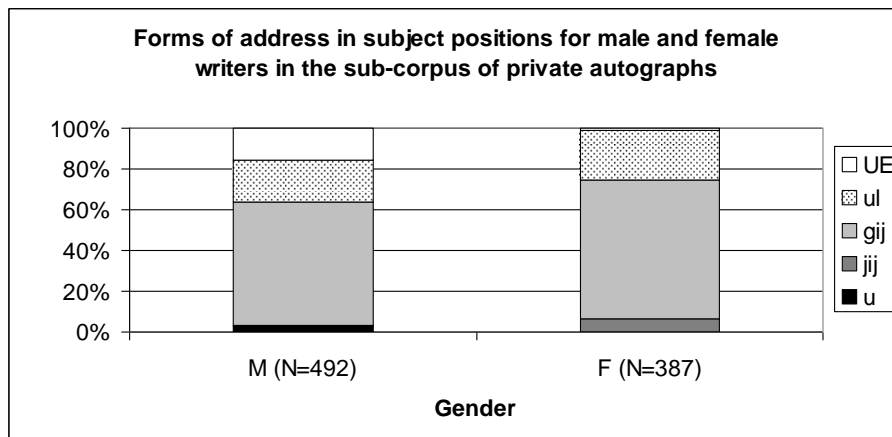


Figure 4.10

Women use *UE* less often than men do and use *ul* more often. We see this same difference in the presence of *UE* in the distribution of the forms of

address in subject position across gender presented in figure 4.11. This greater presence of *UE* in the letters of men may also explain the fact that *u* as a form of address for the subject only occurs with male writers, for it is probable that *u* developed from the form *UE*. Furthermore, women seem to use *gij* and *jij* slightly more often than men do.



**Figure 4.11**

#### *Gender and social class*

As has been shown so far in this section, the distribution of the forms of address *ul*, *UE*, *gij* and *jij* in seventeenth-century letters is clearly linked to social class and gender. However, there is more to it, since a closer look at the language use of men and women and members of different social classes reveals a very interesting pattern: women and the lower social classes seem to behave similarly, just like men and the upper classes. This is illustrated by figure 4.12 below, which shows the distribution of the different forms of address (without a distinction between subject and non-subject position) across the lower social classes and women on the one hand and across the upper social classes and men on the other hand. The similarities are undeniable: when a certain form of address is used more by women than by men it is also used more by lower-class writers than by writers pertaining to the upper classes and the other way around.

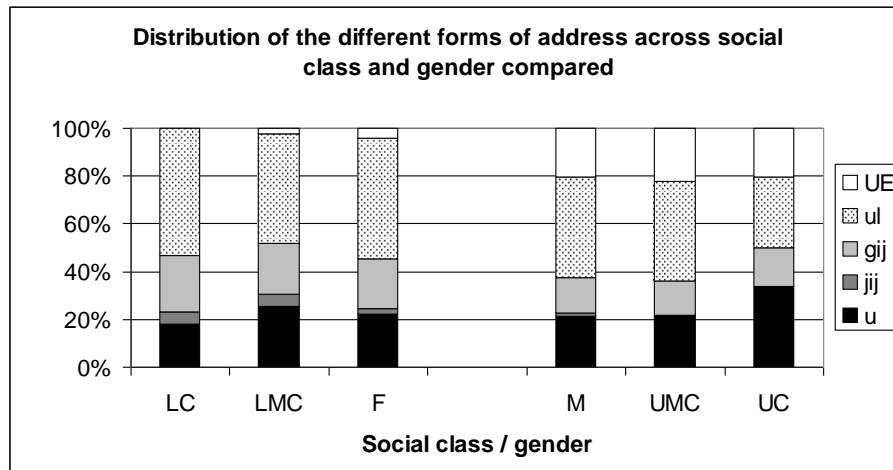
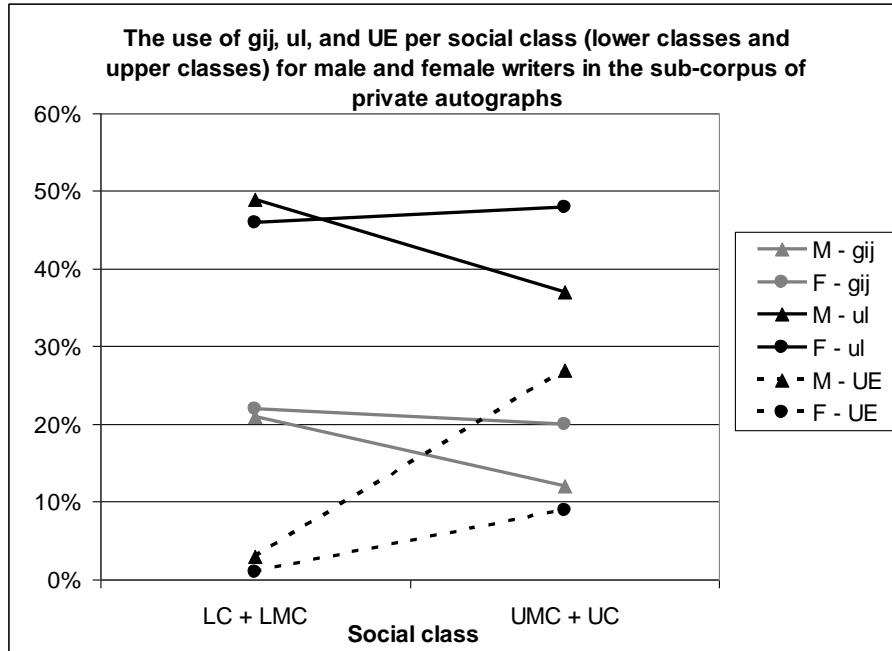


Figure 4.12

More information about the relation between gender and social class can be obtained if the results for social class are broken down into results for men and women. Figure 4.13 shows these results for the use of *gij*, *ul* and *UE*.<sup>68</sup> Again a clear pattern emerges from the results for the three different forms of address: in the lower social classes, the language use of men and women does not differ much when it comes to the use of certain forms of address, while in the upper social classes, men and women clearly differ in their use of *gij*, *ul* and *UE*. However, this difference between men and women in the upper classes is not caused because of the language use of men and women veering off into different directions. The language use of women from the lower social classes differs relatively little from the language use of women in the upper social classes, while the effect of social class is stronger on the language use of men for each form of address: lower-class men use forms of address very differently from upper-class men. How should we interpret this relation between gender and class?

<sup>68</sup> The data for *jij* and *u* in subject position were not included because of the low number of occurrences of these forms of address overall. The data for *u* in non-subject positions were not included given the fact that they do not seem to correlate with the variables gender and social class (see §4.3.6). LC+LMC men N=343, LC+LMC women N=512, UMC+UC men N=1392, UMC+UC women N=528.



**Figure 4.13**

The two recurring patterns described above can be explained by the fact that women and lower-class writers on the one hand and men and upper-class writers on the other have something in common, viz. the level of education and writing experience. In the seventeenth century, women and members of the lower social classes typically received less education and they had fewer reasons to put pen to paper than men and members of the upper classes. Writers from the lower social classes and women in general could thus have used *gij* and *jij* – forms of address that were not restricted to epistolary use – less sparingly than their counterparts, because they were less familiar with the different norms and conventions of written Dutch. They were also slower to adopt the new form of address *UE*, which was introduced by the members of the upper-middle class, because they did not come into contact with professional writing and administration as often as members of the upper classes. Instead, they still used the form of address *ul*, which had become generally accepted as an element of letter writing by the second half of the seventeenth century. The effect of gender and social class on the use of the forms of address that was described above, could thus be traced back to an overall effect of writing experience and education.



*Conclusion*

All in all, this section has presented new and insightful data on the distribution of the forms of address used in seventeenth-century letters: *gij*, *jij*, and *ul* are used more often by lower-class writers and female writers, while *UE* is used more often by upper-class writers and men. The interesting pattern in the relationship between social class and gender shows that the use of the forms of address depended largely on the writing experience of a writer. Thus, the social variables gender and social class have proved to be very useful in examining forms of address in seventeenth-century Dutch. However, the picture of the use of the forms of address in these letters is not complete yet. In section 4.4, I will examine whether the relationship between sender and addressee also influences the use of the seventeenth-century Dutch forms of address.

#### 4.4. The relationship between sender and addressee

So far, I have focused on the correlation between social variables and the use of the forms of address: an approach which has yielded very interesting results. However, I cannot refrain from examining the letters from a pragmatic perspective as well. In what follows I will examine if and how the relationship between sender and addressee is correlated to the distribution of the different forms of address in seventeenth-century Dutch letters. The data for business and private letters written by upper-middle-class men presented in §4.3 in any case suggest that *gij* is more typical of more intimate relationships (since it is clearly linked to private letters) and that *UE* is more typical of less intimate relationships (since it is clearly linked to business letters). The data for *ul*, *jij*, and *u* were less revealing in this respect. I will examine if the *Letters as Loot* corpus can reveal more about the link between certain forms of address and the writer-addressee relationship on the basis of a qualitative and a quantitative analysis. First I will concentrate on the 18 writers of private autograph letters who have written letters to several addressees: do they vary their use of the forms of address depending on the relationship they have with the addressee? Then I will examine a larger sub-corpus of private autograph letters and compare the forms of address used by different groups of sender-addressee pairs.

##### 4.4.1. Individual writers writing to different addressees

There are 18 writers in the corpus who wrote private autograph letters to two or more different addressees. Since there are on average about 10 forms of address (for the singular) per letter, caution is called for when comparing

two or three letters to each other. Differences in the distribution of the forms of address may well be coincidental.

With regard to *gij* or *ul* as a form of address in subject position, the letters of two writers show some differences. Captain Pieter Tant wrote a letter to his wife and one to his brother.<sup>69</sup> In the letter to his wife he used *ul* as a form of address in subject position (twice), but in the letter to his brother he used *gij* (once). It seems that Pieter wrote differently to his wife than to his brother. However, we must take into account the special meaning of the sentence in which the example of *gij* was found. Pieter wrote to his brother:

24) *en bedanke ul van al u bryeuen die **gij** gheschreeuen heeft maer hut der hoch huet der art maer toenes huberechsen heeft noch hen mij ghe screeuen*  
 ‘And I thank you for all your letters that **you** have sent. But out of sight, out of mind. But Toenes Huberechsen has sent me a letter once (more).’

If the first sentence – the part in which *gij* was found – is considered in isolation, it will be interpreted as a word of thanks for the received letters. However, the following proverb and announcement suggest that the letter writer has actually *not* received any letters from his brother. This allows for a different interpretation of the first sentence: a cynical one. It opens up the possibility that Pieter Tant used *gij* to address his brother in this instance, because it fitted better with his emotional state of mind at the time of writing than *ul* did.

Captain Noe Pietersz similarly used different forms of address in subject position when writing to his wife on the one hand and to his friend on the other.<sup>70</sup> He addressed his wife with *gij* (twice) and his friend with *ul* (once). Did he want to strike a more personal tone in the letter to his wife (keeping in mind that *gij* is found more often in private letters than in business letters)?

Regarding the forms of address that were used in non-subject position, there are some differences in the use of *jij*, *ul* and *UE* with some writers. Cornelis Cornelisz Van de Stad for instance, uses two inflected forms of *jij* and uses *ul* 5 times in the letter to his wife, but sticks to *ul* in a letter to a friend or patron.<sup>71</sup> Maybe he felt more free to use *jij*, which was typical of the spoken language and thus more informal, in the letter to his

<sup>69</sup> Letters 06-01-2010 238-340 and 06-01-2010 252-253 in the corpus (HCA 30-644 ).

<sup>70</sup> Letters 3-1-2008 079-080, 3b-1-2008 197-198 and 3b-1-2008 195-196 in the corpus (HCA 30-647 and HCA 30-644 ).

<sup>71</sup> Letters 16-06-2009 001-002 and 16-06-2009 007 in the corpus (HCA 30-640-1 ).

wife – whom he calls *Eersame seer beminde Lieve huijs vrouw* ‘my honourable very beloved dear wife’ and whom he begs for letters – than in the letter he writes to the *Eersame Seer diskrete* ‘honourable wise Sitie Jacobs’ which he ends with *V L dienaer* ‘your servant’. The latter letter is clearly meant to be more formal.

With regards to *UE*, it is clear that some letter writers use it when writing to people who did not belong to their closest family and do not use *UE* when writing to close members of the family. Pieter Barends for instance, uses *U* (four times) and *ul* (three times) when writing to his sister, but uses *ul* (three times) and *UE* (three times) when writing to his cousin.<sup>72</sup> The already mentioned Noe Pietersz uses *UE* once in a letter to his friend, while using *ul* for the seven remaining forms of address in object position, but he does not use *UE* in the letter to his wife (using *ul* 13 times instead).

But then there is Jan Leinsen, who writes letters to two different close relatives. He writes to his brother as well as to his father.<sup>73</sup> In the letter to his father, Jan uses predominantly *ul* as a form of address in non-subject positions (7 times *ul*, once *u*). However, when writing to his brother, Jan uses predominantly *u* (4 times *ul*, 12 times *u*). Jan uses *ul* more when writing to someone who could be seen as his superior (his father who has paternal authority and is older) than when writing to someone who could be seen as his equal (his brother who belongs to the same generation).

These results suggest that seventeenth-century letter writers varied the forms of address according to their relationship with the addressee. Although some writers differ in their form of address for certain relationships (e.g. Captain Noe Pietersz uses *gij* to address his wife, while Captain Pieter Tant addresses his wife with *ul*), some general patterns are present. *Gij* and *jij* seem fit to be used in intimate relationships, and *UE* seems to be reserved more for relationships that cross the boundaries of the core family or for addressing someone who can be perceived as a superior to the letter writer. The relationship between a writer and an addressee could thus be a useful variable to explain the variation further. In the next section, I will examine this in a more quantitative way. I will try to determine which forms of address relate to which type of relationship, in order to find out if the findings based on this qualitative investigation are corroborated or not.

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<sup>72</sup> Letters 3b-1-2008 155-156 and 3b-1-2008 157-158 in the corpus (HCA 30-642-1).

<sup>73</sup> Letters 06-01-2010 276-279 and 06-01-2010 231-233 in the corpus (HCA 30-644).

#### 4.4.2. The relationship between sender and addressee and forms of address in private autograph letters

In order to examine how the relationship between the sender and addressee affects the distribution of the forms of address, I focused on the sub-corpus of private autograph letters. For practical reasons – the letters in the corpus are arranged per writer so that all the different letters of one single writer are grouped together irrespective of possible different addressees – only writers were included who wrote letters to one addressee, cf. the investigation of the relationship between *u* and *gij* in §4.3.6. So if a letter writer wrote to both his father and his sister, the data for this letter writer were not included in the following investigation. On the other hand, if a letter writer wrote one or more letters to only one addressee, all of this letter writer's letters were included. The writers were grouped according to their relationship with the addressee of their letter, which resulted in ten different groups: parent – child (13 writers N=362), child – parent (15 writers N=162), sibling – sibling (19 writers N=304), spouse – spouse (82 writers N=1416), cousin - cousin (7 writers N=100), brother-in-law – brother/sister-in-law (12 writers N=143), friend – friend (18 writers N=280), uncle – nephew (2 writers N=36), nephew – uncle/aunt (2 writers N=28), and father-in-law – son-in-law (2 writers N=91).<sup>74</sup> Figure 4.14 shows how the forms of address are distributed according to the pair of sender and addressee. Three groups were not included because of the low number of writers involved: the group of uncles writing to nephews, the group of nephews writing to uncles and aunts, and the group of fathers-in-law writing to their sons-in-law.

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<sup>74</sup> The first member of each pair is the sender, the second member is the addressee.

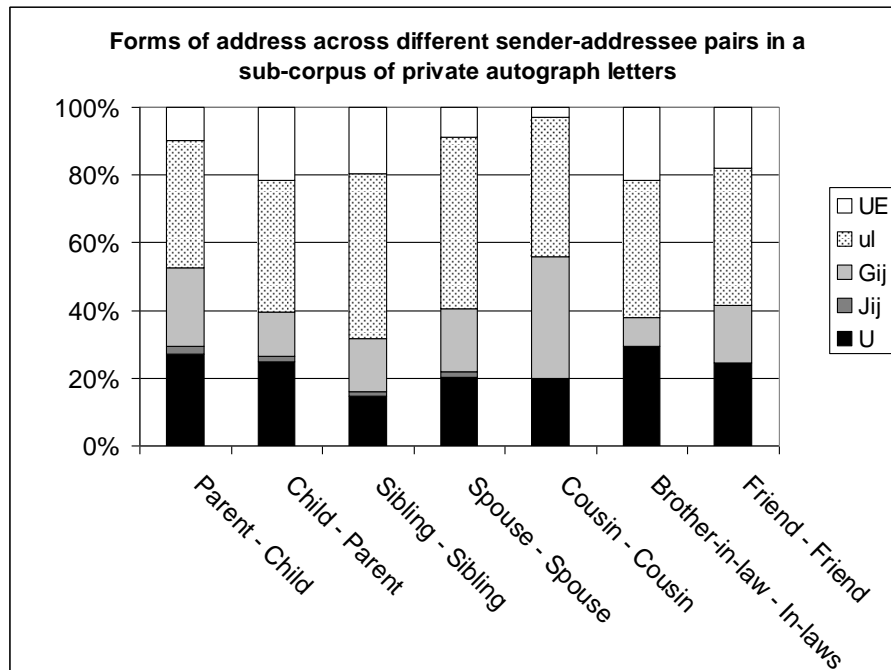
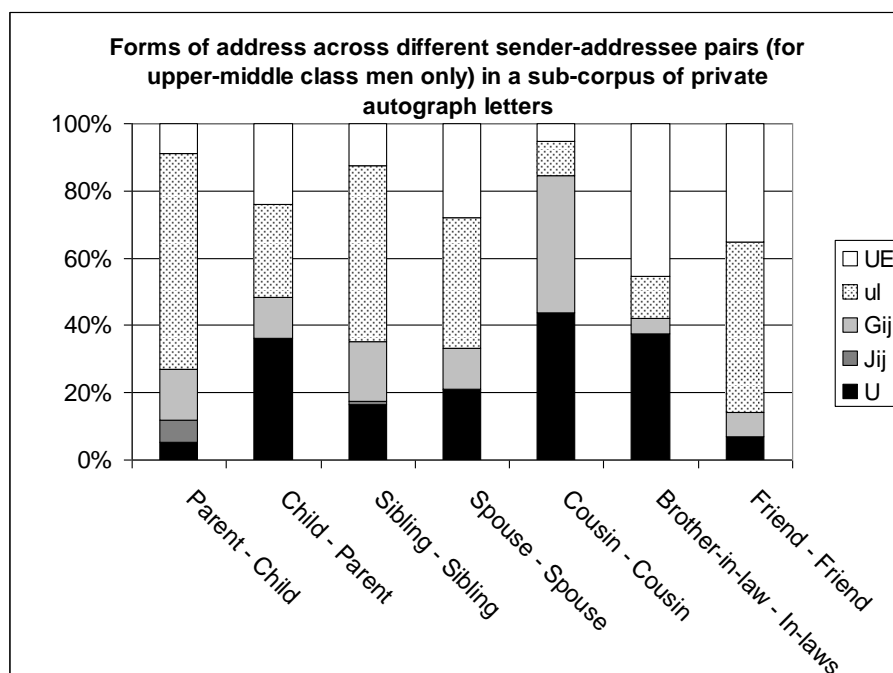


Figure 4.14

Figure 4.14 shows variation in the use of forms of address across different sender-addressee pairs. *Jij* is used only in letters sent to members of the sender's core family and *gij* likewise seems to be more popular for the more intimate relationships, given that it hardly occurs in letters between in-laws. A pattern for *UE*, however, is less clearly visible: children use *UE* quite often in their letters to their parents, which could be a sign of respect, and *UE* is rather popular in letters from brothers-in-law to brothers- or sisters-in-law. However, it is also used relatively often in letters between siblings and friends. The hypotheses formulated in §4.4.1 are thus corroborated to some extent by figure 4.14, but not completely.

However, since it has been demonstrated above that social class and gender are important variables, more accurate data might be obtained if these factors are kept stable. I therefore examined the sub-corpus of male letter writers belonging to the upper-middle class, since they are the largest sub-group of writers and that they were found in all of the sender-addressee groups that were examined above: father – child (4 writers N=134), son – parent(s) (7 writers N=91), brother – sibling (7 writers N=97), husband – wife (25 writers N=243), cousin – cousin (3 writers N=39), brother in law – brother/sister in law (7 writers N=64), and friend – friend (11 writers

N=142). The figure below shows how the forms of address are distributed for each pair of sender and addressee:



**Figure 4.15**

In figure 4.15, the variation identified in figure 4.14 seems to be magnified. The form of address typical of spoken Dutch, *jij*, is used only in letters written by fathers to their children and in letters between siblings.<sup>75</sup> This suggests that *jij* was deemed fit for use with intimates or maybe also to address people over whom one was superior (parents to children, for instance). *Gij*, too, seems to be used more often in the more intimate relationships, occurring regularly in letters between core family members (ranging from 12% in letters between spouses to 41% in letters between cousins) while occurring only occasionally in letters written between in-laws (5%) and friends (7%).<sup>76</sup> *UE* behaves as the opposite of *gij*, as it is more

<sup>75</sup> Since *jij* occurred only once in letters written between siblings, it cannot be spotted in the graph in figure 15.

<sup>76</sup> Although it may seem odd to consider the relationship between friends as not necessarily very intimate, one must keep in mind that the word *vriend* 'friend' was used differently in the seventeenth century than it is in present-day Dutch. The seventeenth-century concept of friendship had less to do with intimacy and more to do with securing one's place in society by granting favours and getting favours in

popular in letters for in-laws and friends than in other letters. Using this form of address may also show that the sender of the letter respects the addressee or feels the addressee to be his superior: sons writing to their parents use it in 24% of the cases, while fathers writing to their son or daughter use it in only 9% of the cases. *UE* is also popular in letters written by husbands to wives, which is more difficult to explain since the relationship between spouses is expected to be an intimate one. However, this is a twenty-first-century idea and one could wonder whether the relationship between husband and wife in the seventeenth century was generally less intimate than today. Or do husbands writing to their wives use *UE* often because of an epistolary convention or as a sign of respect?

The relationship between sender and addressee of a letter has been clearly shown to affect the distribution of the forms of address used. The variation could be found on the level of individual writers and on the level of groups of sender-addressee pairs. Although interpreting the nature of some seventeenth-century relationships is not very straightforward and may be dangerous, some general patterns seem to stand out. *Gij* and *jij* were likely forms of address typical of more intimate relationships and for addressing a person who is in some respect inferior. *UE* seems to have been a form of address typical of less intimate relationships and for addressing a person who is in some respect superior.

#### 4.5. Conclusions

At the start of this chapter I set out two goals. The main goal was to refine our knowledge about the use of forms of address in seventeenth-century letters in relation to social variables. Although this analysis does not fit in with the traditional line of approach for analysing forms of address, it has yielded interesting results. It has given us an unprecedented view on the distribution of the different forms of address used in Dutch letters in the second half of the seventeenth century: I have shown that social class, gender, and type of letter all to some extent affected the distribution of the pronominal forms of address *ul*, *UE*, *jij*, and *gij*. The second objective has been reached as well: the relationship between sender and addressee has proved to influence the distribution of the forms of address. Both qualitative and quantitative research has shown that *jij*, *gij* and *UE* are more typical for particular sender-addressee relationships.

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return than the 21<sup>st</sup>-century concept of friendship. For an extensive discussion of friendship in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, see Kooijmans 1997.

Furthermore, the data under investigation have not only provided us with information about the distribution of forms of address in seventeenth-century letters. They have also hinted at the origin of *u* in subject position and they have exposed a false assumption about the relationship between *gij* and *u*. Lastly, what has been brought to attention as well is the incredible variation in the use of forms of address in seventeenth-century Dutch letters – the entire range of possible forms of address which is sometimes present in one single letter. This variation neatly illustrates how private letters are in between speech and writing, containing at the same time forms of address typical of letters as well as forms of address more typical of spoken Dutch.



## Chapter 5. Reflexivity and reciprocity

This chapter combines two case studies of seventeenth-century Dutch which are related in several respects. The first study, presented in §5.1, deals with the rise of *zich* as a reflexive pronoun for the third person singular and plural. In §5.2, the reciprocal pronouns *mekaar* and *elkaar* are examined. Both case studies deal with pronouns, but that is not all they have in common. Both case studies examine how and why a particular pronoun became an element of the developing standard for Dutch in the seventeenth century. Although neither the investigation of *zich* nor that of *elkaar* and *mekaar* yield enough data to put an end to ongoing discussions in the literature once and for all, the new information yielded by both case studies offers clear answers to some important questions.

### 5.1. *Zich*: an intangible history

#### 5.1.1. A change initiated in written or spoken language?

In the light of ongoing discussions in the literature on the history of Dutch, it is desirable to examine the distribution of *zich(zelf)* ('himself' / 'herself' / 'itself' / 'themselves') – the present-day Standard Dutch reflexive pronoun for the third person singular and plural – in the seventeenth-century corpus. The originally High German *zich(zelf)* is believed to have made its first appearance in some south-eastern Dutch texts in the Middle Ages and in some north-eastern Dutch texts from the fourteenth century onwards in the form of *sick* or *sich* (Hermodsson 1952: 263-267; Van Loey 1970: 143; Postma 2004). *Zich* eventually became the standard reflexive pronoun during the seventeenth century (Van Loey 1970: 143). While *zich* rose fast during this period and while it has been present in Standard Dutch for over centuries now, it is not found in the majority of the present-day Dutch dialects (Barbiers & Bennis 2004: 43).

Apart from *zich(zelf)*, the following forms also occurred in seventeenth-century Dutch: a personal pronoun (*haar* 'her' or 'them', *hem* 'him', and *hen/hun* 'them') sometimes followed by *zelf* 'self' (examples 1-3), *eigen* 'own' preceded by a possessive pronoun and sometimes followed by *zelf* (example 4), or the possessive pronoun *zijn* 'his' followed by *zelf* (example 5) (Weijnen 1965: 49).<sup>77</sup> These forms still occur in spontaneous

<sup>77</sup> Whether *zelf* can be included in the reflexive pronoun depends on the type of verb which is used and the context. With reflexive verbs (e.g. *zich vergissen* 'to make a mistake' and *zich voornemen* 'to resolve'), *zelf* usually does not occur in Standard

speech in some Dutch regions (Barbiers & Bennis 2004: 43; SAND *Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten* ‘Syntactic atlas of the Dutch dialects’ Barbiers et al. 2005-2008; DynaSAND Barbiers et al. 2006). The forms *ul* and *UE* also occurred as reflexive pronouns in the seventeenth-century letters analysed, but it is often hard to tell whether they were seen as second or third person reflexives (see chapter 4 §4.2.1). The reflexive forms *ul* and *UE* were therefore not included in the data. However, it is to be noted that all the other third person reflexive pronouns (*zich(zelf)*, *haar(zelf)*, *hem(zelf)*, *hun(zelf)*, *hen(zelf)*, *zijn eigen (zelf)*, *haar eigen (zelf)*, *hun eigen (zelf)*, *zijnzelf*) that occurred with the subjects *ul* or *UE* were included in the data. Examples 1 to 5 illustrate the possibilities for marking third person reflexivity in seventeenth-century Dutch.<sup>78</sup>

- 1) *de sterre met de steert heeft **hem** hier mede verscheijden nachten vertoont*  
 ‘The comet has shown **him** here as well over several nights.’  
 ‘The comet has shown **itself** here as well over several nights.’
- 2) *Alsoo sij **haer** niet eerlijck quam te dragen*  
 ‘Since she was not behaving **her** in an honest way.’  
 ‘Since she was not behaving in an honest way.’
- 3) *voor waert beter dat alle menschen **haer** met haereijgen dingen bemoeijden*  
 ‘Furthermore, it would be better that all people would occupy **them** with their own business.’  
 ‘Furthermore, it would be better that all people would occupy **themselves** with their own business.’
- 4) *Desen voghel was immers vet ghenoegh om **sijn eyghen selven** te bedruypen.*  
 ‘For this bird was fat enough to baste **his own self**.’  
 ‘For this bird was fat enough to baste **itself**.’

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Dutch. With verbs that can be used both in a reflexive and non-reflexive way (e.g. *(zich) wassen* ‘to wash (oneself)’ and *(zich) scheren* ‘to shave (oneself)’), *zelf* can be added to stress the fact that the verb is used in a reflexive way (e-ANS §5.4.3.1).

<sup>78</sup> Examples 1-3 and example 5 stem from the corpus. Example 4 is taken from A. Poirters’ book *Het masker van de wereldt afgetrocken* (Poirters 1646: 109). The first English translations offered for each example are literal translations, while the second ones are more idiomatic.

- 5) *hij adde wel beter gedaen **sijn seluen** daer noch wat af te houden*  
 ‘He would have done better by keeping **his self** away from it [marriage] for now.’  
 ‘He would have done better by keeping **himself** away from it [marriage] for now.’

The ongoing discussion in the literature, summarised in Bennis (2005), is concerned with how and why *zich(zelf)* was adopted into the developing Standard Dutch in the seventeenth century while it was not part of the everyday language use of the elite in the trend-setting province of Holland. A first reason could be, according to Hermodsson (1952: 284-289), Van Loey (1970:143), and Van der Wal & Van Bree (2008: 214-215), that *zich* found its way into Standard Dutch through religious texts from Germany. *Zich* then became preferred by grammarians and literary men as the reflexive pronoun because it was unambiguously reflexive, while the use of personal pronouns could cause confusion, as illustrated in examples 6 and 7 (Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 214-215; Van der Sijs 2004: 482):

- 6) *Hij heeft **zich** gewassen.*  
 ‘He<sub>a</sub> has washed **himself**<sub>a</sub>.’  
 7) *Hij heeft **hem** gewassen.*  
 If *hem* has a reflexive meaning, the sentence is interpreted as:  
 ‘He<sub>a</sub> has washed **himself**<sub>a</sub>.’  
 If *hem* does not have a reflexive meaning, the sentence is interpreted as: ‘He<sub>a</sub> has washed **him**<sub>b</sub>.’

A different view on the matter is offered by Boyce-Hendriks (1998: 209-224) who claims on the basis of her sociolinguistic study that *zich* entered Dutch through spoken language: *zich* was introduced through the speech of the large number of immigrants in the Netherlands, particularly in Amsterdam, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These immigrants had originally fled the regions south of the Republic and had moved to Germany, from where they later emigrated to the Republic. According to Boyce-Hendriks (1998: 209-224), spoken language rather than written language was the first bearer of *zich*. It suffices to say that an agreement on the issue is still to be reached, an undertaking in which the corpus of seventeenth-century Dutch letters might be useful.

### 5.1.2. *Zich* in the *Letters as Loot* corpus

Unfortunately, it turns out that the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus will not provide us with the final answers to the questions about *zich*,

since the third person reflexive pronoun is not very frequent in the letters analysed. This is partly due to the text type: the main goals of the seventeenth-century letters analysed are usually to let the addressee know that the sender is alive and well and to ask the addressee for information about his or her state of health and finances. Finite verbs thus most often occur in the first and second person. Third person finite verbs also occur, naturally, when the letters describe the environment and the circle of acquaintances of sender or addressee, but they are less typical. In addition, reflexivity in itself is not highly frequent.

These facts combined explain the low number of third person reflexive pronouns: they occur only 66 times in total in the entire corpus (*zich* 14 times, other reflexives 52 times). Only 32 occurrences were found in the sub-corpus of private autograph letters (see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus) and can thus be assigned to writers of a particular gender, age, region and class (*zich* 5 times, other reflexives 27 times). Given the low number of occurrences of the reflexive pronouns, it is not surprising that there are no absolute conclusions to be drawn about the distribution of *zich*. Some findings, however, are certainly worth to be discussed.

However low the number of occurrences, it is remarkable that *zich* in private autograph letters was only found in letters written by upper-middle-class people (5 times with 5 people), as shown in table 5.1. No reflexive pronouns were found in the letters of lower-class writers.

	<i>Zich</i>	<i>Hem(zelf)</i> <i>Haar(zelf)</i> <i>Hun(zelf)</i>	<i>Zijnzelf</i>
<b>LMC</b>	0	6	0
<b>UMC</b>	5	15	2
<b>UC</b>	0	2	0
<b>Unknown</b>	0	1	1

**Table 5.1: The distribution of the different reflexive pronouns across social class in private autograph letters**

The other reflexives were not only present in upper-middle-class letters (17 times with 14 writers), but were also found in letters written by the lower-middle class (6 times with 4 writers) and the upper class (twice with two writers). This suggests that *zich* was first adopted by the upper-middle class. However, as pointed out above, the scarceness of the data calls for prudence.

Less tentative is the conclusion that can be drawn about the type of reflexive forms used in Dutch seventeenth-century letters. It is undeniable that the personal pronouns are the preferred way of expressing reflexivity in the seventeenth-century letters: they occur 49 times in the letters of 40

different writers in the entire corpus. *Zijn zelf* appears only 3 times in the letters of two writers from Zeeland. The other way to express reflexivity, the combination of a possessive pronoun and *eigen* possibly followed by *zelf* (*zijn eigen (zelf)*, *haar eigen (zelf)*, *hun eigen (zelf)*), is nowhere to be found. Apparently it was customary in the second half of the seventeenth century to use the personal pronouns to express third person reflexivity in writing rather than *zijn/haar/hun eigen*, *zijn zelf* or *zich*. It is possible that *zijn/haar/hun eigen* and *zijn zelf* were already considered to be typical elements of spoken Dutch and thus not used in writing, while *zich* was not established enough yet to appear very frequently.

The behaviour of letter writers who seem to be of German origin or whose mother tongue seems to be German, but who write letters in Dutch is also remarkable. There are four of such letter writers in the entire corpus who use at least one reflexive pronoun in their letters.<sup>79</sup> To these German-speaking letter writers, the reflexive pronoun *zich* must have been very familiar. Two of them indeed use the originally High-German third person reflexive pronoun *zich* in their letters (it occurs 3 times), as shown in table 5.2.

	<i>Zich</i>	<i>Hem(zelf)</i> <i>Haar(zelf)</i> <i>Hun(zelf)</i>
<b>Heinrich Rode</b>	0	2
<b>Everhard Jabach</b>	1	2
<b>Michiel Heusch</b>	0	1
<b>Janneken Aengenendt</b>	2	0

**Table 5.2: The distribution of the different reflexive pronouns across letters that show a clear German influence**

However, these writers also use a different reflexive pronoun in 5 cases. The fact that Dutch reflexive pronouns occur alongside *zich* in these letters merits attention, since it shows how some immigrants with a German background or German-speaking people interacting with Dutch-speaking people actively tried to adapt their language to the existing language norms of the Dutch society.

Take for instance the letters of Heinrich Rode. Not only does his first name indicate a German background, his Dutch letters are filled with Germanisms and spellings that point to German (such as the German conjunction *denn* ‘because’ in example 8, *ei* instead of *ij* in the possessive pronoun *mijn*, the word *bott* for ‘ship’, *mitt* instead of Dutch *met* ‘with’, and

<sup>79</sup> Writers of business letters have thus been included.

the use of a capital for nouns in example 9). Nevertheless, when Heinrich uses the third person reflexive pronoun, he turns to *hem* instead of *zich* (example 10).

- 8) *Jck moet het noetsacklick laeten macken **den** Wij Connen niet off ende anbort Vaaren.*  
‘I have to have it fixed because we can’t leave or board the ship.’
- 9) *mein **bott** is In stucken **mitt** dise **Weders**.*  
‘My ship is in bits and pieces with this weather.’
- 10) *Capt. Weer hefft voel maels **hem** bemuijt om In mein Compania te Wessen*  
‘Captain Weer has often meddled **himself** to be in my company.’  
‘Captain Weer has often done his best to approach me.’

Finally, the data for *zich* in Zeeland prove to be of particular importance. Considering the distribution of *zich* for the province of Zeeland, my data alone are not particularly revealing: *zich* occurs once out of 9 third person reflexives in total.<sup>80</sup> However, when we compare this result to the data presented in an article on the rise of *zich* in the province of Zeeland in the seventeenth century, the results of this study suddenly become more meaningful. Verhagen (2008) examined a corpus of municipal records of the city of Arnemuiden and decrees of the city of Tholen consisting of about 650,000 words. The corpus shows how *zich* first appeared in these texts at the beginning of the century and gradually took over from the pronouns *hem*, *haar* and *hun* until its use was nearly categorical by 1700. His data show that between 1660 and 1680 the rate of *zich* rose from about 60% to 90% in Tholen and from about 60% to approximately 80% in Arnemuiden. Comparing these figures to my data, the rate of *zich* in the seventeenth-century letters (1 out of 9 occurrences) seems suspiciously low. Of course, these 9 tokens cannot offer absolute certainty that *zich* was used only rarely in late seventeenth-century letters in Zeeland, but nevertheless the figures deserve to be examined. If there is indeed a clear difference between the rate of *zich* in letters like the ones in the corpus and in documents like the ones in Verhagen’s corpus, the fact that *zich* occurs more often in official texts than in private letters – the language of which is considered to be more receptive to influences from spoken Dutch than the language used in official texts –

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<sup>80</sup> All the letters for Zeeland for the entire corpus were taken into account: private and business, autographs and non-autographs or letters of uncertain authorship. There were no third person reflexives found in business letters from Zeeland.

suggests that *zich* entered Zeeland through (official) written texts rather than through spoken Dutch.

### 5.1.3. Conclusions

Due to the low frequency of the reflexive pronouns for the third person in the corpus, it has proved to be impossible to provide a detailed picture of the distribution of *zich* across social class, gender and region in seventeenth-century Dutch private letters. Only the fact that personal pronouns are the preferred way of expressing reflexivity and the fact that other reflexive forms such as *zijn/haar/hun eigen* and *zijn zelf* were not used in the corpus of seventeenth-century letters stand. However, it is also noticeable that *zich* is only found in letters written by members of the upper-middle class; although it is unclear whether this is simply due to the large presence of such letters in general or whether the upper-middle-class writers were actually the first ones to adopt *zich*.

Another interesting point for discussion is the comparison between the use of *zich* in the private letters analysed and the use of *zich* in official texts from Zeeland. The result suggests that *zich* spread through this region as a change from above: that it occurred first in the language use of members of the upper classes and in careful writing before it started to occur in the language use of people from the lower classes and in more spontaneous language use. This seems to contradict Boyce-Hendriks' conclusions about *zich* being introduced into Dutch through the spoken language of lower-class immigrants.

Furthermore, the data provided by the letter writers with a German background are interesting: these letter writers occasionally use the reflexive *zich*, which is closely related to the German reflexive *sich*, but they also seem inclined to adapt their language use to the Dutch norms and to use *hem* and *haar* as reflexives.

However, one should keep in mind that these results are only a small part of the puzzle: without more of such data from different moments in time and from different regions, it is still impossible to provide a detailed picture of this language change and bring an end to the discussion. After all, the nature of a language change can very well differ depending on the region, the period, and the stage this language change was in.

## 5.2. *Elkaar* and *mekaar*: competing forms?

### 5.2.1. The history of the reciprocal pronouns *mekaar* and *elkaar*

Hüning (2006) describes reciprocity in the history of Dutch and focuses on the anaphoric reciprocal pronouns used in present-day Dutch: *mekaar* and

*elkaar*. The article gives rise to some interesting questions to which the seventeenth-century corpus of letters may help find an answer. Before turning to *mekaar* and *elkaar* in the *Letters as Loot* corpus, I will first describe how these reciprocal pronouns are used in Dutch and what is already known about their history.

*Mekaar* and *elkaar* are typically used to indicate a symmetrical relationship. A typical context would be a thematic relation with two or more participants in which each participant acts as an agent and as an experiencer or patient at the same time. Take for instance the event of Johan and Thomas who meet each other. Johan meets Thomas and at the same time Thomas meets Johan (Lichtenberk 1994: 3506 and Kemmer 1993: 97 in Hüning 2006: 186). In Dutch, this reciprocity can be expressed as follows:

- 11) *Johan en Thomas ontmoeten elkaar/mekaar.*  
 ‘Johan and Thomas meet **each other**.’

The pronouns also occur in certain fixed expressions, such as *uit elkaar vallen* ‘to fall apart’. Both pronouns can occur in the same contexts and expressions, but *mekaar* is hardly ever used in present-day written Dutch. *Elkaar* has become the standard form, while *mekaar* can still be found in colloquial speech (Hüning 2006: 185-189). Hüning (2006: 186-189) lists some examples of the use of *elkaar*, taken from the ANS (Haeseryn et al. 1997, e-ANS §5.4.):

- 12) *Johan en Pieter verdedigen elkaar.*  
 ‘Johan and Pieter defend **each other**.’  
 13) *Ze schreven elkaar een brief.*  
 ‘They wrote **each other** a letter.’  
 14) *De auto’s reden achter elkaar.*  
 ‘The cars were driving **one after the other**.’  
 15) *Walter en Maarten aten elkaars boterhammen op.*  
 ‘Walter and Maarten ate **each other**’s sandwiches.’

Hüning (2006) describes the histories of development of *mekaar* and *elkaar*. *Mekaar* and *elkaar* developed from *malkander* and *elkander* respectively which in turn developed from the Middle Dutch pronouns *manlijc* (‘each one of the people’) and *elc* (‘each’) in combination with the so-called ‘alterity word’ *ander* (‘other’). These constructions of the Middle Dutch pronouns and the ‘alterity word’ became grammaticalised in time as the combinations of *elc* or *manlijc/mallic* with *ander* became re-interpreted as the reciprocal pronouns *elkander* and *malkander* (Hüning 2006: 200-209). It is assumed that the ending *-ander* turned into *-aar* as the vowel in front of *n* became



nasalised. This created an intervocalic position in which the dental was often dropped in the history of Dutch. Therefore *a<sup>n</sup>der* became *aar* (Heeroma 1942: 220 in Hüning 2006: 206).

At the end of his article, Hüning discusses the use of the reciprocal pronouns from the fifteenth until the nineteenth centuries with the seventeenth century as a pivotal period. He concludes that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century authors used *malkander* as the default pronoun of reciprocity and that the switch to the present-day Standard-Dutch pronoun of reciprocity *elkander/elkaar* took place in the seventeenth century (2006: 211). Hüning illustrates this with Vondel's use of the reciprocal pronouns in his plays: until 1641 the famous Dutch poet and playwright Vondel (1587-1679) used *malkander* almost exclusively, while in the period between 1642 and 1648 *elkander* occurs as often as *malkander* in his plays, and starting from 1650 Vondel used *elkander* exclusively. The question remains whether this shift in Vondel's language use occurred because the author adapted to a changing linguistic norm or because he was trying to establish a norm himself (Hüning 2006: 210).

Hüning (2006) also discusses how and why *elkaar* may have become the standard reciprocal pronoun while *mekaar* was once so dominant and still appears to be dominant in almost all present-day dialects of the Dutch-speaking area. Recent dialect maps of the SAND-atlas show that *elkaar* is the reciprocal pronoun in dialects only of the region of Amsterdam (SAND Barbiers et al. 2005-2008, DynaSAND Barbiers et al. 2006). If this was already the case in the sixteenth century, Hüning argues, *elkaar* may have become part of the standard language simply because it was present in the dialect of Amsterdam, which formed the basis of the developing standard language in Dutch. However, the author assumes that *elkaar* in the current dialects of Amsterdam is not a cause, but rather a consequence of the development by which this pronoun became part of the standard language (2006: 213).

These loose ends in the history of the reciprocal pronouns *elkaar* and *mekaar* in Dutch prompt us to examine the corpus of seventeenth-century letters. What does the distribution of *elkaar* and *mekaar* look like and can it help us to answer the remaining questions above?

### 5.2.2. *Elkander* and *malkander* in the seventeenth-century letters

To examine the distribution of *elkaar* and *mekaar* in the corpus, all variants of these forms in the entire corpus were listed and prepared for analysis.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Occurrences of *de(n) andere(n)* ('the other') were also present in the corpus as another alternative to express reciprocity. *De(n) andere(n)* occurred 5 times in the entire corpus and could not be linked to a specific gender, region or social class. It

However, the surprising results left little room for extensive analyses, since not much variation could be found. Remarkably, not even a single occurrence of the present-day standard reciprocal pronoun *elkaar* was found in the entire corpus, neither in the older form *elkander*, nor in its current form *elkaar*. Instead I found 211 occurrences of *malkander* and 10 occurrences of *malkaar/mekaar* in the letters of 147 different writers.<sup>82</sup> Examples 16 to 19 illustrate the reciprocal pronouns found in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus:

- 16) *nu verhoope VL sult troost aen **malcanderen** hebben, ende **malcanderen** oock voort helpen*  
 ‘Now, I hope you will find comfort in **each other** and help **each other** as well’
- 17) *liefste ick hoop dat ghij ons me niet verget al ben wij niet bij **mekaer** wij hoef daerom **mekaer** niet vergeten*  
 ‘Dearest, I hope that you will not forget us either. Even though we are not **together**, this does not mean that we should therefore forget about **each other**.’
- 18) *ijck hoop als dat die heer ons met gesondtghijt weer bij **malcanderen** sal laten komen*  
 ‘I hope that the Lord will let us meet **each other** again in good health.’
- 19) *godt wil ul bewaeren voor on geluck ende ons weder te saemen bij **mal kandere** laete kome*  
 ‘God save you from harm and let us meet **each other** again’

One cannot help noticing that examples 18 and 19 are rather similar. They are indeed both instances of a formula that occurs quite often in the seventeenth-century letters. This formula expresses the wish of the letter writer to be able to meet the addressee alive and well again one day, with the help of God, something which was not self-evident in a time of war, epidemics and overseas adventures. The occurrences of *malkander* and *mekaar* that are found in these formulae should be handled with care, since it is likely that the letter writers did not actively choose the form *malkander* or

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will not be discussed in the remainder of the chapter, since this section focuses on the relation between *elkaar* and *mekaar*.

<sup>82</sup> The 10 instances of *malkaar/mekaar* were mostly found in letters from the sub-corpus of non-autograph letters and letters with an unknown status, so that they could not be linked to a specific individual. Only two instances could be linked to a writer (to a middle-aged upper-middle class woman from Amsterdam and to a young upper-middle class man from Zeeland), but this is not enough to link the newer forms of *malkander* to a specific gender, region, age or social class.

*mekaar* in this environment, but rather used the formula in its entirety and used the reciprocal pronoun as a fixed part of it without much thought. Therefore, the occurrences in formulae could have a distorting effect on the data. However, if all these instances of the reciprocal pronoun found in formulae are left out (129 occurrences by 104 different writers), there are still 92 occurrences of *malkander* or *mekaar* written by 68 different writers – men and women from all different age categories and belonging to the lower-middle, upper-middle and upper classes. These data are still numerous enough to suggest that *malkander/mekaar* was the regular reciprocal pronoun in seventeenth-century letters and that *elkander* or *elkaar* was hardly used by most seventeenth-century Dutch people when writing letters.

That there is no variation to be found in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus with regard to the use of *malkander* and *elkander* does not mean that the data cannot provide us with valuable information. On the contrary. In this case, at least, the lack of variation gives clear answers to some of the remaining open questions raised by Hüning (2006) discussed above. Firstly, the corpus of seventeenth-century letters analysed here consists of letters written in the periods 1664 to 1666 and 1671 to 1672, which is fourteen to twenty-two years after the poet and playwright Vondel had started to use *elkander* exclusively. If Vondel was indeed following a norm that was developing in the vernacular, then we should at least see some variation in the data, if not find a preference for *elkander* or *elkaar*. However, it seems to be the case that the vast majority of people preferred *malkander* or *mekaar* to *elkander* or *elkaar*. Vondel thus must have been among the first to opt for *elkander* as the only reciprocal pronoun in his written texts. This may well have been a conscious act of standardisation on his behalf, since it is well known that Vondel was very much interested in and concerned with the Dutch language and strove to standardise it (Hüning 2006: 210; see also Van der Sijs 2004: 588 ff; Van der Wal 1995: *passim*).

However, I do not want to raise the impression that Vondel alone would be responsible for the development of *elkander* into the standard reciprocal pronoun in Dutch. Rather, it seems likely that *elkander* had become the norm in the written language of a circle of upper-class literary men and maybe of upper-class writers in general by the seventeenth century. Since the corpus does not contain letters written by regents, nobility or great literary men (see chapter 2), other sources must be examined to find out who exactly was using *elkander* in the seventeenth-century upper-class circles. Vondel was not the first or only one to prefer *elkander* as is born out by an analysis of the letters of Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687), a well-known Dutch poet and diplomat, and of the correspondence of P.C. Hooft (1581-1647), a Dutch poet, historian and playwright. Huygens preferred *elkander* to *malkander* in his early as well as in his later letters: he used

*elkander/elkaar* 65 times, while *malkander* only appears twice in the epistolary collection examined.<sup>83</sup> In his letters written between 1601 and 1647, Hooft shows this same preference: he uses *elkander* 10 times and *malkander* only once.<sup>84</sup>

As to how and why *elkaar* became the standard reciprocal pronoun in Dutch, it has been suggested that *elkander/elkaar* was part of the dialects in and around Amsterdam, which were at the basis of the standard language (Hüning 2006: 213). However, all of the 23 letter writers from Amsterdam who use a reciprocal pronoun in a non-formulaic context write *malkander* or *mekaar* (a total of 34 occurrences), which contradicts the assumption that *elkander* was the preferred reciprocal pronoun in the seventeenth-century dialect of Amsterdam. Hüning was thus right in assuming that *elkaar* in the present-day dialects of and around Amsterdam is probably a consequence of the fact that *elkaar* found its way into the standard language (2006: 213).

### 5.2.3. Concluding remarks

To conclude, the results from the corpus cannot offer a final answer to the question why and how *elkaar* became part of the standard language and *mekaar* did not. However, the data clearly suggest that *elkaar* was not introduced into the standard language from below, because the first appearances of *elkaar* are not found in the language of immediacy found in private letters written by people of the lower classes. *Elkaar* seems to have entered Dutch through a change from above, because Vondel, Huygens and Hooft are among the very first to prefer the form *elkaar* in their written texts. This suggests that we are dealing here with a form that was introduced into the Dutch by a small group of upper-class literary men or maybe by upper-class members in general.

## 5.3. Conclusions

Both case studies presented in this chapter turned out to be rather atypical compared to other case studies in this dissertation. The case study of

<sup>83</sup> For this query, I used the digital version of the *Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens 1608-1687, uitgegeven door J.A. Worp* (Worp 1911-1917), which can be consulted online: <<http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/Huygens>> [08/11/2012]

<sup>84</sup> For this query, I used the digital version of the edition of P.C. Hooft's correspondence (Van Tricht, Kuijper, Zwaan, Musarra & Ekkart 1976-1979) in the DBNL (*Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren* 'The Digital Library for Dutch Language and Literature'): <<http://www.dbnl.org/titels/titel.php?id=hoof001hwva00>> [08/11/2012]

reflexive pronouns only yielded a small amount of data and the case study of the reciprocal pronouns *elkaar* and *mekaar* revealed no variation at all. This hindered settling the issue of why and how *zich* and *elkaar* became elements of the developing Standard Dutch in the seventeenth century. However, although the *Letters as Loot* corpus could not provide the final answers to these discussions, it nevertheless produced some interesting findings. Examining the everyday language in the letters of people from all sorts of social classes and comparing it to the Dutch in official texts (Verhagen 2008) and to the language use of well-known literary men (Hüning 2006) raised some new valuable insights and hypotheses, as described above in §5.1.3 and in §5.2.3. So while the data for *zich* and *elkander/malkander* in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus seem rather modest when considered in isolation, they are certainly not insignificant in the light of previous research.



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## Chapter 6. Negation<sup>85</sup>

### 6.1. Negation in Dutch: (un)certainities about its history

#### 6.1.1. Exploring social variation

The way in which negation is expressed in Dutch has changed over the centuries, following the pattern of the well-known Jespersen's cycle, just as in English, German and French (Jespersen 1917).<sup>86</sup> This evolution of negation in Dutch has been documented and examined in different studies, many of which deal with the change from bipartite to single negation.<sup>87</sup> The main goal of the bulk of these studies was to explain *why* negation in Dutch evolved as it did and to link this development to other language-internal changes such as changes in word order (Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979, 1984; De Haan & Weerman 1984; Burridge 1993). For a long time, less attention has been given to *how* the changes spread through the language community, although Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979), Burridge (1993) and Paardekooper (2006) discuss regional differences and Van der Wouden (1995) examines the changes in negation in the language use of one individual, the Dutch poet and playwright Joost van den Vondel. More recently, some historical linguists have turned their attention towards the social aspects of change and variation in the use of negation (e.g. Goss (2002) on the language use of 25 immigrants and natives in seventeenth-century The Hague, and Vosters & Vandebussche (2012) on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Southern Dutch).

The data from the *Letters as Loot* corpus can be used to re-examine the influence of language-internal factors and region on the distribution of different types of negation in a text type different from those used in most of the previous research, a text type which is more closely associated with language of immediacy. Furthermore, the corpus of private autograph letters is also very suitable for a first large-scale investigation of the influence of social class and gender on the transition from bipartite negation to single negation in the seventeenth-century Netherlands.

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<sup>85</sup> Part of the research reported here was also presented in Rutten, Van der Wal, Nobels & Simons (2012).

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed overview of negation in Dutch over the centuries, see Van der Horst 2008.

<sup>87</sup> For instance: Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979, De Haan & Weerman 1984, Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1984, Burridge 1993, Van der Wouden 1995, Hoeksema 1997, Postma 2002, Paardekooper 2006, Postma & Bennis 2006, and Van der Horst 2008.

I will describe the distribution of single and bipartite negation in relation to both language-internal and language-external factors in §6.2. In §6.3 of this chapter, I will analyse the use of a completely different type of negation, the use of which has not been examined extensively yet in historical corpora of Dutch: double negation. Before presenting these analyses, however, I will first describe the history of these different types of negation in §6.1.2 and §6.1.3. The ambiguities which had to be dealt with in the data will be discussed in §6.1.4. The conclusions of this chapter will be presented in §6.4.

### 6.1.2. From single negation to bipartite negation and back again

In Old Dutch, negation was expressed by the negative particles *ne* or *en* in front of the finite verb: a single negation. In Middle Dutch, negation typically consisted of two elements: sentence negation was expressed with the negative particle *ne* or *en* in front of the finite verb and the negative adverb *niet* ‘not’. I will refer to this type of negation as ‘bipartite negation’.<sup>88</sup> The negative particles *ne* or *en* also occurred with other types of negation, such as negation with the adverbs *nooit* ‘never’ and *nimmer(meer)* ‘never(more)’, with the indefinite pronouns *niet* ‘nothing’, *niemand* ‘nobody’, and *nergens* ‘nowhere’, and with the article *geen* ‘no’. Some examples from Van den Berg (1971) illustrate bipartite negation:

- 1) *Hine wilde scamps niet ontbaren.*  
‘He **didn’t** want to miss the fight.’
- 2) *Ende dat is die beste wortel, die niet gatich en is ende niet en stuvet als mense brect.*  
‘And this is the best root, one that **isn’t** worm-eaten and **doesn’t** rise in clouds when one breaks it.’
- 3) *Ons ne verraet hi nemmermee.*  
‘He will **never** treat us disloyally **again**.’
- 4) *Ic en hoords noit boec ghewaghen.*  
‘I have **never** heard a book mention it.’

<sup>88</sup> Some scholars refer to this type of negation as *double negation*, but we reserve this term for a different phenomenon. The term *embracing negation* is also used as an alternative name for this type of negation and refers to the fact that in bipartite negations, the two elements of negation often ‘embrace’ the finite verb. However, the term *bipartite negation*, as explained by Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979, is more suitable for Dutch, for in most Dutch sub-clauses, *ne* and the inherently negative word do not ‘embrace’ the finite verb, but occur both in front of it. The term *bipartite negation* simply indicates that we are dealing with one negation that is expressed by two parts, without implying that these two parts embrace the finite verb.



- 5) *Hi en begheerde gheen ander goet dan hi den camp vechten moet.*  
 ‘He **didn’t** want **anything** else but to fight.’

However, while this type of negation was normal in Middle Dutch, Old Dutch single negation with *ne* or *en* as the only negative element still occurred as well. These single negations only occurred with particular verbs (such as *weten* (6), *moghen* (7), and *willen* (8)), in short questions (9), and in particular syntactic environments (such as sentences with a conditional meaning (10) or short answers (11)):<sup>89</sup>

- 6) *dat si en weten wat beghinnen*  
 ‘that they **don’t** know what to begin’
- 7) *mer hij en mochte.*  
 ‘but he **couldn’t**.’
- 8) *Hi ne wilde: hi was te out.*  
 ‘He **didn’t** want to: he was too old.’
- 9) *En is dit Florijs miin soete lief?*  
 ‘**Isn’t** this Florijs, my sweet love?’
- 10) *hi en saecht met zinen oghen*  
 ‘**unless** he would see it with his own eyes.’
- 11) Person A: *Marcolf ghi slaept!*  
 Person B: *Ick en doe heer!*  
 ‘Person A: Marcolf, you are sleeping!  
 Person B: I am **not**, sir!’

In the course of time, bipartite negation which was common in Middle Dutch slowly evolved into a new type of single negation: the negative particle *ne* or *en* could be dropped and the remaining inherently negative word (such as *niet* ‘not’, *nimmer(meer)* ‘never(more)’, or *geen* ‘no’) took over the entire function of negation. This is still the way in which negation is generally expressed in present-day Dutch. Some examples from the corpus illustrate this new single negation:

- 12) *maar ick door het met een ander niet ouer stueren*  
 ‘But I **don’t** dare to send it over with someone else.’

<sup>89</sup> Examples 6, 7, 10 and 11 were taken from Van der Horst (2008: 517, 751, 1023) and examples 8 and 9 were taken from Stoett (1923: 155).

- 13) *ick vehaelt vl hier noch in kort als dat onse Ande rijs **geen** syn  
meer ynt vaere heyt*  
'I briefly tell you here that our Anderijs has **no** wish for sailing  
any longer.'
- 14) *alsoo het lamoen sop bitter js wil daer **niemant** aen*  
'Since the lemon juice is bitter, **nobody** wants it.'
- 15) *maer het scheidt of wij het **nooidt** sellen beleeven*  
'But it seems as if we will **never** live to see that.'
- 16) *min ijonck harten sal **nimmer** van min lijeste wijcken*  
'My young heart will **never** part from my dearest.'

This change from bipartite negation to single negation went gradually and took place at different points in time and at different speeds in different regions of the Netherlands and in different linguistic environments, as has been shown in several studies, e.g. Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979), Burridge (1993), Hoeksema (1997), Paardekooper (2006), Postma & Bennis (2006), Van der Horst (2008), and Vosters & Vandebussche (2012).

### 6.1.3. Double negation

Another type of negation which will also be examined is the so-called 'double negation'. In sentences with a double negation, negation is expressed by two or more negative elements at the same time, as shown in example 17, taken from Van der Wouden (2007).<sup>90</sup>

- 17) *Op een zeemansgraf staan **nooit geen** rozen.*  
'On a sailor's grave there are **never no** roses.'  
'On a sailor's grave there are **never** roses.'

Double negation should not be confused with *litotes*, or a 'denial' as Van der Wouden (2007) calls it. In *litotes* two negatives cancel each other out and make a positive, such as in example 18.

- 18) *Hij is **niet onvriendelijk**.*  
'He is **not unfriendly**.'

This sentence could mean as much as: 'He is rather friendly.' However in true double negations like in example 17, the two or more negations do not cancel each other out, but rather strengthen each other. The meaning of this example is thus not that there are *always* roses to be found on a sailor's grave, but that there are *absolutely never* any roses to be found there.

<sup>90</sup> The literal English translation is followed by a more idiomatic one.

In present-day Standard Dutch, double negation is not normally used, since it is heavily stigmatised (Van der Wouden 2007). According to Van der Horst (2008: 1577) double negation started to be avoided in writing from the seventeenth century on and was avoided more and more in written Dutch as the language norms tightened. However, we know it lingered in non-standard speech, because it can still be heard in colloquial spoken Dutch today (De Vries 2001: 184; Klooster 2003: 298-299; Van der Horst 2008: 1303). The SAND (*Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten* ‘Syntactic Atlas of the Dutch Dialects’ Barbiers et al. 2005-2008) shows that double negation occurs in Dutch dialects in the entire Dutch-speaking territory of the Netherlands and Belgium (DynaSAND Barbiers et al. 2006), although in no dialect does it seem to be used systematically.

It would be interesting to see whether double negation appears in the seventeenth-century letter corpus. Was it already stigmatised in written language or did writers use it freely? Do we find double negation typically in letters of writers who do not have much writing experience or in those by writers who did not have a good education? Or is it used by all writers independently of any social variables? I will try to answer these questions in §6.3 of this chapter.

#### 6.1.4. Ambiguity

Before going to the analyses in §6.2 and §6.3, it needs to be clarified which types of negation were included in the data and which were not. Not only negations with the negative adverb *niet* were examined, but also negations with *nooit* ‘never’, *nimmer(meer)* ‘never(more)’, *niet* ‘nothing’, *niemand* ‘nobody’, *nergens* ‘nowhere’, and *geen* ‘no’. The negative formula *niet/geen meer op dit pas* ‘nothing more for now’ was systematically left out. Some negations were excluded as well when their interpretation and analysis was ambiguous, as will be explained below.

As Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979: 18) already mentioned, it is sometimes unclear whether a negation in a sentence with the finite verb in the first position (a V1-clause) is single or bipartite. This problem is due to the ambiguity of *en*. This word could be used as a negative particle in the seventeenth century, but it was also increasingly used as a coordinating conjunction instead of the older conjunction *ende*. In sentences like example 19, this can create confusion. Ambiguous sentences of this kind were therefore not included in the data.

- 19) *en vertrout schipper vooght niet want hij een fielt is*  
 ‘(and?) do **not** trust captain Vooght, because he is a villain.’

Furthermore, negative clauses in which the personal pronoun *men* is the subject and appears directly in front of the finite verb – as in example 20 from the corpus – are said to be ambiguous, since they could be hiding a bipartite negation, i.e. the enclitic negative particle *-en* in the personal pronoun *men* (Van den Berg 1971: 35; Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979: 14; Burridge 1993: 197).

- 20) *men kan het hier op aerden niet altijd soo danijgh hebben als wij wel soude willen en wensschen*  
 ‘One **cannot** always have things here on Earth as we would like and as we would wish.’

However, while this enclitic rendering of negation was very common in Middle Dutch, it had already strongly diminished by the seventeenth century. Since no other evidence of clitic *-en* could be found in the corpus, the chances are small that the personal pronoun *men* is indeed hiding a clitic negative particle. Therefore these data were not excluded from my analyses.

## 6.2. Negation in seventeenth-century private letters

In §6.2.1 to §6.2.3 I will look at language-internal factors (phonetic and syntactic environment) and at regional variation in order to compare the data from the corpus to the conclusions already presented in previous studies. In order to examine these first three variables, the sub-corpus of autograph letters as well as the sub-corpus of non-autograph letters and letters of uncertain authorship were used, but only the private letters were taken into account (545 letters written by 408 different writers, see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus). For the other variables (gender and social class), which will be examined in §6.2.4 and §6.2.5, I will rely on the sub-corpus of private autograph letters (260 private letters written by 202 different writers, see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus).

### 6.2.1. Different phonetic environments

In §6.1.4, sentences with the subject *men* directly in front of the finite verb were discussed as potentially ambiguous because of the possibility of enclitic *-en*. But there is also a second reason to take a closer look at these sentences: the phonetic context in sentences like example 20 (and in other sentences with a word ending in *-en* in front of the finite verb) could cause the negative particle *en* to be deleted due to likeness of sound (Burridge 1993: 196-197).

In the private letters in the corpus, only one of the 24 negative sentences with the pronoun *men* immediately preceding the finite verb had a bipartite negation in which *men* was followed by *en* and the finite verb (21). This is about 4%.

- 21) *men en weet nijet ofte wij het lant sullen mogen houden ofte nijet*  
 ‘One doesn’t know whether we will be allowed to keep the land or not.’

In all the other negative sentences in private letters analysed, however, the percentage of bipartite negation lies much higher: 35% of the negative sentences in private letters have bipartite negation. This suggests that haplology takes place if *en* is supposed to occur following *men*. These data confirm the findings of BurrIDGE (1993: 196-197) and Hoeksema (1997: 141-142).

For infinitives with the verbal ending *-en* preceding the finite verb, a similar effect was also mentioned by BurrIDGE (1993: 195-196). However, Hoeksema could not find proof for infinitival endings in *-en* encouraging haplology of the negative particle in his data (1997: 142-143). What can the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus tell us? If we have a look at the percentage of bipartite negation in a sub-corpus of 523 randomly chosen negative sub-clauses, we can still find proof for haplology.<sup>91</sup> If there was a word ending in *-en* in front of the finite verb, bipartite negation only occurred in 39% of the cases (59 occurrences out of 152 occurrences), while if the phonetic context offered no possibility for haplology, bipartite negation occurred in 54% of the cases (201 occurrences out of 371 occurrences).<sup>92</sup> Not only the personal pronoun *men* in front of the finite verb thus promoted the presence of single negation, but all words ending in *-en* did. Negative sentences like example 22 are thus more likely to occur with a single negation than sentences in which the word in front of the finite verb does not end in *-en*.

- 22) *alsoo ick ul daer van soo alles niet verhalen (en) kan*  
 ‘since I **cannot** tell you everything...’

<sup>91</sup> The sub-corpus was made up of examples in sub-clauses, because in this syntactic environment it is possible for verb forms ending in *-en* (an infinitive or a past participle) to occur in front of the finite verb. This is impossible in the other syntactic environments.

<sup>92</sup> Of the 152 examples with *-en* in front of the finite verb, 105 cases had a verb form in *-en* in front of the finite verb. In these 105 cases, bipartite negation occurred in 43% of the cases.

This particular phonetic context in negative sentences thus seems to have played an important role in the transition from bipartite to single negation in the seventeenth century.

### 6.2.2. Different syntactic environments

Just like phonetic environments, syntactic environments can influence the degree of single or bipartite negation.<sup>93</sup> Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) distinguish seven environments: main clauses, sentences with the finite verb in first position (such as ‘yes-no’ questions and imperatives), sentences with inversion, sub-clauses, ellipses (clauses in which the finite verb has been left out), sentences in which negation is local and concerns only one word or a word group, and sentences in which *niet* is a noun and means ‘nothing’. The latter three categories were not taken into account in the article by Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) since they did not find any bipartite negations in these categories. In the case of ellipsis of the finite verb, this is not unexpected, since a bipartite negation would be hard to imagine in such a syntactic environment: the finite verb, in front of which the negative particle *en* always occurs if it is present, is namely missing.

In what follows, I will compare the data from the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus to studies by Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and Burridge (1993). As Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) discriminate between a larger number of distinct environments than Burridge (1993), I will follow their subdivision so as not to lose any information. Table 6.1 gives an example from the corpus of single and bipartite negation for each syntactic environment under examination. Elliptic sentences were not taken into account, since they did not show any variation in the way they were negated, as explained above.

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<sup>93</sup> As demonstrated by Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979, De Haan & Weerman 1984, Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1984, Burridge 1993, Hoeksema 1997, Postma 2002, Paardekooper 2006, Postma & Bennis 2006.

<i>Environment</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Bipartite</i>
<b>Main clause</b>	<i>jck can het <b>niet</b> schijue</i> 'I cannot write it.'	<i>maer godt <b>en</b> heeft het soo <b>niet</b> gewilt</i> 'But God did not want it this way'
<b>Finite verb in first position (V1)</b>	<i>weest toch <b>nijet</b> langer so slocht</i> 'Don't be that bad any longer'	<i>ende hout u altijd van quaet geselschap ende <b>en</b> verkert altijd in <b>geen</b> herbergen bouen al</i> 'And always shy bad company, and above all, never find yourself in taverns'
<b>Inversion</b>	<i>maer de toback heb jck <b>niet</b> coonnen vercoopen</i> 'But the tobacco I could not sell.'	<i>soo <b>en</b> konde ick ul <b>niet</b> naerder schrijven</i> 'Thus I could not write you more.'
<b>Sub-clause</b>	<i>...dat ul <b>niet</b> weet waer de reijs naertoe geleegeen is</i> '... that you do not know where the journey will lead.'	<i>... dat het de koninck <b>niet</b> hebben <b>en</b> wil</i> '... that the king does not want it.'
<b>Local</b>	<i>... datter <b>niet</b> een schip daer mach komme</i> '... that not one ship can come there.'	<i>... waer op ick tegenwoordich noch <b>niet</b> meer als 6000 op betaelt <b>en</b> hebben</i> '... of which to this day I have paid not more than 6000.'
<b>Niet 'nothing'</b>	<i>daer is <b>niet</b> te winnen</i> 'There is nothing to be gained.'	<i>alhier <b>en</b> passert <b>niet</b> van merito</i> 'Here nothing happens which is worth mentioning.'

Table 6.1: examples of single and bipartite negation for different syntactic environments and for *niet* meaning 'nothing' in the *Letters as Loot* corpus for the seventeenth century

The degree of bipartite negation is not the same for every syntactic environment in my data, which is what could be expected on the basis of the existing literature. Table 6.2 shows the distribution of bipartite and single negation across the different environments in all the seventeenth-century private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus (545 letters).

	<i>Single negation</i>		<i>Bipartite negation</i>	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Sub-clause</b>	466	56%	362	44%
<b>Inversion</b>	164	57%	124	43%
<b>Main clause</b>	508	67%	246	33%
<i>Niet</i> ‘nothing’	85	77%	26	23%
<b>Local</b>	157	82%	35	18%
<b>V1</b>	120	89%	15	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>35%</b>

**Table 6.2: The distribution of single and bipartite negations in different syntactic environments and for *niet* meaning ‘nothing’ in all the private letters of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus**

In the seventeenth-century private letters analysed, single negation is used in the vast majority of cases when it comes to V1 structures (89%). It is also used very frequently in local negations, and when *niet* means ‘nothing’ (82% and 77% single negation respectively). However, bipartite negation is not always a minor variant, since it is still noticeably present in main clauses, in sentences with inversion and in sub-clauses where it appears in 33%, in 43% and in 44% of the instances of negation respectively.

These results differ in some respects from the results obtained by Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and by Burridge (1993). While in Van der Horst and Van der Wal’s data, single negation was used almost exclusively in main clauses, V1 clauses and with inversion by 1640-1650 (1979: 15-16), in my data single negation is used in almost 90% of the cases only in V1 clauses. Bipartite negation still occurs rather often in main clauses (33%) and in sentences with inversion (43%) in the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus. Furthermore, Van der Horst & Van der Wal left out sentences in which negation was local (i.e. sentences in which the scope of negation is not the sentence or the proposition, but a constituent, a phrase or a word), since they could not find any variation in these conditions: single negation in this syntactic context seemed to be used exclusively already in Middle Dutch (1979: 11). However, in my data there are clearly instances of bipartite negation with local negations (18%). Overall, I can conclude that



bipartite negation is more present in the *Letters as Loot* corpus than in the corpus used by Van der Horst and Van der Wal (1979).

A similar difference can be found if my data are compared to the results presented by Burridge (1993: 191-193). While Burridge's data from the region Holland show that single negation was categorical (occurring in 99% to 100% of the time) by 1650 in main clauses, sub-clauses and clauses with a dominant V1 order (V1 clauses combined with inversions), in the data for South Holland and North Holland combined, single negation takes up 70%, 62%, and 73% in main clauses, sub-clauses and clauses with a dominant V1 order respectively. Again, bipartite negation occurs more often in my data than it does in Burridge's data.

All in all, the differences between my data and the data presented in Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and Burridge (1993) seem to suggest that my data represent an earlier stage in the evolution from bipartite to single negation: a stage in which bipartite negation still occurs rather often in some environments. This is odd at first sight, since my data actually stem from a couple of decades later (the earliest letter stemming from 1661 and the latest from 1675) than Van der Horst & Van der Wal's and Burridge's data and therefore would actually be expected to show *fewer* instances of bipartite negation than their data. However, we must keep in mind that Van der Horst & Van der Wal mainly based their conclusions on data stemming from prose, poetry and plays (1979), and that Burridge's corpus consists of "medical treatises, recipes and herbals", while it also includes "a number of religious prose works, legal documents, travelogues and private letters" (1993: 189).

First of all, the text types used by Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and most of ones used by Burridge (1993) are very different from private letters. As explained in chapter 1, private letters can be expected to reflect a more oral type of language use, to contain more language of immediacy. Since bipartite negation is known to have lingered longer in spoken language than in written language, this could be the reason why bipartite negation occurs more frequently in my data: a difference in text types. Secondly, most of the texts used by Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and by Burridge (1993) are typically produced by men who were rather high upon the social scale, while the letters in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus have been written by men and women from an array of social classes.<sup>94</sup> The larger presence of bipartite negation in the corpus

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<sup>94</sup> Even the private letters used by Burridge (1993) contain language use typical of the upper classes. For all of the private letters used by Burridge were written by P.C. Hooft, a well-known Dutch poet and playwright who was also the bailiff of the Muiden and who can definitely be categorised as a member of the upper classes.

may thus also be a consequence of variation in gender and social background of the writers.

Whether there was indeed variation in the use of bipartite and single negation in the seventeenth century which is related to gender and social class is what I will examine in the rest of this section. Unlike Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979) and Burrige (1993), I included the sentences with a local negation and sentences in which *niet* means ‘nothing’, since there are occurrences of bipartite negation in these contexts in the *Letters as Loot* corpus.

### **6.2.3. Regional variation: the south of the Republic vs. the north of the Republic**

Several studies have shown that region was an important factor in the distribution of single and bipartite negation. Both Van der Horst & Van der Wal (1979: 17-19) and Paardekooper (2006: 100-134) have shown that bipartite negation was still present in the language use of southern writers and poets (both from the south of the Dutch Republic and from the region which is now known as Flanders in the northern part of Belgium) in the seventeenth century, while it occurred less frequently in the language use of their northern peers.

Burrige notices that as early as 1300, the dialects of Brabant and Holland differed in the way they expressed negation: while bipartite negation seemed to be the norm in Brabant, in the texts from Holland from this period “all clause types show a considerable degree of deletion [of the negative particle *en* or *ne*, JN]” (1993: 190-193). In the seventeenth century as well these dialects differed according to Burrige’s data: while in texts from Holland of around 1650 the negative particle *en* or *ne* hardly ever occurred, bipartite negation in Brabant texts still made up more than 90% of the instances of negation in main and sub-clauses (Burrige 1993: 190-191).

Postma & Bennis (2006: 156) suggest that the deletion of the negative particle *en* or *ne* started in the north-east of the Dutch republic. Verdicts from the province of Drenthe show that around 1350 and 1400 bipartite negation already occurred considerably less often in that region than it did in Brabant or Holland.

When and where this change from bipartite to single negation may have started, in the north-west of the Republic a turning point seems to have been reached in the seventeenth century. In this period, well-known poets and playwrights in Holland started to adopt single negation (Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979: 15-17). The grammarian Leupenius (1607-1670) criticised bipartite negation based on the logical argument that two negatives form an affirmative (1653: 70):

*Daar het een groot misbruik is dat en somtyds wordt genomen voor een ontkenninge / gestelt synde by geen of niet: soo wordt gemeenlyk geseidt / gy en sullt niet dooden, gy en sullt niet steelen, gy en sullt geen overspel doen: doch dat is teegen den aard der ontkenningen: want daar twee ontkenningen by een komen / doen sy soo veel als eene bevestiginge: nu geen en niet syn ook ontkenningen / daarom kan en, als een ontkenninge, daar by geen plaatse hebben. Tis ook overtollig / want het kann veel korter en soeter naagelaaten worden. Wat ongemakk geeft het te seggen / gy sullt niet dooden, gy sullt geen overspel doen, gy sullt niet steelen?*

‘Since it is a bad misuse that *en* is sometimes taken for a negation, if it occurs with *geen* ‘no’ or *niet* ‘not’: thus people usually say *gy en sullt niet dooden* ‘thou shalt not kill’, *gy en sullt niet steelen* ‘thou shalt not steal’, *gy en sullt geen overspel doen* ‘thou shalt not commit adultery’: however this goes against the nature of negations: because if two negations come together, they do as much as an affirmation: now *geen* ‘no’ and *niet* ‘not’ are negations as well; that is why *en*, being a negation, cannot be used here. It is indeed superfluous, since it is shorter and more pleasant if it is left out. Where is the inconvenience in saying *gy sullt niet dooden*, *gy sullt geen overspel doen*, *gy sullt niet steelen*?’

The minister, poet and language authority Johannes Vollenhove (1631-1708) rejected bipartite negation, too, in a didactic poem directed to Dutch writers (1686: 164-577 in Van der Horst 2008: 1299). Furthermore, the literary men Hooft (1581-1647) and Vondel (1587-1679) both switched to using single negation exclusively around approximately 1640 (Van der Wouden 1995; Van der Horst 2008: 1298-1299). Bipartite negation seems to have disappeared rapidly from written texts from the seventeenth century onwards, but it persisted longer in the spoken language. In the recent past, it could still be heard in certain dialects, mainly southern ones in Flanders, Brabant and Zeeland (Koelmans 1967).

As explained above, it is thus known that in the seventeenth century, single and bipartite negation were used to a different extent in different regions. On the basis of previous research, I expect to find more bipartite negations in the southern provinces of the Republic than in the northern provinces represented in the corpus. Table 6.3 shows the distribution of

single and bipartite negation in the private letters from the *Letters as Loot* corpus for the different syntactic environments in the regions of Zeeland, South Holland, and North Holland (454 letters).<sup>95</sup> For North Holland I also show the results for the city of Amsterdam and the rest of the province separately.

Before looking at the differences in the share of bipartite negation between regions, it is worth noticing that the relations between the different syntactic environments remain more or less the same in every region. Sub-clauses and sentences with inversion count the highest percentage of bipartite negation and they are followed – in order of declining presence of bipartite negation – by main clauses, sentences in which *niet* means ‘nothing’, local negations, and lastly sentences with the finite verb in first position. This shows that the different regional varieties of Dutch must have shared those language-internal factors that influenced the order of the syntactic environments in which the decline of bipartite negation took place.

In Zeeland and South Holland, bipartite negation is used in about half of all the cases of negation, while bipartite negation is barely used in 1 out of 4 occurrences (25%) in North Holland. The differences between the regions are not only visible in the total percentages of bipartite negation, they can be found for every syntactic environment. This shows that the loss of bipartite negation was far advanced in the province of North Holland, while it was still in full swing in South Holland and Zeeland.

An interesting element to point out about the province of North Holland, however, is the position of Amsterdam compared to the rest of the province. One could expect that a language change develops much more quickly in a densely populated area such as the city of Amsterdam. However, this does not seem to be the case for the change of bipartite to single negation, since the percentage of bipartite negation is systematically *lower* in the province of North Holland – in more rural areas and smaller towns – than in its largest city, as can be gathered from table 6.3. This means that the language change must have taken place more quickly or earlier in the northern part of North Holland.

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<sup>95</sup> The total number of negations (2038) in table 3 does not equal the total number of negations in table 2 (1652). This is due to the fact that some letter writers could not be assigned to any of these regions.

	Zeeland			South Holland			North Holland			Amsterdam			<i>North Holland without Amsterdam</i>		
	N	%	bipart	N	%	bipart	N	%	bipart	N	%	bipart	N	%	bipart
<b>Sub-clause</b>	202	61%		95	56%		441	34%		275	45%		161	14%	
<b>Inversion</b>	74	50%		44	68%		135	28%		89	33%		46	20%	
<b>Main clause</b>	174	43%		96	52%		395	24%		257	30%		138	12%	
<b>Niet 'nothing'</b>	17	41%		12	25%		64	19%		44	23%		20	10%	
<b>Local</b>	50	30%		22	23%		96	9%		56	14%		40	3%	
<b>V1</b>	31	19%		7	14%		83	5%		55	7%		28	0%	
<b>Total</b>	548	48%		276	51%		1214	25%		776	33%		438	12%	

Table 6.3: Percentage of bipartite negation per region for each syntactic environment and for niet meaning 'nothing' in private letters

A possible explanation for this may be that immigrants in Amsterdam who came from areas where bipartite negation was still used more often (either from abroad, e.g. from what is now Belgium, or from other regions in the Republic, e.g. Brabant) slowed down the change from bipartite negation to single negation. Another, more plausible explanation might be the location of the city: although Amsterdam belongs to the province of North Holland, it is situated at the southern border of this area. The dialects below the river IJ, the most southern dialects in North Holland, are said to differ from those in the northern part of North Holland (Berns & Steusel 2004: 21). Therefore, it is possible that the change from bipartite negation to single negation first occurred in the dialects in the north of North Holland – an area which is known as *de kop van Noord Holland* – and then gradually moved southwards. Bipartite negation would then start to disappear later in Amsterdam than in the northern part of the province.

#### **6.2.4. How social class and gender influence the type of negation used**

With just over 1000 occurrences of single or bipartite negation in the sub-corpus of private autographs that can be attributed to writers whose social class, gender, and region of origin is known, it is possible to create an overview of the distribution of the two types of negation while taking into consideration all these different variables. An overview like this enables us to look for the influence of one variable at the time without having to worry about possible interference of the other variables. Theoretically, it would be possible to include the factor of age in this overview as well. However, this would diminish the number of negations per slot to such an extent, that it would become very difficult to retain a reliable overview. Therefore age will not be dealt with extensively in this section. However, since age may well have been a factor in the change from bipartite to single negation, I will take it into account and mention its possible effects wherever appropriate.

In order to create this overview, the percentage of bipartite negation was calculated per group of writers of a particular class, gender, and region.<sup>96</sup> Table 6.4 below shows the results. For each slot, the total number of occurrences of single and bipartite negation is given and the share of bipartite negation is presented in percentages. Percentages based on ten or more occurrences are represented in bold so that slots with very few data are easily recognisable. For North Holland, the results for the city of Amsterdam and the rest of the province are presented separately as well.

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<sup>96</sup> For this purpose, I used the private autographs written by writers whose gender and class were known and who belonged to Zeeland, South Holland, or North Holland. This sub-corpus contains 205 letters written by 160 different writers.

Class	Gender	Zeeland		South Holland		North Holland		Amsterdam		North Holland without Amsterdam	
		N	% bipart	N	% bipart	N	% bipart	N	% bipart	N	% bipart
LC	M			17	59%	3	0%			3	0%
	F			4	75%	32	31%	27	37%	5	0%
LMC	M	36	67%	9	78%	60	8%	2	0%	58	9%
	F	16	81%	38	74%	92	27%	48	33%	44	20%
UMC	M	262	46%	11	27%	197	18%	113	23%	84	12%
	F	29	7%	7	71%	127	35%	118	38%	9	0%
UC	M	11	9%			41	5%	18	11%	23	0%
	F			41	73%	16	44%	3	67%	13	38%
Total		354	45%	127	68%	568	23%	329	31%	239	12%

Table 6.4: Bipartite negation across class, gender, and region for all syntactic environments and *niet* meaning 'nothing'

*Social class*

Looking at the overall distribution of bipartite negation across the different social classes in table 6.5, we can see little difference between the different classes:

	#	<i>single</i>	%	<i>single</i>	#	<i>bipartite</i>	%	<i>bipartite</i>
	<i>negations</i>		<i>negation</i>		<i>negations</i>		<i>negation</i>	
<b>LC</b>	33		59%		23		41%	
<b>LMC</b>	149		59%		102		41%	
<b>UMC</b>	421		67%		212		33%	
<b>UC</b>	69		63%		40		37%	

**Table 6.5: Distribution of single and bipartite negation across social class in the corpus of private autographs of Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland**

The lower-class and lower-middle-class writers use bipartite negation in 41% of the cases, while the upper-middle-class writers and the upper-class writers use it slightly less often, in 33% and 37% of the cases respectively.

However, as can be gathered from the overview in table 6.4, this is not the picture for every region separately. The use of bipartite negation clearly diminishes in accordance with a rising social status in the province of Zeeland: for women as well as for men, the percentage of bipartite negation diminishes as the writers belong to a group higher up the social ladder. For men, the percentage of bipartite negation drops from 67% in the lower-middle class, to 46% in the upper-middle class, and to 9% in the upper class. For women, the percentage drops from 81% in the lower-middle class to 7% in the upper-middle class, which creates an enormous gap between the language use of men and women from the upper-middle class in Zeeland (46% bipartite negation with men vs. 7% bipartite negation with women). Single negation was clearly preferred by the upper- and upper-middle-class writers of Zeeland, while the lower classes preferred bipartite negation.

The province of South Holland, too, seems to show social variation. For men, the percentages of bipartite negation are rather high in the lower and lower-middle class (59% and 78% respectively), but low in the upper-middle class (27%). For women, the percentage of bipartite negation seems to stay more or less the same across the different social classes (somewhere around 73%). However, it is important to know that the woman in the upper class who is responsible for the high percentage of bipartite negation, Kathelijne Mattheus Haexwant, is an older woman who uses bipartite negation exclusively, while a younger upper-class woman uses bipartite negation only in 39% of the cases. Since the women in the other social classes are all younger than 50 and the older woman could be using bipartite



negation so frequently due to her age rather than to her social class, it is advisable to check what would happen if the older upper-class woman's data were not included. In this case, the percentage of bipartite negation would drop from around 73% in the lower, lower-middle and upper-middle class, to 39% in the upper class. So in South Holland, too, there seems to have been a social factor influencing the distribution of bipartite negation, providing a distribution similar to that in Zeeland: bipartite negation for the lower classes, single negation for the upper classes. This is evident for male writers and probably also true for the female writers.

In the data for the province of North Holland it is harder to discover social variation. Only the difference between upper-middle-class men (18% bipartite negation) and the upper-class men (5% bipartite negation) hints at a social stratification like the one witnessed in the other regions. However, the difference between lower-middle-class men (5% bipartite negation) and upper-middle-class men (18% bipartite negation) contradicts this. For women, the level of bipartite negation at first sight seems to be higher for the upper class than for the lower classes. However, the data for the upper-class women stem from two older women who are probably aged over fifty, while the data for the lower classes stem from women who are all younger. The higher amount of bipartite negation in the upper class might thus also be an effect of age.

The data for Amsterdam and the rest of the province separately do not show a picture widely different from the combined data. In Amsterdam and in the rest of the province separately, the only variation that can be clearly seen is that between the upper-middle-class men and the upper-class men: the latter group seems to use bipartite negation less often than the former group (in Amsterdam upper-middle-class men use bipartite negation in 23% of the cases, while the upper-class men use it in 11% of the cases; in the rest of North Holland, upper-middle-class men use it in 12% of the cases, while upper-class male writers never use it). Social class seems to influence the distribution of bipartite negation less in North Holland than in Zeeland and South Holland.

Summarising: in Zeeland and South Holland there is social variation among both men and women. Since the bipartite negation in Zeeland and South Holland occurs less often in the language use of the upper classes and more often in the letters of the lower classes, the change from bipartite to single negation can be characterised as a change from above in these regions. In North Holland, only the data for men suggest similar patterns of social variation, but less convincingly so. It looks as if there once may have been social variation in the distribution of single and bipartite negation in North Holland, but that this variation had almost disappeared by the second half of

the seventeenth century, because the rate of bipartite negation in general had simply become too low.

### *Gender*

When it comes to the distribution of the different types of negation across men and women in the overview table, it is striking that high percentages of bipartite negation are found more with women than with men. Wherever the difference between men and women of the same social class and region is 10% or more, we see that the women almost always use bipartite negation more often than the men do. This is the case in the lower-middle class of Zeeland (men 67% vs. women 81%), in the lower class of South Holland (men 59% vs. women 75%), in the upper-middle class of South Holland (men 27% vs. women 71%), and in all the classes of North Holland (men 0% vs. women 31% in the lower class, men 8% vs. women 27% in the lower-middle class, men 18% vs. women 35% in the upper-middle class, men 5% vs. women 44% in the upper class). The overall figures in table 6.6 as well, suggest this difference between male and female writers.<sup>97</sup> Women use bipartite negation in 43% of the cases and men in 35% of the cases.

	<i># single negation</i>	<i>% single negation</i>	<i># bipartite negation</i>	<i>% bipartite negation</i>
<b>Men</b>	465	65%	249	35%
<b>Women</b>	279	57%	207	43%

**Table 6.6: Distribution of bipartite and single negation across gender in the corpus of private autographs of Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland**

Only once do men use bipartite negation more often than women from the same social class and region, and this is in the upper-middle class of Zeeland (men 46% vs. women 7%). The question why this difference is so large and why it is so different from the rest of the data is a difficult one to answer. However, the general picture is clear: on the whole, women use the bipartite negation more often than men do.

### **6.2.5. From regional variation in spoken Dutch to social variation in writing**

What do the data discussed in section 6.2.3 and 6.2.4 actually mean? Can the social and regional variation found be linked up together somehow? The answer to this question seems to be ‘yes’, for it is plausible that the data

<sup>97</sup> These overall figures are based on private autographs written by writers whose gender was known and who originated from Zeeland, South Holland or North Holland. This sub-corpus contains 236 letters written by 185 different writers.

presented above actually reflect a transition from regional variation to social variation.

The very low percentages of bipartite negation in the province of North Holland with writers from all social classes – particularly in the northern part of this province – suggests that single negation was a regional norm for written Dutch in the province of North Holland. This was probably the case because bipartite negation was also used less often than single negation in colloquial spoken Dutch: the low rates of bipartite negation in the lowest classes and the fact that bipartite negation cannot be found any longer in twentieth-century North Holland dialects (Koelmans 1967: 13) suggest this. It is hardly surprising then that there was little social variation found in the expression of negation in North Holland.

This regional variation appears to have caused social variation when the single negation of the North Holland dialects became the preferred negation for literary men and other highly placed persons in the seventeenth century. It created sociolinguistic variation in the written language of the south of the Dutch Republic (Zeeland and South Holland), where bipartite negation was probably still much more present in everyday spoken language, judging by the high percentages of bipartite negation in the lower classes and the fact that even today bipartite negation can be found in dialects of the South. People belonging to the upper classes and men in general – who were usually more educated, well-read and more experienced in writing than members of the lower classes and women in general (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237-238) – followed the northern norm for negation more easily in writing than lower-class writers and women. Members of the lower classes and women across the board probably stuck more closely to the type of negation they used in their everyday spoken language.<sup>98</sup> The fact that bipartite negation was still more present in the spoken language of South Holland and Zeeland while the northern norm had become accepted in printed texts thus created a situation in which social variation in the use of negation could exist in these provinces.

With this picture of the distribution of single and bipartite negation in the seventeenth century, an important period in the history of negation in Dutch has been discussed and the way in which single negation invaded Dutch has been clarified. However, before the final conclusions will be drawn, there remains one other type of negation to be examined: double negation.

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<sup>98</sup> Admittedly, the upper-middle class women in Zeeland do not seem to fit in this pattern as they use single negation much more frequently than their male peers do. Explaining these data is difficult and we might be dealing with two exceptional upper-middle class women whose language use may be influenced by particular personal circumstances of which we are unaware.

### 6.3. Double negation

In the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus, double negation does not occur very often; it is used in only 28 cases of the total 2336 instances of negation in all the private letters of the seventeenth-century corpus (545 letters written by 408 different writers, see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus). Double negation thus barely takes up 1% of all the instances of negation. Only 25 letter writers from different regions use it, which is about 6% of the total number of letter writers in the corpus of private seventeenth-century letters. Among the writers whose identity is known, there are men as well as women, and members of different social classes (one letter writer belongs to the lower class, 6 writers belong to the upper-middle class). No pattern of distribution can be distinguished. Some examples of double negation in the corpus are given in 23-29. Examples 23 to 27 are emphatic double negations, while examples 28 to 29 illustrate double negation caused by a combination of negations in the main clause and in the sub-clause.

- 23) *ijck comme ock **nergens niet***  
 ‘I **don’t** come **nowhere**’  
 ‘I **don’t** go anywhere’
- 24) *daer **en is gans nijet te wijnnen vor mijn noch vor nijemant***  
***nijet***  
 ‘there is totally **nothing** to be gained for me, **neither** for **nobody**  
**not**’  
 ‘there is totally **nothing** to be gained for me or for anybody else’
- 25) *en heb noch **gien** antwoort **noijt** bekomen*  
 ‘and I have **never** received **no** answer yet’  
 ‘and I **never** received an answer’
- 26) *daerom vertrouwe ick als dat UE **noijte niet** het medogentij van*  
*UE verstooten*  
 ‘That is why I trust that you will **never not** cast the compassion  
 off you’  
 ‘That is why I trust that you will **never** cast off the compassion’
- 27) *vergeet **geen** kastanien **noch** wijn*  
 ‘Forget **no** chestnuts **nor** wine’  
 ‘**Don’t** forget chestnuts or wine’

- 28) *want wy allemael heel kranck geweest hebbe van de rasende koorse dat ick **niet en** docht datter **geen** van alle deur gekome sou hebbe van onse kindere*  
 ‘Because we have all been so ill with a very high fever that I did **not** think that **none** of our children would recover from it.’  
 ‘Because we have all been so ill with a very high fever that I did **not** think that any of our children would recover from it.’
- 29) *dat hij selfs personen ... op lijfstraffe **verboden** heeft ...in sijn lant **niet** te komen*  
 ‘that he [the king of France, JN] has even **forbidden** people to **not** enter his country under penalty of corporal punishment’  
 ‘that he has even **forbidden** people to enter his country under penalty of corporal punishment’

The data for double negation are difficult to interpret due to the fact that we do not know for certain how often double negation would have been used in colloquial speech in the seventeenth century. Admittedly, we do not even know how often double negation is actually used in colloquial speech nowadays. It is often mentioned in the literature as a feature of negation in present-day spoken Dutch (Klooster 2003: 298-299, De Vries 2001: 184, Paardekooper 2010), but no quantitative studies are available in which the occurrence of double negation in present-day colloquial Dutch has been analysed systematically.<sup>99</sup> Now depending on whether double negation is likely to have been abundant in seventeenth-century colloquial spoken Dutch or not, the data may be interpreted differently.

On the one hand, if double negation occurred very often in the seventeenth-century colloquial speech, the 28 instances of double negation probably form a smaller group than expected on the basis of the theory that the language use in private letters approaches the spoken language (they only take up 1% of the total number of negations in the seventeenth-century

<sup>99</sup> A hint might be found in the CGN (Corpus Gesproken Nederlands ‘Corpus Spoken Dutch’), a large corpus containing present-day spoken Dutch recorded in different situations (2004). I examined how often some negative elements (the negative pronouns *niemand* ‘nobody’ and *nergens* ‘nowhere’, and the negative adverb *nooit* ‘never’) occurred on their own and how often they occurred in a double negation (such as *nooit niet*, *nooit geen*, *nooit niets*, *nooit niemand*, *nooit nergens*, *niemand niet*, *nergens niet*, *nergens geen*, *nergens niemand* etc.) in spontaneous face-to-face conversations. Only 3.8% of the instances of negation with these negative elements were double negations (108 double negations on a total of 2846 negations), suggesting that double negation does not occur very often in present-day spoken Dutch. More research is necessary, however, certainly since the speakers in the CGN-corpus were asked to speak Standard Dutch.

corpus). While other aspects of spoken language do seem to penetrate the written language in the private letters of people from all sorts of backgrounds, double negation apparently does not. This may mean that double negation was stigmatised and already avoided in written Dutch by the second half of the seventeenth century. Since double negation occurs as rarely with members of the lower social class as it does with members of the upper-middle social class (10% of the lower-class writers use double negation and 7% of the upper-middle-class writers use it), one could even tentatively conclude that the stigmatisation must have penetrated through all social layers by the second half of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, if double negation did not occur very often in the colloquial speech of the seventeenth century, but was only occasionally used, the few occurrences of double negation in the corpus would not be surprising. And in this case, since double negation occurs in all social classes, this means that it was not stigmatised yet in the private letters of the social classes represented in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus.

It is hard to tell which of these two interpretations is more plausible, since obviously no spoken language of the seventeenth century is available to us. Further investigations might throw more light on the matter in the future. What I may cautiously conclude for now in view of the relatively few occurrences, however, is that seventeenth-century letter writers did not seem to differ in their limited usage of double negation, neither in social, nor in gender respect.

#### 6.4. Conclusions

The data presented in this chapter have confirmed important findings about the change from bipartite to single negation in Dutch: it has been proved again that both the phonetic and the syntactic environment are factors that influenced the type of negation used in seventeenth-century Dutch. Furthermore the data from the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus have shown how single negation in written Dutch advanced from North Holland down to the southern parts of the Dutch Republic.

The investigation of the change from single to bipartite negation in the *Letters as Loot* corpus, however, not only confirmed existing ideas; it also offered new insights. It showed that the change from bipartite to single negation took place at different rates in different text types, for instance. And the analysis of the corpus also produced new facts about the influence of social class and gender. In Zeeland and South Holland the upper social classes were quicker to adopt the use of single negation in their letters, while the lower classes used bipartite negation more often. At the same time, men

seemed to be quicker in adopting single negation than women, except in the upper-middle class of Zeeland. This coincides with the idea that bipartite negation was still used in colloquial speech in the south of the Republic at the time. The writers with more writing practice – typically members of the upper classes and men in general – were more able to follow the emerging norm for the use of single negation in written Dutch based on the expression of negation in North Holland than the lower-class writers and women. These last two groups seem to have stuck more closely to their spoken language, and thus to bipartite negation. What was first a regional variant of the North became a social variant in the written language of the South.

The data for double negation that were found in the corpus were not unambiguous. Interpreting the low number of occurrences of double negation in the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus is difficult without information or indications on how often this double negation occurred in the spoken Dutch of the time. In any case, the number of instances of double negation in the corpus was surprisingly low.

The analyses in this chapter have shown that not only region and language-internal factors were at play in the change from bipartite to single negation, but that the factors of gender and social class were important as well, especially in the southern regions of Zeeland and South Holland. It can be concluded that, although some questions pertaining to double negation remain to be answered, the seventeenth-century corpus of private letters has led to revealing additions to our knowledge about the history of negation in Dutch.





## Chapter 7. Schwa-apocope

### 7.1. Previous studies and present goals

#### 7.1.1. The origin and spread of schwa-apocope

One of the striking differences between Middle Dutch and Early Modern Dutch lies in the endings of words. The unstressed final vowel *e* which is often present in Middle Dutch appears less often in Early Modern Dutch words. This is due to a language change which started in the thirteenth century, also known as schwa-apocope (Marynissen 2004a; 2004b; 2009). This language change affected words of different grammatical categories: not only nouns (*lettere* > *letter* ‘letter’) lost the final schwa, but also some verb forms (the first person singular in the simple present e.g. *ic neme* > *ick neem* ‘I take’, the first person singular in the simple past for some specific verbs e.g. *ic brachte* > *ick bracht* ‘I brought’, and the inflected infinitive e.g. *te doene* > *te doen*), prepositions (*ane* > *aen* ‘on’, ‘with’, ‘to’, ‘of’, etc.), adverbs (*lange* > *lang* ‘long’), adjectives used attributively or predicatively (*simpele* > *simpel* ‘simple’, ‘easy’), articles (*ene* > *een* ‘a(n)’), and numerals (*achte* > *acht* ‘eight’) were stripped of their unstressed final *e* (Marynissen 2004a: 609).

Although schwa-apocope had a very big scope, it did not affect all words ending in the unstressed *e*. In present-day Dutch, old schwa-endings can still be found in some fixed expressions (e.g. *met name* ‘in particular’), in the declension of the adjectives and the ordinal numbers under certain conditions (e.g. *het witte huis* ‘the white house’, *een tweede huis* ‘the second house’), in nominalised adjectives (e.g. *de blinde* ‘the blind person’), in the past tense forms of weak verbs (e.g. *hij kookte* ‘he cooked’), in the nominal suffixes *-de* or *-te* which are used to form abstractions (e.g. *vreugde* ‘joy’, *hitte* ‘heat’), in personal nouns in which the final *e*’s function is to indicate that the noun refers to someone of the female sex (e.g. *agente* ‘policewoman’ vs. *agent* ‘policeman’), and in a few words that can only be classed in a residual category (e.g. *linde* ‘lime tree’, *orde* ‘order’, *vete* ‘feud’, *dille* ‘dill’, *aanname* ‘assumption’) (Marynissen 2004a: 609-610). The question why schwa-apocope spread the way it did, with particular exceptions, has been discussed in several studies (see for instance Van Haeringen 1937a and Boutkan & Kossman 1998).

According to Marynissen (2004a: 616; 2004b: 139), the schwa apocope first occurred in North Holland and Utrecht in the last quarter of the thirteenth century and then quickly spread to east-northern Brabant and Limburg. It then slowly spread to the north and to the south. In present-day Dutch, there is still a north-eastern and a south-western area in which schwa-

apocope is absent, as Weijnen (1991: 108-109) shows in his map 45 and as can be gathered from figure 7.1 below: the check marks represent the places where the first person singular form of the present for the verb *breken* ‘to break’ occurs without a schwa at the ending (*ik breek*). The vertical bars represent the places where this verb form occurs with a final schwa (*ik breke*). These are clearly only to be found in the north-eastern and in the south-western areas of the Dutch speaking region. Of the regions represented in the corpus – Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland – only Zeeland has the form *ik breke*.

Not only geographical factors played a role in the spread of schwa-apocope, but also morphological and phonetic factors were important. It has become evident that the schwa was lost first in words with three or more syllables and was slower to disappear in *e*-endings which indicated a dative or which indicated the feminine in nouns (Van Haeringen 1937a: 325; Marynissen 2004a: 611; 2009: 237). Furthermore it has been suggested that *e*-endings following [d] were less easily dropped (Van Haeringen 1937a: 322-323, Boutkan & Kossman 1998: 169-170). Several factors influencing schwa-apocope have thus been identified already. In what ways can the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus contribute to the discussions?

### 7.1.2. Social, stylistic and phonetic factors

Firstly, no social factors have been examined yet in relation to schwa-apocope. So while it is clear where schwa-apocope originated geographically and while some morphological and phonetic factors have been identified which influenced the deletion of the final schwa, it is unclear whether the language change moved through different social groupings at the same pace. The seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus offers the possibility to investigate whether social variables did have an impact on this language change and what this impact looked like. In what follows, I will focus on schwa-apocope in first person singular verb forms in relation to the social variables gender, class and age. Since previous studies have shown that region was an important factor and since the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus contains letters linked to three different regions, region will be taken into account as well.

The corpus of letters also offers the opportunity to examine the influence of epistolary conventions: the seventeenth-century letters contain many formulae and much conventional language use. It would be interesting to examine whether schwa-apocope found acceptance less easily in conventional phrases than in more spontaneously composed passages.

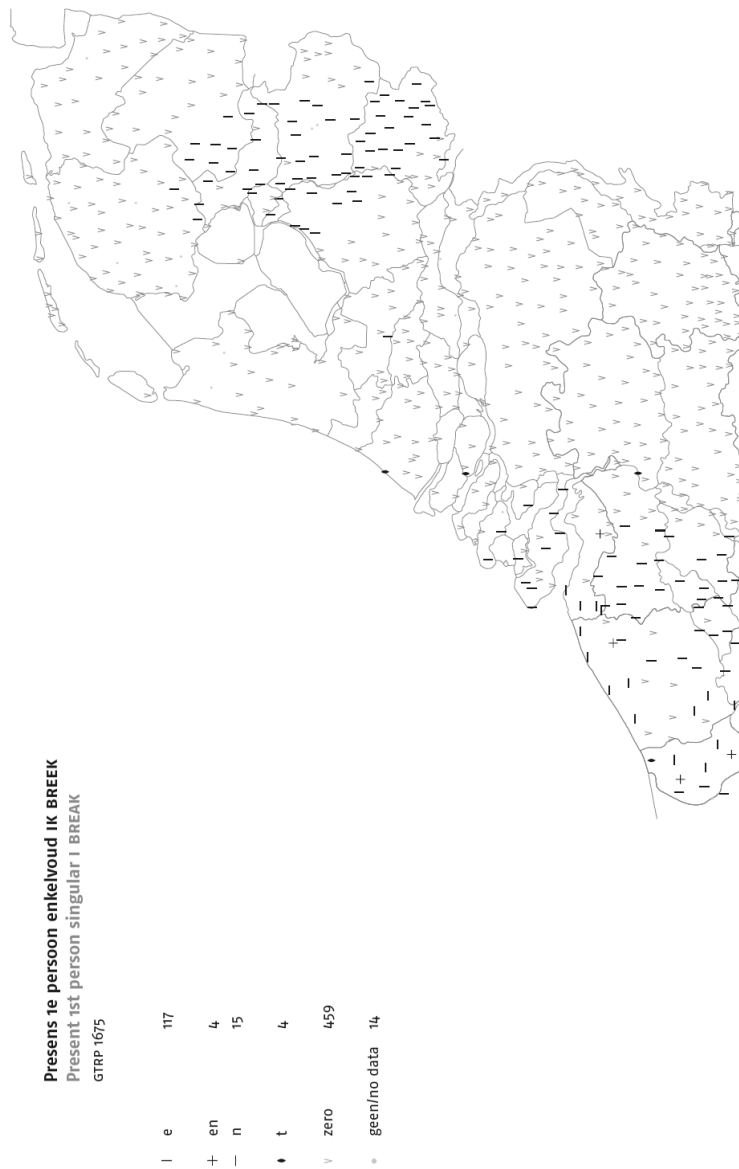


Figure 7.1: the first personal singular verb form for the present tense of the verb *breken* 'to break' in present-day Dutch dialects, from the Morphological Atlas of the Dutch Dialects (MAND II, Goeman et al. 2008).

Finally, I will also examine the possible influence of the phonetic context preceding and following the final schwa. The importance of the phonetic context *preceding* the verbal ending has been suggested by Van Haeringen (1937a: 322-323) and by Boutkan & Kossman (1998), but has not been corroborated with figures yet. Whether the phonetic context *following* the final schwa influences schwa-apocope in the seventeenth-century corpus of letters is also an interesting question: this context was likely very influential in spoken Dutch, but will we see this reflected in the written Dutch of private letters as well?

The reason why I will focus on verb forms, rather than on nouns, is that verb forms have not been the focus of much investigation yet, while the writings of Verdenius give reason to expect variation in the presence of the schwa-ending in these forms in the seventeenth century (1943: 175) and while first person singular verb forms are ubiquitous in the letters of the corpus. The first person singular verb forms were extracted from the corpus with a simple search on the personal pronoun *ick* and its orthographical variants. The verb forms under examination were limited to forms of the present tense and of the indicative mood, since the first person singular of the past tense shows the variation between final *e* and the null ending in only a few verbs (e.g. *ick bracht* vs. *ick brachte* ‘I brought’) and since the verb form for the conjunctive mood always occurs with the *-e* ending (e.g. *leve de koningin!* ‘Long live the Queen!’). I excluded the verb *zijn* ‘to be’ from the data, given that its declension is irregular. Monosyllabic verbs were excluded as well (*gaan* ‘to go’, *slaan* ‘to hit’, *staan* ‘to stand’, *verstaan* ‘to understand’, *zien* ‘to see’, and *doen* ‘to do’), since the first person singular verb form of the present tense of these verbs only shows variation between a final *n*, a zero-ending, or a *t*-ending. The first person singular verb form of the present tense of these verbs can thus be the stem (e.g. *ick doe*), the stem followed by *n* (e.g. *ick doen*), or the stem followed by *t* (e.g. *ick doet*). The praeterito-praesentia (*kunnen* ‘can’, *moeten* ‘have to/must’, *mogen* ‘may/can’, *zullen* ‘shall/will’) and the verb *willen* ‘to want’ were also excluded.<sup>100</sup> They have been left out on the grounds that they originally occurred without a final schwa in the first person singular of the present tense in Middle Dutch. As a consequence, they show less variation than other verbs in the seventeenth-century corpus. Since some of these verbs occur quite

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<sup>100</sup> The verb *weten* also belongs to the class of praeterito-praesentia, but it was not excluded from the data since it shows slightly more variation than the other praeterito-praesentia do: the final schwa occurs in 7 out of the 129 cases (that is in 5.4% of the cases) with the verb *weten*, while with the other praeterito-presentia the schwa never occurs more often than in 3.4% of the separate cases and in 0.8% of the cases in total (in 5 out of 664 occurrences).

frequently (e.g. the first person singular form of *zullen* occurs 326 times), including them could distort the data.

Before I go into the influence of all the different factors mentioned above (region, social variants, epistolary conventions, and phonetic context), I will first list the different kinds of verb endings for the first person singular that were found in the *Letters as Loot* corpus in §7.2. In §7.3 region and the social variables will be examined and formulaic language will be brought to the attention in §7.4. The phonetic context preceding and following the verbal ending will be discussed in §7.5. The final conclusions will be drawn in §7.6.

## 7.2. Different endings for the first person singular

The most frequent endings for the first person singular verb forms in the seventeenth-century corpus are the *-e* and the zero-ending, which I will represent as  $-\emptyset$ . In the sub-corpus of private letters (454 letters written by 408 different writers, see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus), the final *-e* occurs 1019 times and  $-\emptyset$  occurs 1684 times. These endings are presented in table 7.1 together with less frequent endings.

The first ending presented in the table is *-n*. The single occurrence of this spelling for the ending of the first person singular of the present tense originates from Zeeland (*ick verhopn* ‘I hope’). This spelling could represent a syllabic *n*, which occurs occasionally in some Flemish dialects from the southernmost part of Zeeland (*Zeeuws-Vlaanderen*) nowadays (see figure 7.1), although not in Middelburg and Vlissingen, the towns almost all of the Zeeland letters stem from. However, the *-n* could also be a misspelling of the *-en* ending, which will be discussed below.

The *-'* ending is a very interesting one. The symbol at the end of the verb form signals that the final *-e* has been lost. The two letter writers who use this symbol use it only in front of vowels, indicating that the final schwa has been dropped in front of the vowel of the following word. Deletion of the schwa in front of a vowel can occur across a word boundary in present-day casually spoken Dutch (cf. Booij 1995: 65-68, 150-151) and is here shown to have occurred in the seventeenth century as well for the final schwa of the first person singular verb form.

<i>Ending</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>-n</i>	1	0%	<i>ick verhopn</i> ‘I hope’
<i>-’</i>	3	0%	<i>ick bid’ ul</i> ‘I beg you’, <i>ik hoop’ en</i> ‘I hope and’, <i>zend’ ik</i> ‘I send’
<i>-t</i>	70	2%	<i>ick hebt</i> ‘I have’, <i>ick hort</i> ‘I hear’, <i>ick vorlanght</i> ‘I long’
<i>-en</i>	163	6%	<i>ick hebben</i> ‘I have’, <i>ick hoopen</i> ‘I hope’, <i>ick twijfelen</i> ‘I doubt’
<i>-e</i>	1019	35%	<i>ick bevele</i> ‘I recommend’, <i>ick bidde</i> ‘I pray’, <i>ick denke</i> ‘I think’
<i>-∅</i>	1684	57%	<i>ick bedanck</i> ‘I thank’, <i>ick beveel</i> ‘I recommend’, <i>ick bit</i> ‘I pray’
<b>Total</b>	2940		

**Table 7.1: Endings for the first person singular verb form in the sub-corpus of private letters**

The final *-t* is said to have been a central-Dutch innovation and thus it is not surprising that the data of the SAND (*Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten* ‘Syntactic Atlas of the Dutch Dialects’) show that it occurs predominantly in the central province of Utrecht (De Vogelaer 2008: 67-68; SAND Barbiers et al. 2005-2008; DynaSAND Barbiers et al. 2006). However, according to different scholars, the area of distribution of this ending is larger than the central area of the Netherlands (De Vogelaer 2008: 67-68). The final *-t* is for instance mentioned to be present in some South Holland dialects and in North Holland (Daan 1965: 13; Van Bree 2004: 90; MAND II, Goeman et al. 2008), but De Vogelaer also finds occurrences in the east of the Netherlands and even in Dutch Limburg in the data of the SAND (2008: 68). In the corpus I find the final *-t* in all the major regions for which I have a large amount of data: Zeeland, South Holland, and North Holland. However, it seems to occur particularly often in South Holland (35 occurrences out of the 64 occurrences that could be attributed to a particular region) and in the city of Amsterdam (17 out of the 64 occurrences that could be attributed to a particular region). The central Dutch innovation thus seems to have spread to the neighbouring regions already in the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, the first person singular verb forms ending in *t* do not occur often enough to examine their distribution across gender and social class in detail.

This brings me to the last unusual ending presented in the table: *-en*. The intriguing thing about this ending is that it occurs most often of all the ‘irregular’ endings, while – unlike *-t* – it cannot be found in the present-day Dutch dialects of South Holland or North Holland. There is no evidence to be found of people who say for instance *ik weten*, with a clear [n] at the

ending in these regions, nor are there any indications in the literature suggesting that people did so in the seventeenth century. This means that the spelling *-en* may very well represent a different pronunciation in seventeenth-century Holland, and the most likely candidate for this pronunciation is the schwa. This is connected to the fact that infinitives and plural verb forms, which are supposed to end in *-en* in spelling, did not always have a clearly audible [n] at their ending when pronounced.<sup>101</sup> Writers who knew that these verb forms in spoken language ended in a schwa but were spelt with an *n* at the ending, might have reasoned by analogy for the verb forms of the first person singular: they also normally end in a schwa in the spoken Dutch of Holland too, and writers could have been tempted to write a final *n*, just as for infinitives and plural forms. The *-en* ending in the first person singular in letters from Holland is thus likely an alternative spelling which signals the use of a schwa in spoken language.

However, in the Belgian province of West-Flanders – adjacent to Zeeland – and in the southernmost part of Zeeland (*Zeeuws-Vlaanderen*), where Flemish dialects are spoken, there are examples of final *-n* and of final *-en* in first person singular verb forms in present-day dialects (see figure 7.1). Even though these forms do not seem to occur in present-day Vlissingen and Middelburg, the two towns with which almost all of the Zeeland letters can be associated, I must thus allow for the possibility that the final *-en* in these letters faithfully reflects the spoken language of the seventeenth century. So for Zeeland, the final *-en* may be reflecting the schwa in spoken language, but it may as well be reflecting a schwa followed by an [n]. Whatever the final *-en* in Zeeland truly represents, this ending represents an ending unaffected by schwa-apocope in any case.

Although the ending in *-e* and the one in *-en* are quite likely to be just different spelling forms for the same pronunciation, especially in Holland, I will keep the data for *-e* and *-en* endings separate in the rest of this chapter. I will do this because I cannot be certain that *-e* and *-en* spellings are exchangeable for Zeeland, and maintaining the difference will help to find out whether this spelling was typical of a certain group of writers. Wherever appropriate, however, I will combine the figures for *-e* and *-en*. The other irregular endings *-t* and *-n* will not be dealt with extensively in the following sections; if mentioned, they will be grouped under the header ‘other endings’. The three endings with an apostrophe will be treated as zero endings.

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<sup>101</sup> This can be seen clearly in the corpus of seventeenth-century letters: infinitives and plural verb forms are regularly spelt without the final *n*, e.g. *waer ouer weij godt niet genoch wete te dancken* ‘for which we cannot thank God enough’.

The two endings presented at the bottom of table 7.1 are the leading figures in the story of schwa-apocope: *-e* and the zero-ending, *-∅*. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century grammars both endings are represented. Some grammarians only list first person singular verb forms with a final schwa (Moonen 1706: 184), some only list these forms with the zero-ending (Kók 1649: 44, 47), and others point out to their readers that both the *-e* and *-∅* are being used in Dutch (Leupenius 1653: 59, Van Heule 1625: 45; Ten Kate 1723: 551). It is not the case that grammars written before the second half of the seventeenth century prefer the final *-e* and that the grammars of the early eighteenth century prefer *-∅*. This indicates that the change from a final schwa to a zero-ending in first person singular verb forms of the present must still have been in full swing by the end of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, none of these grammar writers explicitly rejects the use of either ending, so it is likely that neither of the endings was strongly marked as improper in the seventeenth century.

As is clear from table 7.1, the zero-ending outnumbers the final schwa. Schwa-apocope is thus clearly spreading through the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. However, whether it is equally present in different regions, in different social spheres, and in different stylistic and phonetic contexts is a question to be answered in the remainder of this chapter.

### 7.3. Regional and social variation

#### 7.3.1 Zeeland as the odd one out

Based on the map and regional information presented above, which shows that schwa-apocope has not reached the north-eastern and the south-western regions of the Dutch language area even to this day, we can expect there to be a difference between the southern data (data for Zeeland) and the northern data (the data for South and North Holland) as far as the presence of the schwa is concerned. In order to examine this, I looked at all the private letters in the corpus for the regions of Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland (450 letters by 331 writers). The table below shows how often the schwa occurs in the ending of the first person singular forms and how often this ending is missing. The table also includes the ending *-en*, while endings other than *-∅*, *-e*, or *-en* are grouped under the common heading ‘other endings’. As in earlier chapters, the data for North Holland have been presented in total as well as separately for Amsterdam and the rest of the province.



	<i>Zee</i>	<i>SH</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>NH Ams</i>	<i>NH without Ams</i>
–∅	23%	73%	71%	72%	69%
– <i>e</i>	68%	20%	22%	20%	28%
– <i>en</i>	7%	3%	4%	5%	2%
<b>other endings</b>	1%	4%	3%	4%	1%
<b>N total</b>	631	424	1502	977	525

**Table 7.2: The distribution of the different endings of the first person singular verb form in private letters across region**

The results confirm my expectations. While in Zeeland the final *e* is present in 68% of all the first person singular verb forms, in South and North Holland the share of the final *e* is no more than 22%. The difference is striking. Clearly, schwa-apocope had not come as far in Zeeland yet as it had in Holland. The data for the endings in *–en* and the other endings are so scarce, that they do not allow for any comparison between the different regions. For schwa-apocope, we see that the data for South Holland agree with the data for North Holland. However, North and South Holland do not always seem to align linguistically, since for the feature of negation expanded upon in chapter 6, the language use in South Holland resembled the language use in Zeeland rather than the language of North Holland.

Since this regional difference between Zeeland on the one hand and Holland on the other is so overwhelming, I will examine the influence of the social factors per region. Given the fact that the data for the presence of the schwa in South Holland seem to be similar to the data for North Holland, I will combine these two regions and refer to this covering region as Holland. I will not make a distinction between Amsterdam on the one hand and the rest of North Holland on the other hand, since the data do not seem to indicate too large a difference.

### 7.3.2 Zeeland

#### *Social class*

In the province of Zeeland, the factor of social class seems to have little influence on the endings for the first person singular as they are written in private letters. Table 7.3 shows the frequency of each possible ending per social class. The sub-corpus of private autographs from Zeeland does not contain any letters written by writers from the lower class. Unfortunately, the corpus also contains no more than 3 occurrences of the first person singular ending in letters written by members of the upper class in Zeeland. Therefore,

only the percentages for the lower-middle and upper-middle class are presented below.

	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<i>other endings</i>	<b>N total</b>
<b>LMC</b>	23%	61%	16%	0%	69
<b>UMC</b>	23%	71%	5%	1%	321

**Table 7.3: The distribution of the different endings of the first person singular verb forms private autographs from Zeeland across social class**

Looking at the data from the lower-middle class and the upper-middle class, the difference between the classes does not lie in the absence of a schwa-like ending: the zero-ending occurs as often in the lower-middle class as it does in the upper-middle class, namely in 23% of the cases. However, there are differences pertaining to the *e*-ending and the ending in *-en*. The *e*-ending occurs more often in the upper-middle class than in the lower-middle class (71% vs. 61% respectively); while for the final *en* it is the other way around: it occurs more often in the lower-middle class than it does in the upper-middle class (16% vs. 5% respectively). The differences are not staggering and, if the *e*- and *en*-endings are seen as one group of endings unaffected by schwa-apocope, there are no differences at all between the social classes.

#### *Gender*

Looking at the data for men and women from Zeeland, it is clear that women use the final *e* less often than men do. In the 88 autographs written by 59 different writers, women use the final *e* in 48% of the cases, while men use it in 71% of the cases. At the same time, women use the zero ending more often than men do (33% vs. 21% respectively). Final *en* is also favoured more by women than by men: women use it in 17% of the cases, while men only write it in 7% of the cases. Even if the final *e* and the final *en* are combined as schwa-like endings, the difference between men and women remains: women use schwa-like endings in 65% of the cases, while men use them in 78% of the cases. I can thus conclude that schwa-apocope seems to have caught on with women earlier than with men in writing in Zeeland. However, I must be very careful in analysing the data for women from Zeeland, since the corpus contains only five autograph letters written by 4 different female writers. On the basis of these data, one cannot conclude for certain that men and women in Zeeland differed in their use of the final schwa and schwa-apocope.

	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<i>other endings</i>	<b>N total</b>
<b>Men</b>	21%	71%	7%	1%	407
<b>Women</b>	33%	48%	17%	2%	42

**Table 7.4: The distribution of the different endings of the first person singular verb forms in private autographs from Zeeland across gender**

#### *Age*

The social variable age only has a very small effect on the presence of the final schwa in Zeeland, as can be gathered from table 7.5 below.

	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<i>other endings</i>	<b>N total</b>
<b>&lt;30</b>	20%	67%	12%	1%	245
<b>30-50</b>	25%	72%	2%	0%	201

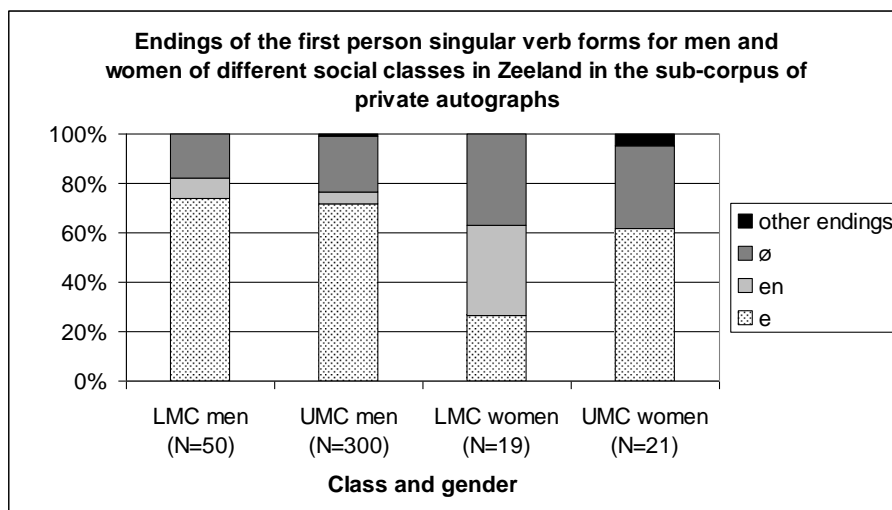
**Table 7.5: The distribution of the different endings of the first person singular verb forms in private autographs of Zeeland across age groups.**

The largest difference between the two age-groups can be found for the presence of final *en*. The younger letter writers use the final *en* more often than the older letter writers: letter writers younger than 30 years of age use it in 12% of the cases, while letter writers of 30 to 50 years of age use it in no more than 2% of the cases. An explanation for this difference is not easily given. Furthermore, the small difference between the distribution of the zero-ending and final *e* across the two age groups is not what one would typically expect to see. Instead of the youngest letter writers, the older letter writers are the people who seem to adopt the language change most quickly. While letter writers younger than 30 use schwa-apocope in 20% of the cases, the letter writers older than 30 use it in a quarter of the cases (25%).

#### *Gender and social class combined*

What will the data for gender and social class look like if the interaction between these two social variables is examined? Figure 7.2 shows the distribution of the different endings for the first person singular verb form across gender and social class. The two columns to the left illustrate the frequency of the different endings in letters written by men from the lower-middle class and men from the upper-middle class. To the right, the two columns illustrate this for the one woman from the lower-middle class and for the two women from the upper-middle class.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>102</sup> The data for the fourth female writer could not be included in the analysis of gender and social class due to the fact that it was impossible to assign her to a particular social class.



**Figure 7.2**

The data for male writers show that men from the lower-middle and upper-middle class do not differ much in the suffixes they use for the first person singular verb form of the present. With female writers, however, there does seem to be a difference between the two social classes. The final *-en* is used quite often by the woman of the lower-middle class (in 37% of the cases), while it is never used by the women from the upper-middle class. However, if one keeps in mind that these *-en* endings are closely linked to the *-e* endings in that they are both unaffected by schwa-apocope, the data for the woman of the lower-middle class actually resemble those of the women from the upper-middle class: the data of the lower-middle-class woman show about as much apocope of the schwa (the zero-ending appears in 37% of the cases) as the data for the upper-middle-class women do (the zero-ending appears in 33% of the cases).

Overall, when women and men are compared, women use the schwa-like endings less often than men from the same social rank and they use the zero-ending more often in return. The lower-middle-class woman uses the schwa-like endings in 63% of the cases, while lower-middle-class men use these endings more often (in just over 80% of the cases). For the members of the upper-middle class, the conclusions are the same: women use the schwa-like endings less often than their male peers (in 62% of the cases vs. in 77% of the cases respectively).

This overview has confirmed my previous conclusions about social class and gender related to schwa-apocope in Zeeland: both gender and social class influence the presence of schwa-apocope to some extent. However, the influence of gender seems to be more important than the

influence of social class: influence of social class could only be spotted in the data for women and is limited to the representation of the schwa-like endings. How should these observations be interpreted?

The fact that variation related to social class does not seem to occur in the data for men and that it is limited to variation in the schwa-like endings with women is remarkable. Schwa-apocope is clearly rising in seventeenth-century Dutch, so it could have the potential to become a social class marker. However, I cannot catch it in the data. This may mean that schwa-apocope had not become a variable marking social class yet in Zeeland. On the other hand, it is possible that schwa-apocope *was* linked to social class in Zeeland in the seventeenth century, but that I cannot catch it due to the fact that the data for the lower and the upper class in Zeeland are too scarce.

For the fact that women use the schwa-like endings less often than men, two explanations can be given that are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand it is possible that women's spoken Dutch was influenced by schwa-apocope before men's spoken Dutch and that this is reflected in writing. On the other hand, it is possible that men – as more experienced writers than women (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237-238) – were more aware of the fact that the *e*-ending was used quite often in printed texts, which lent it some sort of prestige, and therefore retained the schwa-like endings longer in their written language than women did.

The last observation requiring an explanation is the fact that the presence of the final *en* in the first person singular verb form seems remarkably high in letters written by lower-middle-class women from Zeeland. However, these data are based on the language use of only one woman, Tanneke Cats, so it is impossible to tell whether this was common in the written language use of other women of this same social sphere or not. Regardless of whether this spelling-variant represents an actual pronounced *n* at the ending of the verb forms or whether it is a spelling variant representing a schwa, it probably occurs in her writing due to a lack of knowledge of common spelling practices. If the *-en* spelling mirrors the woman's pronunciation of the first person singular verb forms, this female writer occasionally fails to make the distinction between her spoken Dutch and the written Dutch of the seventeenth century which is starting to be standardised. If the *-en* spelling indicates a spoken schwa, the language use of this woman shows how she confuses the spelling of infinitives and finite verbs.

This is a picture of schwa-apocope in a region in which the final schwa in spoken language was still present. How much and in what ways will this picture differ from the data in the corpus for the region of Holland,

where schwa-apocope was probably a common feature of the spoken language?

### 7.3.4 Holland

#### *Social class*

At first sight, the factor of social class seems to have a limited impact on the distribution of the different possible endings for the first person singular verb forms in Holland. Table 7.6 below, based on the 148 private autographs written by 126 different writers linked to Holland, shows that there is no noteworthy difference in the distribution of these endings between letters written by lower-class members and lower-middle-class members. In the letters of writers belonging to these classes, the zero-ending is present in the majority of the cases (in 71%, and in 73% of the cases respectively) and the final *e* takes up about 22% of the cases. The ‘irregular’ *-en* and other endings occur seldom.

	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<i>other endings</i>	<b>N total</b>
<b>LC</b>	71%	21%	7%	1%	89
<b>LMC</b>	73%	23%	2%	2%	244
<b>UMC</b>	63%	27%	6%	4%	309
<b>UC</b>	47%	51%	2%	0%	98

**Table 7.6: The distribution of the different endings of the first person singular verb forms in private autographs from Holland across social class**

However, the two remaining upper classes show a different distribution. The upper-middle-class letter writers behave slightly differently from the lower- and the lower-middle-class writers. The share of the zero-ending drops as the writer belongs to a higher class (from 73% with lower-middle-class writers to 63% with upper-middle-class writers), while the share of the *e*-ending rises slightly (from 23% in the lower-middle class, to 27% in the upper-middle class). These trends are continued in the language use of the upper class. Upper-class writers do not use a zero-ending in most of the cases: with a share of 47%, the zero-ending is less popular with upper-class writers than with other letter writers. Conversely, the final *e* is used more often by upper-class writers than by writers belonging to a lower class: the final *e* takes up 51% of all the endings for the first person singular verb form with upper-class members, while the other letter writers use it in no more than 27% of the cases. The change from first person singular verb forms with a final schwa to forms without the schwa seems to have been a change from below in Holland. With regards to the ‘irregular’ final *en* and other endings, there is

no difference to be found for the four social classes: members of all of the different classes in Holland use these endings sparingly.

#### *Gender*

While men and women in Zeeland differed in their use of all the possible endings, the differences between men and women from Holland only lie in the share of the zero-ending and the final *-e*. Table 7.7 below shows how the different endings for the first person singular are distributed across men and women in Holland.

	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<i>other endings</i>	<b>N total</b>
<b>Men</b>	57%	36%	6%	1%	355
<b>Women</b>	76%	18%	3%	3%	522

**Table 7.7: The distribution of the different endings of the first person singular verb forms in private autographs from Holland across gender**

Schwa-apocope seems to have spread more quickly among the women of Holland. They use the zero-ending for the first person singular verb form in 76% of the cases. Schwa-like endings are only used by them in 21% of the cases (*-e* in 18% of the cases and *-en* in 3% of the cases). Although men from Holland prefer the zero-ending over other endings as well, they use it less often than women (in 57% of the cases vs. in 76% of the cases respectively). Conversely, men use twice as many schwa-like endings as women do: they use it in 42% of the cases (36% *-e* endings and 6% *-en* endings) while women who use it in 21% of the cases.

#### *Age*

In table 7.8, I show the distribution of the different endings for the first person singular verb forms of the present across the different age groups in Holland, based on the private autographs linked to Holland.

	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<i>other endings</i>	<b>N total</b>
<b>&lt;30</b>	76%	18%	5%	1%	382
<b>30-50</b>	67%	26%	4%	3%	393
<b>50+</b>	35%	65%	0%	0%	66

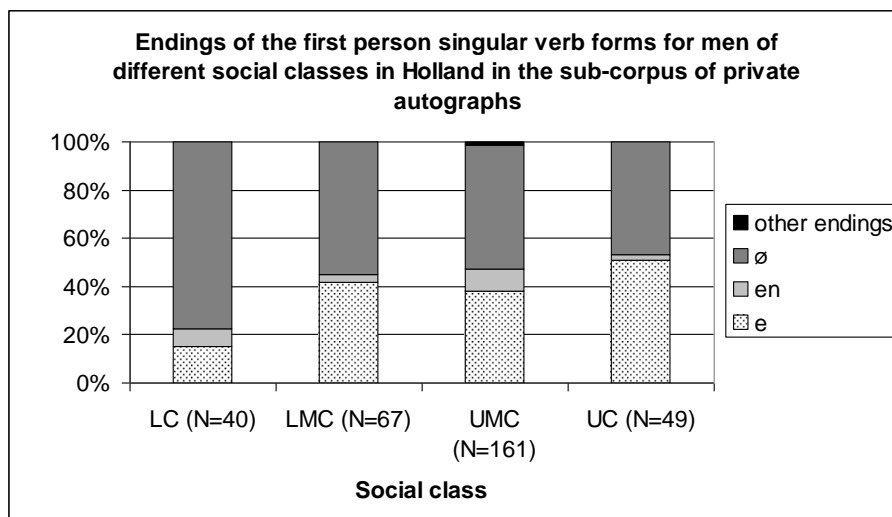
**Table 7.8: The distribution of the different endings of the first person singular verb forms in autograph letters from Holland across the three age groups**

The percentages in table 7.8 indicate that the oldest letter writers from Holland do not show as much influence of schwa-apocope in their writings as the younger letter writers from Holland do: schwa-apocope only occurs in 35% of the cases with letter writers older than fifty, while it occurs in 67%

of the cases with letter writers between 30 and 50 and in 76% of the cases with the youngest letter writers. This likely illustrates that schwa-apocope was spreading across Holland during the years before the letters from the corpus were written.

#### *Gender and social class combined*

For Zeeland I have shown how an investigation of the interaction between social class and gender can offer a clear picture of the linguistic situation. Since an overview table of the distribution of the different endings for the first person singular verb forms for men and women of different social classes in Holland would become too large and complex, I have split up the results into two figures. Figure 7.3 below shows the distribution of the different endings across social class for men from Holland.



**Figure 7.3**

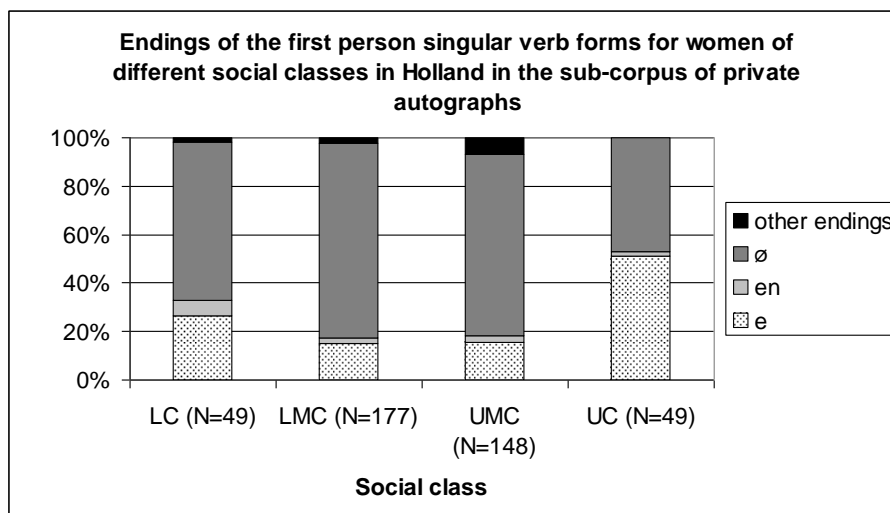
The data for men from Holland clearly show influence of social class. However, this influence does not manifest itself in the manner one would expect based on the overview of social class above. While in the overview table (table 7.6) – in which the data for men and women were combined – the upper-class writers behaved very differently from the other writers, now it is the lower class showing results deviating from the other classes. Lower-class men use the zero-ending considerably more often than men belonging to higher classes do: lower-class men use the zero-ending in 78% of the cases, while men from the lower-middle, upper-middle and upper class use it in 55%, 52% and 47% of the cases respectively. In return, men from the lower-middle, the upper-middle and the upper class use the schwa-like



endings more often than lower-class men (in 45%, 47% and 53% of the cases respectively vs. in 23% of the cases).

While the lower-class men allowed for schwa-apocope to occur very often in their letters, members of the higher classes, who were probably more aware of writing conventions and who were more experienced writers, were more reluctant to let go of the *-e* endings. These data show that with men from Holland, schwa-apocope was probably very much present in their spoken Dutch, since lower-class writers use it very often. However, men with a certain amount of writing and reading experience seemed to hold on to the older writing convention of the final *-e* to some extent and showed this apocope less often in their writings than men from the lowest social class.

And what about women? Did social class have the same influence on their language use? In what way did women from Holland differ from their male peers regarding the distribution of schwa-apocope in the first person singular verb forms? At first sight, the figure below shows that the upper-class women in Holland behave very differently from women from other classes. While women from the lower, lower-middle and upper-middle class use schwa-like endings in no more than 33% of the cases, upper-class women use these endings in 53% of the cases.

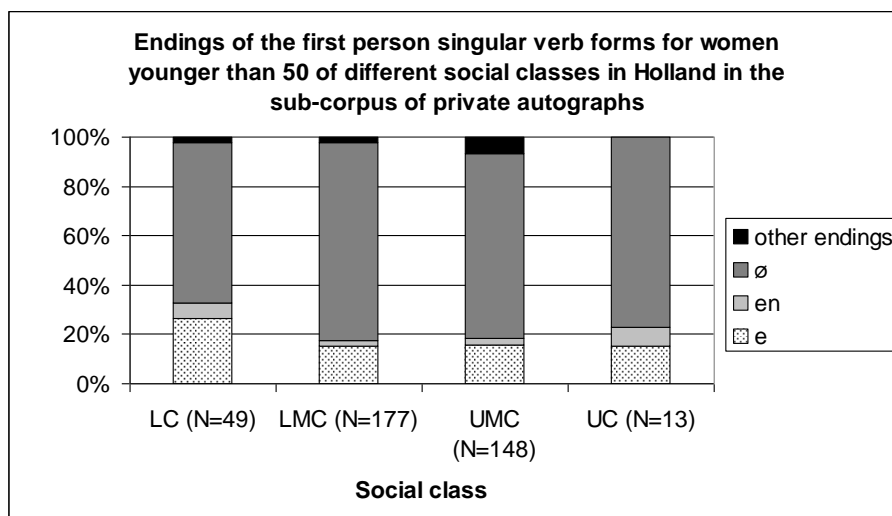


**Figure 7.4**

However, one must keep in mind the fact that the age groups are not distributed evenly across the social classes for the women in Holland. The only class which includes data from women who are presumably older than 50 is the upper class: it contains letters of three women over 50 and of one

woman younger than 30. As we have seen in previous chapters and in the overview for age above, the data for these 50+ women are very different from the data for the younger peer belonging to the same social group. If I were to leave out the data for the oldest women, it would change the overall overview drastically. While oldest women use the *-e* ending in 64% of the cases, the younger letter writer does this in only 23% of the cases.

It is thus the language use of three older women which influenced the data in such a way that the overview for social class presented above in table 7.6 suggested that the upper-class members behaved radically different from members of the lower classes. With the knowledge we have about the distribution of women of different age groups across the different social classes, we now know that this overall view might be slightly misleading. In order to get a well balanced overview I will present the results without the data of these three divergent writers. Figure 7.5 below shows the distribution of the different endings for the first person singular for women from Holland of different social classes who are all under fifty. This time, the results for the upper class are not radically different from the other social classes.



**Figure 7.5**

Just as the data for men from Holland, the data presented in figure 7.5 show an influence of social class. However, with women from Holland this influence is different. While lower-class men use the final *e* strikingly less often than men belonging to the higher classes, lower-class women seem to use this *-e* ending and the schwa-like *-en* ending more often than women from the higher classes (33% vs. 17%, 19% and 23% respectively). Whether

the difference is big enough to warrant an explanation is debatable and logical explanations for the difference are hard to find.

In any case, the presence of schwa-apocope in the letters of all the women in Holland (76%) is similar to the presence of schwa-apocope in letters written by lower-class men from Holland (78%). Women from Holland in general and lower-class men from Holland can thus be said to use the zero-ending very often (in almost 80% of the cases), while men from the higher classes – who are likely more experienced in reading and writing than women in general and than men from the lower class – use it more sparingly (in about 50% of the cases) and leave more room for the final *-e*. Women in Holland thus seem to stick fairly close to their spoken language and do not seem to resort to older writing conventions in which the schwa was more overtly present.

### 7.3.5 Zeeland and Holland compared

The distribution of the different possible endings in Zeeland and Holland shows similarities, but also differences. The main difference between Zeeland and Holland is the relationship between social class and the presence of schwa-apocope. Since it is questionable whether social class had any influence on the use of schwa-apocope in the letters of women from Holland, for Holland I will focus on the data for men. While in Zeeland being higher upon the social ladder did not influence the ratio of schwa-like endings and schwa-apocope, in Holland it meant using schwa-like endings more often. In all likelihood, this difference in the written language is linked to the different status of the schwa in the spoken Dutch of Zeeland and in the spoken Dutch of Holland and it can also be linked to the different socio-economical status of the two regions involved.

In Holland schwa-apocope was probably well advanced in the spoken language, as is clear from the low presence of schwa-like endings in letters written by writers pertaining to the lowest social class and by the fact that in present-day dialects the schwa-ending has disappeared in this region. This rendered the older *-e* endings and other schwa-like endings typical of written Dutch. Since members of higher classes were usually more experienced at reading and writing, they were more likely to use typical features of written Dutch when writing their letters. In short, we may be seeing how the more experienced writers of the higher social classes move their written language away from their spoken language in what seems to be an effort to distinguish between the two.

In Zeeland, however, schwa-apocope had not conquered the region to the same extent as it had conquered Holland by the seventeenth century. This is clear because the schwa-like endings are rather present in the letters of letter writers belonging to the lowest class of which I could find letters (in

this case the lower-middle class) and because the schwa can still be found at the end of some words in some present-day dialects of Zeeland as shown in the map in figure 7.1.<sup>103</sup> The schwa-ending was therefore probably not seen as typical of written or spoken language in Zeeland, which partly explains why it was not favoured by any of the social classes for which there are data in the corpus.

What is similar, however, for the data for Zeeland and Holland is the fact that women use the schwa-like endings less often than men. The fact that women in both regions behave similarly, independent of whether one variant was locally regarded as proper for writing or not, suggests that women were just quicker to pick up on the language change, irrespective of their reading and writing experience. It suggests that schwa-apocope was a part of their spoken Dutch earlier than it was part of the spoken language of their male peers.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that the social variables gender and social class have played a role in the spread of schwa-apocope, albeit that social variables had probably become influential in Holland first and that they were not yet of big importance in Zeeland by the second half of the seventeenth century. The age of letter writers as well has proved to influence the presence of the schwa apocope in the written language use of Holland in the seventeenth century. These findings can now be added to our knowledge about this large-scale language change, but there may be even more to add. In the next section I will examine if and how letter conventions relate to the spread of schwa-apocope.

#### 7.4. Letter conventions: conservatives or forerunners?

One would expect that formulaic language is an environment in which archaic variants can be well preserved and examples of this preserving action are not scarce: e.g. the Dutch idioms *zegge en schrijve*, literally meaning ‘I say and I write’, *verzoeke* ‘I request/I ask’, and *met name* ‘in particular’. Therefore I expect to find the schwa-like endings more often in formulae and conventional phrases than in non-conventional passages of letters. In order to test this hypothesis I looked at two different types of epistolary conventions. Firstly I took into account the typical epistolary formulae: standard things to say in a letter that have been moulded into the same pattern. Typical epistolary formulae always occur with more or less the same words in more

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<sup>103</sup> Other examples of words with a final schwa in Zeeland can be found in Van Driel’s book on the dialects of Zeeland (Van Driel 2004: 74-75): *baade* ‘bed’, *deure* ‘door’, *oore* ‘ear’, *eane* ‘one’, *tweae* ‘two’, *drieje* ‘three’.

or less the same order and form, conveying the same message.<sup>104</sup> Some examples from the Dutch seventeenth-century letters in the corpus would be:

- 1) *Ick laet ul weten dat ick noch kloeck en gesondt ben en verhope van ul het selfde te hooren*  
‘I let you know that I am still sturdy and healthy and I hope to hear the same from you.’
- 2) *ijck wens mijn alderlijste man dussent goeden nacht*  
‘I wish my sweetest husband a thousand times good night’
- 3) *Ick laet ul weten als dat*  
‘I let you know that...’

Secondly I took into account an epistolary convention regularly encountered in the seventeenth-century corpus: the ellipsis of the personal pronoun for the first person singular *ick*, which is also a common feature of present-day letters and e-mails and which is also illustrated in the idioms presented above, *zegge en schrijve* ‘I say and I write’ and *verzoeke* ‘I request/I ask’. In the letters, ellipsis of the subject can occur with singular as well as with plural first persons, but it is hardly found with second or third persons.

#### 7.4.1 Formulae

In order to check whether the *-e* and *-en* endings are more abundant in formulaic language than in non-formulaic language, I examined a few frequently occurring verbs in the sub-corpus of private letters from Zeeland and Holland. Three verbs which occur often in formulae were compared to a verb which has nothing to do with formulae at all (*hebben* ‘have/to have’ occurring 760 times for the first person singular in the private letters from Zeeland and Holland). The verbs typical of formulae which were compared to *hebben* are (*ver*)*hopen* (occurring 379 times), *wensen* ‘to wish’ (occurring 158 times), and *laten* ‘to let’ (occurring 455 times). The results are presented in table 7.9.

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<sup>104</sup> For a further discussion of the use of formulae in the letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus, see Rutten & Van der Wal 2012, Rutten & Van der Wal forthcoming, and Van der Wal & Rutten forthcoming.

		–∅	–e	–en	other endings	N total
‘Formulaic’ verbs	<i>(ver)hopen</i>	52%	45%	3%	0%	379
	<i>wensen</i>	53%	39%	7%	2%	158
	<i>laten</i>	92%	7%	1%	0%	455
‘Non-formulaic’ verb	<i>hebben</i>	45%	43%	7%	6%	760

**Table 7.9: Endings of the first person singular verb forms of typical ‘formulaic’ verbs and the neutral verb *hebben* in private letters from Zeeland and Holland**

The data for *(ver)hopen* and *wensen* do not seem to differ greatly from the data of the ‘non-formulaic’ verb *hebben*, and where they do, they do not illustrate a preservative effect, but rather a promoting one. While schwa-apocope is present in 45% of the verb forms for *hebben*, it is slightly more frequent with *(ver)hopen* and *wensen* (it occurs in 52% and 53% of the cases respectively). Schwa-like endings occur slightly more often with *hebben* (50%) than with *(ver)hopen* (48%) and *wensen* (46%).

So far, formulae do not seem to have a strong conservative effect on the presence of schwa-like endings. Moreover, the data for *laten* suggest completely the opposite effect: the zero-ending is present in the overwhelming majority of occurrences. The first person singular verb form occurs with a schwa-like ending in only 8% of the cases. This may be due to the sheer frequency of the formula *ick laet ul weten dat* or to the fact that this verb form is found almost always in front of a vowel (in 93% of the cases) which in spoken language could induce the apocope of the schwa at the end of a word (Booij 1995: 166, 171). However, Van Helten (1887: 251) mentions that *laten* is among the first verbs to appear without a final schwa in the first person singular form already in the fifteenth century, so the reason for the low presence of the final schwa might not be dependent on the context following *laten* in the letters per se. Yet another cause of the high frequency of the zero-ending in the verb *laten* could be the final t of the verb stem: this will be discussed below in §7.5.1 on phonetic context.

If the [t] in front of the verbal ending could influence the presence or absence of the schwa, I must allow for the possibility that other stem endings can also influence the occurrence of schwa-apocope and that the small differences between the verbs in table 7.9 have nothing to do with the influence of formulaic language. Therefore, I resorted to a second method of investigating the influence of formulae: I examined the first person singular verb forms of the verb *(ver)hopen* ‘to hope’ in different contexts. This verb can be part of several different formulae: e.g. *dat ick noch kloeck en gesont*

*ben soo ick verhoope dat het met ul meede soo is* ‘that I am still sturdy and healthy and I hope the same goes for you’, or *ick hoop dat godt de heer ons weeder bi malcander sal laten comen* ‘I hope that God our Lord will let us come together again’. I classified each occurrence of *(ver)hopen* as part of a formula or as part of a non-formulaic context and then examined whether schwa-apocope occurred more often with the verb forms which did not belong to a formula. The table below shows the results.

<i>(ver)hopen</i>	–∅	–e	–en	other endings	N total
<b>Formulaic</b>	49%	45%	5%	1%	173
<b>Non-formulaic</b>	54%	45%	1%	0%	206

**Table 7.10: The distribution of the different endings for the first person singular verb form of *(ver)hopen* for formulaic and non-formulaic contexts in private letters from Zeeland and Holland**

Table 7.10 shows no large differences between the distribution of the different endings of the verb forms of *(ver)hopen* across formulaic and in non-formulaic sentences. Schwa-apocope occurs in 54% of the non-formulaic usages while it occurs in 49% of the formulaic usages. In return the schwa-like endings occur in 46% of the cases in non-formulaic sentences while they occur in 50% of the formulaic sentences. These differences do suggest that the schwa was preserved longer in formulaic contexts, but they are so small that they do not warrant the conclusion that there was a strong preserving influence of formulae on the presence of the final schwa.

#### 7.4.2 Ellipsis

If the typical formulae do not seem to influence the presence of schwa-apocope much, does this also count for the ellipsis of *ick* in letters? A remark from Ten Kate (1723: 551) suggests that the answer to this question is ‘no’:

*dog oulinks had men E agter 't zakelijke Worteldeel, even als nu nog bij den Subjunct: als, IK REDDE, IK LEVE, enz.: Deze laetste stijl is nog in wezen bij den Koopman, wanneer die, om korthed-wille, 't Pronomen IK in 't schrijven agterlaet, zettende ZENDE AEN U (mitto tibi), enz.:*

‘[...] though in earlier days the E was behind the root of the verb, as it is still with the conjunctive form: such as, IK REDDE, IK LEVE, etc. This last style is still present with the merchant, when he, for brevity’s sake, leaves out the pronoun IK in writing, putting down ZENDE AEN U (*mitto tibi*), etc.’

To investigate whether the ellipsis did indeed help preserve the schwa in first person singular verb forms, the forms of the highly frequent verb *hebben* ‘to have’ were examined again. Some examples of the first person singular verb form for the present of *hebben* with ellipsis of the personal pronoun are given below:

- 4) *ue aengename vanden 7 April uijt Engelant **hebbe** seer wel bekomen*  
‘[I] have received your pleasant letter which was sent on the 7th of April from England in good order.’
- 5) ***heb** gescheept Aan den baes in Jan meier 2263 lb suiijker*  
‘[I] have shipped 2263 pounds of sugar to the boss with Jan Meier.’
- 6) ***hebbe** mijt hendrijck vor borch en brif gesturt mijt gudt dar bij*  
‘[I] have sent a letter with some things with Hendrijck Vor borch.’

This time, all the verb forms of *hebben* ending in *-e*, *-en*, or the zero-ending with ellipsis of the first person singular pronoun as the subject were traced in all the private letters from Zeeland and Holland in the seventeenth-century corpus and compared to the data for the verb forms of *hebben* which were accompanied by *ick* or its spelling variants. The table below shows the results. The percentages for *hebben* with *ick* in table 7.11 (47%  $-\emptyset$ , 46% *-e* and 7% *-en*) differ slightly from the percentages for *hebben* with *ick* presented in table 7.9 (45%  $-\emptyset$ , 43% *-e*, and 7% *-en*), since verb forms with other endings than the zero-ending, *-e* or *-en* were not taken into account in table 7.11 for practical reasons.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>105</sup> The verb forms of *hebben* with other endings and without the ellipsis of *ick* turned up automatically in the general search for first person singular verb forms. This search was executed by looking up all instances of *ick* in the corpus of private letters and then identifying the different verbs and the different endings used, as was explained in § 7.1.2. The first person singular verb forms of *hebben* with ellipsis of *ick* could only be traced by making a list of the different verb forms of *hebben* and manually checking this list for sentences with ellipsis. Since these first person singular verb forms of *hebben* with an unusual ending are rather scarce and not the main point of interest in this investigation (while *heb*, *hebbe* and *hebben* are) and



	–∅	–e	–en	N total
<i>hebben with ick</i>	47%	46%	7%	718
<i>hebben without ick</i>	26%	71%	3%	164

**Table 7.11: The distribution of the different endings for the first person singular verb form of the verb *hebben* 'to have' with or without the subject *ick* in the private letters from Zeeland and Holland**

The difference between the verb forms of the first person singular showing ellipsis of the personal pronoun *ick* is and those not showing ellipsis of *ick* is unmistakable. The schwa-like endings *–e* and *–en* occur more often in the elliptic environment: when *ick* is absent, schwa-like endings occur in 74% of the cases, but when the subject is present, these endings occur in 53% of the cases. The ellipsis thus seems to hold back schwa-apocope to some extent.

However, we must keep in mind that the ellipsis is a writing convention that may have been used by a typical group of writers, rather than by every writer. And indeed, if we compare the distribution of the first person singular verb forms of *hebben* showing no ellipsis of the subject to the distribution of this verb form showing ellipsis of *ick*, it becomes clear that ellipsis is used more often by men than by women and more often by members of the upper classes than by members of the lower classes. Of the occurrences of the first person singular form of *hebben* in the presence of *ick*, 60% is found in letters written by men and 67% is found in letters written by members of the upper classes. But for the occurrences of the first person singular form of *hebben* showing ellipsis of the personal pronoun *ick* almost all of the examples are found in letters written by men (93%) and a large majority stems from letters written by members of the upper classes (88%). This particular distribution of ellipsis could distort the results, since I have shown above that men in general use schwa-apocope less often than women and that the upper social classes in Holland also use it less often than the lower social classes. The differences shown in table 7.11 could thus be caused by the fact that ellipsis occurred more often in letters written by men and by upper-class people, rather than by the presence or absence of *ick*.

The only way to find out whether ellipsis itself was responsible for a higher percentage of the use of the final schwa is to check whether the difference between the verb forms of *hebben* showing ellipsis of *ick* and the forms not showing ellipsis of *ick* still manifests itself if I keep the other variables of influence (region, gender, and social class) stable. Only the

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since finding the instances of these verb forms of *hebben* with the ellipsis of *ick* would require a manual search of a list of all occurrences of *hebt* and *heeft* (and their different spelling variants) in the corpus of private letters of Zeeland and Holland, I excluded these special forms of *hebben* with ellipsis of *ick* in table 11.

groups of male upper-middle-class writers from Zeeland and of male upper-middle-class writers from Holland provide us with enough occurrences of the first person singular verb form of *hebben* with ellipsis of *ick* to be compared to their counterparts without ellipsis. Table 7.12 shows the percentage of schwa-like endings for the verb forms of *hebben* with and without ellipsis for these two groups of writers.

	<i>ellipsis of ick</i>		<i>with ick</i>	
	schwa-like endings %	N total	schwa-like endings %	N total
<b>Upper-middle-class men from Zeeland</b>	75%	56	92%	98
<b>Upper-middle-class men from Holland</b>	69%	42	65%	68

**Table 7.12: The frequency of the schwa-like endings in first person singular verb forms of *hebben* with and without ellipsis of the subject *ick* in private letters written by upper-middle-class men from Zeeland and from Holland**

If the difference in presence of schwa-apocope between the verb forms of *hebben* with ellipsis and without ellipsis is caused by the presence or absence of ellipsis itself, we should be able to see more schwa-like endings in verb forms with ellipsis for both groups of writers in table 7.12. However, the percentage of schwa-like endings for verb forms with ellipsis for the upper-middle-class men from Zeeland is lower than this percentage for verb forms without the ellipsis (75% vs. 92% respectively). And for the upper-middle-class men from Holland the presence or absence of the ellipsis does not seem to make much difference for the presence of the schwa-like endings; the frequency of schwa-like endings for the verb forms with and without ellipsis of *ick* is similar (69% and 65% respectively).

However, before concluding that ellipsis does not have any influence on the presence of the final schwa in first person singular verb forms in the seventeenth-century letters, the small sub-corpus of business letters should be examined too, for Lambert Ten Kate (1723: 551) explicitly referred to the relationship between ellipsis and the blocking of schwa-apocope in letters written by *merchants*. It is possible that Ten Kate did not refer to all letters that were written by merchants, but that he was referring to letters that merchants had written in their capacity as merchants: business letters.

If the business letters written by upper-middle-class men are drawn into the investigation and the relationship between the presence of the

schwa-like endings and the ellipsis of *ick* in this sub-corpus is examined, it becomes evident that Ten Kate's remark should not be discarded too quickly. In the business letters of upper-middle-class men from Zeeland and Holland, the final schwa is always present when the first person singular pronoun *ick* has been left out, while it is not always present when *ick* is written. Table 7.13 shows the results:

<i>Business letters</i>	<i>with ellipsis of ick</i>		<i>without ellipsis of ick</i>	
	<b>schwa-like endings %</b>	<b>N total</b>	<b>schwa-like endings %</b>	<b>N total</b>
<b>Upper-middle-class men from Zeeland</b>	100%	11	67%	9
<b>Upper-middle-class men from Holland</b>	100%	12	94%	16

**Table 7.13: The frequency of the schwa-like endings in first person singular verb forms of hebben with and without ellipsis of the subject *ick* in business letters written by upper-middle-class men from Zeeland and from Holland**

Although this comparison suggests that the ellipsis of *ick* with first person singular verb forms of the present did indeed block schwa-apocope in business letters, this result cannot be considered as sufficient evidence, since the number of occurrences on which this comparison is based is fairly low. The conclusion of this investigation must thus be that the seventeenth-century data do not demonstrate conclusively that the ellipsis of the subject *ick* with first person singular verb forms had any influence on the presence or absence of the final schwa, although there is reason to believe that in seventeenth-century business letters the ellipsis of *ick* in combination with the preservation of a final schwa was or was becoming some sort of an epistolary convention.

### 7.4.3 Conclusions

The results presented above nuance the idea that conventional parts of letters typically preserve archaic features. Schwa-apocope seems to have encountered little resistance in entering typical formulae for seventeenth-century letters such as *ick verhoope dat het met ul meede soo is* 'I hope that you are in the same state', *ick hoop dat godt de heer ons weeder bi malcander sal laten comen* 'I hope that God our Lord will let us come

together again', *ijck wens mijn alderlijste man dussent goeden nacht* 'I bid my dearest husband thousand good nights' and *ick laet ul weten dat* 'I let you know that'. On top of this, the epistolary convention of the ellipsis of the first person singular subject *ick* cannot be proved to bear any relation to the presence or absence of schwa-apocope in the first person singular verb form used in private letters, although the data in business letters seem to suggest otherwise. Apparently, the preservative strength of the seventeenth-century epistolary conventions examined here did not assert itself very strongly with regards to the presence or absence of the final schwa.

### 7.5. The phonetic context

In spoken Dutch, the phonetic context in which the first person singular verb ending was situated, could have been a very important factor in the spread of schwa-apocope. Since the language in the seventeenth-century private letters is expected to lean relatively close to spoken language, the influence of the phonetic context on the presence of schwa-apocope could also be detectable in the corpus.

What is more, possible influence of the phonetic context may also provide us with new information on the status of the *-en* endings. So far, I have treated most of these endings as a reflection of the schwa in spoken language. However, as it often happens in casual spoken present-day Dutch, the final *n* might also be functioning as a filler for the hiatus between the end vowel of the verb form (in this case schwa) and a vowel at the beginning of the word following the verb form (Booij 1995: 166, 171): an intrusive *-n*. If this is the case, it may be reflected in the results for the phonetic context following the final schwa.

However, before investigating the influence of the phonetic context *following* the final schwa in §7.5.2, I will discuss the phonetic context *preceding* the final schwa in §7.5.1. Some evidence leads us to believe that this phonetic context is important as well and the data will be needed to correctly interpret the results for the phonetic context *following* the final schwa. Van Haeringen (1937a: 322 ; 1937b: 104-105) signalled that words with a [d] in front of the final schwa were less likely to lose this ending than other words and as Van Helten (1887: 251) noticed that *laten* is a verb that showed schwa-apocope very early on, it is worthwhile investigating whether a [t] in front of the final schwa promotes schwa-apocope (cf. §7.4.1 about the verb *laten*). I will thus examine whether first person singular verb forms with different stems also differ in their receptivity to schwa-apocope in §7.5.1. Finally, in §7.5.3, the influence of the phonetic context preceding the

ending of the verb form and the phonetic context following it will be compared.

### 7.5.1. The phonetic context preceding the final schwa

The examples Van Haeringen (1937a: 322 ; 1937b: 104-105) gives of words which end in *-de* and which seem to preserve their final schwa without becoming archaic or part of a high register are all nouns (cf. *vrede* ‘peace’, *bode* ‘messenger’, *schade* ‘damage’). If the fact that these nouns preserve their schwa-ending more easily than other nouns is truly a consequence of the phonetic context, we should be able to trace the same influence of the *d* in the verb forms in the corpus. Table 7.14 below shows the distribution of the endings for first person singular verb forms from private letters from Zeeland or Holland across verbs with different stem endings.

<i>Stem ending</i>	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<b>N total</b>
<b>m</b>	30%	53%	17%	30
<b>d</b>	36%	56%	8%	116
<b>l</b>	37%	56%	7%	41
<b>ng</b>	45%	44%	11%	62
<b>b (only <i>hebben</i>)</b>	47%	46%	7%	718
<b>p</b>	52%	45%	3%	380
<b>s</b>	54%	39%	7%	158
<b>k</b>	55%	40%	5%	75
<b>r</b>	57%	43%	0%	61
<b>n</b>	57%	34%	9%	44
<b>v</b>	57%	33%	10%	63
<b>w</b>	60%	35%	5%	20
<b>g</b>	78%	15%	6%	65
<b>z</b>	79%	21%	0%	14
<b>t</b>	92%	7%	1%	645
<b>Total</b>	61%	34%	5%	2492

**Table 7.14: The endings of verb forms of the first person singular across verbs with different stem endings in private letters from Zeeland and Holland.**

The table shows a large amount of variation: while verb forms with a stem ending in *-m* occur without a schwa in 30% of the cases, verb forms at the other end of the list (with a stem ending in *-t*) occur without a schwa in as much as 92% of the cases.

As is clear from the table, the intervocalic *d* does seem to preserve the final schwa quite well. With the schwa present in 64% of the cases, verbs with a stem ending in *-d* are almost at the top of the list. What Van

Haeringen (1937a: 322; 1937b: 104-105) signalled for the nouns with an intervocalic *d*, thus also seems to hold for verb forms of the first person singular with an intervocalic *d* at the end.

While the words with *d* in front of an original final schwa are very preserving of the final schwa, the opposite counts for words with *t* in front of the original schwa ending. Verbs with a stem ending in *-t* can be found at the bottom of the list. These verbs occur with a final schwa in less than 10% of the cases. For the verb *laten* I have already shown above that the schwa is seldom present in the first person singular verb form. Rather than a consequence of the formulaic nature of the verb, this is indeed a consequence of the *t* in front of the verb ending, since other verbs with a stem ending in *t* behave similarly. This is shown in table 7.15.

	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<b>N total</b>
<i>laten</i>	92%	7%	1%	455
<b>Other verbs with the stem ending in <i>t</i></b>	92%	8%	1%	190

**Table 7.15: The endings of the first person singular of *laten* and of other verbs with a stem ending in *t* in private letters from Zeeland and Holland.**

It has been shown in tables 7.14 and 7.15 that the phonetic context preceding a final schwa has influence on the presence or absence of schwa-apocope. Is this also true for the phonetic context *following* the final schwa?

### 7.5.2. The phonetic context following the final schwa

Since in spoken Dutch, a vowel following a weakly stressed schwa can cause the schwa to be dropped (Booij 1995: 65-68, 150-151) and since the private letters sometimes exhibit oral elements, it is possible that we find influence of the phonetic context following the ending of the first person singular verb form on the presence of the final schwa in the letters. Two particular writers mentioned in §7.2 do indeed show explicitly how the weakly stressed schwa is dropped in front of a vowel by replacing the final *-e*'s of their first person singular verb forms by an apostrophe (e.g. *ick bid' ul* 'I beg you' or *ik hoop' en* 'I hope and'). Does the final schwa drop in front of vowels in the letters of other writers as well? Table 7.16 below shows the relation between the phonetic context following the verb form and the ending of the first person singular verb form for all the private letters from Zeeland and Holland from the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus (450 letters by 331 different writers).

	–∅	–e	– en	N total
<b>preceding a vowel</b>	66%	30%	4%	1365
<b>preceding a consonant</b>	55%	39%	6%	1103

**Table 7.16: The distribution of the different endings of first person singular verb forms preceding a vowel or a consonant in the private letters from Holland and Zeeland.**

It is immediately clear from the table that there does seem to be influence from the phonetic context on schwa-apocope in the letters of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus, although the differences do not seem to be very overwhelming. The zero-ending is used more frequently preceding a vowel than preceding a consonant (occurring in 66% of the cases vs. in 55% of the cases respectively) and the final –e is used less often preceding a vowel than preceding a consonant (30% vs. 39%).

However, a large part of the difference seems to be caused by the formulaic verb *laten*. This verb is one of the three verbs whose first person singular form occurs more than 250 times in the sub-corpus of private letters (*hebben* occurs 760 times, *hopen* occurs 301 times, and *laten* occurs 455 times), which makes it quite influential. Now *laten* has a very interesting distribution: it occurs in front of a vowel in 93% of the cases. At the same time, it occurs almost always without the schwa, which is a consequence of the *t* in which the stem ends, as shown above in tables 7.14 and 7.15. Since this verb's frequent occurrence in front of vowels happens to be combined with a tendency to lose the schwa-like endings, the large presence of *laten* could distort the data, suggesting a relationship between a vowel following the verb and schwa-apocope where there might not be one. And indeed, if the verb *laten* is left out of the data, the difference between the two phonetic contexts disappears completely, as can be seen in table 7.17 below.

	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>-en</i>	<i>N total</i>
<b>preceding a vowel</b>	54%	40%	5%	<b>941</b>
<b>preceding a consonant</b>	54%	40%	6%	<b>1072</b>

**Table 7.17: The distribution of the different endings of the first person singular verb forms preceding a vowel or a consonant without data for the verb *laten* 'let' in private letters from Holland & Zeeland.**

In order to ensure that the results are trustworthy, I examined the effect of the type of phonetic context following a first person singular verb form of the present tense again, but this time only for verb forms occurring in the middle of a sentence and not at the end of a sentence or at a specific point in a sentence where a pause could occur. This ensures that only the phonetic contexts are examined which could have influenced the pronunciation of the verb form for certain. However, the results still showed no difference. The percentages of the different possible endings in the middle of a phrase are the same for verb forms preceding a vowel and verb forms preceding a consonant. The final schwa occurs in about 41% of the cases, the zero-ending in about 54% of the cases, and the *-en* ending in 4% of the cases.<sup>106</sup>

I can only conclude that unlike the phonetic context *preceding* the ending of the first person singular verb forms, the phonetic context *following* the endings does not seem to influence the presence or absence of the schwa in seventeenth-century Dutch letters. Furthermore, the occurrence of the final *-en* does not seem to be influenced by the nature of the phonetic context following the first person singular verb form: it occurs in 5% of the cases preceding a vowel and it occurs in 6% of the cases preceding a consonant. This suggests that the final *n* in spelling is not used as a reflection of an epenthesis between two vowels, which strengthens the idea that the *-en* endings actually represent a schwa-like sound.

<sup>106</sup> The distribution of the endings is slightly different for the verb forms at the end of a sentence or in front of a pause. The final *-e* occurs in 32% of the cases, the zero-ending in 54% of the cases and the *en*-ending in 14% of the cases. The *-en* ending thus occurs more often in verb forms at the end of a sentence than in verb forms in the middle of a sentence. A possible explanation could be that if the first person singular verb form occurs at the end of the sentence, it is likely that it is far removed from the subject *ick*. This may cause the letter writer to make mistakes more easily and confuse the first person singular verb form with the infinitive, a verb-form more likely to be found at the end of a sentence which is spelt with final *en*.



### 7.5.3. Conclusions about the phonetic context

In seventeenth-century Dutch letters, the phonetic context does not always seem to influence the presence of schwa-apocope. From the data it has become clear that the phonetic context *preceding* the verbal ending has a clear influence on the presence of schwa-apocope: if a *t* precedes the ending, the schwa is more likely to be dropped than in other verbs; if a *d* precedes the ending, the schwa is more likely to be retained. On the other hand, the data clearly show that the phonetic context *following* the ending of the verb form does not influence the presence of the final schwa in the letters analysed, while I have every reason to believe that the phonetic context following the verb form would have affected the presence of schwa-apocope in *spoken* Dutch.

## 7.6. Conclusions

The conclusion of this investigation of schwa-apocope is clear: several of the different factors examined were influencing its progress in the seventeenth century. As was expected, there was a strong regional effect, which can still be seen in modern Dutch dialects: the schwa apocope did not affect the spoken Dutch in Zeeland in the same way as it influenced the spoken language in South and North Holland and this can be seen in the written Dutch of the seventeenth century. While the final schwa was found in about 25% of the cases in letters linked to Holland, it occurred abundantly in letters linked to the more southern province, Zeeland. Secondly, the social variables gender, social class, and age were influential as well. The effect of gender was similar for Zeeland and Holland: women were quicker in embracing schwa-apocope. However, with regards to social class, the data for Zeeland and Holland differed from each other. In Zeeland, social class could not be shown to influence the presence of schwa-apocope, while in Holland, social class did influence the endings of the first person singular verb forms of the present tense in letters written by men. The higher the social class to which a male writer in Holland belonged, the larger the share of final schwas was.

Not all variables examined had as much influence as the regional and social variables, however. Formulaic language, for instance, could not be shown to have much effect on the presence of the final schwa in the verb forms of the first person singular of the present in the letters of the corpus, even though some formulae have preserved the final schwa until this day (e.g. *met name* ‘in particular’). The phonetic context *following* the final schwa also did not influence the occurrence of schwa-apocope in written

language, despite the fact that it probably did in spoken Dutch. However, the phonetic context *preceding* the final schwa did influence the presence or absence of schwa-apocope. Some phonetic contexts stimulated schwa-apocope ([t]); others seemed to block it ([d]).

The way in which all of these variables relate to schwa-apocope reminds us strongly of the intricate relationship between the language use in letters and spoken Dutch. On the one hand, there was no complete separation between what was said and what was written; otherwise schwa-apocope would not have stood a chance in the written Dutch and certainly not in the epistolary formulae. On the other hand, I cannot trace any influence of the phonetic context following the ending and men from the middle and upper social classes in Holland seemed to distance their written language from what was probably spoken. Therefore, the language in the private letters should not be considered as just spoken Dutch written down either.

## Chapter 8. Diminutives

### 8.1. The history of the different types of diminutive suffixes

In present-day Standard Dutch the diminutive suffix is *-je* [jə]. It has five variants: *-tje* [cə], *-etje* [əcə], *-je* [jə], *-pje* [pjə] and *-kje* [kjə]. Which variant is used depends on the final sound of the root and of the quality of the vowel in the last syllable of the root. For instance, *boom* [bo:m] ('tree') receives the diminutive suffix *-pje* on the basis of the final [m] and the fact that the vowel in the last (and only) syllable is long and stressed. But the diminutive of the word *bom* [bɔm] ('bomb') is *bommetje* (with diminutive suffix *-etje*), given that the final consonant of the root is [m] and that the vowel preceding this auslaut is short and stressed.

In non-Standard Dutch, both in regiolects and sociolects, the *-je* diminutive suffix and its variants also occur, but sometimes with variations. For instance, the suffix and its variants can be pronounced with a final [n] (e.g. *boekjen* [bukjən] 'booklet') depending on the phonetic context and the dialect or regiolect of the speaker. And the rules governing the occurrence of the different variants of *-je(n)* can differ as well from region to region. Take for example the diminutive of the word *mouw* in the Dutch village of Voorthuizen and in its neighbouring village of Barneveld: according to the MAND (*Morfologische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten* 'Morphological atlas of Dutch Dialects') the diminutive of *mouw* is *mouwtje* in Voorthuizen (with the suffix *-tje*), while in Barneveld the diminutive is *mouwetje* (with the suffix *-etje*) (MAND I, De Schutter et al. 2005). Listing all the rules for the formation of diminutives in Standard and in non-Standard Dutch would certainly go beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is crucial for the research presented in this chapter to describe the origin of the suffix *-je(n)* and the history of diminutive suffixes in Dutch from Middle Dutch up to present-day Dutch.<sup>107</sup>

Over the past century, extensive research and intense linguistic discussions have resulted in a history of the Dutch diminutives upon which most scholars agree. Let us start with Middle Dutch, in which the suffix *-kijn* is said to be the central diminutive suffix (Van Loey 1970: 225-231). Other diminutive suffixes which occurred on a smaller scale were *-elkijn*, *-lijn*, *-sijn*, *-skijn*, *-tgin* en *-tiaen* (Bakema 1997: 203, Van Loey 1970: 225-231). The suffix *-kijn* gradually changed into *-je(n)* through palatalisation of

<sup>107</sup> The formation of diminutives in Dutch is described in detail in the ANS (*Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* 'General Dutch Grammar') (Haeseryn et al. 1997).

the [k] caused by the following [i] and through reduction of the ending. Kloeke, who first described this transition, stated that this change took place first in North Holland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and that this new suffix later spread to the south and to the north from North Holland (1923: 229). Pée confirmed this theory by showing that the Dutch dialects of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century contained several diminutive suffixes that illustrate a stage in the change from *-kijn* to *-je*, such as [tʃə] or [əʏə]. This process moved gradually, from word to word and from dialect to dialect, and could be traced back to North Holland, to the western regions of South Holland and to Zeeland (Bakema 1997: 207, Pée 1936-1938: 58-60, 107).

In some present-day dialects of Dutch, this change from *-kijn* to *-je* has not been completed yet. In fact, present-day dialects contain a multitude of diminutive suffixes, as can be gathered from map 1 below, taken from the MAND I (De Schutter et al. 2005). Furthermore, just like for the standard Dutch diminutive suffix *-je*, each dialect may have different variants of suffixes or different suffixes altogether, the occurrence of which is governed by a set of phonological or lexical rules. For instance, in Texel the diminutive of the word *ei* ('egg') would be ['eicə] with the suffix *-tje*, while the diminutive of the word *vis* ('fish') would be ['visi] with the suffix *-ie*. Therefore, a map of the diminutive suffixes of another root word may differ greatly from the map presented below based on the diminutives of the root word *brief* ('letter').

Two of the diminutive suffixes in the map are popular non-standard variants. The suffix *-ke* [kə] (also prone to occur with final [n]), clearly a direct descendant of the Middle Dutch suffix *-kijn*, stands out as the most frequent diminutive suffix for the root *brief* ('letter'). It occurs mainly south of North Holland and also in the north-east of the Netherlands. The second most frequent non-standard diminutive suffix is *-ie* [i] (also found with a final [n] in the north-east of the Dutch speaking region). Unlike *-ke*, this non-standard diminutive suffix occurs in the cradle of the standard diminutive suffix *-je(n)*, i.e. Holland.

It is known that in the seventeenth century, changes in the diminutive suffixes were still in full swing and several variants were used. The grammarian Van Heule mentioned in his grammar of Dutch that in different parts of the Low Countries different variants of diminutive suffixes were used: *-je* in Holland, *-kje* in Flanders and *-ke* in Brabant (Van Heule 1625: 91). In 1653 Petrus Leupenius, another grammarian, claimed that two different diminutive suffixes were used in Dutch: *-ke* and *-(t)je* (Leupenius 1653: 32-33 in Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 211-212). Furthermore, the suffix [i] is said to have first occurred in the seventeenth century, though not in written Dutch (Van Loey 1970: 230).

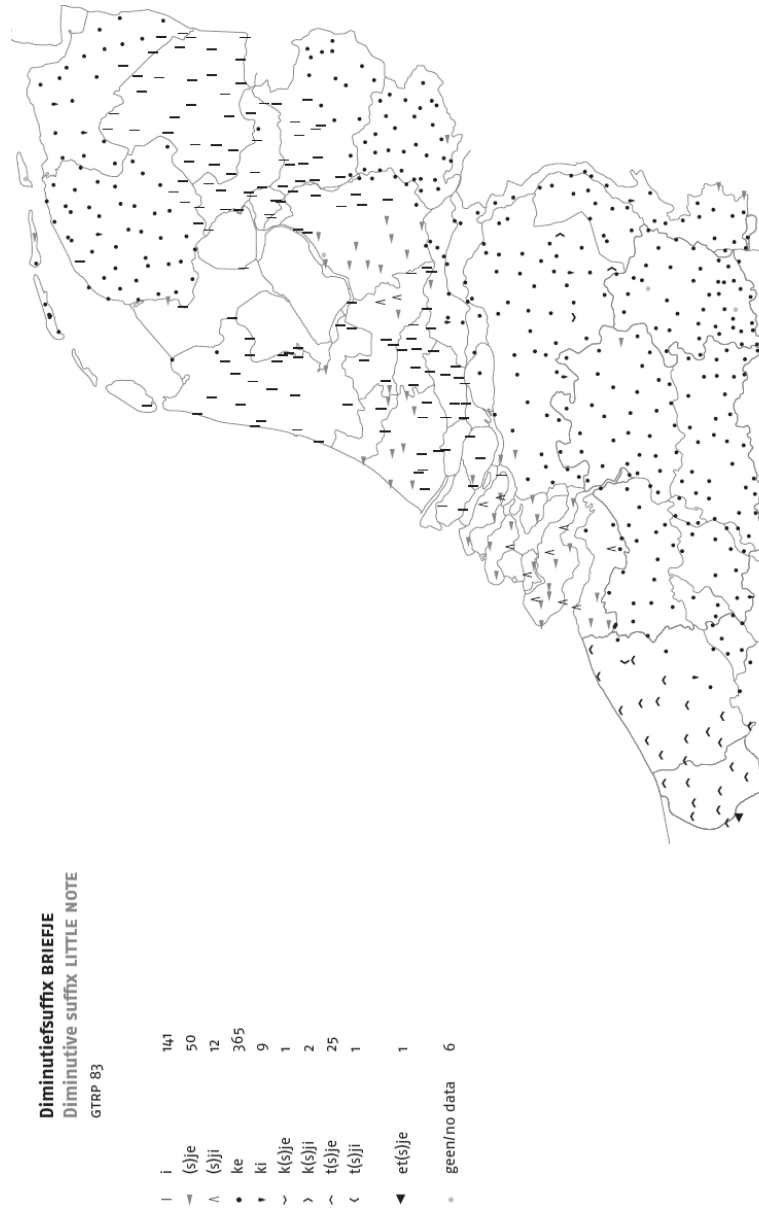


Figure 8.1: Diminutive suffixes for the root *brief* in dialects of Dutch from the Morphological Atlas of the Dutch Dialects, part I (MAND I, De Schutter et al. 2005: 50).

The seventeenth-century private letters are a new source of information on the Dutch language of the time that may contain language of immediacy and can bring us closer to the diminutives used in seventeenth-century everyday Dutch. By examining this corpus I am able to address several questions regarding the spread of the diminutive suffixes. Questions I would like to answer are: how far had the *-je* diminutive suffix spread regionally by the second half of the seventeenth century? Can we catch the claimed spread from North Holland? Are there any social variables influencing this spread? For instance, does the choice for a particular diminutive suffix relate to social class, gender, or age?

Answering these questions, however, is hindered by the fact that the seventeenth-century spellings do not always clearly show which type of diminutive suffix is being used. Especially the difference between [i] and [jə] suffixes is hard to determine, due to the old practice of representing both the vowel [i] and the semi-vowel [j] by <i>, <j>, <ij>, or <y> (e.g. *iaer* and *jaer* for [ja:r] ‘year’ or *iet* and *jet* for [it] ‘something’) which still occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century. Therefore I will examine whether there is a way to circumvent difficulties in categorising diminutive suffixes on the basis of spelling in §8.3, immediately after listing the different kinds of diminutive suffixes that were found in the corpus in §8.2. The regional distribution of the spelling of these diminutives will be examined in §8.4, while the influence of social variables will be dealt with in §8.5. The results of the categorisation of different spelling variants into different phonological types of suffixes will be examined in itself in §8.6. In §8.7, I will deal with the presence of a final [n] in diminutives and the differences between diminutives in proper names and diminutives in other types of words will be examined in §8.8. The conclusions of this research into the diminutives in seventeenth-century Dutch will be given in §8.9.

## 8.2. Diminutives in the corpus

The private letters of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus contain a wealth of different diminutive suffixes. If a plural form of a certain type of diminutive is not considered to be a different form, the total number of differently spelled diminutive suffixes is 63. Of course, this large amount of variety is also caused by the fact that each type of diminutive suffix may have several variants depending on the auslaut of the root and the quality of the vowel in the last syllable. Just like *-je*, for instance, the diminutive suffix *-ke* can occur in different forms: as *-ke* in *vis-ke* (‘fish’), as *-ske* in *boek-ske* (‘booklet’), or as *-eke* in *matt-eke* (‘rug’). If I ignore this variation, I end up with 12 different orthographical types of suffixes.

In table 8.1 below, I have categorised all the different diminutive suffixes found in all of the seventeenth-century private letters (454 letters written by 408 different writers, see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus) on the basis of their orthography. Discriminating between different suffixes on a phonological basis would be more desirable, but I will show in §8.3 that this can be problematic.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Variants</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>ie</b>	eitien	<i>meineitien</i> (proper name)	500	43%
	entie	<i>marrentie</i> (proper name)		
	etie	<i>kommetie</i> ('bowl')		
	etien	<i>tonnetien</i> ('barrel')		
	eties	<i>kinneties</i> ('barrels')		
	eutien	<i>Meijnneutien</i> (proper name)		
	ie	<i>briefie</i> ('letter')		
	ien	<i>stockien</i> ('walking stick')		
	iens	<i>pratiens</i> ('rumours' 'talk')		
	ies	<i>perkitties</i> ('budgies')		
	itien	<i>meijnitien</i> (proper name)		
	pie	<i>wellempie</i> (proper name)		
	tie	<i>sontie</i> ('son')		
	tien	<i>Dochtertien</i> ('daughter')		
	tiens	<i>swaentiens</i> ('swans')		
ties	<i>jaarties</i> ('years')			
iiie	<i>roockiie</i> (proper name)			
<b>ke</b>	aken	<i>tannaken</i> (proper name)	218	19%
	eke	<i>tonneke</i> ('barrel')		
	eken	<i>kendeken</i> ('child')		
	ekes	<i>hannekes</i> ('cockerels')		
	ekens	<i>kijnnekens</i> ('barrels')		
	ke	<i>soen hantke</i> ('handblown kiss')		
	ken	<i>wijfken</i> ('woman')		
	kens	<i>letterkens</i> ('letters')		
	kes	<i>weeskes</i> ('orphans')		
	xken	<i>pacxken</i> ('parcel')		
<b>je</b>	etje	<i>velletje</i> ('skin')	131	11%
	etjen	<i>kappetjen</i> (proper name)		
	je	<i>glaesje</i> ('glass')		
	jen	<i>dachjen</i> ('day')		
	jens	<i>nichtjens</i> ('cousins' or 'nieces')		
	jes	<i>bouckjes</i> ('books')		

	tje tjen tjes	<i>huijs vrouwtje</i> ('wife') <i>moertjen</i> ('mother' or 'grandmother') <i>kindertjes</i> ('children')		
<b>ge</b>	etge etgen etges ge gen gens ges ghe ghen ghens tge tgen tgens tger tges tgn	<i>tonnetge</i> ('barrel') <i>annetgen</i> (proper name) <i>kinnetges</i> ('barrels') <i>meere catge</i> ('guenon') <i>maetgen</i> ('friend') <i>vatgens</i> ('barrels') <i>vatges</i> ('barrels') <i>neelghe</i> (proper name) <i>packghen</i> ('parcel') <i>achtendeelghens</i> ('barrel') <i>leckertge</i> ('something sweet') <i>neeltgen</i> (proper name) <i>soontgens</i> ('sons') <i>Maertger</i> (proper name) <i>meutges</i> ('aunties') <i>aeltgn</i> (proper name)	104	9%
<b>ije</b>	eije eijen etije etijen etijes ije ijen ijes tije tijen tijes	<i>vrouweije</i> ('woman') <i>besteijen</i> ('animal') <i>maretije</i> (proper name) <i>annetijen</i> (proper name) <i>kinnetijes</i> ('barrels') <i>kaasije</i> ('cheese') <i>stuijkijen</i> ('part') <i>pockijes</i> ('smallpox') <i>sontije</i> ('son') <i>seeltijen</i> ('bill/list') <i>moijtijes</i> ('fine')	102	9%
<b>en</b>	en eten ten	<i>grijeten</i> (proper name) <i>gangeten</i> ('alleyway') <i>vrouuten</i> ('wife')	55	5%
<b>ye</b>	tye etyen tyen tyes ye yen yes	<i>maertye</i> (proper name) <i>annetyen</i> (proper name) <i>eessertyen</i> ('head brooch') <i>moytyes</i> ('well') <i>gertye</i> (proper name) <i>scortyen</i> ('pinafore') <i>gatyes</i> ('holes')	24	2%
<b>i</b>	is	<i>augurikis</i> ('gherkins')	9	0.78%



	tis	<i>voogeltis</i> ('birds')		
	in	<i>grietin</i> (proper name)		
	tin	<i>trijntin</i> (proper name)		
	etin	<i>annetin</i> (proper name)		
<b>gie</b>	etgien	<i>jannetgien</i> (proper name)	8	0.69%
	gie	<i>vatgie</i> ('barrel')		
	gien	<i>vatgien</i> ('barrel')		
	tgien	<i>aeltgien</i> (proper name)		
	tgin	<i>vroutgin</i> (proper name)		
<b>y</b>	hy	<i>magelynhy</i> (proper name)	3	0.26%
	ty	<i>krystyenty</i> (proper name)		
	y	<i>gryetty</i> (proper name)		
<b>kie</b>	ickie	<i>annickie</i> (proper name)	2	0.17%
<b>che</b>	che	<i>elsche</i> (proper name)	2	0.17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>63 variants excluding plural forms, 88 variants including plural forms</b>		<b>1158</b>	

**Table 8.1: The frequencies of the different orthographical types of diminutive suffixes and their subtypes in the corpus of seventeenth-century private Dutch letters.**

As is clear from the table, the *-ie* suffixes outrank the other suffixes by far. In no less than 43% of the cases, the diminutive suffix used is of the *-ie* type. In second place comes *-ke* (19%), closely followed by *-je* (11%). The nine remaining different types of diminutive suffixes each do not take up more than 10% of the total number of suffixes.

Before I can begin to examine the diminutives in the *Letters as Loot* corpus, however, some measures need to be taken. First of all, the number of occurrences of diminutive suffixes fit for examination of their relation with regional and social variables needs to be restricted. A large number of diminutive suffixes (805 in total) in the corpus of private letters occur in proper names and of these diminutive suffixes it is hard to tell whether they have been fossilized or not. This means that if writers use a certain type of diminutive suffix in a proper name, it is impossible to say whether they use this specific suffix because they themselves would use it spontaneously in forming diminutives or whether they only use this suffix because it is a fixed part of the name they want to write down. In §8.7 I will return to this problem and demonstrate what differences there are between diminutives in proper names and diminutives in other types of words. For now it will suffice to note that proper names will be excluded from the data altogether in order to avoid inaccuracy. This means that there are 353 occurrences of diminutive suffixes left in the corpus of private letters which can be properly

examined when exploring the influence of regional and social variables on the use of diminutive suffixes in §8.4 and §8.5.

Secondly, an extra problem in examining diminutive suffixes is the fact that some spellings are ambiguous: it is not always clear which phonological variant of the diminutive suffixes is represented. Given the ambiguity of the graphemes <i> and <j> for example (as mentioned above in §8.1), the suffix *-ie* cannot be identified as the [je] or as the [i] suffix straightforwardly. Is there a way to make sense of the data from a phonological point of view? In the following section I will illustrate the difficulties in getting past the spelling of the diminutive suffix. For the palatal suffixes in particular I will examine various methods which can be used to determine whether the suffix in question represents [i] or [jə].

### 8.3. Getting beyond spelling?

In §8.3.1, I will explain for each orthographical type of diminutive suffix that was found in the corpus of private letters, including the diminutives in proper names, which phonological types of suffixes they may represent. In §8.3.2, I will describe the method used to identify the phonological type of the <ie>, <ije>, <ye> and <je> suffixes and I will present the results of this method when applied to the non-proper names in the corpus of private letters.

#### 8.3.1. Spelling and phonology

##### *The <ie>, <ije>, <ye> and <je> suffixes*

It is particularly difficult to decide which phonological variant of the diminutive suffix is represented by the spellings <ie>, <ije>, <ye> and – to a lesser extent – <je>. This is the case because the graphemes <i>, <j>, <ij>, and <y> have a history of being interchangeable in the spelling of Dutch and there is a large amount of intra- and interspeaker variation. All of these suffixes could thus be interpreted either as representing [i] or [jə]. Even the <je> spellings, which seem to be straightforward, cannot be assumed to actually represent [jə] without any risk, as will be illustrated below. Various strategies can be devised to uncover the possible phonological nature of the diminutive suffix. In what follows, I will discuss these strategies and show when they might be used successfully and when they turn out to be inadequate for the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus.

The first method is to examine the spelling used throughout the letter(s) of one writer very closely in search of indications that show how to interpret the spelling of the diminutive suffixes. Ideally, it would be best to look for words that contain the same graphemes as the diminutive suffixes

and see whether these words would be expected to be pronounced with [jə] or [i].

Take for instance the spelling of the diminutive suffixes in two letters written by Dominicus Pottey.<sup>108</sup> The diminutives used by Dominicus are: *stuijckies* ('pieces'), *fergatie* and *fergattie* ('frigate'), *nightie* ('niece'), *kinderties* ('children'), and *glaesie* ('glass'). All diminutives have suffixes of the *-ie* type. When I look at the spelling in the rest of Dominicus' letter, I see this *ie* spelling turn up in words that are very likely to be pronounced with [i]: e.g. *sien* ('to see'), *die* ('who' or 'which'), *niet* ('not'), *vrienden* ('friends'), *colonie* ('colony'), *apparentie* ('appearance'), and *famillie* ('family'). Given that Dominicus' spelling in the rest of the letter seems fairly consistent and given that the <ie> spelling for an [i] pronunciation also occurs frequently in morphemes other than diminutive suffixes, I have good reasons to assume that when Dominicus Pottey spelled his diminutive suffixes as <ie>, the phonological type would be [i].

Of course it is difficult to be absolutely certain about the phonological type. There is still a possibility that the letter writer used <ie> not only for [i] but also for [jə]. It would therefore add some security to find that the letter writer spelled words differently that probably contained [jə] or [j] in their pronunciation. For Dominicus, this evidence is present. He uses the grapheme <j> where I expect to find [j] in the pronunciation, namely in the words *majoor* 'major', *ja* 'yes', and *junij* 'June'. It is unfavourable, however, that words containing [jə] or [j] in their pronunciation are not ubiquitous and that [j] is sometimes spelled with what seems like a capital letter at the onset of a word, requiring some study to be identified as <j> or as <i>. These facts often make it difficult to discover the necessary extra evidence in letters.

The present generation of speakers and writers of Dutch might be tempted to try out another way to establish whether the diminutive suffix should be interpreted as [i] or as [jə]. This has to do with the fact that in present-day Dutch there is an orthographical rule regarding consonants following a short vowel: if a syllable containing a short vowel and ending in a consonant is followed by an unstressed syllable starting with a vowel, the consonant in the auslaut of the first vowel should be doubled (*Woordenlijst Nederlandse Taal* 'Wordlist of the Dutch Language' 2005). The word ['penən] 'pens' should thus be spelled as <pennen>, while ['penən] 'carrots' should be spelled as <penen>. And ['pɔcə] 'jar' should be spelled as <potje>, while ['pɔti] should be spelled as <pottie> 'jar'. It would take us too far to explain this rule in detail, but if this rule would be projected onto the written

<sup>108</sup> Letters 17-06-2009 127-129 and 17-06-2009 130-132 in the corpus (HCA 30-223).

Dutch of more than 300 years ago, it would seem acceptable to conclude that if we encounter diminutives whose root ends with a syllable containing a short vowel and whose last consonant is doubled in front of a diminutive suffix spelt as <ie>, <ije> or <ye> – such as the word *fergattie* used by Dominicus Pottey in one of his letters – that we are dealing with a diminutive suffix of the [i] type rather than of the [jə] type.

However, it is hazardous to project this present-day orthographical rule of Standard Dutch onto Dutch written in the seventeenth century. That this present-day rule was probably not a rule for (all) seventeenth-century letter writers becomes very clear when we see that the doubling of the consonant also occurs in some words where one would not expect it on the basis of the orthography and the expected phonological types of suffixes. Take for instance the letters written by Henricus Cordes and Cornelis Brandt.<sup>109</sup> Henricus writes *mottjen* ‘auntie’ and Cornelis writes *Schottjens* ‘the Scots’. Their letters present no evidence for these diminutive suffixes representing [i] rather than [jə], since both writers use both the grapheme <i> and the grapheme <j> as we would in present-day Standard Dutch. Even though their diminutives <je> very likely represent the phonological type of diminutive suffix [jə], both writers double the <t> in front of the diminutive suffix. These examples show that this present-day rule of orthography is not reliable as a simple way to determine the phonological type of diminutive suffix used in seventeenth-century letters.

A similar indication which might be suggested by users of present-day Dutch, but which will again turn out to be unreliable, is the nature of phonetic context preceding the diminutive suffix. It is often claimed that the [i] suffix cannot occur when the auslaut of the root is [t]. Following a [t], the diminutive suffix [jə] should occur (Cohen 1958: 44-45). One could use this knowledge together with a further analysis of the spelling of certain writers to determine what the phonological diminutive suffix could be. However, again it is questionable whether this rule would have applied in seventeenth-century Dutch. It is not even applied in all present-day Dutch dialects, as can be gathered from different dialect maps of diminutives presented in the MAND I (De Schutter et al. 2005). The maps for diminutive forms of the words *voet* [vut] (‘foot’), *pot* [pɔt] (‘pan’), *rond* [rɔnt] (‘round’), and *draad* [dra:t] (‘thread’) show that in present-day dialects in the north-east of the Netherlands, roots ending in [t] do occur with the diminutive suffix [i]. The root *poort* [po:rt] (‘gate’) does not only occur in the north-eastern dialects with the [i] suffix, but also occurs with [i] in an area surrounding the city of Utrecht in the centre of the country. On top of the fact that [i] can follow the

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<sup>109</sup> Letters 08-01-2009 047-048 and 06-01-2010 216-218 in the corpus (HCA 30-646 and HCA 30-644).

root word ending in [t] in some present-day dialects, there is the fact that in the corpus I do not see any orthographical evidence for this rule: root words ending in [t] are not more often accompanied by a diminutive suffix of the *je* type than other root words. Furthermore, even if this rule was applied in spoken Dutch and the diminutive form of *kast* ‘cupboard’ with the [i] suffix could only occur if the [t] was dropped such as in *kassie* [‘kasi], this does not mean that letter writers also dropped the <t> in the spelling of this diminutive form. The spelling <kastie> thus does not necessarily have to be understood as [‘kascə]. Considering these facts, I can only conclude that it may have been possible that an [i] diminutive suffix could follow a root ending in [t] in the west of the Low Countries in the seventeenth century and that the method presented here cannot be used conclusively.

In conclusion of this overview of options to determine the phonological nature of the <ie>, <ije>, <ye> and <je> suffixes, only a careful analysis per writer of his/her spelling of words that in all probability contain [i] and [j] could reveal the phonological nature of the diminutive suffixes used. Whether this procedure is successful or not depends on the length of the letter and the other words used by a writer.

#### *The <ke> suffixes*

The *-ke* suffixes occur quite frequently in the seventeenth-century corpus. Although it is possible that letter writers who used *-ke* in their written Dutch may have used another type of diminutive in their spoken Dutch, it is hard to imagine that when they wrote *-ke*, they actually meant [i] or [jə], since the grapheme <k> is not simply interchangeable with <i> or <j>. These suffixes can thus be assumed to represent the diminutive suffix [kə] or maybe a slightly palatalised variant.

#### *The <ge> suffixes*

These suffixes seem to represent a stage in the change from the older *-kijn* or *-ke* diminutive to *-je*, when the [k] was beginning to become palatalised. It is often mentioned that this spelling might actually be a first attempt at representing the newer [jə] suffix (Van Loey 1970: 229). Which phonological representation is behind these suffixes is hard to decide on and may differ from writer to writer.

#### *The <en> suffixes*

The diminutive suffix *-en* does not occur very often in the corpus; it occurs 55 times in all the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus and occurs most often in proper names (*-en* occurs only 6 times in non-proper names). This diminutive suffix was probably already in use in Middle Dutch (Van Loey 1970: 226), but was probably less popular as a diminutive suffix than –

*kijn*. It leaves little fantasy to which phonological type of diminutive suffix lies behind this spelling: there is little reason to doubt that it represents [ən] or [ə].

#### *The <i> suffixes*

This spelling variant might represent the [i] diminutive suffix. In the cases of <is> and <tis>, there is very little doubt about [i] being the phonological representation. However, *-in*, *-tin* and *-etin* might also be alternative spellings for the above-mentioned <en> diminutive suffix, since it is probable that what in present-day Dutch is pronounced as a schwa had a more palatal pronunciation in the seventeenth century (Caron 1952, 1973). These spellings might be attempts to represent the more palatal sound.

#### *The <kie> and <gie> suffixes*

There are two diminutive suffixes that seem to be a combination of two suffix types: *-gie* and *-kie*. These suffixes clearly represent a form in between the old diminutive suffix *-kijn* [kin] and the newer diminutive suffix *-je* [jə]. However, it is hard to determine whether the graphemic representation <kie> represents something like [ki], [k<sup>i</sup>], or [k<sup>i</sup>ə]. The same goes for <gie>: this spelling could also represent a number of different forms, among which for instance [zə] and [zi].

#### *The <y> suffixes*

It is hard to imagine that the phonological representation of these suffixes is not the diminutive suffix [i]. There is no <e> following the <y> grapheme, which makes it very unlikely that it represents [jə].

#### *The <che> suffixes*

The two occurrences of this diminutive suffix occur in the same proper name *Elsche*. What phonological type of diminutive suffix they represent is unclear: maybe [kə], or [χə], or – considering that [s] is the auslaut of the root *Els* – possibly [jə].

### **8.3.2. From the spelling of palatal suffixes to their phonology**

When examining the relation between diminutive suffixes and regional and social variables, it is crucial to be able to discriminate between [jə] and [i] suffixes. Therefore it was necessary to develop a method that would help to interpret the several spellings used to represent palatal suffixes. I did not make use of the orthographical indications (double spelling of the final consonant before [i]) or phonological indications ([i] cannot follow [t]) as I have already shown them to be unreliable for the seventeenth-century corpus. Instead, I focused on the way words containing a [j] or an [i] sound were

spelled in the letters of one individual and how this spelling related to the spelling of the diminutive suffixes. If letter writers were consistent in using one particular spelling occurring in the diminutive suffix for a particular phoneme (e.g. <ie> for [i]), this provided greater evidence for how they would have pronounced the diminutive suffix. However, I only considered the evidence strong enough if the letter also showed that a different spelling was used to represent the competing phoneme (e.g. <ij> for [j]). I will illustrate this with a few examples.

First I will look at the letter of Jan Eghbertz.<sup>110</sup> The diminutive occurring in his letter is *vatie* ('barrel'). Since Jan's other words with <ie> all represent the pronunciation [i] (*brief* 'letter', *die* 'who' or 'that', *Pieter* 'Peter', *niet* 'not', *hier* 'here'), that he spells words containing a [j] with <j> (*Jan* 'John', *jans* 'Johnson', *jannewary* 'January', *juny* 'June'), and that there is not a single <i> spelling to be found that can be linked to the sound [j], it is clear that Jan's diminutive suffix <ie> represents [i].

There are of course also letter writers whose spelling habits do not offer a clear picture. Take for instance the letter of Grietje Jans from Amsterdam to her husband Sijewert Leenders.<sup>111</sup> The diminutive occurring in Grietje's letter is *veschertje*, meaning 'a fisherman' or 'a fishing boat'. When coming across this diminutive with <j> spelling, one is inclined to categorise it as representing [jə], for <j> in the middle of a word is rarely a reflection of another sound. To corroborate this, Grietje seems to use the spelling <j> in words where I would expect there to be a sound [j]; at least Grietje can be shown to use a capital letter that should probably be interpreted as <J> in these two cases (*Jans* [jans] 'Johnson', *Jonge* [jɔŋə] 'young'). However, if I take into account the spelling in the rest of Grietje's letter, the categorisation must be reconsidered, because Grietje uses the spelling <j> four times in words where we would definitely expect the sound [i]: *vrjendelijcke* [vrindələkə] 'friendly', *grjetje* [ɣriti] or [ɣricə] a proper name for women, *brjef* [brif] 'letter', and *tjet* [tit] 'time' or 'period'. On the basis of these various spelling forms, it is impossible to categorise Grietje's diminutive suffixes as either representing [jə] or [i].

A second letter writer whose spelling habits leave us in the dark about the phonological interpretation of the diminutives is Maertie Nannings. Maertie writes several letters to her husband Pieter Pauelsz.<sup>112</sup> The diminutives occurring in her letter are *pennemesie* 'penknife', *vatie* 'barrel', and *briefje* 'letter'. For words containing [i] she uses the spelling <ie> almost consistently and a search for <j> spellings reveals that she uses

<sup>110</sup> Letter KB 227-2 010-011 in the corpus (HCA 30-227-2).

<sup>111</sup> Letter 06-01-2009 203-204 in the corpus (HCA 30-652-2).

<sup>112</sup> Letters 3-1-2008 091-092, 3-1-2008 093-094, 3-1-2008 097-098, and 16-06-2009 155-157 in the corpus (HCA 30-647).

this spelling for words which probably contain the sound [j], e.g. *jan* [jan] ‘John’ and *joris* [joris] ‘George’. All seems to point in the direction of <ie> being safely interpretable as [i]. However, a last check reveals that Maertie does not only use the spelling <j> for [j], but also <i>. Her letter contains the following examples: *iackop* [jakɔp] ‘Jacob’, *ian* [jan] ‘John’, *iaer* [ja:r] ‘year’, *iannwari* [janwari] ‘January’, *ia* [ja:] ‘yes’, and *iansen* [jansən] ‘Johnson’. And this discovery unsettles the interpretation of the diminutive suffixes <ie> as [i], for <ie> might thus represent [jə] as well.

The three examples presented above illustrate the methodology used in determining the phonological category of different diminutive suffixes. Incidentally, they also illustrated the difficulties that can arise in the determination. Nonetheless, of the 353 diminutive suffixes remaining in the corpus (after having excluded 805 diminutive suffixes occurring in proper names) 298 diminutive suffixes could be ascribed to a specific phonological type of suffix. I chose to employ six different categories: a first category of presumed [kə] suffixes, a category of suffixes somewhere in between the velar type and the palatal type for all the orthographic representations containing the grapheme <g>, a category of presumed [jə] suffixes, a category of presumed [i] suffixes, a category of suffixes that might be either [jə] or [i], and a residual category.

Table 8.2 below shows the distribution of the different types of suffixes in the entire seventeenth-century corpus. As is clear from the table, the most popular suffix seems to be the [i] type: of the 353 diminutive suffixes no fewer than 134 suffixes could be identified as possible [i] types. Next in line is [jə] with 20% of the suffixes. However, for 55 diminutive suffixes (16% of the total) it remained unclear whether they should be interpreted as [jə] or as [i]. This means that the percentages of [i] and [jə] suffixes are in reality higher than presented in this table.

<i>Type</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
[i]	134	38%
[jə]	69	20%
[jə] or [i]	55	16%
[kə]	50	14%
in between velar and palatal	39	11%
Other	6	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	

**Table 8.2: The frequency of the different phonological types of diminutive suffixes in non-proper names in all the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus**



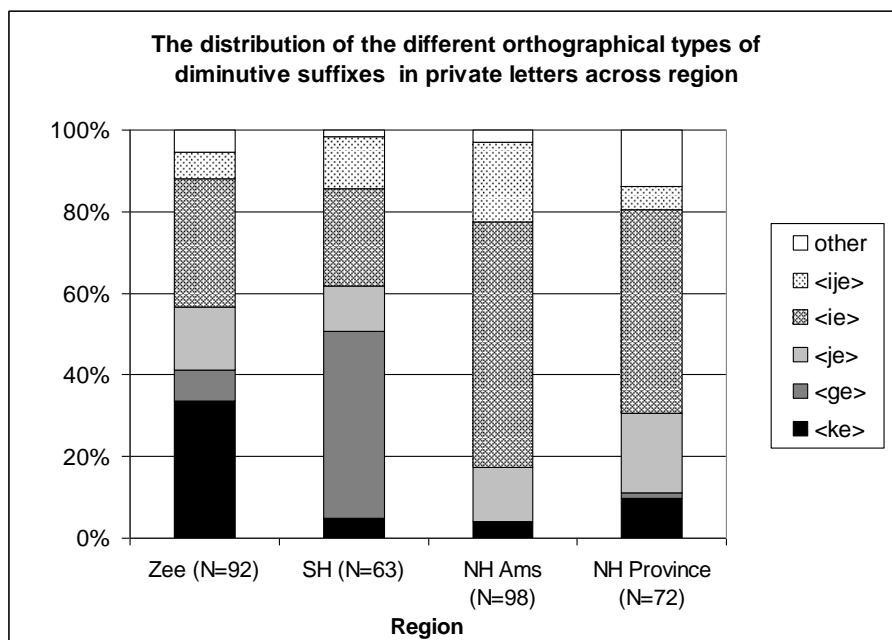
In conclusion: some of the orthographical variants seem to be quite readily interpretable, such as the <y> and <kə> suffixes. Others seem to present us with more problems, such as the <ie>, <ije>, and <ye> suffixes in particular. In some cases, a thorough analysis of a writer's spelling habits reveals the phonological type. In other cases, one has to accept that the connection between written and spoken language is difficult to find. In the following sections that deal with the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes across region, class, gender and age, this delicate relationship between spelling and phonology will require continuous attention.

## 8.4. Regional variation

### 8.4.1. Variation in spelling

To see whether I can catch the spread of the *-je* ([jə]) diminutive from Holland to the rest of the Dutch-speaking regions, I examined the distribution of the five most frequent diminutive types as presented in table 8.1 (*-ie*, *-ke*, *-je*, *-ge*, *-ije*) in private letters across the 3 most important regions in the corpus: Zeeland, South Holland, and North Holland (split up into the city of Amsterdam on the one hand and the province of North Holland excluding Amsterdam on the other). This distribution is presented in figure 8.2. As explained in §8.2, diminutives in proper names will not be included in the examinations of this section.

As is clear from figure 8.2, there are indisputable regional differences. Zeeland, the province located further away from North Holland than South Holland, has the most *-ke* suffixes. Almost 35% of the diminutive suffixes used in Zeeland are of the *-ke* type. In all of the other regions the *-ke* suffixes occur in no more than 10% of the cases. In North Holland (Amsterdam and the rest of the region) on the other hand, the combined amount of *-ie*, *-je* and *-ije* suffixes is remarkable. Independently of which phonological types of diminutives these three orthographical types actually represent, it is clear that in Amsterdam and in the rest of North Holland the rate of palatalisation of diminutive suffixes is higher than it is in South Holland and Zeeland. South Holland is geographically situated in between Zeeland and North Holland and the orthography of its diminutive suffixes seems to reflect this position. *-Ge* spellings of the diminutive suffixes occur in 45% of the cases and it is likely not a coincidence that just these spellings are quite frequent in South Holland: *-ge* spelled suffixes suggest a stage in the transition from velar *-ke* to palatal *-je*.

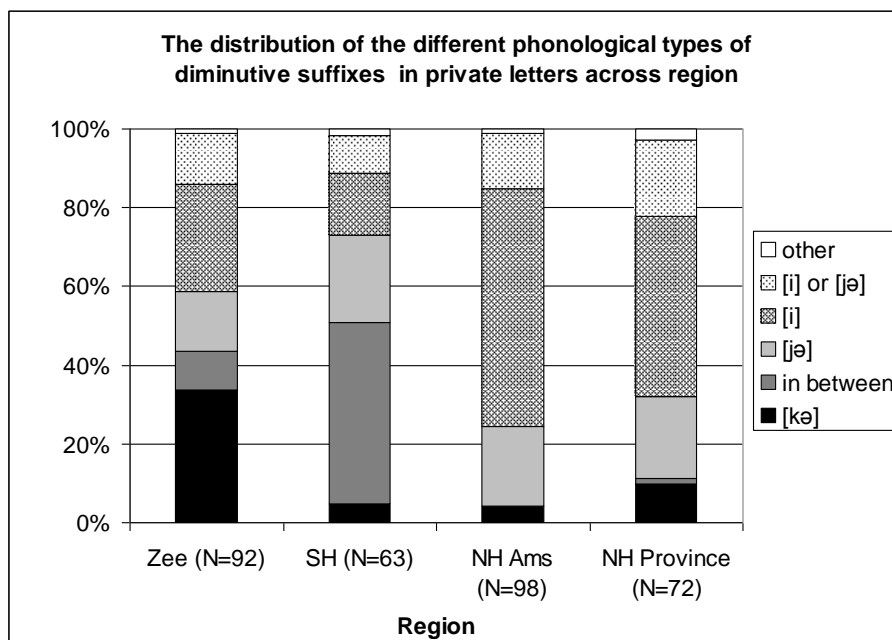


**Figure 8.2**

#### 8.4.2. Variation in phonology

However, figure 8.2 does not readily prove that the phonological variant [jə] first spread from North Holland because the spelling of the different palatal diminutive suffixes blurs our view on the phonological types. Therefore I will examine the distribution of the phonological types of suffixes in what follows.

It is needless to say, given the complicated relationship between spelling practice and phonology discussed above, that an overview of the distribution of the phonological categories of diminutive suffixes based on the method described above gives us indications of what might have happened on the phonological level in the seventeenth century, but that it is not completely infallible. Nonetheless, figure 8.3 may offer us more information about the seventeenth-century situation of the regional distribution of these suffixes. It is based on all the private letters from Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland (450 letters written by 331 different writers) which yielded 325 occurrences of diminutives in total.



**Figure 8.3**

Of course the bottom half of figure 8.3 is almost identical to that of figure 8.2, since the categories [kə] and in between velar and palatal almost have a one-on-one relationship with the orthographical categories *-ke* and *-ge* respectively. It is especially the top half of figure 8.3 that could provide us with more information about the actual phonological types. However, figure 8.3 does not prove that the [jə] diminutive suffix spread across the Netherlands from North Holland. In Amsterdam and in the rest of the province, the share of [jə] suffixes is about 20% which is not higher than its share in South Holland (22%) and not much higher than its share in Zeeland (15%). In reality, the percentages in North Holland may be slightly higher than in the other regions, for there remain some suffixes that might represent [i] or [jə] (14% in Amsterdam and 20% in the rest of North Holland). However, the share of this category of suffixes that might represent [i] or [je] is as large in Zeeland and South Holland as it is in North Holland. The data thus prove that by the second half of the seventeenth century, the [jə] suffix did not only occur in North Holland but also occurred about as often in South Holland and Zeeland.

About the distribution of the [i] suffix, figure 8.3 offers us a clear picture. Even though there remain a number of suffixes in each region that are ambiguous, it is indisputable that [i] has the largest share in Amsterdam and in North Holland: it occurs in 60% and in 46% of the cases respectively.

Even if all the ambiguous spellings in Zeeland (13%) and in South Holland (10%) would represent [i] and all the ambiguous spellings in Amsterdam and North Holland would represent [je], the share of [i] in Zeeland and South Holland would still not match the share of [i] suffixes in Amsterdam and North Holland. It has thus been proved that the [i] suffix, which also occurs in present-day Dutch dialects of South Holland – as shown in the MAND (MAND I De Schutter et al. 2005), found its origin in North Holland.

In conclusion, the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes differs at the level of orthography as well as at the level of phonology across the three large regions under examination. The data show that the [i] suffix seems to have spread across the Low Countries starting from North Holland and Amsterdam. By the end of the seventeenth century, it had reached South Holland and Zeeland, even though the velar type of suffix still had a large share in these regions. The data cannot be used to support Pée's claim that the suffix [jə] originated in North Holland (1936-1938: 229). This may be due to the large amount of time that had passed already since the first occurrences of [jə] in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By the seventeenth century, this diminutive suffix seems to have been used as frequently in Zeeland and South Holland as in North Holland. Even though the results did not offer a clear picture of the spread of [jə], the variable region has proved to have quite some influence on the distribution of at least some of the phonologically different diminutive suffixes: [kə], [i], and suffixes in between the velar and the palatal type. Will the social variables class, gender and age prove to be influential as well?

## 8.5. Social variation

Only autograph letters are suitable for an examination of the relation between language use and social variables. This diminishes the number of letters that can be used and the number of occurrences that can be studied. Furthermore, since I have shown in the previous section that there is a large amount of regional variation, the influence of the social variables should ideally be examined per region in order to avoid distortions. The unfortunate consequence of this all is that for Zeeland and South Holland the data become too scarce or are too badly distributed across gender and social class to yield reliable results. Only the region of North Holland has enough data to offer in order to examine the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes across social class, gender and age if I combine the data for Amsterdam and the rest of the province.

In what follows, I will examine the relationship of the data for North Holland with social class, age and with gender in the sub-corpus of private

autograph letters. I will do this first for the different spellings of the diminutive suffixes. Later I will attempt to get past the spelling variation into the realm of the phonological variation to see whether this deepens or changes our understanding of the results.

### 8.5.1. Variation in spelling

Table 8.3, which is based on 107 letters written by the 90 different writers from North-Holland whose social class is known, shows the distribution of the differently spelled diminutive suffixes across social class in North Holland. Since the diminutive suffix *ge* did not occur once in all the autograph letters from North Holland, it was not incorporated in this table or in the other tables considering spelling variation in North Holland. Since there were no diminutive suffixes found in the autograph letters written by members of the lower class from North Holland, no data for the lower class could be included in the table.

	<ke>	<je>	<ie>	<ije>	other	N
LMC	6%	13%	63%	6%	13%	16
UMC	5%	15%	53%	18%	8%	60
UC	36%	55%	0%	9%	0%	11

**Table 8.3: The distribution of the different spelling forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across social class.**

Interestingly, while the diminutive suffix spelled <ie> is the most popular suffix for the lower-middle class in North Holland (63% of the occurrences) and upper-middle-class writers (53% of the occurrences), the suffix is not used by the upper-class writers of Holland. For this group, <je> seems to be the preferred diminutive suffix, closely followed by <ke>. This latter suffix is used remarkably more frequently in the letters of the upper-class writers (occurring in 36% of the cases) than in the letters of the two lower classes (occurring in about 5% of the cases in both lower-middle class and upper-middle class). These 4 occurrences of the old diminutive suffix <ke> in the upper class do not all originate from letters written by writers over 50 years of age, as one might be tempted to presume, but 2 of them were produced by a writer younger than 30. The high percentage of this diminutive suffix in the upper class thus does not seem to be a side-effect of the distribution of writers belonging to different age-groups. The upper-class writers seem to behave rather differently from the other writers in North Holland with regard to the use of diminutive suffixes

What about a difference between men and women? Table 8.4 below shows the distribution of the differently spelled diminutive suffixes across gender, based on the private autographs linked to North Holland. This table

is based on more letters than the previous one, simply because the gender of all the letter writers of autographs in North Holland is known, while the social class could not be determined for some of them.

	<i>ke</i>	<i>je</i>	<i>ie</i>	<i>ije</i>	<i>other</i>	N
<b>Men</b>	9%	23%	51%	14%	3%	69
<b>Women</b>	5%	5%	47%	26%	16%	38

**Table 8.4: The distribution of the different spelling forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across gender.**

The important differences between men and women do not seem to lie in the use of the *ke* suffix, but in the use of the suffixes whose spelling suggests a palatal pronunciation: *je*, *ie* and *ije*. Just as women, men favour the diminutive suffix *ie*. It occurs in 51% of the cases in letters written by men and in 47% of the cases in letters written by women. However, the second most popular diminutive suffix with men is *je* (occurring in 23% of the cases), while women prefer *ije* (in 26% of the cases) over *je*, which occurs in only in 5% of the cases. Furthermore, women use more alternative spelling forms than men do. In 16% of the cases the spelling of their diminutive suffixes differs from <ke>, <je>, <ie> and <ije>, while with men the number of spelling forms diverging from these 4 common forms is only 3%.

The last social variable which can be examined is age. Are there differences in the way writers of different age groups use the diminutive suffixes? Table 8.5 below, based on 114 autographs written by the 97 different writers of North Holland whose age is known to us, shows that there is.

	<i>ke</i>	<i>je</i>	<i>ie</i>	<i>ije</i>	<i>other</i>	N
<b>&lt;30</b>	7%	19%	62%	12%	0%	42
<b>30-50</b>	6%	14%	43%	22%	14%	49
<b>50+</b>	17%	0%	42%	33%	8%	12

**Table 8.5: The distribution of the different spelling forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across age.**

The elder letter writers of North Holland use *ie* and *ije* most often (in 42% and in 33% of the occurrences respectively). The former suffix, *ie*, is also used by the younger letter writers and is the dominant diminutive suffix in these two groups. It is used most often by the youngest letter writers: in 62% of the cases. The other suffix *ije* however, seems to be used less by the younger letter writers (it occurs in 22% of the occurrences in letters written by writers who are between 30 and 50 years of age and it occurs only in 12% of the cases in letters written by the youngest group of writers). While *je*

does not occur in writings of the oldest letter writers, it takes up a modest number of occurrences in the letters of the two younger groups (14% in the letters of the group of writers between 30 and 50 and 19% in the letters of the youngest group of writers). Furthermore, younger writers seem to limit themselves to the use of the four main types of spelling, while the writers older than 30 do use spelling variants other than <ke>, <je>, <ie> and <ije>.

To sum up: social class, gender and age all seem to have a certain amount of influence on the use and spelling of the diminutive suffixes. While the palatal variants form the majority in each social group examined, there are some groups that still use the older suffix *-ke* more often than others: namely, writers from the upper class and older letter writers. The <je> spelling seems to be specific for men, members of the upper class and younger letter writers. Just like <je>, the <ie> spelling seems to have gained in strength through time: while the older generation uses it in 42% of the cases, the youngest generation uses it in more than 60% of the cases. The <ije> spelling, on the other hand, seems to be losing ground: it is used less often by younger letter writers. At the same time it is more typical of female writers than for male writers. The ‘other’ spelling forms are typical of lower- and upper-middle-class writers, women and older letter writers; upper-class writers, men and younger letter writers seem to prefer the 4 most common spelling forms <ke>, <je>, <ie>, and <ije>. This suggests that throughout the seventeenth century, spelling was becoming more and more uniform, especially with men and upper-class writers.

### 8.5.2. Variation in phonology

The variation in spelling suggests that the [jə]-suffix in the second half of the seventeenth century might be typical of the language use of men and writers from the upper class, and that the [i] suffix might be typical of the language use of the lower- and upper-middle-class writers, and the younger letter writers. Is there any further evidence to corroborate this? I examined the actual distribution of the phonological categories of diminutive suffixes in the autograph letters of North Holland. Of the 107 diminutive suffixes occurring in private autograph letters linked to North Holland, 90 were assigned to one of the following categories of phonological suffixes: [kə], [jə], [i] or ‘other’. This last category ‘other’ contains the rare suffixes [tə] and [ən]. The 17 remaining suffixes are doubtful cases that might represent either [i] or [jə]. Let us examine what this categorisation based on phonology rather than on spelling can reveal about the use of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Table 8.6 below shows how the different suffixes are distributed across the different social classes in North Holland. It is based on the 107

letters written by the 90 different writers linked to North Holland whose social class is known.

	<i>[kə]</i>	<i>[jə]</i>	<i>[i]</i>	<i>other</i>	<i>unknown</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>LMC</b>	6%	19%	38%	6%	31%	16
<b>UMC</b>	5%	22%	53%	2%	18%	60
<b>UC</b>	36%	55%	0%	0%	9%	11

**Table 8.6: The distribution of the different phonological forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across social class.**

It is the upper class that stands out in its use of the *[kə]*, *[jə]* and the *[i]* suffixes. Firstly, while the *[kə]* suffixes occur seldom in the lower- and upper-middle class, they occur in 36% of the cases in the upper class. Secondly, while *[i]* seems to be a very popular diminutive suffix in the lower-middle class and in the upper-middle class (occurring in at least 38% and 53% of the cases), it does not seem to occur in the letters written by members of the upper class. Thirdly, the presence of the *[jə]* suffix is greater in the upper social class than in the lower-middle and upper-middle class. In the lower-middle class the percentage of *[jə]* suffixes probably lies somewhere between 19% and 50% (depending on how much of the unknown suffixes actually represent *[jə]*) and in the upper-middle class it is probably situated between 22% and 40%, while in the upper-class it takes up 55% of all the occurrences. There is thus no doubt that the writings of the upper class contain the highest proportion of *[jə]* suffixes, although we do not know exactly how different this share in the upper class is from the shares of *[jə]* in the two lower classes.

For each class there remain a number of suffixes of which it is unclear whether they represent the *[jə]* or the *[i]* category. The consequence is that my conclusions are not definite. If the unknown suffixes for the lower-middle class would all turn out to be *[i]* suffixes, for example, while the unknown suffixes for the upper-middle class would all turn out to represent *[jə]*, this would mean that the lower-middle class and upper-middle class actually differ a lot from each other. But if all the unknown suffixes from the lower-middle class and for the upper-middle class would turn out to be *[jə]* suffixes, the lower-middle class and the upper-middle class would actually resemble each other more closely.

Table 8.7 below shows the results for gender, based on 122 autographs written by the 104 different writers of autograph letters in North Holland. The large number of unclear diminutive suffixes in the letters of women makes it very difficult to draw any conclusions on the use of *[jə]* and *[i]* suffixes related to gender. Men's and women's use of *[jə]* and *[i]* could thus be quite similar or very different. For instance, if all of the unknown



diminutive suffixes used by women would in reality be instances of the [i] suffix and if all the unknown suffixes used by men would represent [jə] suffixes, then women would use the [i] suffix in 77% of the cases. This would be much more often than men, who would use the suffix in 52% of the cases. And at the same time, this would mean that women use the [jə] suffix less frequently than men (in 18% of the cases vs. in 36% of the cases). However, if it were the case that the 32% of unknown suffixes in letters written by women would in reality represent 11% of [jə] suffixes and 21% of [i] suffixes and that the 7% of unknown suffixes of the men would all represent [i] suffixes, then women's and men's use of the [jə] suffix would be exactly the same and women would use the [i] suffixes only slightly more often than men would (in 66% of the cases and in 59% of the cases respectively). Although all possible distributions of the 7% and the 32% of unknown suffixes with men and women across the [i] and [jə] suffixes are imaginable, I do think it is most likely that a large number of these unknown suffixes actually represent the [i] suffixes (as will be argued in §8.6). Therefore I suspect that the [i] suffix was actually more popular with female writers than with male writers in North-Holland and that the [jə] suffix was slightly more popular with male writers.

	<i>[kə]</i>	<i>[jə]</i>	<i>[i]</i>	<i>other</i>	<i>unknown</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>Men</b>	9%	29%	52%	3%	7%	69
<b>Women</b>	5%	18%	45%	0%	32%	38

**Table 8.7: The distribution of the different phonological forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across gender.**

The last social variable to be examined is age. In table 8.8 below we see the distribution of the different phonological forms of the diminutive suffixes across the three different age groups. The table is based on 114 autographs written by the 97 different writers of North Holland whose age is known.

	<i>[kə]</i>	<i>[jə]</i>	<i>[i]</i>	<i>other</i>	<i>unknown</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>&lt;30</b>	7%	24%	57%	0%	12%	42
<b>30-50</b>	6%	22%	47%	4%	20%	49
<b>50+</b>	17%	25%	42%	0%	17%	12

**Table 8.8: The distribution of the different phonological forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across age.**

It was already clear that the oldest generations in North Holland are keener users of the suffix [kə] than their younger peers and unfortunately, we cannot deduce new information about the use of [jə] and [i]. The number of suffixes that cannot be categorised as [jə] or [i] again makes it very difficult to draw

conclusions. However, the numbers across the different age groups are pretty similar overall for [jə] and the unknown suffixes. Only for [i] there seems to be a sturdy difference: the youngest generation appears to hold the most fervent users of this diminutive.

The examination of the different spelling variants earlier in this section had already offered us an idea about the distribution of the velar diminutive suffix [kə], but the exact distribution of the suffixes [i] and [jə] was clouded by the spelling variation. With an examination of each writer's individual spelling habits I tried to bring the distribution of the palatal suffixes [i] and [jə] to light. This gave clear results only for the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes across social class and less clear results for the relationship with gender and age. What can be concluded eventually?

### 8.5.3. [kə] as an archaic, but distinguished form, [jə] for writing, and the relatively young [i] for speaking

Let us start with [kə]: the relatively large share of this diminutive in letters of writers older than 50 can be explained most naturally. This diminutive suffix was clearly starting to become archaic in seventeenth-century Holland. It was being replaced by palatal variants. The fact that it occurs most often in the oldest group of writers simply reflects this. But the [kə] diminutive also occurs relatively often in letters written by members of the upper class. This suggests that the members of the upper class held on to the old writing convention longest. Archaic forms are frequently seen as distinguished forms and this is in all probability also the case with [kə]. In his grammar of Dutch, Petrus Leupenius (1607-1670), a minister and grammarian, remarks on the subject of diminutives:

*De verkleeninge van een selfstandige naame wordt gemaakt door toe doen van ken op het einde als beddeken, boomken, dierken. Maar om de soetvloeijsheid is meer in gebruik jen of tjen, dat ook soo veel uitneeminge niet is onderworpen als ken. (1653: 32)*

‘The diminutive of a noun is formed by *ken* at the end, such as in *beddeken, boomken, dierken*. However, for the sake of a fluent pronunciation *jen* or *tjen*, which doesn't come with so many exceptions, is used more often.’

Leupenius thus mentions [kə] diminutives first and only then admits that [jə] forms are used more often now. This suggests that Leupenius still sees [kə] as the proper diminutive suffix. Since using the [kə] suffix seemed to be an old writing convention – in 1625 the grammarian Van Heule marked this diminutive suffix as the best one (Van Heule 1625: 91) – it is not surprising

that specifically the upper-class letter writers seem to cling to this suffix the longest in writing. They are more likely to have had a good education and a lot of writing practice (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237-238) and were therefore probably more aware of the conventions of written Dutch.

However, even though [kə] was used more often in writing by members of the upper class than by members of other classes, [kə] was not the preferred form for writers of the upper class. Their preferred written form was [jə], as can be gathered from table 8.6, while the suffix [i] had the largest share in writings from the other social classes. This fits with the idea that [jə] was a variant considered to be accepted in written language – which is illustrated by the fact that it made it to be the standard Dutch variant today – while [i] was a variant which seemed to be used more in the spoken language. Social groups with less writing experience – typically the lower social classes and women in general – are expected to use variants typical of spoken language more often when writing than social groups with more writing experience. This is exactly what we see as far as social class is concerned and what I suspect to be true for gender: although the data cannot conclusively prove it, it seems likely that men used the [jə] suffix slightly more often than women did, while women used the [i] suffix slightly more often than men did.

The fact that [i] seems to be used more often by the youngest group of writers suggests that [i] was still an upcoming form in Dutch. However, [i] must already have been quite a popular diminutive suffix in the second half of the seventeenth century, since even the oldest letter writers use it quite often. So one can only assume that it must have been around for quite some time already: [i] does not seem to be a very recent innovation in the language use of the seventeenth-century writers. My data contradict Schönfeld's remark that [i] first turned up in the seventeenth century, though not in writing (Van Loey 1970: 230). They suggest that [i] may have occurred in North Holland already early in the seventeenth century and maybe even before the seventeenth century. Furthermore, [i] was represented in the written Dutch of the seventeenth century: it may have been absent in printed texts, but it was fairly popular in private letters.

## 8.6. The relationship between spelling and phonology

Now that I have successfully used a method to categorise different spelling variants of diminutive suffixes as particular phonological suffixes in order to examine the distribution of different diminutive suffixes across region, social class, gender and age, it would be interesting to examine the results of the categorisation in itself. How big is the variation? Does each writer really

have his or her own way of spelling [i] or [jə]? Or are there patterns to be found? Table 8.9 below shows how often each phonological type of suffix of the palatal class was rendered as a specific spelling in all of the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus (545 letters written by 408 different writers).

	<je>	<ie>	<ije>	<i>other</i>	<b>N total</b>
[jə]	50	0	19	0	69
[i]	1	124	5	4	134
[jə] or [i]	3	31	13	8	55
<b>N total</b>	54	155	37	12	258

**Table 8.9: The distribution of different spelling forms in the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus across the palatal phonological type of diminutive suffix.**

The table shows that there is indeed variation in the way writers represent the different phonological types of suffixes, but the table also shows large fields of overlap between some specific spellings and some phonological categories. For instance, <je> can almost always be safely interpreted as [jə] (in 50 out of the 54 cases). And <ie> does not always represent [i] for certain, but in the majority of the cases (124 out of 155) it seems safe to conclude that it does. Even though the remaining spelling forms still cause some confusion, it seems that there were some shared practices in the seventeenth century with regards to the spelling of the diminutive suffixes.

Now it is also interesting to retrace my steps and examine which social groups have the highest rate of suffixes that cannot be categorised as [jə] or [i], given that a high rate of these suffixes could be linked to a relatively low knowledge or use of these shared practices. Most interestingly, of all the social classes under examination, it is the lowest social class under examination (the lower-middle class) that has the highest rate of suffixes that are difficult to interpret. At the same time women's letters contain far more of these 'blurry' suffixes (in 32% of the cases) than men's letters (only in 7% of the cases). Again these two social groups, women in general and the lower social classes in general, behave similarly. And this comes as no surprise, for just these two groups are bound to have less writing practice than the other social classes and the opposite sex.

### 8.7. Final *-n*

What has not been taken into account in discriminating between different categories of diminutive suffixes is the presence or absence of final <n>, because the presence or absence of <n> in the spelling does not seem to be specific for one type of diminutive suffix. All different spelling forms occur with and without <n>. As Schönfeld (Van Loey 1970: 230) notes, the presence or absence of [n] seems to be a matter in itself, thus independent of the phonological category of the diminutive suffix.

In Dutch [n] has the tendency to be omitted following a weakly articulated vowel. The presence or absence of [n] depends on different variables: geographical, phonological, morphological, grammatical and social ones (Van Bree 1987: 80-81, De Wulf & Taeldeman 2001: *passim*, Van de Velde & Van Hout 2003: *passim*). A map created by De Wulf and Taeldeman (2001: 23) sums up the situation in present-day Dutch. The grey areas under (I), in the north-east and in the south-west, are areas with no to little apocope of [n]. The white areas under (II) are areas where [n] is almost always lost. The areas under (III) are areas in which the presence of [n] depends on phonological and grammatical variables. Finally, the small areas under (IV) represent areas in which the presence of [n] seems to vary randomly.

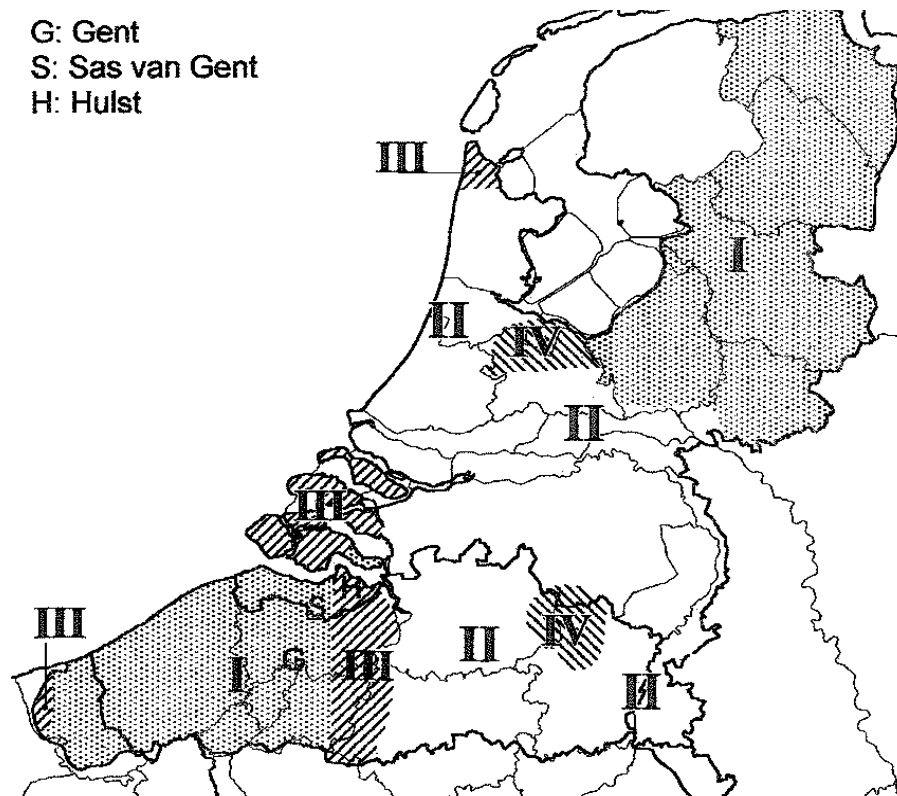


Figure 8.4

Classic examples of this apocope are the pronunciation of Dutch plurals and verb forms ending in <en>, pronounced as [ən] or as [ə]. However, there is also variation in the pronunciation of the diminutive suffixes. Not only *je* [jə] and *ke* [kə] suffixes can be pronounced with or without [n], but [n] is also optional following [i] (MAND I De Schutter et al. 2005: 41). Figure 8.5 shows how the diminutive suffix of the diminutive *plankje* ‘board’ is pronounced in the Dutch-speaking area of Belgium and in the Netherlands. As the map shows, [n] is present in areas in the north-east and in the south-west.

That there was already variation in the pronunciation of [n] following weakly articulated vowels in the seventeenth century is clear from the remarks of two different Dutch grammarians. In 1625 Christiaan Van Heule reports that [n] is often deleted in Holland, which he disapproves of. Some years later, in 1653, Petrus Leupenius as well mentions the deletion of [n] and calls it a bad habit of the Dutch (Leupenius 1653: 59-60 in Van der Wal & Simons 2010: 675).

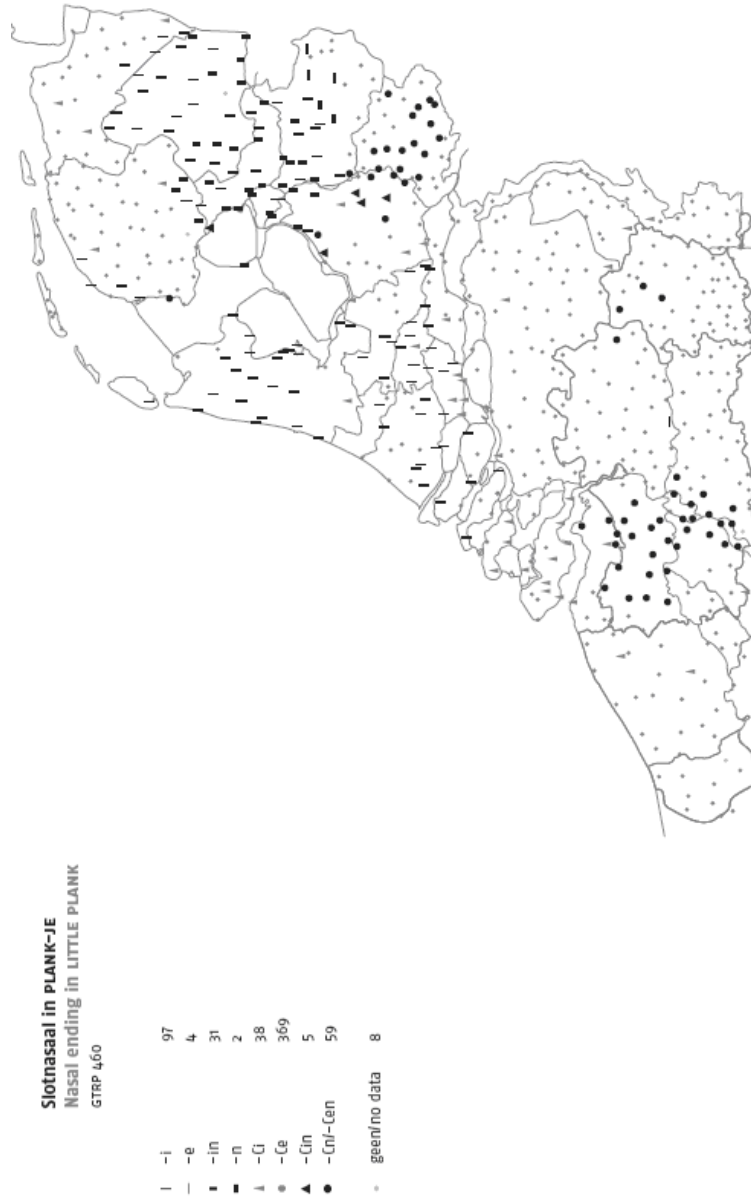
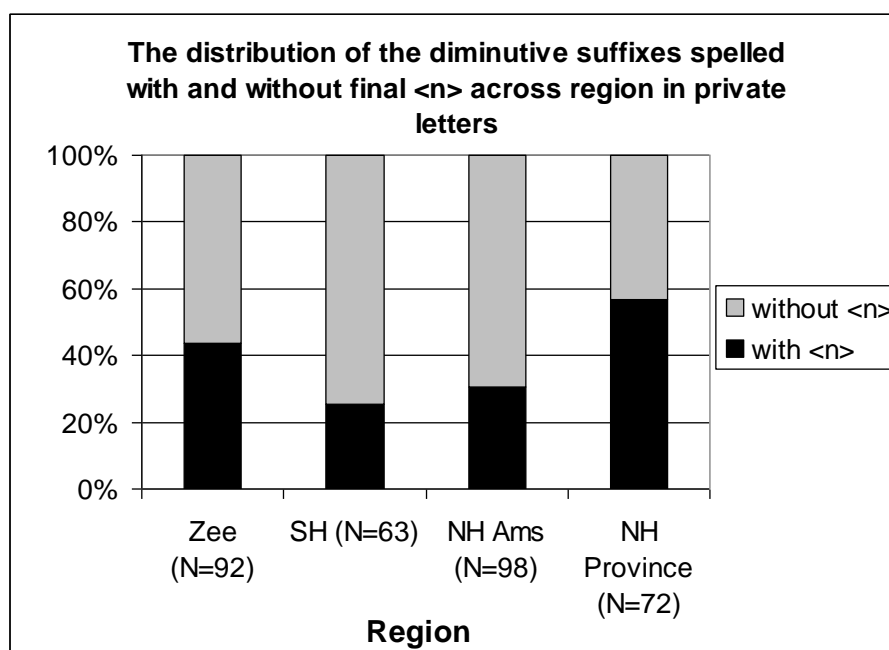


Figure 8.5: The nasal ending in the diminutive *plankje* ‘little plank’ from the Morphological Atlas of the Dutch Dialects, part I (MAND I De Schutter et al. 2005: 63).

Let us have a look at the presence of <n> in the spelling of the diminutive suffixes in the corpus. Again it is not straightforward to gather from the spelling whether any given writer would have pronounced [n] or not in the suffix, but it is possible that the distribution of the spellings with and without <n> across region, class and gender has some interesting information to offer.

Figure 8.6 below shows the distribution of diminutive suffixes with and without <n> in the spelling in private letters across region.



**Figure 8.6**

The data show that Amsterdam and South Holland are the regions where <n> is least present in diminutive suffixes. The two regions at the southern and northern periphery of the area under investigation, Zeeland and North Holland respectively, have a larger share of <n> in diminutive suffixes. A plausible explanation for these results is that [n] was probably still pronounced more often in Zeeland and in North Holland. This explanation would fit well with the current situation in spoken Dutch as shown in the map in figure 8.4, for North Holland and Zeeland are two regions where in present-day spoken Dutch [n] can still be heard after weakly articulated vowels. Zeeland in its entirety is coded as a type III area, in which the presence of [n] depends on phonological and grammatical variables. And although a large part of North Holland is now coded as a type II area, an area in which final [n] is almost always lost, in the most northern part of the



province (known as *de kop van Noord-Holland* ‘the head of North Holland’) a type III area can be seen. This is an area in which the presence of final [n] in present-day Dutch depends on phonological and grammatical variables. In the seventeenth century, this area might still have been larger, extending farther to the south and taking in cities like Enkhuizen and Hoorn, which would explain the higher rate of <n> spellings in the data from this region.

For an examination of the distribution of <n> in diminutive suffixes across the variables social class and gender, again only autograph letters are suitable. Just as in §8.5 of this chapter, due to the distribution of the different occurrences across the different classes in different regions, only the combined data for Amsterdam and North Holland will be used. Table 8.10 below shows how final <n> in diminutive suffixes is distributed across social class in the entire province of North Holland. The data show that the level of diminutive suffixes containing the grapheme <n> rises together with the social status of writers. While the lower- and upper-middle-class writers use diminutive suffixes with <n> in less than half of the cases (in 38% and in 42% of the cases respectively), writers from the upper class use it in 64% of the cases.

	<i>with &lt;n&gt;</i>	<i>without &lt;n&gt;</i>	N
<b>LMC</b>	38%	63%	16
<b>UMC</b>	42%	58%	60
<b>UC</b>	64%	36%	11

**Table 8.10: The distribution of diminutive suffixes with and without <n> across social class in private letters linked to North Holland.**

Table 8.11 below shows the distribution of the same two types of suffixes across gender for letter writers from North Holland. Again we see a clear difference: women use the suffixes containing <n> less often than men do (in 32% of the cases vs. in 51% of the cases respectively).

	<i>with &lt;n&gt;</i>	<i>without &lt;n&gt;</i>	N
<b>Men</b>	51%	49%	69
<b>Women</b>	32%	68%	38

**Table 8.11: The distribution of diminutive suffixes with and without <n> across gender in private letters linked to North Holland.**

The specific distribution of <n> in diminutive suffixes across social class and gender could be explained in two ways. A first explanation for the results would simply be that the groups with the highest share of <n> spellings in the diminutive suffixes are also the groups of speakers who pronounce [n] most often.

However, the fact that the upper social class on the one hand and men on the other hand are the groups with the highest level of <n> spellings in diminutives also allows for another type of explanation. It is just these two groups, men in general and upper social classes in general, that usually have more writing experience in the seventeenth century. Independently of whether they pronounced [n] in diminutives, men and members of the upper social classes could have spelled <n> more often in diminutives because they knew it could or should be there in written Dutch. Good knowledge of the parallel with the pronunciation of verb forms and plural nouns ending in <en> – in which [n] was not always pronounced but always had to be written – could have influenced their spelling as well.

## 8.8. Diminutives in proper names

So far, I have left out of consideration proper names, having focused solely on diminutive forms of words that are not proper names (mostly nouns, such as *vatie* ‘barrel’, and an occasional adverb, such as *sleghties* ‘poorly’), while there is a vast quantity of proper names with diminutive suffixes to be found in the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus (805 occurrences, mostly in first names for women). I did not take these proper names into account in the examinations described above since there is reason to assume that diminutives in proper names differ from diminutives in other types of words. This is because it is probable that diminutives in proper names are not productive, but that they are a fixed part of this proper name. Moreover, since names are passed from generation to generation, we can suspect that proper names are more conservative than other types of words with regards to diminutive suffixes.

In this section, I will examine whether the frequency of different diminutive suffixes in proper names indeed differs from the frequency in other words. Table 8.12 below shows the frequencies of each spelling variant of the diminutive suffixes in proper names on the one hand and in nouns and adverbs on the other in the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus (545 letters written by 408 different writers). The most conspicuously differing percentages have been marked in bold.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Proper names</i>		<i>Nouns and adverbs</i>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>ie</b>	346	43%	155	44%
<b>ke</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>je</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>ge</b>	67	8%	37	10%
<b>ije</b>	65	8%	37	10%
<b>en</b>	49	6%	6	2%
<b>ye</b>	16	2%	8	2%
<b>i</b>	5	1%	4	1%
<b>gie</b>	5	1%	2	1%
<b>y</b>	3	0%	0	0%
<b>kie</b>	2	0%	0	0%
<b>che</b>	2	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>805</b>		<b>353</b>	

**Table 8.12: The distribution of the different spelling variants of the diminutive suffixes in the entire corpus for proper names on the one hand and nouns and adverbs on the other.**

First of all, the table shows that the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes for proper names is not overwhelmingly different from the distribution for nouns and adverbs. The different suffixes occur in more or less the same order of frequency and the same three suffixes (<ie>, <ke>, and <je>) are responsible for more than 70% of the diminutives for proper names as well as for other words. However, the proper names and other words do clearly differ from each other regarding the frequency of the two diminutive suffixes <ke> and <je>. The former suffix occurs in 21% of the cases in proper names and in 14% of the cases in other words. The latter suffix, <je> occurs in 10% of the cases in proper names and in 15% of the cases in other words. Without much doubt these two spellings can be seen as the representations of the phonological variants [kə] and [jə] (see §8.3 for the interpretation of <ke> and the results in §8.6 for the interpretation of <je>).

Although the differences in distribution are not spectacular, they are nevertheless remarkable due to the fact that they show an older suffix behaving differently from a younger one. The [kə] suffix had already been around for quite a while in Dutch by the seventeenth century, while [jə] was a younger suffix. It is clear from the table that this younger variant occurred more often with nouns and adverbs than with proper names, while the older diminutive form [kə] occurred more often with proper names than with other words. This difference in frequencies is exactly what we would expect based on the assumption that diminutive suffixes in proper names are some sort of

fixed parts of the proper names; parts which may not be simply identified or understood as being diminutive suffixes by language users. While the older suffixes slowly made way for the newer diminutive suffix [jə] in nouns and adverbs, the older suffix [kə] was more easily retained in proper names, probably because it was felt to be a fixed part of a name.

The fact that the frequencies of the different diminutive suffixes in proper names are roughly similar to the frequencies of these suffixes in other types of words might give rise to second thoughts about keeping diminutives in proper names separate from the other data. However, one must keep in mind that even when certain types of diminutive suffixes are as popular in proper names as they are in other word types, this does not mean that they are used in the same way. When writing down a proper name, writers do not necessarily actively form a diminutive. They may be writing down a person's name as a whole as it is used by a community, irrespective of whether the diminutive suffix present in this proper name fits with the diminutive suffix the writers themselves would use when actively forming a diminutive. Therefore, the diminutive suffixes commonly used by a certain writer may differ from the diminutive suffixes which are part of proper names also used by the writer.

Examples are the following: take for instance the letter written by Maria Walravens to her son.<sup>113</sup> She uses palatal diminutive suffixes to form the diminutives *praetije* 'small talk' and *moetties* 'auntie's', but refers to her daughter as *Sanneken*. The same goes for Elisabeth Emerij writing to her mother.<sup>114</sup> She writes that she is in the possession of a guenon, *een meere catge*, but she spells the two proper names which contain diminutives with <k>: *neelken* and *maeijken*. A similar phenomenon can also be discovered in the letter written on behalf of Janneken Aengenendt.<sup>115</sup> The letter contains the two diminutives *morgenhappien* 'breakfast' and *landtien* 'country', but the proper name of the sender is reproduced as *Janneken*. A last example is the letter of Adam Erckelens.<sup>116</sup> Adam uses <ke> suffixes to form diminutives of two nouns: *briefken* 'letter' and *pacxken* 'parcel'. However, he refers to a family member as *Catharijntie Nicht* 'niece/cousin Catherine' with the suffix <ie>. Adam seems to be using a name created and used by family members who are more innovative in their use of diminutive suffixes than he is.

To conclude, even though diminutive suffixes in proper names have proved to be only slightly more conservative than diminutive suffixes in

<sup>113</sup> Letter Vliet-94 in the corpus (HCA 30-226-1).

<sup>114</sup> Letters 17-06-2009 099-100 and 17-06-2009 209-210 in the corpus (HCA 30-223).

<sup>115</sup> Letter 17-06-2009 316-319 in the corpus (HCA 32-1822-1).

<sup>116</sup> Letter 06-01-2010 128-129 in the corpus (HCA 30-644).

other types of words, the examples given above are warnings against putting diminutive suffixes in proper names and in other words on a par. I have decided to focus on diminutive suffixes in words that are not proper names, but an examination into the spread of diminutive suffixes in proper names would be interesting in its own right. Some questions that arise are: Are proper names with certain types of suffixes more popular in certain social circles than others? Do different people refer to one and the same person using a name with exactly the same type of diminutive suffix? But to find an answer to these questions, an extensive analysis would be needed: every name with a diminutive suffix should be linked to the specific individual who is called by it and the social class to which he or she belongs should be identified. And to find one man or woman whose name contains a diminutive suffix and who is named by different letter writers would require the letters to be examined one by one until this person is found; if he or she exists at all. These extensive analyses fall beyond the scope of this chapter.

## 8.9. Conclusions

An examination of the different types of diminutive suffixes in the seventeenth-century corpus has shown that there was a lot of variation in the written and probably also the spoken language in the Low Countries during the second half of the seventeenth century. At first sight, this variety and the ambiguity of <i> and <j> in spelling make it difficult to make sense of the data. However, a careful analysis of the spelling habits of each letter writer allowed us to get past the spelling and examine the distribution of the different phonological types of suffixes. Although the data could not prove the theory that the suffix [jə] spread from North Holland to the rest of the Republic, some other interesting findings have come up.

The use of the different types of diminutive suffixes in writing has proved to be influenced by the variables region, social class, gender and age. Region is an important factor given the fact that dialects present in certain regions influenced the diminutive suffixes used in writing. As has been shown in previous chapters too, social class and gender are two influential variables that can be analysed against the background of writing practice. Women and members of the lower social classes, groups which in general have less writing practice than men and members of the upper social classes, showed to behave similarly in the use of diminutive suffixes. People with less writing practice in general used fewer diminutive suffixes that fitted in with an old ([kə]) or a new ([jə]) convention in writing and instead seemed to prefer suffixes typically associated with spoken language ([i]). The variable age could be linked to innovations and old conventions: while the

younger letter writers were keener to use [i], a diminutive suffix which is said to have just started to be used in the seventeenth century, the older letter writers were more likely to stick to the older writing convention of using [kə] as a diminutive suffix.

The careful spelling analysis that was carried out in order to shed some light on the relation between the different types of suffixes and the regional and social variables turned out to be interesting in its own right. Most of the palatal diminutive suffixes that could not be identified as either [i] or [jə] stemmed from letters written by women or letters from the lower classes. This suggests that these two groups of writers were less consistent in spelling than men and writers from the upper classes in general. This can again be related to writing practice and education: the groups with most writing practice and education (men and members of the upper classes in general) seem to be more liable to stick to certain spelling conventions.

The presence or absence of an <n> in the spelling of the diminutive suffixes was treated separately from the examination of the different phonological type of suffixes. This feature as well could be shown to be related to the variables region, social class and gender. The data showed that the <n> occurred more often in the written Dutch of the seventeenth century in regions in which the present-day spoken Dutch has preserved the final <n> in certain phonological and grammatical contexts. Again the presence or absence of this feature seemed to be related to conventions of written Dutch as well, since men and writers from the upper classes – typically writers with more writing practice and a more extensive education – were shown to use this final <n> more often in writing than women and members of the lower class.

Lastly the spelling of proper names, which were expected to behave differently from other types of words concerning the presence of different types of diminutive suffixes, were put to the test. Are there good reasons to keep them apart from the other types of words? An examination of the spelling of the different types of suffixes showed that proper names are slightly more conservative than other types of words: the old writing convention [kə] occurred more often in proper names than in other types of diminutives, while the newer writing convention in development [jə] occurred more often in non-proper names. Furthermore, some individual letter writers can be shown to differ in their active use of diminutives (diminutives of nouns, for instance) and their use of diminutives in proper names. The diminutive suffixes in proper names thus seem to behave more like fixed elements of proper names rather than as suffixes used by a certain letter writer out of free choice.

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## Chapter 9. The genitive and alternative constructions

### 9.1. Deflection

Middle Dutch, the Dutch language as it was written and spoken between approximately 1100 and 1500 AD, had a case-system. Nouns and their accompanying pronouns and articles showed different endings or appeared in different forms depending on which function the noun phrase fulfilled in the sentence. For Middle Dutch, four cases are usually distinguished: the nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative (Van der Horst 2008: 573-581; Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 132-135). However, already in the Middle Dutch period, the case-system started to weaken: the different endings or forms of nouns, pronouns and articles started to erode and syntactic means, like prepositions and word order, became more and more important to signal the function of specific noun phrases – a phenomenon which is called ‘deflection’. By the seventeenth century, a fully-fledged case-system was no longer used in spoken Dutch, but cases still occurred in written texts (Van der Horst 2008: 1074-1075). The fact that Latin was typically taken as a good example of what a language should look like can explain that the case-system was held on to in several grammars of and writings about the Dutch language (Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 195).

In this chapter, I want to examine the use of the case-system and alternative constructions in the seventeenth-century letters. I focused on the genitive, given its special status: the genitive seems to have been the first case that started to dwindle (Weerman & De Wit 1998: 36-37; 1999: 1178-1179), but at the same time it is the only case that is still used productively in present-day Dutch – albeit only occasionally and in formal contexts (Scott 2011: 126-127). Therefore I wondered which people still use the genitive case in the seventeenth-century letters and under what conditions. Are there stylistic, social or syntactic variables that influence the presence or absence of the genitive case? And which alternative constructions are used instead of the genitive? Are some constructions more popular than others with certain people or in certain contexts?

In what follows, I will deal with these questions, but only after describing the genitive case and the alternative constructions which occurred in the seventeenth century according to the literature and which thus may be of importance for the corpus of seventeenth-century letters in §9.2. In §9.3 I will examine whether there is any influence of stylistic variation on the use of the genitive and the alternative constructions: are particular constructions typical of certain contexts? Then, the relation between social factors (social class and gender) and the genitive constructions will be investigated in §9.4.

In §9.5 I will examine the possible influence of a language-internal factor: the length of the constituents in the genitival construction. The conclusions will be drawn in §9.6. From now on, I will use the term *genitival constructions* to refer to the entirety of the genitive and its alternative constructions.

Following Weerman & De Wit (1998: 22), the direct-partitive constructions – measure constructions such as in examples 1 and 2 – were not included in the data. In these constructions the genitival aspect could, but need not be expressed by an *s*-suffix on the second NP in the seventeenth century.<sup>117</sup> The *van*-construction was not an option for these constructions, which makes them different from the alternative constructions examined below.<sup>118</sup> Some other partitive constructions, as in examples 3 and 4, were also kept out of the data on the same grounds: they cannot occur with the alternative *van*-construction. The examples all stem from the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus:

- 1) *een vatie botter*  
a barrel butter  
'a barrel of butter'
- 2) *het vatyen suyckers*  
the barrel sugar-GEN  
'the barrel of sugar'
- 3) *wat jongs*  
something young-GEN  
'a baby'
- 4) *meer schryvens*  
more writing-GEN  
'more letters'

<sup>117</sup> Van der Horst 2008: 1078 notes that the *s*-suffix with these kinds of constructions seems to be waning in the seventeenth century, but Koelmans 2001: 136 notices that it seems to hold strong in partitive constructions in De Ruyter's language. However, De Ruyter's language seems to have been very different from the language use in the corpus and Van der Horst's remark might prove to be an understatement, for a quick search in the corpus for measure constructions (with the words *kast* 'crate', *vat* 'barrel', *sack* 'bag', *ton* 'barrel', *kinnetje* 'barrel', *(half) oxhooft* 'barrel', *pijp* 'barrel', *kelder* 'crate', *ancker* 'barrel', *stooop* 'jar', *pond* 'pound') shows that the *s*-suffix occurs only once (see example 2) out of 111 tokens (that is in 0.9% of the cases).

<sup>118</sup> In English, however, these direct-partitive constructions do occur with the preposition *of*, which closely resembles the Dutch preposition *van*. But in Dutch, the direct-partitive constructions can only be paraphrased using a preposition if this preposition is *met* 'with': *een vaatje met boter* 'a barrel of butter'.



## 9.2. The seventeenth-century situation

### 9.2.1. Different genitival constructions

#### *The genitive*

In Early-Modern Dutch (1500-1700 AD), the genitive case could be expressed by means of inflectional endings on nouns and their possible accompanying pronouns and articles. Depending on the gender and number of the noun, the ending on these accompanying words could be *-(e)r*, *-(e)s* or *-(e)n*. Depending on the category of the singular masculine and neuter nouns (weak or strong), the genitive could be expressed on the noun itself with an *-s* or an *-n* ending. An overview of the different possibilities, taken from Mooijaert & Van der Wal (2008: 56), is presented below in figure 9.1:

<b>masculine</b>	<b>definite article + adjective</b>	<b>strong noun</b>	<b>weak noun</b>
<b>sg.</b>	<b>des goeden</b>	gasts	menschen
<b>pl.</b>	<b>der goeder</b>	gasten	menschen
	<i>of the good</i>	<i>guest(s)</i>	<i>of the good person(s)</i>
<b>neuter</b>			
<b>sg.</b>	<b>des goeden</b>	hoves	herten
<b>pl.</b>	<b>der goede(r)</b>	hoven	herten
	<i>of the good</i>	<i>court(s)</i>	<i>of the good heart(s)</i>
<b>feminine</b>			
<b>sg.</b>	<b>der goede(r)</b>	daet	ziele(n)
<b>pl.</b>	<b>der goede(r)</b>	daden	zielen
	<i>of the good</i>	<i>deed(s)</i>	<i>of the good soul(s)</i>

Figure 9.1: the genitive case in Early-Modern Dutch with different types of nouns

The genitive can occur pre-nominally as well as post-nominally. So not only *het verlangen des herten* ‘the longing of the heart’, but also *des herten verlangen* is possible.<sup>119</sup>

Weerman & De Wit claim that the genitive disappeared earlier than the dative and the accusative case in Dutch (1998: 36-37; 1999: 1178-1179). However, in present-day Dutch the genitive is still used occasionally, mainly occurring in formal titles (as in 5), in certain fixed expressions (as in 6), in

<sup>119</sup> There is a small syntactic difference between these two constructions: the definite article *het* is not present in the prenominal construction. This is because a prenominal genitive, like *des herten*, already ensures that the following noun is interpreted as definite.

formal, archaic language (as in 7 and 8), or with a very specific meaning (as in 9) (e-ANS § 3.4.1. and §15.5.3.4.; Scott 2011):

- 5) *het Kabinet **der** Koningin*  
‘the Queen’s office’
- 6) *de tand **des** tijds*  
‘the ravages of time’
- 7) *’s **mans** computer (’s > **des**)*  
‘the man’s computer’
- 8) *het boek **der** boeken*  
‘the book of all books / the Bible’
- 9) *Zo ’n optreden is niet **des** ministers.*  
‘Such a way of acting is not typical of a minister.’

As has been mentioned above, the genitive case was probably not used any longer in spoken Dutch in the seventeenth century, but it still occurred in writing (Van der Horst 2008: 1075-1076). Two examples from the corpus of private letters illustrate that the genitive was also used in seventeenth-century private letters.

- 10) *vaders **des** vaderlants worden nu verraders **des** vaderlants*  
‘fathers of the country are now turning into traitors of the country’
- 11) *Tot een teecken mijner gunst*  
‘As a token of my favour’

#### *The van-construction*

It is common knowledge that the *van*-construction occurred already early in the history of Dutch as an alternative construction. Weerman & De Wit’s examination of medieval texts from the city of Bruges (in Flanders) confirms this again: the genitive was in competition with the *van*-construction long before the seventeenth century (1998: 20-21; 1999: 1158-1159). In this construction – a prepositional adjunct – the preposition *van* ‘of’ indicates that the element following it is a complement of the noun preceding it (Weerman & De Wit 1998: 23; 1999: 1160). This complement can either be a proper name (12) or a noun phrase (13). Examples from the seventeenth-century corpus of private letters are the following:

- 12) *die hus vrou **van** hendrick vroom*  
‘the wife of Hendrick Vroom’

- 13) *den toe stant van ons vaderlant*  
 ‘the condition of our mother country’

This construction is very common in present-day Dutch, in written as well as in spoken language (e-ANS § 3.4.1.), and was also common in the seventeenth century.

*The s-construction*

The *van*-construction is not the only alternative construction for the genitive in the seventeenth century. There is also the prenominal *s*-construction. It is called prenominal because in this construction the marked possessor is always situated to the left of the noun phrase representing the possessum.<sup>120</sup> Koelmans (1975: 440) gives sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples as in (14) and the seventeenth-century grammarian Christiaan van Heule (1633: 70-71) also mentions the construction in (15).

- 14) *iou mans saken*  
 ‘your husband’s affairs’  
 15) *Pieters bouk*  
 ‘Peter’s book’

The *s*-construction is different from the genitive in that the suffix can only be attached to one word and not to other elements of the constituent. So example (14) is different from the genitive construction *de wegh alles vleesch* (‘the way of all flesh’) in which the genitive is marked on both the noun and the possessive pronoun.

As mentioned above, the *s*-construction can only occur prenominally. Constructions such as in example 16 from the corpus of private letters are not examples of *s*-constructions.

- 16) *de genaede gods*  
 ‘God’s mercy’

In these cases we are dealing with a genitive, which in the Middle Dutch case-system was signalled on male proper names by an *s*-suffix. I categorise examples such as (15) as instances of the *s*-construction, while in theory they

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<sup>120</sup> The terms *possessor* and *possessum* are used to identify the two constituents involved in genitival constructions. The origin of the terms is obviously the prototypical relationship indicated by a genitival construction, possession, even though strictly speaking not all genitival constructions represent such a relationship. In example 17, for instance, the woman Debora cannot be said to *own* the man Jacob in the strict sense of the word.

could also be instances of a genitive. However, by the seventeenth century the *s*-suffix in genitival constructions does not only occur with male proper names, but also with female proper names, such as in example 17. What is more, by the seventeenth century, cases were usually not expressed any longer on proper names. This suggests that the prenominal *s*-construction should indeed be seen as different from the genitive. Only in examples such as 16, where we are dealing with a postnominal construction and with a male possessor, the old genitive for proper names is clearly recognisable.<sup>121</sup>

- 17) *weet dat deboras jacob noch nit tuis en is*  
 ‘know that Debora’s Jacob is not yet home’

A last peculiarity of the *s*-construction is that it is sometimes hard to distinguish it from a compound.<sup>122</sup> In some circumstances, Dutch compounds can be formed by linking two words with the help of an inserted *s*. For instance, a compound of *bakker* ‘baker’ and *vrouw* ‘woman/wife’ is *bakkersvrouw*. But given the fact that in seventeenth-century letters the spacing can differ widely from what would be common in present-day Dutch and that words which today would be spelled as one word were often spelled as two (e.g. seventeenth-century *huys vrou* instead of present-day Dutch *huisvrouw* ‘housewife’), examples 18 and 19 from the corpus of private letters are suspicious at first sight: are they genitival constructions or are they compounds?

- 18) *de konstapels wijff en al de wijven [...] sijn alle kloeck ende*  
*gesont*  
 ‘The constable’s wife and al the wives [...] are sturdy and healthy’  
 19) *maer alsoo de kapetaeins vrou niet kreegh*  
 ‘but since the captain’s wife received nothing’

<sup>121</sup> Although the *s*-construction is usually referred to with the term *genitive* in seventeenth-century grammars and works on Dutch, it is clear that the writers of these works themselves felt that constructions such as in examples 14, 15 and 17 on the one hand and constructions such as in example 16 were somewhat different. Take for instance the grammarian Van Heule who notices that  *Davids Psalmen* ‘David’s Psalms’ is the common word order and that the Latinised word order *Psalmen Davids* would be just as strange as *Het bouk Pieters* ‘Peter’s book’ or *Het huys Ians* ‘John’s house’ (1633: 71).

<sup>122</sup> For an overview of the theory linking compounds to genitival constructions and of factors influencing the development of compounds, see Van Tiel, Rem & Neijt (2011).

However, in example 18 a compound is out of the question given that the noun *wijff* ‘woman’ is neutral while the article in front of the construction can only occur with masculine or feminine nouns and thus belongs to *konstapel* ‘constable’. If *konstapels wijff* were a compound, the article should have matched the gender of the head of the compound, which in this case would be *wijff*. Example 19, however, could be interpreted as a compound given that the definite article *de* can occur with both *kappeteijn* ‘captain’ and *vrou* ‘wife’. Furthermore, the compound *een kapiteinsvrouw* ‘a captain’s wife’ is likely to exist, because the wife of a captain had a special status and very specific tasks (De Wit 2008: 161-163; Bruijn & Van Eijck van Heslinga 1985: 117; Bruijn 1998: 67). This creates more need for a specific word referring to this special status. The wife of a constable, on the other hand, did not enjoy such a special status to my knowledge and this makes it less plausible that a compound referring to a wife of a constable in general existed. I note here that the three occurrences of *de kapiteins vrouw* have not been taken into account in the data below because of the ambiguity of the construction.

#### *The z’n-construction*

Next to the *van*- and the *s*-constructions, there is a third construction for the genitive which occurred in the seventeenth century: the *z’n*-construction. Just like the *s*-construction, the *z’n*-construction is prenominal. The *z’n*-construction contains a possessive pronoun of the third person which indicates the relation between the complement and its noun (Van Heule 1633: 42; Weijnen 1965: 66; Koelmans 1975: *passim*). Examples 20-22 from the corpus of private letters illustrate this construction.

- 20) *wouter sijn bene blijve oock heel en gesont*  
     ‘Wouter his legs also stay whole and healthy’  
     ‘Wouter’s legs also stay whole and healthy’
- 21) *Juffr. Lems haer vader*  
     ‘Miss Lems her father’  
     ‘Miss Lems’ father’
- 22) *de Sack Sijn Swaerte*  
     ‘the bag his weight’  
     ‘the weight of the bag’

According to Koelmans, the *z’n*-construction occurs seldom from the seventeenth century onwards, but this opinion conflicts with Weijnen’s descriptions of seventeenth-century Dutch that state that the *z’n*-construction occurs very frequently (Koelmans 1975: 435, 443; Weijnen 1965: 66; Weijnen 1971: 46). In any case, the *z’n*-construction starts to be condemned

in writings on the grammar of Dutch from the seventeenth century onwards, when Christiaan van Heule (?-1655) describes the construction as *afsienelick* ‘loathsome’ (Koelmans 1975: 443-445; Van Heule 1633: 42).

*An –en suffix, an –e suffix or no suffix at all?*

The above-mentioned alternative constructions were probably known to all speakers of seventeenth-century Dutch and they are commonly discussed in the literature about genitival constructions. However, there are three other seventeenth-century constructions linking a noun and a person that seem to be less typical. I have grouped them under the same heading, because it will become clear that it is impossible – and maybe not even desirable – to make a strict division between these three categories.

A first construction is the construction in which no inflection at all is present. Only the juxtaposition of the constituent referring to a possessor and another constituent referring to a possessum indicates that one is the complement of the other. Koelmans gives seventeenth-century examples, among which *onse Bely schult* ‘our Bely’s fault’ and *angder luy gelt* ‘other people’s money’ (1975: 442).

A second construction is one with an *e*-suffix. According to Van Haeringen, some Dutch dialects allow for constructions such as *Janne pet* ‘John’s cap’ and *Keze moeder* ‘Kees’ mother’ (1947: 251). A search in the database of the SAND (the *Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten*, the ‘Syntactic Atlas of the Dutch Dialects’ DynaSAND Barbiers et al. 2006) indeed reveals that some informants render the phrase *Maries auto* ‘Mary’s car’ as *Marieje auto* and that some informants (among whom some of the *Marieje*-informants) render the phrase *Piets auto* ‘Peter’s car’ as *Piete auto*. All of these informants live in the South of the Netherlands.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore Weijnen mentions that in the *Westerkwartier* (a region in the province of Groningen) proper names ending in *–e* can occur as the first constituent of a genitival construction without any other suffixes or morphemes: *voaie houd* ‘father’s hat’, *Fokke Gertje* ‘Fokke’s (wife/daughter) Geertje’ (1971: 119). While in theory these last two examples are examples of constructions with no inflection at all, it could be that no extra inflection is needed since the speakers feel that the appropriate suffix, namely *–e*, is already present. Whether this *e*-construction also appears in the seventeenth century is not clear from the literature.

The third construction has an *en*-suffix. Van Haeringen mentions that this construction can occur in dialects of the *Zaanstreek* (a region in

<sup>123</sup> Five of them live in an area between Dordrecht and Rotterdam (South Holland), four informants live in the province of North-Brabant and the last informant lives near Geleen in the province of Limburg.

North Holland) and in Barneveld (a town in the province of Gelderland): *Jannen zuster* ‘John’s sister’, *moederen muts* ‘mother’s bonnet’ (1947: 252). That this construction must have existed already in the seventeenth century is suggested by Van Heule’s remark:

*Men bevint dat deze namen als Ian, Pieter, Frederic, Koenraet, etc. ooc in het tweede geval hebben Iannen, Pieteren, Fredericken, Koenraden, etc. Doch het en schijnt geen aen-nemelicke gewoonte.* (1633: 42)

‘One finds that these names, such as *Ian, Pieter, Frederic, Koenraet*, etc. in the second case [i.e. the genitive] also have *Iannen, Pieteren, Fredericken, Koenraden*, etc. Although it does not seem to be an adoptable habit.’

For this construction as well, for some cases it is unclear where the boundary lies with the suffixless construction. When describing the unmarked genitival construction, Koelmans (1975: 441-442) and Weijnen (1971: 118-119) give a fair share of examples of constructions in which the first constituent is a plural and has the plural suffix *-en*: e.g. *boven allen menschen moghenthede* ‘surpassing the abilities of all people’, *die sculdenaeren handen* ‘the hands of the debtors’. And then there are the proper names (mostly last names) already ending in *-en*, such as in the examples *huibrecht pietersen huisvrouw* ‘Huibrecht Pieters(en)’s wife’ and *ijan toebeiassen brief* ‘John Tobias(sen)’s letter’. It is possible that in these cases as well no extra suffix was added to the first constituent, given the fact that it already contained the suffix *-en*, which could be interpreted as a marker for a genitival relationship.

The *e*-construction and the *en*-construction are thus both difficult to distinguish from the suffixless construction, but the *e*- and the *en*-constructions themselves may also be difficult to distinguish from each other. This is because of the *n*-apocope (see chapter 8 §8.7) which occurred in Dutch following a weakly articulated vowel (Van Bree 1987: 80-81, De Wulf & Taeldeman 2001: passim, Van de Velde & Van Hout 2003: passim). The *n* at the end of the *en*-suffix would likely not have been pronounced in spoken Dutch, which makes it questionable whether there is actually any difference between the written *e*- and *en*-suffixes.

Given that these constructions only occur 12 times in total (out of 1220 occurrences of genitival constructions) in the private letters of the seventeenth-century corpus, they will not be taken into account in the examinations below. Therefore I will devote a few small paragraphs to the occurrences found in the corpus here.

The genitival construction with the *en*-suffix occurs 10 times in the private letters of the corpus (see example 23), while the construction with the *e*-suffix and the construction without a suffix each occur only once (examples 24 and 25 respectively). Whether the *e*- and *en*-suffixes are truly genitival suffixes in these examples is unclear, for in most cases they could also be interpreted as a fixed element of a name (e.g. *mattijssen schijp* ‘Mattijssen’s ship’) or as part of a diminutive suffix of a name (e.g. *Jacomijntge broer* ‘Jacomijntge’s brother’). Only in the cases of *mester iJacop blocken soon* ‘Master IJacop Block’s son’ and *de kappeteijns vrou en brieuen* ‘the letters of the captain’s wife’ does the *en*-suffix seem to carry nothing more than the function of a genitival suffix.

- 23) *als dat vader hier uit lant is met Leendert mattijssen schijp*  
 ‘That father has left the country with Leendert Mattijssen’s ship’
- 24) *voors weet vader als dat wij van Jacomijntge broer Jan*  
*Verstaen hebbe dat...*  
 ‘Further, father, know that we have understood from  
 Jacomijntge’s brother John that...’
- 25) *en sijmen neef wijf is doot*  
 ‘And cousin Simon’s wife is dead’

While the data of the SAND (*Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten* ‘Syntactic atlas of the Dutch dialects’ Barbiers et al. 2005-2008; DynaSAND Barbiers et al. 2006) only show the *e*- and *en*-suffixes in dialects of South Holland, Brabant and Limburg, these suffixes also occur in other regions in the corpus of private letters: three *en*-suffixes stem from Amsterdam and six *en*-suffixes and the occurrence with the *e*-suffix stem from Zeeland. The remaining occurrence of the *en*-suffix stems from South Holland.

The total number of occurrences of these types of genitival constructions in the private autograph letters is too small to show whether there is any variation in the use caused by social variables such as class, age and gender. In table 9.1, I have presented the few occurrences of these genitival constructions in the corpus. The only two conclusions that can be drawn from this table is that these genitival constructions seem to be used by both men and women belonging to different age categories and that they certainly occur in letters written by members of the upper-middle class. Van Heule’s rejection of the *e*- or *en*-suffixes may thus not have found any hearing, even among people who can be assumed to have a lot of writing experience.



	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Social Class</i>
<i>en</i> -suffix	male	<30	UMC
	male	<30	unknown
	male	30-50	UMC
	female	30-50	UMC
<i>e</i> -suffix	male	<30	unknown
no suffix	female	30-50	UMC

**Table 9.1:** Social features of the writers of autograph letters who use the *en*-suffix, the *e*-suffix or no suffix at all in genitival constructions in private letters from the seventeenth-century corpus.

### 9.2.2 The overall picture in the corpus

For the seventeenth century, the literature claims that the genitive was likely not used any longer in spoken language, but that it still occurred abundantly in written and printed texts (Van der Horst 2008: 1075-1076). What does the situation look like in the sub-corpus of private letters (545 letters written by 408 different writers, see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus), of which the language use may well be different from the language in printed texts due to influences of the letter writers' spoken Dutch? Table 9.2 below shows the frequencies of the different genitival constructions which occur in all the private letters of the seventeenth-century corpus.

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>van</i> -construction	656	54%
genitive	329	27%
<i>s</i> -suffix	144	12%
<i>z</i> ' <i>n</i> -construction	79	6%
<i>en</i> -suffix	10	0.8%
<i>e</i> -suffix	1	0.1%
no suffix	1	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1220</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 9.2:** The frequencies of the different genitival constructions in the private letters of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus

The overview table shows that the most frequent genitival construction used in the private seventeenth-century letters is the *van*-construction, occurring in slightly more than half of the cases (54%). In second place is the genitive, occurring in 27% of the cases. The *s*-suffix and the *z*'*n*-construction occur less often, in 12% and in 6% of the cases respectively. Lastly, the frequencies of the *en*-suffixes, the *e*-suffixes and the genitival constructions without any suffix are negligible.

For a construction which is believed to be absent from seventeenth-century spoken Dutch, the genitive does seem to occur quite often in a text type expected to be leaning closely to language of immediacy. Although the *van*-construction occurs most often, the genitive still easily surpasses the *s*-suffix and the *z'n*-construction in frequency. Does this mean that the genitive was still alive in spontaneous Dutch of the Golden Age? Not necessarily, for private letters are usually built up according to a fixed structure, with epistolary formulae and fixed expressions occurring at the beginning and the end of the letter and room for more spontaneous writing and thus language of immediacy in between. Does each genitival construction occur as often in each context?

### 9.3. Context

#### 9.3.1. Five different contexts

Five different contexts were identified in the seventeenth-century private letters from the *Letters as Loot* corpus: addresses, religious formulae, non-religious formulae, dates, and neutral contexts. In what follows I will briefly describe each context's particularities and give some examples. More examples will also be given in the discussion of the results for each context.

Seventeenth-century addresses do not differ very much from addresses of present-day letters, apart from the fact that they were not written on envelopes. Seventeenth-century addresses were usually written on a blank page or in a large blank space in the letter; the letter was then folded in such a way that the address was on the outer part of the folded letter and the letter itself was safely tucked away inside the folded paper (as can be seen in the images of Appendix B). An address contains the name of the addressee and his/her address. When the addressee is wandering, the address may also contain other information which is necessary to deliver the letter successfully, such as the name of the ship on which the addressee sailed or the addressee's job in a colony abroad. In some cases, the address also contains the name and address of a go-between. Addresses often end with the formula wishing for the well-being of the bearer of the letter: *met vriend die god geleide* 'with a friend whom God may protect'.

With the term 'religious formulae' I refer to any kind of formula which has anything to do with religion, including parts of dates that contain religious elements. These formulae are – like all formulae – repeated over and over again by writers and can be expected to leave little or no room for spontaneous language use. I distinguished religious formulae from other formulae, because it can be expected that the religious context may have a

strong influence in itself on the language use in fixed phrasings. Examples 26 and 27 from the corpus are good illustrations of such religious formulae.

- 26) *heet soude mij van haarten leedt weesen dat weet godt almactig die een kenner **aller** harten is*  
 ‘it would pain me very much [if you were not well], which God Almighty knows who knows all hearts.’
- 27) *ijn ijaer **onses heren** 1671*  
 ‘in the year of our Lord 1671’

Under the header ‘non-religious formulae’ I have gathered non-religious epistolary formulae and short fixed expressions, such as *brenger deeses [briefs]* ‘the bearer of this [letter]’. Epistolary formulae are formulae which are typical of letters and which usually appear at the beginning or at the end of a letter, e.g. (28) from the corpus.<sup>124</sup> They are the letter’s framework as it were. The letter writer has learnt to use these formulae and he/she is probably writing them down more or less mechanically. There is not much room for language of immediacy in this context.

- 28) *soo laat ick ul weten als dat ick ick ul schrijven **van den** 4 october gekregen hebben*  
 ‘I let you know that I have received your letter from the 4<sup>th</sup> of October.’

The last but one context that was distinguished is the context of dates. While in present-day written Dutch, dates are rendered in such a way that no genitival construction is needed (either completely expressed in numbers or with the month in full, such as *10/04/2012* or *10 april 2012*), in seventeenth-century Dutch some dates do contain a genitival construction. It concerns dates of the type: *den 22 deeser (maand)* translated as ‘the 22<sup>nd</sup> of this (month)’.

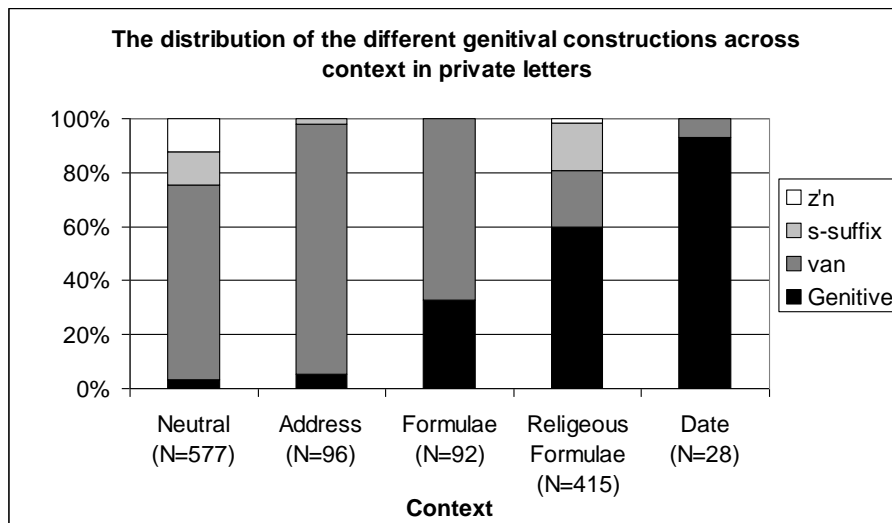
Finally, there are also neutral contexts, which can best be defined by what they are not. For this investigation, I will consider to be neutral those parts of a letter that are not part of the address, of a formula or of a date. Neutral contexts are parts of the letter in which the letter writer can be expected to use more or less spontaneous language, language of immediacy, when describing his/her fortunes.

<sup>124</sup> For more information about epistolary formulae in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus, see Rutten & Van der Wal 2012, Rutten & Van der Wal forthcoming, and Van der Wal & Rutten forthcoming.

For every context in each private letter from the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus, the number of occurrences of each genitival construction was counted and this resulted in the following table and figure.

	<i>Genitive</i>	<i>s-suffix</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>z'n</i>	<i>N</i>
<b>Neutral</b>	3%	12%	72%	12%	577
<b>Address</b>	5%	2%	93%	0%	96
<b>Formulae</b>	33%	0%	67%	0%	92
<b>Religious formulae</b>	60%	18%	21%	2%	415
<b>Date</b>	93%	0%	7%	0%	28
<b>N Total</b>					1208

**Table 9.3:** The frequency of the different genitival constructions across context in the private letters of the seventeenth-century corpus



**Figure 9.2**

The data undeniably show that context is a major factor in the distribution of the different genitival constructions, and in particular for the genitive and the *van*-construction. The frequency of the genitive in different contexts ranges from a meagre 3% in neutral contexts to an impressive 93% in dates. The

frequency of the *van*-construction varies from 7% to 93%. Furthermore, both the *s*-construction and the *z'n*-construction seem to be restricted to particular contexts. The *s*-construction does not occur in formulae or dates, and the *z'n*-construction is used in neutral contexts and only very occasionally in religious formulae. In what follows, I will compare the different contexts and examine what they reveal about the status of the different genitival constructions.

### 9.3.2. Context and genitival constructions

#### *Neutral contexts*

In neutral contexts, that is in the parts of the seventeenth-century letters which are not governed by fixed formulae, the letter writer's language use is likely to resemble his/her spontaneous language use most closely. In this part of the letter, the genitive occurs the least often of all the genitival constructions, namely in only 3% of the cases. This confirms the assumption that the genitive was not or hardly used in spoken Dutch by the seventeenth century. On the other hand, the *van*-construction is quite popular, occurring in more than 70% of the cases. This popularity in neutral contexts and the fact that seventeenth-century writings about Dutch do not seem to treat the construction as something special, lends the *van*-construction a default status. The *z'n*-construction and the *s*-construction both occur in 12% of the cases, which suggests that these constructions were not default constructions, but not quite shunned either.

#### *Address*

The distribution of genitival constructions in address-contexts differs from that in neutral contexts: unlike in neutral contexts, the *z'n*-construction does not occur and the *s*-suffix occurs only in 2% of the cases. The *van*-suffix is now responsible for a share of more than 90%. This suggests that the *z'n*-construction and the *s*-construction are not considered to be appropriate in addresses or – from a different perspective – that the *van*-construction is extremely well fit to be used in address contexts and therefore pushes the other constructions out. This can be understood in no fewer than four different ways. Firstly, it is possible that the function of an address requires a specific genitival construction because of the way it structures the information. Most of the genitival structures in addresses are used to specify the addressee, mostly when the addressee is a woman: e.g. *Aan de huijs vrou van pieter swart* 'to the wife of Pieter Swart'. It is possible that the prenominal genitival constructions, *Aan Pieter Swarts huijsvrou* or *Aan Pieter Swart zijn huijs vrou*, are felt to be less appropriate given that the

most important person for the address (namely the addressee) comes second in place.

The second option more or less resembles the previous one. The *van*-construction is a postnominal construction: the possessor is mentioned after the possessum. In the most frequently occurring genitival construction in addresses, *de huysvrouw van* (*full name and – if appropriate – title of the husband*), the possessor is usually longer than the possessum. It could be that longer constituents are preferred to follow shorter constituents in a construction. I will come back to this short-before-long principle in more details in §9.5.

A third explanation is yet another variation on the first explanation: the order in which the information is presented is important. The function of an address is to get the letter to its destination. To reach this goal, it is very likely that people who do not know the addressee of the letter will handle the letter and pass it through to get it to its destination. Given that prenominal genitival constructions such as *Jans vrouw* and *Jan z'n vrouw* ('John's wife') seem to be more appropriate for contexts in which the possessor is known to the interactants involved, it might be quite odd to use these constructions in the context of an address. However, it deserves to be noted that knowing the possessor seems to be less of a prerogative for using the prenominal genitival constructions if the possessor is not only identified by his/her first name, but also by his/her last name, such as in *Jan de Wits vrouw* 'John White's wife'.

The unsuitability of Dutch prenominal genitival constructions for contexts in which the possessor is not known to the interactants involved is a hypothesis. It is based on my personal intuitions about the genitive in Dutch and on the intuitions of other Dutch-speakers among colleagues, friends and family members. To my knowledge, the relationship between the choice of genitival construction and the participants' familiarity with the possessor has not been examined yet for Dutch. However, the relationship between the topicality of the possessor and the type of genitival construction has been examined by Rosenbach (2002) for English. She found that topical possessors – possessors that are definite and/or that have been mentioned before in the context and thus are assumed to be known to the participants in the interaction – occur more often with an English *s*-genitive (in which they occur in first position, e.g. *the girl's bike*) than with an *of*-construction (in which they occur in second position, e.g. *the bike of the girl*) (Rosenbach 2002: 138-154). This might be true for Dutch as well, but research is called for.

The fourth and final explanation has to do with the fact that the address of the letter is the only part of the letter which is certainly meant to be seen by people other than the addressee or people from his/her immediate

environment. For the image of the sender of the letter and of the addressee, it would therefore be desirable to use linguistic elements in the address which have a high status. This would then suggest that the *z'n*-construction and the *s*-construction are not evaluated as elements of elevated style by seventeenth-century people and are therefore not used in addresses.

The first two options seem to be the more plausible ones. It is outside the scope of this chapter to examine in detail the influence of the different factors mentioned above on the choice of genitival construction. However, more evidence for one of the more plausible explanations may turn up in the course of this chapter, when the influence of the length of constituents on the choice of genitival construction will be examined.

#### *Non-religious formulae*

What immediately catches the eye in the distribution of the genitival constructions in formulaic contexts is the fact that the *z'n*-construction and the *s*-construction are absent. This, however, is likely due to the fact that the genitival constructions in formulaic contexts only seldom involve animate possessors or proper names – which seem to be a prerequisite for the *z'n*- and the *s*-construction – and not to the formulaic context itself.<sup>125</sup> In neutral contexts too, all genitival constructions which involve inanimate possessors (187 occurrences in total) only occur with the genitive or the *van*-construction.

The true difference between the formulaic contexts and neutral contexts should then be found in the share of the genitive. While in neutral contexts the genitival constructions with inanimate possessors are genitives in only 3% of the cases, the genitive occurs in 33% of the cases in formulae. However, there seems to be a strict division between different types of formulae. On the one hand, there is the popular formula *ick heb u schrijven van den 8 sept wel ontfangen* ‘I have received your writing of [date] in good order’, occurring 42 times in the corpus of private letters. This formula always occurs with the *van*-construction. On the other hand there is the formula of the type *per brenger deses (briefs)* ‘with the carrier of this letter’ or *de orsack deses (briefs)* ‘the reason of this letter’, occurring 24 times in the corpus of private letters. It almost always occurs with the genitive (in 22 of the 24 cases).

<sup>125</sup> Van Bergen 2011: 56-57 shows that in present-day Dutch too inanimate possessors almost never occur with the *z'n*- or *s*-construction. This seems to have been the case already in the seventeenth century. Inanimate possessors *can* take a prenominal genitival construction in seventeenth-century writings, but they do so very rarely. Only one example of such a construction with an inanimate possessor was found in a (business) letter from the corpus: *de sack sijn swaerte* ‘the weight of the bag’.

*Religious formulae*

In genitival constructions in religious formulae (examples 26, 27 and 29 to 31 from the corpus), the possessor can be an animate noun (very often *god* ‘God’, *de heer* ‘the Lord’ or *de almachtige* ‘the Almighty’) and the *z’n*-construction and the *s*-construction should be able to occur. However, the *z’n*-construction seems to be less popular in religious formulae than it is in neutral contexts: it occurs in only 2% of the genitival constructions in religious formulae while it occurs in 12% of the genitival constructions in neutral contexts. The *s*-construction on the other hand, seems to be slightly more popular in religious contexts than in neutral contexts, occurring in 18% of the cases versus in 12% of the cases respectively. The most conspicuous difference with the distribution of the different genitival constructions in neutral contexts, however, must be the high presence of the genitive in religious contexts. It occurs in no less than 60% of the cases in religious contexts and thus greatly exceeds its presence in neutral contexts.

- 29) *docht wij moeten ons trosten met godt den heer die een beschermer **der** wedeue is ende een vader **der** weesen*  
 However we have to find comfort in God the Lord who is a protector of the widows and a father to the orphans.
- 30) *doch verhoope met Godts hulpe **UL** gesontheit met onse kindertjes*  
 though with God’s help I wish you are healthy and our children too
- 31) *dat weet godt almachtijch die een kender **van** alle harten is*  
 God almighty, who is a knower of all hearts, knows this

*Dates*

Of all the dates that contain a genitival construction (30), there are two dates containing an animate possessor. In these two cases, this possessor is God. Therefore, these two dates were categorised as instances of religious formulae. Since there are no animate possessors present in the 28 remaining cases, it is not strange that the *z’n*-construction and the *s*-construction do not occur in dates. It has been explained above that the two pronominal constructions almost only occur with animate possessors. What is surprising about the results for dates, however, is that the genitive occurs in no less than 93% of the cases. Again it is the demonstrative pronoun *dese* – that has been shown above to occur very often with the genitive in formulae – which provides the most occurrences of the genitive (25 occurrences out of 28).



32) *tschip de coninck dauid arriuerden hier op 5 deser*

The ship 'the King David' arrived here on the 5th of this month

**9.3.3. Conclusions**

What can be concluded about the status of the different genitival constructions in the seventeenth century from the overview of their distribution across different contexts? For the *z'n*-construction, occurring exclusively with animate possessors in the corpus, I can conclude that it is less popular in religious formulae than in neutral contexts. This suggests that this construction was felt to be less appropriate in an elevated style of writing. This hypothesis fits with the idea that the *z'n*-construction starts to be decried in writings on the grammar of Dutch from the seventeenth century onwards, when Christiaen van Heule describes the construction as *afsienelick* 'loathsome' (Koelmans 1975: 443-445; Van Heule 1633: 42). The letter writers in the corpus might not have agreed with Van Heule completely, however, since they do use the construction in neutral contexts, but they clearly had their reserves in using it in religious contexts. Maybe it was felt to be too common for such contexts. In any case, in present-day Dutch the *z'n*-construction is also reserved for spontaneous language use, which is more or less in line with how it was used in the seventeenth century already.

The *s*-construction differs from the *z'n*-construction in its presence in formulaic contexts. While the *z'n*-construction is less popular in religious formulae than it is in neutral contexts, the *s*-construction occurs as often in both contexts, if not even slightly more often in religious formulae than in neutral contexts (in 17% of the cases versus in 12% of the cases respectively). This indicates that the *s*-construction was probably not felt to be a construction more fit for spontaneous language use in the language of immediacy than for elevated styles.

The *van*-construction seems to be the neutral genitival construction in the seventeenth-century private letters. It is the most popular construction in neutral contexts and no positive or negative comments on it can be found in the normative literature of the time. Given the fact that it seems to be neutral, its abundance in the context of addresses should probably not be ascribed to an evaluation of this construction as prototypical of a certain style. It is more likely that the semantic implications of the *van*-construction or the order in which it presents different semantic roles or constituents of different length have promoted its popularity in addresses.

This leaves us with the spectacular data for the inflectional genitive. It occurs almost never in parts of the letter which probably lean more closely to language of immediacy, while it is very popular in formulaic contexts. This suggests that the genitive was hardly used in spontaneous language any

longer by the second half of the seventeenth century. When it does occur, it occurs most often in formulae or other fossilised expressions. This puts the results from the overview of the different constructions in table 9.2 into a different perspective. Although this overview suggested that the genitive was still alive and kicking with a share of more than 25%, the examination of the influence of context has shown that the genitive was likely only alive in written Dutch, and then in particular in fossilised expressions or in contexts which typically also come with archaic linguistic elements.<sup>126</sup>

It may be worthwhile to examine whether the distribution of these different genitival constructions was also influenced by social variables, such as gender and social class of the letter writer. After all, it is known that stylistic variation can be strongly linked to social variation, as has been shown by Trudgill (2000: 86-87) for example.

#### 9.4. Social variation

In order to examine the influence of the variables social class and gender, all the genitival constructions occurring in the private autograph letters of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus (260 letters written by 202 different writers, see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus) were taken into account.

##### 9.4.1. All contexts

###### *Social class*

If all the genitival constructions in the private autograph letters are examined irrespective of the contexts in which they occur, the following distribution across social class is the result.

	<i>Genitive</i>	<i>s-suffix</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>z'n</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>LC</b>	44%	13%	31%	13%	16
<b>LMC</b>	30%	10%	57%	3%	125
<b>UMC</b>	26%	9%	61%	4%	388
<b>UC</b>	20%	10%	54%	16%	106

**Table 9.4: The distribution of the genitival constructions across social class in all contexts in all private autograph letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus.**

<sup>126</sup> Similar results were found for the distribution of the German genitive and dative-*e* in nineteenth-century private letters (Elspaß 2005: 348-354, 368-370; Elspaß 2012: 60-62).

The data show that the share of the genitive diminishes as the rank of the letter writers becomes higher. At the same time the *z'n*-construction seems to be more popular in the lower class and in the upper class than in the middle classes. The *s*-construction shows no particular variation. The variation present in the distribution of the *van*-construction is whimsical: it is likely caused indirectly by fluctuations in the share of other genitival constructions, since the *van*-construction seems to be rather neutral.

These results are rather unexpected. Why would the genitive – which has proved to be typical of contexts in which an elevated style is required – be used more often by lower-class letter writers? It is just this group of letter writers that would be expected to use more linguistic elements typical of spoken Dutch. And at the same time it is odd that the *z'n*-construction is used more often by letter writers from the upper class. The construction has proved to be unfit for religious contexts and thus unfit for elevated styles. Why would letter writers who are usually found to be very well aware of differences between spoken and written Dutch and who usually use more elements typical of written language than other people use a construction which seems to lean more closely to language of immediacy? Before trying to solve these mysteries, let us first examine what the distribution of the constructions across gender looks like.

#### *Gender*

If all the genitival constructions in the private autograph letters are examined irrespective of the contexts in which they occur, the following distribution across gender is the result.

	<i>Genitive</i>	<i>s-suffix</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>z'n</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>Men</b>	25%	9%	62%	4%	513
<b>Women</b>	30%	12%	44%	13%	189

**Table 9.5: The distribution of the genitival constructions across gender in all contexts in all private autograph letters.**

Men and women do not seem to differ in their use of *s*-suffix, they both use it in about 10% of the cases. On the other hand, women use the *z'n*-construction more often than men do. They use it in 13% of the cases, while in letters written by men the *z'n*-construction occurs in no more than 4% of the cases. This result is not counterintuitive: since women are usually less practised in writing (letters) and less well educated than men, it is likely that they are more prone to use linguistic elements more typical of spoken, and thus of spontaneous, Dutch. The *z'n*-construction might just be such an element, since it does not seem to be appropriate for religious contexts.

An unexpected result for the distribution of the different genitival constructions across gender lies in the distribution of the genitive. Women use the genitive slightly more often than men do: women use it in 30% of the cases while men use it in 25% of the cases. The direction of this difference is remarkable given that the genitive has proved to be a linguistic element typical of elevated style (occurring up to 60% in religious contexts) and atypical of spontaneous language use. In previous chapters we have often witnessed how just such elements are used more often by men than by women, probably given the fact that men are usually more practised in reading and writing and better educated. These results do not fit in with this frequently witnessed pattern.

*Influence of contexts*

Before looking for an explanation within the scope of social variation, it is wise to check whether the distribution of the different contexts across different social groups could not have influenced the data, given the different counterintuitive results. Table 9.6 below shows the distribution of the genitival constructions across context per social class:

	<i>neutral</i>	<i>address</i>	<i>formulae</i>	<i>religious formulae</i>	<i>date</i>	N
<b>LC</b>	38%	0%	0%	63%	0%	<b>16</b>
<b>LMC</b>	50%	9%	6%	34%	2%	<b>125</b>
<b>UMC</b>	54%	9%	10%	25%	3%	<b>388</b>
<b>UC</b>	64%	4%	8%	15%	8%	<b>106</b>

**Table 9.6: The distribution of the genitival constructions across contexts per social class in the private autograph letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus.**

The table shows some striking differences that can certainly explain the strange distribution of the genitive and the *z'n*-construction across social class. It is clear that genitival constructions in religious formulae occur more often in the lower social classes than in the upper social classes. The percentages drop from 63% in the lower class to a mere 15% in the upper class. This does not come as a surprise: it has already been noted in the literature that less-experienced writers make more use of formulaic language. Elspaß claims that inexperienced writers resort to formulaic language more quickly than experienced writers. Using formulaic language allows them to write a message without having to hesitate too much about the wording (Elspaß 2005: 192). Rutten and Van der Wal have confirmed this hypothesis by showing that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letter writers in the *Letters as Loot* corpus use more formulae when they are less experienced

writers, i.e. members of the lower classes or women (2012: 189-194).<sup>127</sup> Since the genitive occurs quite frequently in religious formulae in general (in 60% of the cases, see figure 9.1), this can explain why the genitive occurs more often in lower-class letters than in upper-class letters if all contexts are taken into account.

Furthermore it is clear that the genitival constructions in upper-class letters occur most often in neutral contexts, namely in 64% of the cases. This follows from Rutten and Van der Wal's conclusions too (2012: 189-194). While lower-class writers use more formulae than upper-class writers, upper-class writers produce letters containing more neutral contexts than lower-class writers. Since the neutral context is also the context in which the *z'n*-construction occurs most frequent (see figure 9.2 and table 9.3), this may explain the high frequency of the *z'n*-construction in the upper class. The strange frequencies of the genitive in the lower social class and of the *z'n*-construction in the upper social class can thus be attributed to the fact that lower-class writers and upper-class writers construct their letters very differently. The link between social class and the distribution of different types of genitival constructions is thus indirect.

For gender, the distribution of the genitival constructions across context also shows clear-cut differences:

	<i>neutral</i>	<i>address</i>	<i>formulae</i>	<i>religious formulae</i>	<i>date</i>	N
<b>Men</b>	55%	10%	9%	22%	4%	<b>513</b>
<b>Women</b>	51%	3%	5%	40%	1%	<b>189</b>

**Table 9.7: The distribution of the genitival constructions across contexts for men and women.**

The fact that genitival constructions occurred more often in religious formulae with female writers than with male writers may have positively influenced the share of the genitive written by women. The difference in the use of the *z'n*-construction between male and female writers does not seem

<sup>127</sup> For the seventeenth-century letter writers in the corpus, Rutten & Van der Wal 2012 could only prove that women used formulae more frequently than men did. The small amount of letters for the lower class and upper class prevented them from examining the distribution of formulae across social class (Rutten & Van der Wal 2012: 189). For the eighteenth-century letter writers, however, they did prove that social class was an influential factor on the distribution of formulae (Rutten & Van der Wal 2012: 192). There is no reason to doubt that this was also true for the seventeenth-century letter writers, and the data in table 6 only confirm this.

to be related to a difference in frequency of the neutral context: the genitival constructions occur as often in neutral contexts with men and women (in 55% and in 51% of the cases respectively).

In any case, it has become clear that in order to get a clearer view on the social variation itself, the variable context will need to be held constant in the investigation. That is why I will only take into account genitival constructions in neutral contexts in what follows.

#### 9.4.2. In neutral contexts exclusively

##### *Social class*

Table 9.8 below shows the distribution of the different genitival constructions in neutral contexts across the social classes. Unfortunately, the letters from the lower class only contain 6 genitival constructions in neutral contexts, which means that the percentages for the lower class are not very representative. They will therefore be left aside in the discussion.

The percentages for the genitive and the *s*-construction do not seem to differ much for the lower-middle-, the upper-middle- and the upper-class writers. The strange distribution of the genitive witnessed in table 9.4 has disappeared. The *z'n*-construction, on the other hand, remains more popular among the writers from the upper class than among writers from the middle classes. It occurs in 22% of the cases in letters from upper-class writers, while it occurs in only 6% of the cases in letters of middle-class writers.

	<i>Genitive</i>	<i>s-suffix</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>z'n</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>LC</b>	0%	0%	67%	33%	6
<b>LMC</b>	2%	13%	79%	6%	62
<b>UMC</b>	3%	8%	83%	6%	210
<b>UC</b>	6%	7%	65%	22%	68

**Table 9.8: The distribution of the different genitival constructions in neutral contexts across social class in the private autograph letters of the corpus.**

The fact that the *z'n*-construction occurs less often in religious formulaic contexts has raised the impression that this construction was already felt to be quite colloquial in the seventeenth century. It is thus striking that the upper-class writers use this seemingly informal construction so often, while they are letter writers who are typically well practised in reading and writing and therefore likely to know the differences between spoken Dutch and written Dutch. In the discussion below, this unexpected result will be explained.

One might have expected to see clear social variation in the distribution of the genitive, but the share of the genitive does not seem to

vary considerably across the different social classes. The upper classes use it only marginally more often than the lower-middle-class writers do. Variation may be hard to track down, simply because of the fact that the genitive occurs only very rarely in neutral contexts in the seventeenth century. However, a close examination of the occurrences of the genitive reveals that the presence of the genitive may be linked to another factor: a writer's familiarity with (religious) books and texts.

Of the writers of autograph letters, only 9 people still use the genitive in neutral contexts. At least 3 of these people must have had an intense relationship with (religious) books and texts (Everhard Lijcochsten, Antonius Scherius, and Hieronymus Sweerts) and the only two letter writers who use the genitive more than once belong to this select company. Everhard Lijcochsten and Antonius Scherius were both pastors in Hoorn, and Hieronymus Sweerts was a poet, printer and bookseller in Amsterdam. One other letter writer had likely come into contact with (religious) books and writings indirectly: Guillaume Beddelo. Guillaume had close contacts with a pastor in Surinam with whom he stayed and from whom he seems to have received some education. A third of the group of letter writers who still use a genitive in neutral contexts thus probably had a close relationship with (religious) books and writings. That these three individuals still use the genitive in neutral contexts can be readily explained, since the genitive was still used abundantly in biblical texts and in many other printed works in the seventeenth century. Intense contact with these printed works may have induced these few letter writers to use the genitive without too many reserves, even in neutral contexts in which other letter writers would normally not make use of it. The other letter writers who use the genitive in neutral contexts do not seem to have a profession which would make (religious) books and writings indispensable for them, but it is possible that they were fervent readers in their spare time. However, there is no easy way to verify this.

### *Gender*

In previous chapters we have often witnessed how linguistic elements popular with the upper classes were usually also popular with men and how typical lower-class features were used more often by women. Can we find the same pattern for genitival constructions? Table 9.9 below shows the distribution of the different genitival constructions across gender.

	<i>Genitive</i>	<i>s-suffix</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>z'n</i>	N
<b>Men</b>	5%	8%	81%	6%	280
<b>Women</b>	1%	15%	60%	24%	96

**Table 9.9: The distribution of the different genitival constructions in neutral contexts across gender.**

With respect to the share of the genitive and the share of the *s*-construction, women and men do not seem to differ spectacularly. The *z'n*-construction, however, is used considerably more often by female letter writers than by male letter writers, just as it already was in table 9.4. Women use the construction in almost 25% of the cases, while men use it in only 6% of the cases. This result is contrary to what we would expect based on previous chapters. A linguistic element that is popular in the upper class seems to be more popular here with female writers than with male letter writers.

#### *Discussion*

The social variables class and gender seem to have little impact on the distribution of most of the genitival constructions in the seventeenth-century corpus. The genitive occurs so rarely in neutral contexts in seventeenth-century letters that it is no wonder that the variation displayed is only limited. The *s*-construction too only displays a very limited degree of variation: it seems to be used slightly more often by lower-middle-class writers and by women in general, but to award it the status of a variant typical of spoken or spontaneous language would be too rash, certainly given the fact that it appears to be perfectly appropriate for religious formulaic contexts. Only the *z'n*- and the *van*-construction show considerable variation. However, changes in the share of the latter construction are likely only the consequence of changes in the frequency of the other genitival constructions, since the *van*-construction seems to be quite neutral.

The *z'n*-construction is used more often by upper-class writers than by writers of the upper- and lower-middle classes and at the same time it is used more often by women than by men. At first sight, this is a very strange result. On the one hand, the *z'n*-construction's popularity in the upper class suggests it is a construction used more often in written Dutch; but on the other hand the *z'n*-construction is used more often by women, who are generally less practised writers than men and are often found to use linguistic features typical of spoken Dutch. However, when the distribution of the genitival constructions in neutral contexts across social class is split up for men and women, it becomes clear that the *z'n*-construction is actually only more popular in the upper class with female letter writers. Furthermore, it is even just one particular writer in the group of female upper-class letter writers who is responsible for most of the variation: Kathelijne Mattheus



Haexwant. If her language use would not be taken into account, women would still generally use the *z'n*-construction more often than men (18% vs. 6%), but the variation between the social classes would become much smaller (6% and 6% for the lower-middle class and upper-middle class respectively vs. 13% for the upper-class). The variation linked to gender seems to be stronger than the variation linked to social class. Kathelijne Mattheus Haexwant's large influence cannot, however, explain away all influence of social class. The fact that members of the upper social class use the *z'n*-construction more often than members of the middle classes might also have to do with linguistic insecurity on the part of the latter: it has been shown repeatedly that social aspirers are more sensitive to prestige and stigma than people who already belong to the upper class (Nevalainen 1996: 73; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 135; Labov 1972: 286 in Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 152).

What can thus be concluded with respect to the influence of social variables on the distribution of the different genitival constructions? The only clear variation could be found for the *z'n*-construction, which is used more often by women than by men and which seems to be particularly popular with upper-class women. This pattern fits well with the results found for the *z'n*-construction with respect to context: it is used less often in religious formulae, a context which would typically require a more elevated style. The *z'n*-construction was thus probably felt to be more of an element of informal and colloquial language use in the seventeenth century and this can also explain why women use it more often than men do. However, at the same time, the *z'n*-construction does not seem to be considered as inappropriate for written language in the seventeenth century as it is today, for it is used by letter writers of all social classes. The strong disapproval of Christiaan van Heule (1633: 42) was clearly not shared by the letter writers in the corpus.

Even though the social variables class and gender could not be shown to influence the distribution of the genitive to a very great extent, this does not mean that every letter writer was as likely to use the genitive in neutral contexts in his or her letters. A letter writer's familiarity with printed (religious) books and texts seems to influence the presence of the genitive in seventeenth-century letters. People who can be expected to be very much involved with the reading, writing and maybe even the distribution of (religious) printed texts – such as pastors and book printers – seem more likely to use the genitive in neutral contexts in their private letters.

### 9.5. The length of the constituents

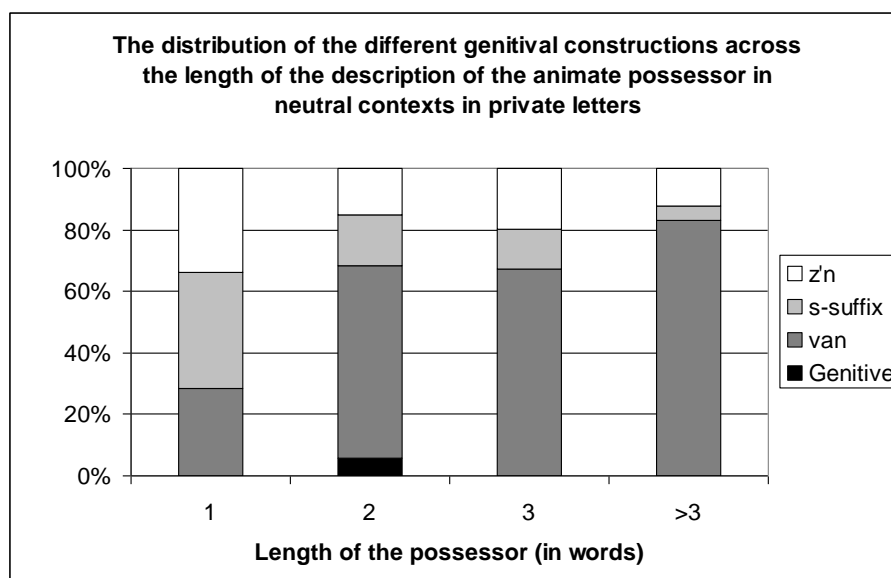
It is clear from the results above that the social variables do not have a very strong impact on the distribution of the different genitival constructions in the seventeenth-century private letters. Apparently, the variable context carries more weight. It is also likely that there are other variables as well that influence the distribution of the genitival constructions more strongly than the social variables do. Van Bergen (2011: 43-76) examines the influence of several variables on genitival constructions in present-day Dutch which have not been discussed or which have not been treated extensively so far in this chapter: animacy of the possessor, definiteness of the possessor, the semantic relation between possessor and possessum, the presence of a sibilant at the end of the possessor, the length of the constituents, and regional variation. Examining all these variables would go beyond the scope of this chapter, but there is one variable I would like to examine seeing its importance for the context of address: the length of the constituents involved.

Weerman & De Wit state that the occurrence of the *s*-construction in Dutch is limited by the complexity of the possessor-constituent. Complex, and thus longer, possessor constituents are less likely to occur with the *s*-construction (1998: 28; 1999: 1167). In her dissertation, Van Bergen mentions how research by Szmrecsanyi & Hinrichs (2008) and Rosenbach (2002) has shown that constituent length influences the choice of genitival construction in English (2011: 53). Van Bergen herself shows how in present-day Dutch as well the occurrence of the *z'n*-construction is influenced by the length of the possessum: the longer the possessum constituent, the less often the *z'n*-construction occurs (2011: 60-61).

For the corpus it is impossible to examine the influence of the length of the possessum on the choice of genitival construction, given that the length of the possessums in the corpus shows little variability: 90% of the possessums consist of only one word. However, the length of the possessor constituents does show considerable variation, which makes it possible to examine its influence. In order to examine whether the length of the possessor-constituent influenced the choice of genitival construction in seventeenth-century Dutch, I examined the distribution of the genitival constructions in the private letters of the corpus depending on the length of the description of the possessor in words. Only genitival constructions in neutral contexts were taken into account. Given that the *s*- and *z'n*-constructions do not occur with inanimate possessors in the corpus, I have left the occurrences with inanimate possessors out of the examination. Table 9.10 and figure 9.3 below show the results.

	<i>Genitive</i>	<i>s-suffix</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>z'n</i>	N
<b>1</b>	0%	38%	29%	34%	56
<b>2</b>	6%	17%	63%	15%	233
<b>3</b>	0%	13%	67%	20%	61
<b>&gt; 3</b>	0%	5%	83%	12%	41

**Table 9.10: The distribution of the different genitival constructions across the length of the description of the animate possessor (in words) in neutral contexts in the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus.**

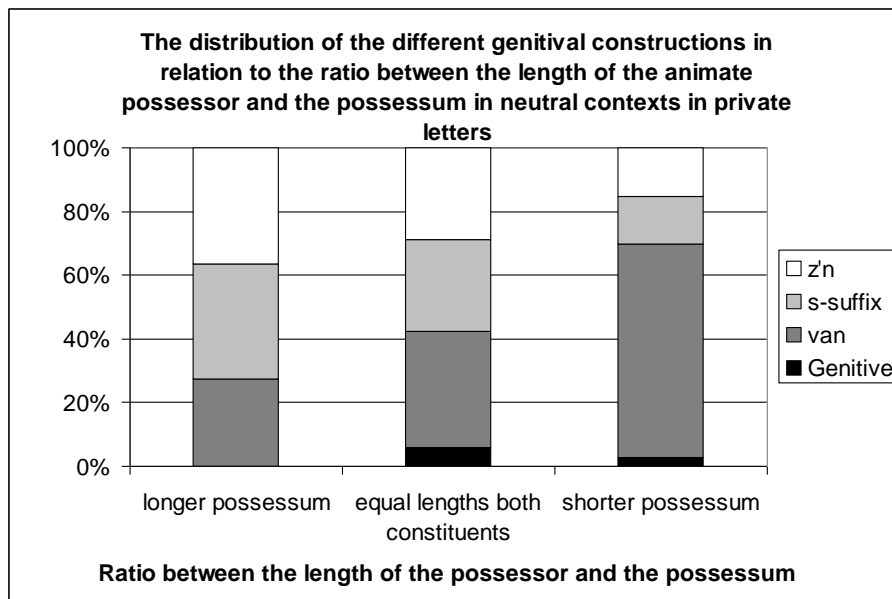


**Figure 9.3**

It is immediately clear from the table and the figure that the length of the description of the possessor indeed influences the occurrence of the *s*-construction in the way Weerman & De Wit described. The longer the description of the possessor, the lower the share of the *s*-construction. It drops from 38% with possessors of only one word, over 16% and 13% with possessors of two and three words of length respectively, to only 5% with possessors whose description counts more than 3 words. The share of the *z'n*-construction also shows a drop, but most clearly between descriptions of the possessor of only one word and descriptions of two words: the share of the *z'n*-construction drops from 34% to 15%.

Since the constructions which decrease are both prenominal genitival constructions (which put the possessor in front of the possessum), while the increasing *van*-construction is a postnominal genitival construction (putting the possessum in front of the possessor), the relative position of

possessor and possession seems to be the dependent variable here. And maybe it is not just the length of the possessor that is a factor of influence, but rather the relative length of the possessor and the possessum. I know that the length of the possessum barely ever exceeds one word if the article is left aside (a way of measuring the length of the possessum suggested by Van Bergen (2011: 60)), so as soon as the possessor constituent counts more than one word, the possessor is probably longer than the possessum. The fact that the difference in distribution of the genitival constructions in figure 9.3 was most outspoken between length 1 and 2 of the possessor seems to confirm the idea that the relative length of the possessor and the possessum is a factor. In order to conclusively show that this is indeed true, figure 9.4 was created. In figure 9.4, the distribution of the different genitival constructions is shown for constructions in which the possessum is longer than the possessor (11 cases), for constructions in which the possessum is shorter than the possessor (314 cases), and for constructions in which the possessor and possessum are of equal length (66 cases).<sup>128</sup>



**Figure 9.4**

Figure 9.4 shows that the general short-before-long principle (Behaghel 1909, Hawkins 1994, Wasow 2002 all in Van Bergen 2011: 52-53) applies to seventeenth-century Dutch genitival constructions. The longer the

<sup>128</sup> Again in neutral contexts in private letters.

possessor is compared to the possessum, the bigger the chances are of finding a *van*-construction, in which the shorter possessum precedes the longer possessor. This means that the short-before-long principle can also be the explanation (or one of the explanations) for the fact that the *van*-construction in addresses is extremely frequent. For in addresses the possessor is usually longer than the possessum (see §9.3).

## 9.6. Conclusions

At the beginning of this chapter it was shown how often the genitive occurred in seventeenth-century Dutch private letters. Although the *van*-construction was definitely most popular, occurring in about half of the cases, the genitive occupied an important second place, occurring in 27% of the cases. For a linguistic feature thought to be as good as extinct in the spoken Dutch of the time, the genitive seemed to occur quite often in a text type which is expected to lean closely to the language of immediacy. However, this finding was nuanced immediately, since the genitive almost only occurred in contexts which require an elevated style or in fossilised expressions. In formulae, religious formulae and dates, the genitive played an important part. But in neutral contexts, in those parts of a letter in which a letter writer is expected to write more spontaneously, the genitive hardly ever occurred. This showed that the genitive indeed must have been used hardly or never in spoken Dutch of the seventeenth century, but that it was still very much part of the written language of the time. In fact, the few letter writers who still used the genitive in neutral contexts, seemed to be influenced by the style of printed (religious) works, since some of these writers had a profession which required them to read and study a lot of books and printed texts.

When looking at social variation, the genitive turned out to be used most often by writers from the lower classes, which was rather unexpected given the conclusion that the genitive must have been rare in spoken Dutch and more typical for elevated styles. Usually, the language use of the writers of the lower classes is linked more closely to spoken Dutch than the language use of writers from the upper classes. However, the strange distribution of the genitive across social class turned out to be caused by the unbalanced distribution of the different contexts. Letters from the lower classes were shown to contain more religious formulae than letters from the upper classes, while these latter letters contained significantly more genitival constructions in neutral contexts. Since the genitive occurred more often in religious formulae than in neutral contexts, the letters of the lower classes contained more genitives than the letters of the upper classes.

When looking at genitival constructions in neutral contexts only, social class did not seem to be a very important variable with regards to the choice of genitival constructions and neither did gender. Only for the *z'n*-construction there was influence of gender: women used this construction more often than men did. Together with the fact that the *z'n*-construction did not seem to be fit for use in religious formulae, this does suggest that the construction was felt to be more appropriate for spoken Dutch than for written Dutch. However, since the *z'n*-construction was used by all different social classes in the seventeenth century, I may conclude that it had not yet reached the status it has today, namely that of an element that has to be avoided in written texts.

Although gender and social class did not have a major effect on the use of the different genitival constructions, next to context there was at least one other non-social variable that did: the length of the constituents involved. It was clear that the relation between the length of the possessor and the length of the possessum influenced the occurrence of prenominal and postnominal genitival constructions. If the possessor was longer than the possessum, the chances were larger to find the possessor placed after the possessum in a postnominal *van*-construction than when the possessor was shorter than the possessum. In the latter case, prenominal genitival constructions (the *s*-construction and the *z'n*-construction) occurred more often than the *van*-construction. This means that the general short-before-long principle (Behaghel 1909, Hawkins 1994, Wasow 2002 in Van Bergen 2011: 52-53) applies to genitival constructions in seventeenth-century Dutch.

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## Chapter 10. Rich rewards

In this dissertation it has been shown that the new *Letters as Loot* corpus can be used successfully to examine the effect of social and regional factors on language use in seventeenth-century Dutch. Thereby, it offers a look at the history of Dutch from a whole new perspective. The rich rewards of the *Letters as Loot* corpus will be described in §10.1 of this final chapter and suggestions for extending the corpus and for further research will be given in §10.2. The final conclusions will be drawn in §10.3

### 10.1. The results

In §10.1.1 I will briefly discuss the results of each case study. In §10.1.2, I will discuss the general patterns that have been detected throughout the different case studies and the general conclusions to which these patterns can be linked.

#### 10.1.1. The case studies

##### *Forms of address*

The case study of forms of address is probably the case study which offers the best view on the amount of linguistic variation that can be present in the seventeenth-century letters. The seventeenth-century private letters do not only contain epistolary forms of address – such as *ul* and *UE* – but also others, such as *gij* and *u*, and the form of address *jij*, which is associated with spoken Dutch. Social class, gender, letter type and the relationship between the sender and the addressee have all been proved to influence the choice of forms of address to some extent.

Very striking is the conclusion that women in general behaved much like members of the lower social classes (men and women alike), while men in general behaved more like members of the upper social classes in general. Forms of address that were not typical of letters (*gij* and *jij*) and the older form *ul* were used more frequently in letters written by women and by members of the lower classes, while the newer epistolary form of address (*UE*) was used more frequently in letters written by men and by members of the upper social classes.

##### *Reflexivity and reciprocity*

There are a few questions pertaining to reflexivity and reciprocity in seventeenth-century Dutch which linguists would like to see answered. The

questions concern the reflexive pronoun *zich* and the reciprocal pronouns *elkaar* and *mekaar*. Where did the third person reflexive pronoun *zich* come from and why did it dethrone the older reflexive pronouns *hem/haar/hun*? Why did *zich* become the standard Dutch reciprocal pronoun? Basically, the same questions can be asked for the reciprocal pronoun *elkaar*: where did it come from and why did it dethrone the original pronoun *mekaar*? Unfortunately, the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus could not provide us with final answers to these questions, due to the fact that these reflexive and reciprocal pronouns do not occur very frequently in letters. However, some conclusions could be drawn.

As far as *zich* is concerned, the data show no evidence for the existing hypothesis that it was brought into seventeenth-century Dutch in the spoken language of Southern immigrants. The spread of *zich* in the region of Zeeland seems to have been a change from above, since it occurred in official texts before it started to be used in letters. Furthermore, it could be established that *elkaar* was not used in the language of immediacy of upper-middle- and upper-class writers in a period in which it was used by upper-class literary authors, such as Vondel, Huygens and Hooft. This strongly confirms the hypothesis that *elkaar* was introduced into Dutch by members of upper-class literary circles.

#### *Negation*

While the language-internal and regional factors influencing the change from bipartite negation to single negation in Dutch have been examined in detail in the existing literature, the possible influence of language-external factors, such as social factors, has received less attention. The sub-corpus of seventeenth-century private autographs makes it possible to examine the influence of these social factors as well. The main conclusions of this chapter are that the change from bipartite to single negation occurred first in North Holland and did only later occur in the provinces south of North Holland. In these southern provinces, South Holland and Zeeland, members of the upper social classes were quicker to pick up the use of single negation: the change from bipartite to single negation seemed to be a change from above in this area of the Dutch Republic. Again, women in these regions behaved more like members of the lower social classes in general, using bipartite negation more often than men and members of the upper social classes.

#### *Apocope of final schwa*

Apocope of final schwa is another change that spread from the North to the South. However, this time, the sub-corpus of private autographs showed that men of the upper classes in North Holland used the schwa-ending in first



person singular verbs more often than men of the lower classes: apocope of final schwa was a change from below in this region. Not only social class turned out to be a factor of influence on the spread of apocope; gender was an important factor as well: women both in the southern and in the northern regions under investigation were quicker to pick up on schwa-apocope than men. A third interesting point is the lack of influence of the stylistic context: verb forms in a formulaic context did not clearly show less apocope of the schwa than verb forms in a non-formulaic context. The fourth point of interest was a language-internal factor: the phonetic quality of the ending of the stem of a verb could either promote [t] or inhibit [d] schwa-apocope. However, the phonetic context following the first person singular verb form did not influence the presence or absence of a final schwa.

#### *Diminutives*

Examining the distribution of the many diminutive suffixes in seventeenth-century private letters proved to be a challenge, because of the fact that one particular spelling, namely <ie>, could be interpreted phonologically in two different ways, as [jə] or as [i]. To solve this problem, a careful analysis of the spelling habits of each letter writer was carried out. The lower the social class of the letter writers examined, the less frequently this approach was successful, and the approach was also less successful for female letter writers. This result is in itself quite meaningful: it illustrates that letter writers of the upper social classes and men were more consistent in using a particular spelling to indicate a particular phonological element.

Region was a factor substantially influencing the distribution of the different types of diminutive suffixes, the diminutive suffix [kə] being clearly more present in the most southern province under investigation, Zeeland. The private autographs of North Holland that were examined for influence of the social factors of gender, social class and age showed the following results. The [kə]-suffix was identified as a suffix more typical of written Dutch than of spoken Dutch and was found most often in the writings of well-educated people, mostly members of the upper class. For [jə] and [i] the data were less decisive, however they did suggest that the [jə]-suffix was used more frequently by members of the upper classes, while [i] was used more often by members of the lower classes. This result could explain the situation in present-day Dutch, where [jə] is the standard diminutive suffix, while [i] is found more often in colloquial speech or in dialects.

#### *The genitive and alternative constructions*

The synthetic genitive construction was thought to be as good as extinct in seventeenth-century spoken Dutch, but still alive in the written Dutch of the

period. This was confirmed very neatly by the corpus of private letters: the genitive construction almost only occurred in parts of the letters that required an elevated style or in formulae, and almost never occurred in parts of the letters which had a more spontaneous character. The more the language use in the letters leaned towards the language of distance and was thus more typical of writing, the more often the genitive occurred. The more the language use in the letters leaned towards everyday language and was more typical of spoken language, the less often the genitive occurred.

In neutral contexts, the social factors of gender and social class did not influence the distribution of the genitive and alternative constructions to a large extent, but one language-internal factor did: the length of the constituents involved. The relative length of the possessor and the possessum in the construction influenced the choice for a prenominal or a postnominal construction. When the possessor was longer than the possessum, the postnominal *van*-construction, in which the long possessor was placed after the possessum, occurred more frequently. This suggests that the general short-before-long principle also applied to genitival constructions in seventeenth-century Dutch.

### 10.1.2. General conclusions

Now that the conclusions of the different case studies have been discussed separately, there is room for a general discussion on the findings of this dissertation and for answering the question of what these findings mean for historical sociolinguistics, for the language history from below and for the history of Dutch in particular. I will present these general conclusions in the form of questions and answers. Questions 1 and 2 pertain to language variation found in the seventeenth-century letters in general. Questions 3 and 4 examine the relationship between variation in language use and some of the external factors: social class, gender, and region. Finally, the answer to question 5 reveals what is so unique about the conclusions of this dissertation.

*1. What does this first large-scale linguistic investigation of seventeenth-century private letters reveal about language variation in the seventeenth century?*

In the introduction, the acknowledged linguistic profile of seventeenth-century Dutch has been presented. Briefly put, Dutch in the seventeenth century is believed to have been largely standardised, while the process of micro-selection had not been completed yet. This dissertation has confirmed this idea to a certain extent: on the one hand it is clear that the letters in the corpus have not been written in the local dialects of the letter writers, but on

the other hand this dissertation has also established that a large extent of morphological and syntactic variation was present in the language use of the letter writers from the corpus.

My research into this variation has revealed that the acceptance of certain standard Dutch phenomena, such as the reciprocal pronoun *elkander/elkaar*, took place later than presumed. According to earlier research, the overtaking of *malkander/mekander* by *elkander* took place in the seventeenth century, which was illustrated by the work of the literary author Vondel, who solely used *elkander* from 1650 onwards. The seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus, however, has shown that *elkander* was almost never used in the everyday language of letter writers from the middle and upper classes, not even in the youngest letters stemming from 1672. Similar conclusions could also be drawn for the single negation: while in earlier studies the literary authors Hooft and Vondel were shown to use single negation exclusively in their writings from about 1640 onwards and while single negation appeared to be quite dominant in the West of the Dutch Republic around 1650, 20 years later, the letter writers in the corpus still used bipartite negation in about 35% of the cases.

Of course, these differences between the results from the corpus and earlier research are related to the fact that language changes take place at different moments in time and at different rates in different text types and with different people. Since it is the first time that the language use in seventeenth-century Dutch private letters written by people from all sorts of social backgrounds is examined in detail, the results from these examinations are bound to be different from the results presented in the literature up to now which is mainly based on printed (literary) texts or administrative documents which were typically produced by members of the upper classes.

## 2. *To what extent can we witness traces of spoken Dutch in the seventeenth-century Letters as Loot corpus?*

Throughout the dissertation, the data have confirmed that the private letters under examination contain both language phenomena typical of spoken language and phenomena typical of written language. The fact, for instance, that region is an important factor of influence on the distribution of different types of negation, on the apocope of the schwa, and on the distribution of different diminutive suffixes suggests that for these linguistic phenomena the variation in the written Dutch is closely connected to variation in spoken Dutch. However, this does not mean that all variation found in writing can be linked directly to variation in spoken Dutch.

The seventeenth-century letter writers in the corpus were of course aware of the fact that they were writing and of the fact that there are

linguistic phenomena typical of written Dutch. Proof of this can be seen in the use of forms of address, for instance. The epistolary forms of address, *ul* and *UE*, are very popular with letter writers from all social classes: per social class they were used in about 50% or more of the cases. If private letters were just a mere reflection of spoken Dutch in writing, this large presence of typically written forms would be unlikely. Another example of variation that does not immediately reflect the variation of the spoken language is the case of schwa-apocope. I have shown that the presence of schwa-apocope in the seventeenth-century letters was not influenced by the phonetic context following the verb form, while it is very likely that the phonetic context did influence the presence or absence of a schwa in spoken Dutch.

Although the private letters are likely to contain more elements of spoken Dutch than, for instance, printed literary texts and thus may offer a more reliable picture of variation in the everyday Dutch of the seventeenth century, it is certainly not the case that they consist entirely of spoken Dutch written down literally. Deciding if and to what extent language use in the seventeenth-century private letters reflects historical spoken Dutch is a precarious affair and should be undertaken for each linguistic phenomenon separately and cautiously: one always has to bear in mind that writing is very different from speaking.

*3. What is the distribution of different linguistic variants across the different groups of language users? In other words: how are the linguistic variables related to region, class and gender?*

As far as region is concerned, a clear pattern is discernable in the case studies described in this dissertation: the newer linguistic variants occurred more often in North Holland, the most northern part of the area under examination, and the older linguistic variants occurred more often in Zeeland, the most southern part. Single negation, for instance, occurred in almost 90% of the cases in North Holland, while it took up just about 50% of the cases in Zeeland, as shown in chapter 6. The older bipartite negation was thus still standing quite strong in the most southern province under investigation. The same applies to the spread of schwa-apocope: the newer first person singular verb forms without final schwa occurred far less often in Zeeland (in 23% of the cases) than in North Holland (71%). Lastly, the older diminutive suffix *-ke* occurred in more than 30% of the cases in letters written by people from Zeeland, while it was less popular in North Holland (occurring in only 4% of the cases in the city of Amsterdam and in 10% of the cases in the rest of the province).

The position of South Holland varies: sometimes the distribution of the linguistic variables in South Holland resembled the distribution in North

Holland, such as in the case study of schwa-apocope. However, the data for South Holland could also resemble those for Zeeland: bipartite negation was present in about 50% of the cases in letters linked to either of the provinces. South Holland thus appeared to be a transitional region, the linguistic profile of which fitted neatly in between that of Zeeland and North Holland. This was very obvious in the case of the diminutive suffixes: the many *-ge* suffixes in South Holland seemed to form the transition between the popular *-ke* suffix of Zeeland and the popular [jə] and [i] suffixes in North Holland.

The social variables class and gender have proved to be important variables. The nature of their influence depended strongly on the nature of the language variable of interest and could also vary per region. For terms of address, for instance, the variant *UE* – which had found its origin in the chancery – was more popular with the upper social classes, while it was almost never used by letter writers of the two lower social classes. However, as far as the spread of schwa-apocope in Holland was concerned – a change that probably took place in spoken Dutch first – the upper classes were the last groups to accept the younger variant without the schwa. For negation, women held on to the old bipartite negation longer than men, but then again women were quicker than men in picking up on schwa-apocope.

One particular link between gender and social class deserves special attention, because it reappeared several times: in the distribution of forms of address, negation, and diminutive suffixes, female writers in general behaved similar to letter writers from the lower social classes in general, while male writers in general behaved similar to letter writers from the upper social classes in general. In practice, this meant that the language use of men from the upper social classes stood out as different, as was shown in §4.3.7. As explained in chapter 2, this phenomenon is linked to the level of education and writing experience: men from the upper social classes were usually better educated than their female peers and members from the lower classes. Furthermore, they probably had more writing experience, given the fact that many of them were involved in business and had to maintain a large network of friends and business partners. Their being more ‘writing-oriented’ than members of the lower classes or than women in general clearly had its impact on their language use in private letters.

This link between gender and social class shows that the influence of these variables on the distribution of certain linguistic phenomena can sometimes be of an indirect nature. Writers’ level of education and writing experience can sometimes be the prime factor influencing the extent to which they use a particular linguistic variant. And the level of writers’ education and writing experience is then determined to a certain extent by their gender and social class. So it has been proved to be very fruitful to treat social class and gender not just as variables that say something about a

person's sex and socio-economical status, but also as variables that give something away about a person's education, their functioning in society and thus about their relationship with reading and writing.

4. *Can these data reveal where particular language changes started: in which region and among which group of language users?*

In trying to answer this question, we must keep in mind that the corpus of letters mainly contains letters linked to the provinces of Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland. If a language change appears first in one of these three provinces, this does not necessarily mean that this region was the first region in the entire Dutch-speaking area to show a certain variant. The same caution applies to the social strata. The corpus probably comprises no more than a few fragments of the language use of the lowest of all social classes in the six-layer stratification discussed in §2.2.4, namely that of the have-nots. And neither does the corpus contain language use of the highest level: the aristocracy. If either of these social groups was responsible for a language change, we are not able to establish this.

From the discussion above it is very clear that North Holland is the region in which the three different language changes examined for regional influence occurred first (the rise of single negation, changes in diminutive suffixes and the apocope of the schwa). This is in accordance with the generally acknowledged theory that Holland was the richest and the most influential region of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century and that its political and economical power led to this region becoming exemplary for its language use as well.

It is impossible to determine one particular social group that would be responsible for each language change. As the discussion above has indicated, it varies a lot which social group should be considered the pioneer of a particular evolution. What is important to conclude, is that both language changes from below and language changes from above occurred in seventeenth-century Dutch. It is not the case that all language changes under examination were steered by members of the upper classes, nor did all changes start spontaneously in the lower social strata. Sometimes a change was started by writers from the upper classes, such as the spread of *elkaar* that seems to have been introduced by well-known writers at the expense of the older form *mekaar* or such as the introduction of *UE*. However, in the case of schwa-apocope for instance, the lower social classes in Holland used first person singular verb forms more often without the schwa than letter writers from the upper social classes, suggesting that members of the lower social classes of Holland were the first to use this schwa-less verb form.

5. *Does this dissertation yield unique data and insights?*

The answer to this question is a straightforward ‘yes’. The corpus created for this dissertation is unique for different reasons. Firstly it contains language use of men and women from lower and middle classes, while until now, many corpora used for historical research of Dutch contained linguistic material produced by members – mainly men – from the upper classes. Secondly, the letters in the corpus have been examined in detail in order to establish whether they are autographs or not. As a result, there is a sub-corpus of letters that are definite autographs, a sub-corpus of letters that are certainly non-autographs and a sub-corpus of letters of uncertain authorship. The sub-corpus of autographs can be safely used for socio-historical examinations. Thirdly, the corpus contains language use of a large number of different people: it contains 595 letters written by 441 different writers. This large number of different letter writers allows us to map language variation in seventeenth-century Dutch and allows us to obtain a picture of seventeenth-century Dutch that is more reliable than it would be if it was based on the language use of a small group of individuals. The last exceptional element about the corpus is the fact that it is made up mostly of private letters and thus contains elements of everyday language. In any case, the language use in these letters is different from language use in printed (literary) texts, which have formed the subject of much historical linguistic research so far.

The data used for this dissertation are thus unparalleled, which means that the results from this corpus are without parallel too, whether they contradict existing ideas about the history of Dutch or not. The data have in some cases confirmed existing hypotheses, but they have also given rise to new insights about variation and change in seventeenth-century Dutch. Seventeenth-century women in general used terms of address, single negation, and diminutive suffixes in the same way as lower-class writers generally did, which is likely linked to the fact that both women and lower-class writers in general were less experienced writers than men from the upper classes. The careful analysis of the spelling of the diminutive suffixes also revealed that seventeenth-century women and lower-class writers spell less consistently than men from upper classes, which could again be related to their level of writing experience. It has also been shown that the reflexive pronouns *elkander/elkaar* were introduced into Dutch by a certain upper-class group of literary authors and that in Zeeland the other reflexive pronoun *zich* occurred first in official, administrative texts rather than in spoken Dutch. Furthermore, women were the first to adopt the apocope of the schwa in the seventeenth century. And it has been shown that in the seventeenth century, the use of some linguistic variants was influenced by

context, while the use of others was not: the older synthetic genitive was very clearly linked to formulaic contexts, while the distribution of schwa-apocope was not influenced by formulae at all.

To conclude, the results and insights of this dissertation are not only an addition to research on seventeenth-century Dutch, they also contribute to sociohistorical linguistics in general. The language history from below approach has been shown to work for seventeenth-century Dutch, to which it had not been applied before. It has revealed insight into variation and the relevant factors involved in this variation in specific cases. The idea that the levels of education and writing experience have explanatory value beyond the variables gender and social class has again been proved to be fruitful. Furthermore, in developing the Leiden Identification Procedure for the *Letters as Loot* corpus, I have provided a method that could be applied to distinguish autograph letters from non-autograph ones in other letter corpora for Dutch as well as in corpora for other languages.

## 10.2. Desiderata

This dissertation has proved that it is possible to work on a linguistic history from below for seventeenth-century Dutch, but much research is still to be done. In what follows, I will make a few suggestions for further research.

First and foremost, the corpus of seventeenth-century letters could still be enlarged with more seventeenth-century *Sailing Letters*. Another 400 private letters from the period of the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch War have already been photographed and transcribed by the *Letters as Loot* project and there may still be more of them hidden in the huge HCA archive. The sub-corpus of business letters could also be enlarged, since the archives in London contain several thousands of business letters. The existence of a large corpus of business letters next to a corpus of private letters would enable comparisons between language use in different types of letters. Studying the influence of register and letter type could reveal much about the attitude towards different linguistic variants. At the moment, a project at the Meertens Instituut in collaboration with the *Prize Papers* consortium, an affinity group which strives to ensure that the documents in the HCA archive can be thoroughly analysed by scholars who have the expertise, is making a start at inventorying more Dutch letters present in the High Court of Admiralty archives and transcribing them. Hopefully, this project will lead to an enlarged corpus fit for socio-historical research.

The usefulness of the corpus would also be increased if it was parsed and tagged (for both headwords and syntactic functions). For now, only string searches are possible which means that – given the many spelling



variants – one can never be 100% certain of having found all possible variants of a word. Lemmatising would simplify searches for a particular word or morpheme and parsing and tagging would make research of syntactic variables and word order more feasible. At the moment, the INL (Institute for Dutch Lexicology) is experimenting with lemmatising the *Letters as Loot* corpus. If this is successful, further steps might be taken in parsing and tagging the corpus and in examining further syntactic issues.

In this dissertation, the letters of the sub-corpora of non-autograph letters and of letters of uncertain authorship have not been included in examinations of the relation between social variables and language use. They have only been used to inventory different variants for a particular linguistic variable and to determine the frequency (overall or per region) of these variants. But since not a lot of research has been carried out in the domain of non-autograph letters, these letters by themselves might constitute interesting research material. Questions that can be asked are for instance: Can we tell the difference between letters written by a professional letter writer and letters written by a friend or a family member of the sender of the letter? Are there linguistic elements that betray the status (autographs or not) of a letter? Do letter senders and the friends or family members writing their letters usually belong to the same social class or age group or have the same gender? If so, can these letters also be incorporated when examining the relationship between a specific social factor and language use?

Now that there is a clear picture of the variation and change in seventeenth-century Holland and Zeeland regarding several linguistic phenomena, the question arises how this picture of the second half of the seventeenth century fits into a larger time frame and a wider geographical perspective. Comparing the results of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus to the results of the eighteenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus will show how Dutch developed in a period of hundred years.<sup>129</sup>

### 10.3. A new outlook

Little did the seventeenth-century letter writers from the corpus know that their writings would be preserved for hundreds of years and that twenty-first-century historical linguists would regard them as a true treasure. They would probably wonder what could be so special about their ordinary letters. But it is just the fact that these writings are private letters of which many are written by ‘ordinary’ people from the lower and middle classes that makes

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<sup>129</sup> A comparison of the results stemming from these two corpora will shortly appear in a monograph written by Gijsbert Rutten and Marijke Van der Wal.

them extraordinary to present-day historical linguists: such a large collection of this type of Dutch seventeenth-century texts has never been found before. Therefore the finding of these letters has raised high expectations. Hidden in the countless cardboard boxes of the High Court of Admiralty archives in Kew could be some missing pieces of the puzzle of the history of Dutch.

Examining the material has required substantial efforts: figuratively digging up seventeenth-century Dutch letters in the enormous archive of the High Court of Admiralty in Kew, preparing the found objects for research by transcribing them and double-checking transcriptions, mapping the finds in a database and delving in other Dutch archives in search of background information. But the results were worthwhile. Here lies, gleaming in the metaphorical display case that a dissertation is, the result of a substantial linguistic excavation: parts of the everyday language use of lower- and middle-class seventeenth-century people, a view from below on seventeenth-century Dutch.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: The transcription protocol

This transcription protocol contains the guidelines that were used for transcribing letters for the *Letters as Loot* corpus. Among other things it contains information for the volunteers of the *wikiscripta Neerlandica* project about how to deal with punctuation, abbreviations and illegibility.

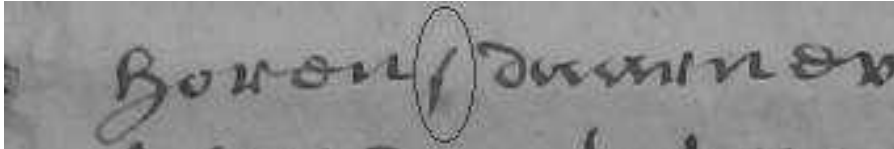
#### Dutch version

##### Diplomatische transcriptie en voetnoten

- o Zet alle toevoeging van jezelf in een voetnoot, zodat de transcriptie alleen 17e-eeuws en 18e-eeuws taalgebruik bevat.
- o Zet aanvullende informatie over personen, plaatsen, schepen, etc. in de database, zodat de transcriptie uitsluitend diplomatische voetnoten bevat.
- o Zet voetnoten altijd aan het eind van een woord, ook als de opmerking betrekking heeft op één letter. Begin de voetnoot ook met dat woord, bijvoorbeeld: *haer*: de e is gevlekt.
- o Neem interlineaire toevoegingen of toevoegingen in de marge op in de lopende tekst en geef dit aan met een voetnoot. Bijvoorbeeld: *het*: interlineaire toevoeging boven de regel.
- o Geef tekst die in superscript staat ook als zodanig in de transcriptie weer, bijvoorbeeld in afkortingen: Cap<sup>t</sup>.
- o Geef onleesbare tekst (bijv. door loodlint, vlek of scheur in het papier) weer met: [...]. Weet je wat er waarschijnlijk heeft gestaan? Geef deze tekst dan cursief weer, bijvoorbeeld: *cursief*.
- Merk in een voetnoot op waardoor de tekst onleesbaar is.
- o Geef tekst die is doorgestreept weer in de transcriptie met een enkele doorhaling, bijvoorbeeld: ~~doorgestreept~~. Gebruik bij leesbare woorden geen rechte haken. Is de tekst onleesbaar? Dan transcriberen we: {...}.
- o Twijfel je over een transcriptie? Geef dit aan met een gele arcering of een opmerking/comment.

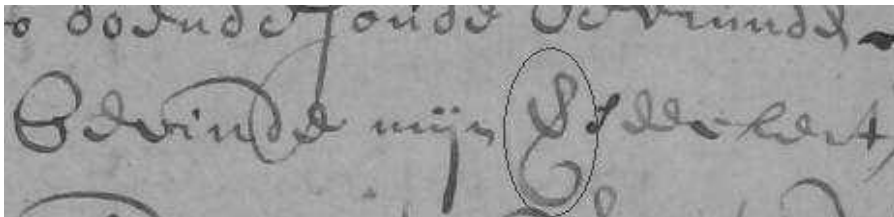
##### Interpunctie en spelling

- o Breng zelf geen interpunctie aan, maar geef de interpunctie in het materiaal wel altijd weer.
- o Geef een komma voor zogenaamde gotische komma's.



**Figuur A.1:** voorbeeld van een gotische komma

- o Geef afbrekingtekens in de tekst weer met: -. In de 18e-eeuwse brieven vaak zijn
- woordafbrekingen vaak aangegeven met: ”. Ze kunnen zowel aan het eind als aan het begin van de regel voor komen. Transcribeer woordafbrekingen alleen als ze in de brief staan.
- o Schrijf afkortingen niet voluit. Een uitzondering vormen eñ \_ *ende* en woorden met ver- \_ *ver-* (zie voorbeeldillustratie). Cursiveer de letters die niet in de tekst staan. Andere afkortingen kun je oplossen in een voetnoot.



**Figuur A.2:** voorbeeld van een afkorting voor *ver-*

- o Geef *u* voor *ú/ü* wanneer deze letter consequent zo in een brief geschreven wordt.
- o Geef *y* voor *ij* zonder puntjes.
- o Maak zoveel mogelijk het onderscheid tussen *i* en *j* / *u* en *v* in overeenstemming met de brief.
  - Schrijf voor *iaer* en *ian* niet *jaer* en *jan*, maar behoud de *i*.
  - Transcribeer een *u* in *bouen* zoals in de brief en niet *boven*.
- o Vaak is niet duidelijk of een letter een hoofdletter is. Maak, bij een duidelijk onderscheid tussen hoofdletters en kleine letters in de brief, ook een onderscheid in de transcriptie. Gebruik nooit een hoofdletter in het midden van een woord. En zorg ervoor dat er geen hoofdletters in de transcriptie staan als dat in de brief evident niet zo is.

### English translation

#### Diplomatic transcriptions and footnotes

- o Put all additional comments in footnotes, such that the transcription itself only contains seventeenth- and eighteenth-century language.
- o Put all additional information about people, places, ships, etc. in the database, such that the transcription only contains diplomatic footnotes.
- o Always include footnotes at the end of a word, even if the remark in the footnote concerns only one letter. Start the comment in the footnote with the word you are commenting on, e.g. *haer*: the letter *e* is stained.
- o Include interlinear additions or additions in the margin in the running text and indicate this with a footnote. Example: *het*: interlinear addition above the line.
- o Render text that is in superscript as such in the transcription, e.g. superscript in abbreviations: *Cap<sup>t</sup>*.
- o Represent illegible fragments (because of tears or stains on the paper or because of a piece of lead used to weigh down the letter for photographing in the Archives) with: [...]. Do you know what the text probably said? Then render this text in italics, e.g.: *cursief*. Then add in a footnote the reason why this fragment is illegible.
- o Render words that have been crossed out as text with a single strikethrough in the transcription, e.g.: ~~doorgestreept~~. Do not use brackets if the text is legible. If the text is illegible and crossed out, then write: {...}.
- o If you have doubts about a fragment of the transcription, then indicate this with a shading or a comment.

#### Punctuation and spelling

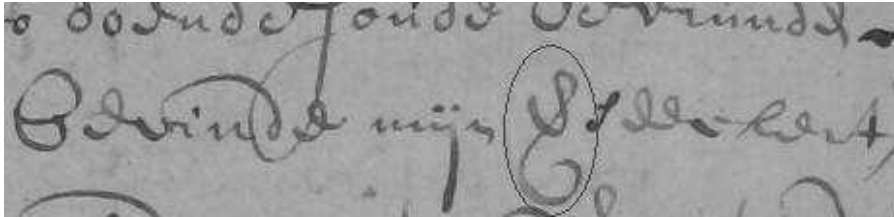
- o Do not add your own punctuation to the transcription, but always reproduce the punctuation present in the letter.
- o Transcribe a comma (,) when the text contains so-called Gothic comma's.



Figure A.1: example of a Gothic comma

- o Transcribe hyphens with -. In eighteenth-century letters, hyphens are often rendered as: ”. They can occur at the end as well as at the beginning of a line. Only include hyphens in the transcription if they are in the original letter.
- o Do not write abbreviations in full. Exceptions are *eñ* \_ *ende* and words beginning with a symbol for *ver-* \_ *ver-* (as in figure A.2). Render the letters

that are not in the text in italics. Other abbreviations can be rendered in full in a footnote.



**Figure A.2:** example of an abbreviation of *ver-*

- o Render *u* for *ú/ü* if this occurs consistently within a letter.
- o Render *y* for *ij* without the dots.
- o Try to distinguish *i* from *j* and *u* from *v* as much as possible in accordance with the original letter.
  - Retain the *i* in *iaer* and *ian* and do not write *jaer* en *jan*.
  - Retain the *u* in *bouen* if this is in the letter and do not change the word into *boven*.
- o It is often unclear whether a letter is a capital or not. If there is a clear distinction between capitals and non-capitals in the letter, then keep this distinction in the transcription. Do not write capitals in the middle of a word. Make sure there are no capitals in the transcription if there are no capitals in the letter.



## Appendix B: An example of a diplomatic transcription

### The transcription

[3-1-2008 129-130]

1. Aen den eersamen pieter
2. aerrensen schipper op
3. het zeepaert
4. tot sernamen
5. met vrient over zee

[p.1]

6. Looft Godt boven al den 2 april
7. Een vriendelicke groetenisse sij gescreuen aen mijn
8. seer lief mede wel bemijnde man pieter harensen
9. bij mijn elijsabet bernaers ick late ul weten als
10. dat ick noch kloeck en gesondt ben met onse kijnders
11. godt ~~h~~ lof ende danck van sijner genade[...]<sup>1</sup> ende ick
12. hoepe het van ul mede te horen waer het
13. henders met u ende met onse sone het soude mijn
14. van herten leet weesen om te horen dat weet
15. weet godt [...]<sup>2</sup> al machtigh die een kender van al
16. mensen herten is<sup>3</sup> vors late ick ul weten als
17. datter drie schepen genomen ben van de hingelssen
18. ende dat de spaense vlote gesleegen heeft ge tegens se
19. de hingelse schepen ende daer ben twee hingelse
20. schepen in de grondt geschooten ende de hingelse
21. schepen die ben hier al g beslege<sup>4</sup> vors soo en weete
22. [...]<sup>5</sup> ick niet veel te scriuen want den tijt is [...]<sup>6</sup> kort dat
23. ghij weech geweest heft ende wij hebbe [...]<sup>7</sup> bief
24. brieuen ontvangen 2 uijt korck ende een uijt

<sup>1</sup> [...]: vlek.

<sup>2</sup> [...]: doorhaling.

<sup>3</sup> is: s is moeilijk leesbaar door vlek.

<sup>4</sup> beslaan: in beslag nemen, innemen, veroveren?

<sup>5</sup> [...]: hier lijkt een letter begonnen, maar niet afgemaakt.

<sup>6</sup> [...]: hier lijkt een letter begonnen, maar niet afgemaakt.

<sup>7</sup> [...]: twee letters begonnen.

25. watervort ende wij hebbe verstaen als dat gij  
26. van storm ofte van een noor ooste wijnt heet  
27. was mijn van herten leedt om te horen maer  
28. ick hoope dat godt u bewaeren sal voor een  
29. aongelick want ick ben soo benaeut door dese  
30. bedroufden tijt want den tijt staet seer  
31. drouvijgh soo dat ick wel wijlde dat gij al weer  
32. tuis was [...] <sup>8</sup> maer ick hoope dat wij malkander  
33. met gesontheit sullen syen als godt belieft ofte dat ons  
34. salighij is hoope ick de heere sal ons dat geue voors  
35. soo late ick ul weten als datter een scaipeen <sup>9</sup> olander  
36. in gekomen is ende dat ick niet een briefken  
37. gekrege vors soo weense ick u hondert duisent  
38. goede nachten bij mijn elijsabedt <sup>10</sup> bernaers door mij  
39. gescreven maeijken pieters ul dochter

---

<sup>8</sup> [...]: vlek.

<sup>9</sup> *scaipeen*: schip, scheepje?

<sup>10</sup> *elijsabedt*: *e* is over een eerdere *d* heen geschreven.

## The images of the original letter

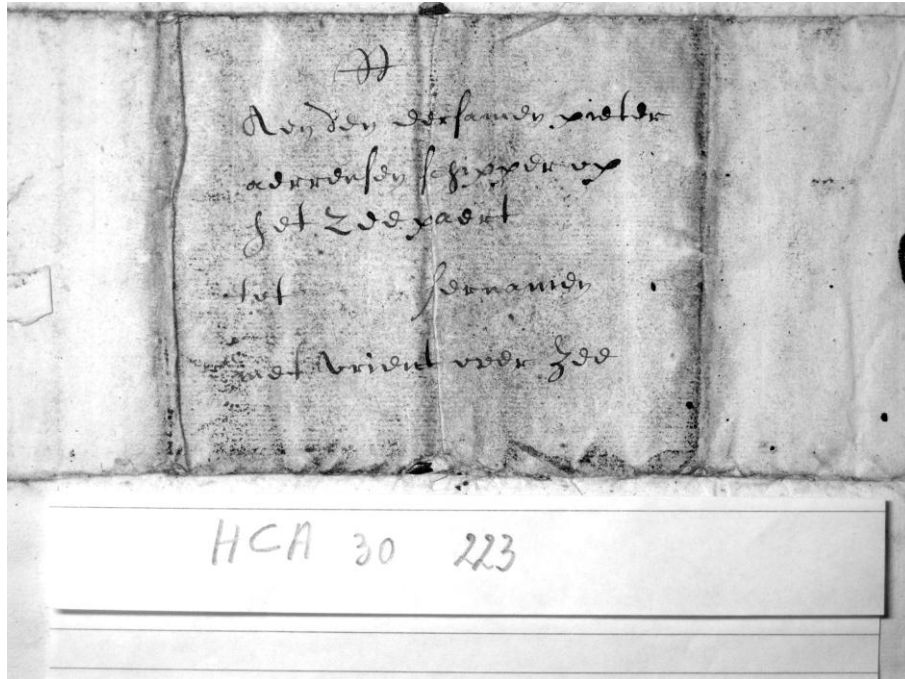


Figure B.1: the address

Looft Gode eerde al den 2 april  
 Een vriendelike groetenisse sij gescreuen den mijn  
 heer liet mede volc beuipde man pieter zanten  
 bij mijn elijsabet bernardus ichte late ul vollen als  
 dat ichte nachts belode en gesont ben met onse reijnders  
 godt ~~de~~ lot ende danck. van sijner genade. Ende ichte  
 goede bet van ul mede te horen voer bet  
 bernardus met in ende met onse sone bet sone mijn  
 van berden heet vollen om te horen dat volc  
 volc godt al machtigh al een kinder van al  
 menschen berden is vord late ichte ul vollen als  
 datter wil schijden. genomen den van de bingelste  
 ende dat de spaense vake gesbedgen bedt ge tegense  
 de bingelste schijden ende daer ben twee bingelste  
 schijden in de grond gesbedden ende de bingelste  
 schijden die den huer al g beslege vord so en vordt  
 ichte met well te scriven voer den tijt is kort dat  
 glij vordt genodeft bett ende wij belode } bett  
 brieden outoangen 2 mist kronck ende een iijst  
 voer den vordt ende wij belode vordt als dat gij  
 van doren ofte van een more oost te vordt bett  
 voer mijn van berden heet om te horen mede  
 ichte goede dat godt in beuipden sal voor een  
 onghelick vordt ichte den so beuipden vordt dese  
 beuipden tijt vordt den tijt staet seer  
 onvrijgh so dat ichte volc onghelick dat gij al mede  
 tijt voer mede ichte goede dat wij mal kander  
 met gesontheit sulken sijn als goet beliet of dat ons  
 salighij is goede ichte de belode sal ons dat geue vordt  
 so late ichte ul vollen als datter een fraiden olander  
 in gekomen is ende dat ichte met een briedstien  
 gesbedde vordt so vordt ichte in kander dinstent  
 gode maeten bij mijn elijsabet bernardus voer mij  
 gesonten maey den pieter ul datter

Figure B.2: the letter

## Appendix C: Protocol for Word file to Text file conversion

The protocol for Word file to Text file conversion contains guidelines for converting a Word file of a diplomatic transcription (as shown in Appendix B) into a Text file that can be searched with the program WordSmith, a popular corpus linguistics tool. Among other things it contains information about how to deal with abbreviations, illegibilities and tags.

### Dutch version

1. Loop de transcriptie eerst nog even door op foutieve afbreektkens en achterhaalde layout. In enkele van de oudere transcripties komen soms nog aangevulde afkortingen voor (bijvoorbeeld: *captein*). Haal de cursivering hier weg (behalve bij *ver* en *ende*). Ook is niet altijd correct weergegeven dat een woord onleesbaar is. Loop deze gevallen even na. Soms zijn er woorden met geel gearceerd en alternatieve lezingen gegeven, gevolgd door een vraagteken. Kies hier voor een van de mogelijkheden (eventueel met behulp van de foto). Kortom: pas de transcriptie zoveel mogelijk aan aan de nieuwe richtlijnen.
2. Maak de transcriptie definitief en sla deze daarna met 'save as' op (eventueel met de toevoeging txt (voorbeeld: 2-1-2008 064-067-TR-def-txt.doc)) in het mapje WordSmith (17<sup>e</sup> of 18<sup>e</sup> eeuw) op de J-schijf zodat er dus een extra exemplaar ontstaat dat je kunt bewerken, zonder in het origineel te rommelen!
3. Bewerk het bestand vervolgens door toevoeging van tags voor de categorieën 'doorhaling', 'afkorting', 'toevoeging', 'afbreking' en 'onleesbaar' volgens onderstaande afspraken
4. Haal ten slotte in dit nieuwe bestand de paginanummers, de regelnummers en de noten weg en sla het daarna op als textfile.

Let op: aangebrachte tags moeten ook telkens gesloten worden, bijvoorbeeld: `<unclear> gra[...]</unclear>`, zie verder hieronder:

- doorhalingen: Hetgene dat doorgehaald is en in de diplomatische transcriptie ~~doorgehaald~~ weergegeven wordt, wordt tussen de tags `<del>` en `</del>` geplaatst.  
vb ~~hebben~~ wordt `<del>h</del>ebben` (zonder spaties!)  
vb ~~hebben~~ wordt `<del>hebben</del>`  
vb een niet meer te ontcijferen doorhaling ~~f...f~~ wordt `<del>[...]</del>` (de streep van de doorhaling verdwijnt in de textfile).

- afkortingen: Alleen de standaardafkortingen *ver* en *ende* (komen met name voor in 17<sup>e</sup> eeuwse materiaal) die in de word-transcriptie cursief zijn uitgeschreven, worden in de textfile tussen de tags `<abbr>` en `</abbr>` geplaatst.
- toevoeging: Alle woorden die geheel of gedeeltelijk door de transcribenten in een tekst zijn aangebracht als *best guesses* voor wat er in de brief ontbreekt, worden volledig tussen de tags `<supplied>` en `</supplied>` gezet.
- afbrekingen: Alle woorden die aan het eind van een regel zijn afgebroken, met of zonder een afbrekingsteken, worden in de textfile tussen de tags `<hyph>` en `</hyph>` geplaatst. Op de plaats van de afbreking wordt in het woord nog de tag `<->` aangebracht.  
vb *amster*  
*dammer*  
wordt `<hyph>amster<->dammer</hyph>`  
vb *amsterda-*  
*mmer*  
wordt `<hyph>amsterda<->mmer</hyph>`
- onleesbaar: Alles wat onleesbaar is – om welke reden dan ook – wordt tussen de tags `<unclear>` en `</unclear>` geplaatst. Kijk ook in de noten of er sprake is van onzekere lezing of iets dergelijks.

### English translation

1. Check the transcription for wrongly placed hyphens and old layout. Some transcriptions still contain supplemented abbreviations e.g. ‘*captein*’. Remove the additions in italics (except for *ver* and *ende*). Sometimes illegibilities are not signalled correctly. Check these cases. Sometimes words are shaded and alternative readings are suggested. Pick one of these readings (if necessary, check the picture). In short: make sure the transcription is set up according to the present guidelines.
2. Create a final version of the transcription and save this version through the ‘save as’ button (if desired with the addition *txt* in the filename, e.g. *2-1-2008 064-067-TR-def-txt.doc*) in the folder called *Wordsmith* (17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century) on the computer’s *J* disk in order to create an extra file that you can manipulate without fiddling with the original file.
3. Process the file by adding the tags for the categories: ‘deletions’, ‘abbreviations’, ‘additions’, ‘hyphens’, and ‘illegibilities’ according to the rules presented below.

4. Finally, remove the page numbers, line numbers and footnotes in this new file and then save it as a Text file.

Take care: all tags consist of an opening and a closing tag, e.g. `<unclear>gra[...]</unclear>`, see below:

- deletions: parts that have been crossed out and that are represented as ~~crossed out~~ in the diplomatic transcriptions are put between the tags `<del>` and `</del>`.  
e.g. ~~hebben~~ becomes `<del>h</del>ebben` (without spacing!)  
e.g. ~~hebben~~ becomes `<del>hebben</del>`  
e.g. a deletion that has become illegible ~~f...f~~ becomes `<del>[...]</del>` (the strikethrough disappears in the Text file).
- abbreviations: Only the standard abbreviations *ver* and *ende* (typical of seventeenth-century letters), which have been rendered in italics in Word files, are put between the tags `<abbr>` and `</abbr>` in Text files.
- additions: All words or parts of words that have been added to a text by the transcriber as ‘best guesses’ for missing fragments of text in a letter are tagged with `<supplied>` and `</supplied>`.
- hyphens: All words that have been broken off at the end of a line – with or without a hyphen – are put between the tags `<hyph>` and `</hyph>` in Text files. The tag `<->` is added at the point of the break-off..  
e.g. *amster-*  
*dammer*  
becomes `<hyph>amster<->dammer</hyph>`  
e.g. *amsterda*  
*mmer*  
becomes `<hyph>amsterda<->mmer</hyph>`
- illegibilities: Every element that is illegible – no matter why – is put between the tags `<unclear>` and `</unclear>`. Check the footnotes of the diplomatic transcription to find out whether transcribers have indicated doubtful interpretations.

## Appendix D: The database

Below some screen shots from the *Letters as Loot* database show the kind of metadata that was gathered about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters and their senders and addressees. Figure D.1 shows a part of the database that contains general information about a specific letter in the database. Figures D.2 and D.3 show a part of the database that contains information about the specific sender of this letter. Screen shots from the part of the database with information about the addressee of this letter are not presented here, for they are identical to the parts that contain information about the sender. Finally, figure D.4 shows a part of the database with information about the contents of the letter.

<b>Signatuur:</b>	<input type="text" value="HCA 30-644"/>	Format: <i>HCA ##-###(#)(-#)(-###(#))</i>
<b>Status:</b>	definitief	<input type="button" value="aanpassen"/>
<b>1. Brief</b>		
<b>Datering:</b>	<input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="december"/> <input type="text" value="1664"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> onduidelijk of onbekend <input type="button" value="?"/>
<b>Adressering:</b>	<input type="text" value="op de brief"/>	(niet leeglaten)
<b>Aantal Pagina's:</b>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	(aantal beschreven pagina's, excl. adressering) <input type="button" value="?"/>
<b>Aantal Woorden:</b>	<input type="text" value="420"/>	
<b>Type brief:</b>	<input type="text" value="privé"/>	(niet leeglaten)
<b>Regiocode:</b>	<input type="text" value="Noord-Holland, Amsterdam"/>	
<b>Handschrift:</b>	<input type="text" value="gebrekkig"/>	
<b>Bijzonderheden:</b>	<input type="text" value="er kan ook een gedeelte van de brief op 5 december geschreven zijn, onduidelijk"/> Mogelijk merkteken boven adressering. Autograaf	
		<input type="button" value="Ok"/> <input type="button" value="Annuleer"/>

**Figure D.1:** Screen shot of the part of the database that contains information about a specific letter in the *Letters as Loot* corpus: finding place, status, date, and location of the address in the letter, number of pages, number of words, text type, region, quality of the handwriting, and further details.



2. Afzender	
(indien meerdere afzenders dan hier de eerste/belangrijkste vermelden)	
Geslacht:	<input type="text" value="man"/>
Naam:	zoals in brief: <input type="text" value="Carsten Carstensen"/>
	genormaliseerd: <input type="text" value="Carsten Carstensen"/>
Locatie, plaats:	zoals in brief: <input type="text" value="S Christoeffel"/>
	genormaliseerd: <input type="text" value="Saint Kitts"/>
Locatie, straat:	zoals in brief: <input type="text"/>
	genormaliseerd: <input type="text"/>
Locatie, regio:	zoals in brief: <input type="text"/>
	genormaliseerd: <input type="text" value="Caraïbisch gebied"/>
Locatie, land:	zoals in brief: <input type="text"/>
	genormaliseerd: <input type="text" value="Saint Kitts"/>
Locatie, schip:	zoals in brief: <input type="text"/>
	genormaliseerd: <input type="text"/>
Opleiding:	<input type="text"/>
Beroep:	<input type="text"/>
Klasse:	<input type="text" value="onbekend"/>
Soc. klimmer:	<input type="checkbox"/> ja

**Figure D.2:** Screen shot of the part of the database that contains information about the sender of a specific letter in the *Letters as Loot* corpus: gender, name, location (place, street, region, country, ship), education, occupation, social class, and a marking for social climbers.

Relatie tot geadr.:	(ex)echtgenoot	en	
Geboortejaar:			
Geboortedecennium:			?
Leeftijdscategorie:	30-40		
Geboorteplaats:			
Godsdienst:			
Beroepsschrijver:	<input type="checkbox"/>	ja	
Meerdere personen:	<input type="checkbox"/>	ja	?
Bijzonderheden:	Carsten Carstensen en Karsten Karstensen en Karsten Karsten worden alledrie gebruikt  kind Trijntje vader Carsten Carstensz moeder Grietje Jans		

**Figure D.3:** Screen shot of the part of the database that contains information about the sender of a specific letter in the *Letters as Loot* corpus: relationship with the addressee, year of birth, decade of birth, age group, place of birth, religious background, a marking for professional writers, a marking for multiple senders, and further details.

---

4. Inhoud brief

Genoemde familie:	
Genoemde personen:	Chrijstijan van de Weteren / Chrijstyan van der Weteren (schipper);
Genoemde plaatsen:	Hamborgh (Hamburg)
Genoemde schepen:	De Leeuw van Hamburg
Gebeurtenissen:	kinderen zijn overleden; tabak en suiker opgestuurd via Hamburg. Afzender is heel bedroefd omdat hij een brief heeft ontvangen die zijn vrouw duidelijk niet zelf heeft geschreven en ook niet heeft ondertekend
Vreemde talen:	<input type="checkbox"/> ja

---

**Figure D.4:** Screen shot of the part of the database that contains information about the contents of a specific letter in the *Letters as Loot* corpus: which family members are mentioned, which other people are mentioned, which cities, villages or regions are mentioned, which ships are mentioned, which events are described, a marking for languages other than Dutch that are present in the letter.



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## Samenvatting

Over het Nederlands van de zeventiende eeuw zijn ettelijke studies gepubliceerd. Verscheidene taalkundigen hebben in de loop van deze en de vorige eeuw honderden verschillende onderwerpen onderzocht en (soms hevig) bediscussieerd. Men zou dus kunnen denken dat het zeventiende-eeuws Nederlands weinig geheimen meer heeft voor de hedendaagse taalkundige. Toch levert deze dissertatie (*Extra*)*Ordinary letters. A view from below on seventeenth-century Dutch* een belangrijke bijdrage aan onze kennis over het zeventiende-eeuws en dat heeft alles te maken met de gekozen invalshoek – ‘language history from below’ – en het unieke bronnenmateriaal.

Gedurende de laatste twee decennia is het paradigma van de ‘language history from below’ uitgegroeid tot een volwassen subdiscipline binnen de historische sociolinguïstiek. Het doel van deze subdiscipline is tweeledig. Eerst en vooral is ‘language history from below’ – zoals de naam van de discipline al aangeeft – gericht op het taalgebruik van mensen uit de lagere regionen van de maatschappij. En hiermee hangt ook samen dat onderzoekers die binnen dit paradigma werken minder de nadruk willen leggen op prestigevariëteiten van bepaalde talen, maar meer willen inzoomen op taalvariëteiten die eerder niet als legitieme onderzoeksobjecten werden gezien. Het is als het ware een verschuiving van ‘vogelperspectief’ naar ‘kikvorsperspectief’ (Elspaß 2005: 13).

De ‘language history from below’ heeft de voorbije decennia gezorgd voor vernieuwende studies en onderzoeksprojecten, waaronder bijvoorbeeld studies over gesproken Frans in Parijs (Lodge 1994, 2004), over taalgebruik van de lagere klassen in het negentiende-eeuwse Brugge (Vandenbussche 1996, 1999), over gesproken en non-standaard Frans in de zeventiende eeuw (Ayres-Bennett 2004), over ‘Alltagsdeutsch’ in brieven van negentiende-eeuwse Duitse emigranten (Elspaß 2005, 2007), over Canadees Frans van de achttiende en negentiende eeuw (Martineau 2007), en over persoonlijke brieven uit Spanje en Portugal (Marquilhas 2012). In deze dissertatie richt ik mij op de ‘language history from below’ van het Nederlands en in het bijzonder op de sociolinguïstische situatie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden van de zeventiende eeuw.

Zoals eerder aangegeven, is er al veel onderzoek uitgevoerd naar zeventiende-eeuws Nederlands. Alleen heeft dit onderzoek zich in behoorlijke mate toegespitst op het zeventiende-eeuws Nederlands dat te vinden was in gedrukte, literaire en ambtelijke teksten in het kader van onderzoek naar het standaardisatieproces. Door het onderzoeken van deze bronnen is dus voornamelijk het Standaardnederlands in ontwikkeling

onderzocht zoals het werd gebruikt door de schrijvers van deze teksten: voornamelijk mannen uit de hogere lagen van de samenleving. Hierdoor is het taalgebruik van een belangrijk segment uit de samenleving, het (spontane) taalgebruik van mannen en vrouwen uit de midden- en lagere klasse, voor een groot deel buiten beschouwing gebleven. Deze dissertatie brengt hier verandering in door het toegankelijk maken en analyseren van uniek bronnenmateriaal, de zogenaamde *Sailing Letters*.

Deze *Sailing Letters* zijn brieven uit de zeventiende, achttiende, en negentiende eeuw die bewaard worden in het archief van de *High Court of Admiralty* (HCA) in de *National Archives* in Kew, London. Deze brieven werden voornamelijk buitgemaakt ten tijde van verschillende oorlogen waarin Nederland en het Verenigd Koninkrijk tegenover elkaar stonden. Tijdens deze oorlogen deden beide naties aan kaapvaart, wat niet verward mag worden met piraterij. In tegenstelling tot piraterij is kaapvaart namelijk legaal. Kaapvaart houdt in dat de staat in oorlogstijd toestemming geeft aan particulieren om schepen van de vijand te kapen en op te brengen als buit.

Dit proces was goed geregeld: de kaping moest aan verschillende eisen voldoen wilden de kapers de buit uiteindelijk toegewezen krijgen. Voor gekaapte schepen werkelijk tot buit verklaard konden worden, moest er in de *High Court of Admiralty* een proces gevoerd worden om te verifiëren of de kaping wel geldig was. Interviews met opvarenden en de inhoud van documenten aan boord moesten bewijs leveren dat het gekaapte schip inderdaad aan een vijandige natie toebehoorde. Daarom werden alle documenten aan boord van een gekaapt schip van boord gehaald en als bewijs gebruikt, inclusief de particuliere post die het schip vervoerde. Na het proces werden de bewijsstukken zorgvuldig opgeslagen in het archief. Omwille van deze gang van zaken bevat het HCA-archief vandaag de dag duizenden dozen vol zeventiende, achttiende, en negentiende-eeuwse documenten, waaronder – volgens een schatting van Roelof van Gelder in opdracht van de Koninklijke Bibliotheek – zo'n 38.000 Nederlandse brieven. Van die 38.000 Nederlandse brieven zouden er bijna 16.000 privébrieven zijn. Verkennend onderzoek naar de brieven wezen uit dat de persoonlijke brieven in dit archief geschreven waren door mannen en vrouwen uit alle lagen van de samenleving. Dit maakt deze brieven uitermate geschikt bronnenmateriaal voor historisch-sociolinguïstisch onderzoek van het zeventiende- en achttiende-eeuwse Nederlands volgens het paradigma van de 'language history from below'.

In 2008 startte dan ook onder leiding van Prof. dr. Marijke van der Wal aan de Universiteit Leiden het *Brieven als Buit*-project. Doel van dit door NWO-gefinancierde project was een nieuw licht te werpen op de sociolinguïstische situatie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw. Het subproject dat tot deze dissertatie heeft geleid

focuste op de zeventiende-eeuwse brieven die te vinden zijn in het HCA-archief en in het bijzonder op brieven die gekaapt werden tijdens de Tweede en Derde Nederlands-Engelse Oorlog (respectievelijk tussen 1665 en 1667 en tussen 1672 en 1675). De meeste van deze brieven zijn afkomstig uit het westen van de Republiek: uit de provincies Zeeland, Zuid-Holland en Noord-Holland. Deze dissertatie wil de zeventiende-eeuwse taalsituatie – een situatie waarin de positief gewaardeerde standaardtaal in grote lijnen al ontwikkeld was, maar waarin nog veel microselectie plaatsvond – opnieuw bekijken met speciale aandacht voor het tot nu toe onderbelicht gebleven taalgebruik van mensen uit de midden- en lagere klasse. Dit gebeurt aan de hand van zes casus waarin telkens een andere morfologische of morfosyntactische variabele wordt geanalyseerd aan de hand van een aantal taalexterne variabelen (regio, gender, sociale klasse, leeftijd en af en toe ook brieftype). Incidenteel komen ook enkele taalinterne variabelen aan bod. De onderzochte morfologische en morfosyntactische variabelen zijn: de aanspreekvormen (hoofdstuk 4), reflexiviteit en reciprociteit (hoofdstuk 5), negatie (hoofdstuk 6), apocope van de sjwa (hoofdstuk 7), diminutieven (hoofdstuk 8) en de genitief (hoofdstuk 9). In wat volgt vat ik elk hoofdstuk van deze dissertatie afzonderlijk samen.

In het inleidende hoofdstuk schets ik het theoretisch kader waarbinnen dit onderzoek geplaatst dient te worden: zowel de discipline van de historische sociolinguïstiek als de subdiscipline van de ‘language history from below’ worden beschreven en toonaangevende studies binnen deze disciplines worden besproken. Ook de stand van het onderzoek naar zeventiende-eeuws Nederlands wordt geschetst zodat het vernieuwende karakter van het onderzoek in deze dissertatie goed ingeschat kan worden. Vervolgens wordt de geschiedenis van het unieke bronnenmateriaal dat in dit onderzoek wordt gebruikt uit de doeken gedaan. Ten slotte worden de onderzoeksvragen die dit werk wil beantwoorden op een rijtje gezet. Wat onthult dit eerste grootscheepse linguïstische onderzoek van zeventiende-eeuwse persoonlijke brieven over taalvariatie in de zeventiende eeuw? In welke mate vinden we in de brieven sporen terug van gesproken Nederlands? Hoe zijn de verschillende varianten van bepaalde taalvariabelen verspreid over verschillende groepen taalgebruikers? En kunnen de brieven laten zien waar bepaalde taalveranderingen startten: in welke regio en bij welke taalgebruikers?

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt het zeventiende-eeuwse *Brieven als Buit-corpus* voorgesteld, evenals de methode die gehanteerd wordt om het materiaal te analyseren. Allereerst wordt nader ingegaan op de verschillende stappen in de opbouw van het corpus: de keuze van de data, de dataverzameling, het transcriberen van de originelen binnen het kader van het vrijwilligersproject *Wikiscripta Neerlandica*, het omzetten naar *Textfiles*,

de gegevensinvoer in de database en het identificeren van autografen met behulp van de *Leiden Identification Procedure* (LIP). Vervolgens worden de onafhankelijke variabelen besproken die van belang zijn voor de analyses in de verschillende casus en waarmee dus rekening dient gehouden te worden in de opbouw van het corpus: brieftype, regio, gender, sociale klasse, leeftijd, en opleiding en schrijfervaring. Hierna wordt het zeventiende-eeuwse *Brieven als Buit*-corpus voorgesteld. Het corpus van 595 brieven (geschreven door 441 verschillende scribenten) is onderverdeeld in drie subcorpora: een corpus van autografen (307 brieven van 232 verschillende scribenten), een corpus van niet-autografen (117 brieven van 77 verschillende scribenten) en een corpus van brieven waarvan niet kan worden vastgesteld of ze zelfgeschreven zijn of niet (171 brieven van 149 verschillende scribenten). Het subcorpus van autografen is geschikt voor onderzoek naar de invloed van de sociale variabelen gender, sociale klasse en leeftijd, aangezien de sociale kenmerken van de brieveschrijver gekoppeld kunnen worden aan het taalgebruik in de brief. De andere twee subcorpora kunnen niet voor dergelijk onderzoek gebruikt worden, maar zijn wel van belang voor onderzoek naar regionale variatie en het bepalen van de relatieve frequentie van bepaalde varianten van een talige variabele. Ten slotte wordt in dit hoofdstuk kort stilgestaan bij de rol van statistiek in de analyse van het bronnenmateriaal.

In hoofdstuk 3 wordt het belang van het indelen van de brieven in verschillende subcorpora uitgebreider besproken. Er wordt stilgestaan bij de geletterdheid in de zeventiende-eeuwse Republiek en de *Leiden Identification Procedure* (LIP) die ontwikkeld is om te bepalen of een brief autograaf is of niet. In deze methode worden de fysieke kenmerken van een brief gecombineerd met kennis over het leven van de afzender van de brief om te bepalen of het document door de afzender zelf geschreven is (en dus een autograaf is) of niet. Er wordt in detail uitgelegd hoe deze methode in de praktijk gebruikt is om de brieven van het *Brieven als Buit*-corpus in het juiste subcorpus onder te brengen.

Hoofdstuk 4 presenteert de eerste casus in de dissertatie: het onderzoek naar de aanspreekvormen in brieven. Uit de analyse blijkt duidelijk dat er een keur aan aanspreekvormen wordt gebruikt in het zeventiende-eeuwse corpus: het epistolaire *ul*, het epistolaire *UE*, het neutralere *gij* en *u*, en het meer spreektaalige *jij*. Het is onmiskenbaar dat de sociale variabelen van gender en sociale klasse een invloed hebben op de gebruikte aanspreekvormen: de relatief jonge aanspreekvorm *UE* blijkt typerend te zijn voor mannelijke schrijvers en voor schrijvers uit hogere sociale kringen, terwijl *ul*, *gij* en *jij* duidelijk vaker gebruikt worden door vrouwelijke schrijvers en schrijvers van de lagere sociale klassen in het algemeen. Verder tonen andere analyses ook duidelijk dat de relatie tussen



de afzender en geadresseerde invloed heeft op het gebruik van bepaalde aanspreekvormen.

In hoofdstuk 5 worden reflexiviteit en reciprociteit onder de loep genomen in de vorm van het reflexieve pronomen *zich* en het reciproke pronomen *elkaar*. Beide pronomina werden in het Standaardnederlands opgenomen ten koste van oudere vormen (de persoonlijke voornaamwoorden *hem/haar/hun* enerzijds en *mekaar* anderzijds), maar het is nog niet helemaal duidelijk geworden waar de nieuwe pronomina vandaan komen en waarom uitgerekend deze vormen in de standaardtaal terecht kwamen. Hoewel het *Brieven als Buit*-corpus geen sluitend antwoord op deze vragen kan bieden omdat de reflexieve voornaamwoorden slechts zelden voorkomen en omdat de reciproke voornaamwoorden in het corpus geen variatie laten zien (enkel vormen van *mekaar* zijn te vinden in het corpus), kunnen toch een paar interessante vaststellingen omtrent *zich* en *elkaar* worden gemaakt door de data uit het corpus te vergelijken met eerder onderzoek. Zo blijkt dat *zich* in de provincie Zeeland eerst gebruikt werd in de ambtenarij voor het in brieven opdook en dat *elkaar* naar alle waarschijnlijkheid in de standaardtaal is opgenomen omdat het in de zeventiende eeuw werd gebruikt in literaire kringen van de hoogste klassen.

Hoofdstuk 6 presenteert het onderzoek naar de verandering van tweeledige naar enkelvoudige negatie. Eerder onderzoek naar deze verandering was voornamelijk gericht op de invloed van taalinterne variabelen en regionale verschillen, maar in dit hoofdstuk worden naast taalinterne (syntactische constructie en fonetische omgeving) en regionale variabelen ook sociale variabelen onder de loep genomen. Uit de analyses blijkt dat de enkelvoudige negatie waarschijnlijk eerst een regionale variant voor Noord-Holland werd en zich daarna naar de andere regio's verspreidde. Tijdens die verspreiding hield de distributie van de enkelvoudige negatie in Zeeland en Zuid-Holland direct verband met de sociale variabelen van gender en sociale klasse: mannen en schrijvers uit de hogere klassen in het algemeen pikten de enkelvoudige Hollandse negatie sneller op dan vrouwen en schrijvers uit de lagere klassen.

In hoofdstuk 7 bespreek ik het onderzoek naar de relatie tussen de distributie van de *sjwa-apocope* en de sociale variabelen van klasse en gender, formulaire context en fonetische context. Ook in dit hoofdstuk zijn duidelijke regionale verschillen te zien die erop wijzen dat de *eindsjwa* in de zeventiende-eeuw in gesproken taal waarschijnlijk zelden meer gebruikt werd in Noord- en Zuid-Holland terwijl de *eindsjwa* nog een belangrijk kenmerk van het taalgebruik in Zeeland was. Omdat de *eindsjwa* in gedrukte teksten niet zo snel verdween, werd deze in Noord- en Zuid-Holland duidelijk vaker gebruikt door schrijvers die een goede opleiding genoten hadden en schrijfvaardig waren: mannen en schrijvers uit de hogere sociale

klassen. Verder blijkt uit de analyses dat de sjwa-apocope niet vaker of minder vaak voorkwam in formulaire contexten dan elders in de brieven. Ook de fonetische context lijkt niet altijd invloed te hebben: het feit of de klank volgend op een eindsjwa een klinker of medeklinker is, heeft geen invloed op de aanwezigheid van die eindsjwa, terwijl men er toch van kan uitgaan dat dit wel zo was in gesproken taal. Maar de fonetische context voorafgaand aan de eindsjwa heeft wel duidelijk invloed: als deze [d] is, dan is de kans groot dat de eindsjwa behouden is gebleven, terwijl een voorafgaande [t] dan weer de apocope van de sjwa bevordert.

Hoofdstuk 8 handelt over de diminutiva. Het onderzoeken van de distributie van de verschillende varianten wordt bemoeilijkt door de spelling in de brieven: de varianten [i] en [jə] zijn moeilijk uit elkaar te houden doordat ze beiden in spelling kunnen voorkomen als <ie> en occasioneel ook als <je>. Voor elke briefschrijver is er een analyse uitgevoerd om te bepalen hoe de <ie>-spelling geïnterpreteerd moeten worden. De analyse van de uiteindelijke data laat zien dat zowel regionale als sociale variabelen (gender, sociale klasse en leeftijd) invloed hebben op de distributie van de verschillende diminutiefsuffixen. De palatale diminutiefsuffixen worden vaker gebruikt in Noord-Holland terwijl het velaire suffix <ke> vaker gebruikt wordt in Zeeland. Zuid-Holland is een duidelijk overgangsgebied. Opnieuw blijken mannen en schrijvers uit hogere sociale klassen gelijkaardige voorkeuren te hebben: ze gebruiken vaker suffixen die gelinkt zijn aan oude of nieuwere schrijfconventies ([kə] en [jə] met in spelling vaak nog een eind-*n*), terwijl vrouwen en schrijvers uit de lagere sociale klassen vaker diminutiva gebruiken die gelieerd worden aan gesproken taal ([i] zonder eind-*n*). Jongere briefschrijvers gebruiken vaker het jongere suffix [i], terwijl oudere briefschrijvers sterker vasthouden aan het oudere suffix [kə]. Tot slot wordt vastgesteld dat de distributie van de verschillende diminutieven in eigennamen licht verschilt van de distributie in niet-eigennamen: het diminutiefgebruik in eigennamen is licht conservatiever.

De laatste casus wordt besproken in hoofdstuk 9. Dit hoofdstuk gaat over de genitief en alternatieve constructies (de *van*-constructie, de *s*-constructie en de *z'n*-constructie) in de persoonlijke brieven. Uit een eerste overzicht blijkt dat de genitief relatief vaak voorkomt in de persoonlijke brieven, wat contra-intuïtief lijkt omdat we weten dat de genitief waarschijnlijk niet meer voorkwam in het gesproken Nederlands van de zeventiende eeuw en dat persoonlijke brieven taalgebruik kunnen bevatten dat relatief dicht bij die gesproken taal aansluit. Na verdere analyse blijkt echter dat de aanwezigheid van de genitief zich voornamelijk beperkt tot formulaire contexten en dat deze variant in neutrale contexten – waarin het taalgebruik waarschijnlijk het meest spontaan is en het dichtst gesproken taal benadert – praktisch nooit voorkomt. Verder blijkt uit de analyses dat de

sociale variabelen weinig invloed hebben op de distributie van de alternatieve constructies in neutrale contexten, maar dat een taalinterne factor wel invloed heeft: de verhouding tussen de lengte van het *possessum* en de *possessor* bepaalt voor een groot deel welke alternatieve constructies gebruikt worden.

In het slothoofdstuk wordt stilgestaan bij de resultaten van de verschillende casus, maar er wordt ook besproken wat deze studies nu hebben opgeleverd in het algemeen. Een belangrijk punt is dat met het onderzoeken van deze grote collectie persoonlijke brieven het tot nu toe bekende beeld over taalgebruik in de zeventiende eeuw op bepaalde vlakken kan worden bijgesteld: bepaalde veranderingen waarvan tot nu toe werd aangenomen dat ze zich in de zeventiende eeuw al voltrokken hadden bijvoorbeeld, blijken in het taalgebruik in het *Brieven als Buit*-corpus nog volop aan de gang te zijn. Andere belangrijke terugkerende elementen in het onderzoek zijn het belang van opleiding en schrijfvaardigheid, de innovatieve rol van Noord-Holland en het verschil tussen taalveranderingen die van onderaf (lagere sociale klassen en spontaan taalgebruik) of van bovenaf (hogere sociale klassen en schrijftaal) afkomstig zijn. Concluderend kunnen we zeggen dat het unieke bronnenmateriaal voor unieke resultaten zorgt en dat het paradigma van de ‘language history from below’ ook met succes op het zeventiende-eeuws Nederlands toe te passen blijkt.



## Curriculum Vitae

Judith Nobels was born on 29 April 1985 in Sint-Niklaas, Belgium. In September 2003 she took up her studies of Germanic Languages (Dutch and English) at the University of Antwerp. She was awarded her licentiate in Germanic Languages (majoring in Linguistics) in 2007 (*magna cum laude*). During the last two years of this study (2005-2007), she also took the Specific Teacher Training Course (*Academische Initiële Lerarenopleiding*) at the University of Antwerp, from which she graduated in 2007 (*magna cum laude*). In September 2007 she took up the Master of Advanced Studies in Linguistics (Linguistics in a Comparative Perspective) at Ghent University. During this master's program she also worked as a student research assistant for Prof. dr. Reinhild Vandekerckhove (University of Antwerp) compiling an electronic corpus of chat language. She was awarded the Master of Advanced Studies in Linguistics at Ghent University in 2008 (*summa cum laude*), the same year in which she joined the research project *Letters as Loot* (funded by NWO, the *Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research*) directed by Prof. dr. Marijke van der Wal at the Leiden University Centre of Linguistics. This dissertation is the result of Judith Nobels' research in this project.