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

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Chapter 6. Negation[85]

6.1. Negation in Dutch: (un)certainties 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).[86] 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.[87] The main goal of the bulk of thess 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 & Vandenbussche (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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[85] Part of the research reported here was also presented in Rutten, Van der Wal, Nobels & Simons (2012).

[86] For a detailed overview of negation in Dutch over the centuries, see Van der Horst 2008.

[87] 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 his type of negation as 'bipartite negation'.[88] 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) *Hi**ne** 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.'

[88] 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)): [89]

6) *dat si **en** weten wat beghinnen*
'that they do**n't** know what to begin'
7) *mer hij **en** mochte.*
'but he could**n't**.'
8) *Hi **ne** wilde: hi was te out.*
'He did**n't** want to: he was too old.'
9) ***En** is dit Florijs miin soete lief?*
'Is**n'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.'

[89] 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 scheindt of wij het **nooidt** sellen beleeuen*
'But it seems as if we will **never** live to see that.'
16) *min ijonck harten sal **ninmer** 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 & Vandenbussche (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).[90]

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 on**vriendelijk.*
'He is ***not un***friendly.'

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.

[90] 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*** *altijt 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.[91] 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).[92] 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*** *verhal<u>en</u>* ***(en)*** *kan*
'since I **cannot** tell you everything...'

[91] 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.

[92] 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.[93] 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.

[93] 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.

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

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

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.[94] The larger presence of bipartite negation in the corpus

[94] 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 Burridge (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.

Burridge 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 Burridge'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 (Burridge 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 / gestellt 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).[95] 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.

[95] 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**		***North Holland without Amsterddam***	
	N Tot	**% bipart**	**N Tot**	**% bipart**	**N Tot**	**% bipart**	**N Tot**	**% bipart**	**N Tot**	***% bipart***
Sub-clause	202	61%	95	56%	441	34%	275	45%	161	*14%*
Inversion	74	50%	44	68%	135	28%	89	33%	46	*20%*
Main clause	174	43%	96	52%	395	24%	257	30%	138	*12%*
Niet 'nothing'	17	41%	12	25%	64	19%	44	23%	20	*10%*
Local	50	30%	22	23%	96	9%	56	14%	40	*3%*
V1	31	19%	7	14%	83	5%	55	7%	28	*0%*
Total	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.[96] 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.

[96] 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 Total	% bipart	N Total	% bipart	N Total	% bipart	N Total	% bipart	N Total	% 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:

	# single negations	***% single negation***	***# bipartite negations***	***% bipartite negation***
LC	33	*59%*	23	*41%*
LMC	149	*59%*	102	*41%*
UMC	421	*67%*	212	*33%*
UC	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.[97] Women use bipartite negation in 43% of the cases and men in 35% of the cases.

	# single negation	***% single negation***	***# bipartite negation***	***% bipartite negation***
Men	465	*65%*	249	*35%*
Women	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

[97] 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.[98] 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.

[98] 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.[99] 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

[99] 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 lead to revealing additions to our knowledge about the history of negation in Dutch.