

Continuity, change, and linguistic recycling in Flemish dialects: Negation, polarity focus, and mirativity¹

Anne Breitbarth

Abstract

The present paper revisits Neuckermans's (2008) proposal concerning the geographic distribution and diachronic genesis of different functions of the particle *en*, a remnant of Jespersen's Cycle in the Southern Dutch dialects, and addresses van der Auwera's (2009) claim that *en* may in some dialects of Dutch have developed into a non-negative marker of clausal subordination at the end of the cycle. Based on a 400,000-word corpus of spontaneous dialect speech data from 65 locations in the southern Dutch dialect area (with an emphasis on West and East Flemish ones) as well as on historical data from the literature, it is concluded that Neuckermans's implicational hierarchy (a) needs to be revised and (b) cannot not be a reflex of a diachronic retraction scenario, and that (c) an analysis of non-negative *en* as a marker of subordination as proposed by van der Auwera cannot be confirmed for the Southern Dutch dialects more generally. Instead, it is argued that the observable distribution points to the synchronic co-existence of several layers of change that have affected *en* since Middle Dutch, and have led to it having become co-opted as a mirative strategy.

Keywords: negation, Jespersen's Cycle, Southern Dutch dialects, polarity focus, mirativity

1. Introduction

Many Southern Dutch dialects (SDDs) continue to use the former pre-finite negation particle *en*, not only in negative clauses, but also outside them. The SDDs comprise West Flemish (which includes French Flemish and Zeeland Flemish), East Flemish, Zeelandic, Brabantic, and Limburgian, cf. Fig. 1.

© Anne Breitbarth

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC 4.0 license
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

149

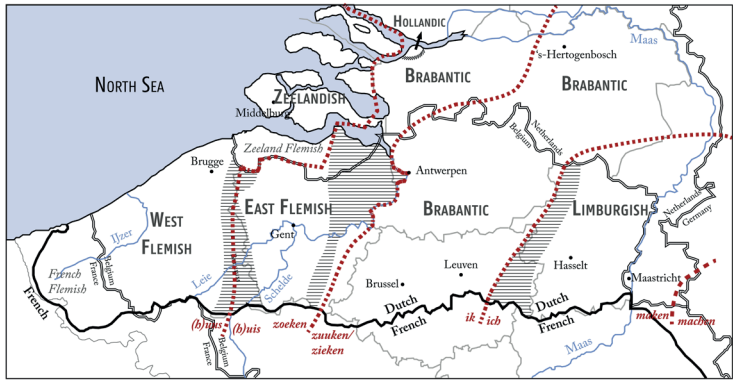


Fig. 1: The Southern Dutch dialects, main isoglosses defining them (red dotted lines), and transitional areas between them (shaded)

The current article starts from Neuckermans's (2008) observations and the diachronic scenario she proposes, as well as van der Auwera's (2009) claim that *en* becomes a marker of subordination (at least in selected dialects) and discusses them in the light of novel data from a small 400,000-word corpus of spontaneous dialect speech recorded in the 1960s and 1970s comprising 65 places in the Southern Dutch dialect area, mainly West and East Flemish ones, complemented by historical data as reported in the work of van Koppen (2019) and Dietz et al. (to appear). These data do not support Neuckermans's semantic hierarchy of contexts nor the diachronic conclusions she draws from it. Neither do they allow the conclusion that *en* becomes a marker of subordination, though the structure of the corpus may obscure this matter. It will be argued that the data do warrant a re-evaluation of the diachronic genesis of (non-negative) *en*, and lend further support to the analysis of *en* as a marker of polarity focus proposed in Breitbarth and Haegeman (2014, 2015). It will be argued that the SDDs preserve several layers of change affecting *en*, including a co-optation as a mirative strategy.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 will discuss the background to the current study, section 3 discusses new data from the "Voices from the past" collection of Southern Dutch dialect recordings, section 4 sketches a possible diachronic scenario, and proposes a formal account of the changes involved. Section 5 summarises and concludes the paper.

2. Background

Dutch, like all Germanic languages, underwent Jespersen's Cycle (Jespersen 1917, Dahl 1979). In Old Dutch/Old Low Franconian (1a), negation was expressed by a single particle *ne* before the finite verb, by Middle Dutch (1b), this particle had become reinforced by a new negative adverb grammaticalized from an indefinite pronoun ('nothing'), *niet*, which eventually took over the expression of sentential negation (1c), leading to the demise of the original prefinite particle. The stages represented by (1a), (1b) and (1c) can be called stages I, II and III of Jespersen's Cycle, respectively.

- (1) a. *ne* *farlāt* *tu* *mi!*
 NEG forsake you me
 'Do not forsake me!'
 (Old Dutch (Old Low Franconian), *Wachtendonk Psalms*, LXX.9.2)
- b. *Want* *ic* *ne* *wille* *niet*, *broeder*, *dat* *ghi*
 because I NEG want NEG brother that you
 onwetende *sijt*
 unknowing be
 'Because I do not want you to be unknowing, brother.'
 (Middle Dutch, *Lectionarium Amsterdam* 1348)
- c. *Ik* *will* *het* *niet* *zien*.
 I want it NEG see
 'I do not want to see it.'
 (Modern (Standard) Dutch)

Unlike the other West Germanic languages, however, Dutch took much longer to pass through stage II. While High German completed the transition from stage II to stage III around 1300 (Dal 1966: 164, Lockwood 1968, 207–8, Jäger 2008: 211), and English around 1350–1420 (Wallage 2005: 195), Dutch in the northern provinces – at least in the written sources – completed the transition only in the 17th century (Burridge 1993, 190–1), and in the southern provinces even only in the 19th century (Beheydt 1998, though it remains available in spoken dialects). The transition of Northern Dutch from stage II to stage III is well-described in the literature on historical sociolinguistics. Language contact and standardization played a role in the demise of the conservative pattern, as described in detail in the contributions to Nevalainen and Rutten (2012) (see also Walkden and Breitbarth 2019). In spoken Southern Dutch dialects, on the other hand, the preverbal particle, in the form of *en*, in fact survives to this day (e.g. Koelmans 1967, Haegeman

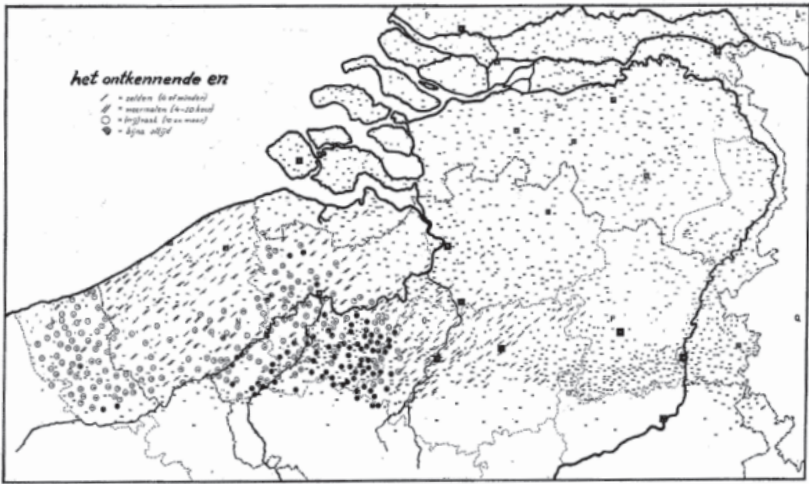


Fig. 2: The geographic distribution of negative *en* in the RND-questionnaires (Koelmans 1967)

1995: 116–131), albeit it at a much lower frequency than the stage-III pattern. Fig. 2 from Koelmans (1967) shows the geographic distribution of *en* in the data collected for the RND-atlases,² with a particular concentration in southern East Flemish and the transitional zone with West Flemish, as well as French Flemish. In Brabantic, it is only rarely attested in these data, and it is completely absent in Limburgish.

Fig. 3 shows the geographic distribution in the data of the SAND as generated by the DynaSAND web-interface in negative main clauses (left) and negative subordinate clauses (right).³ As can be when comparing Fig. 2 with Fig. 3, there is great diachronic stability in the data elicited for the different atlases (if the data for main and subordinate clauses are taken together), as the data collection for the RND started in 1925, and the for the SAND in 2000. The SAND data, however, also show the much wider distribution of *en* in subordinate than in main clauses, which is not visible in Koelman's map.

It is important to bear in mind that the division of JC into three stages as above only refers to the superficial form (the presence of one or two particles involved in the expression of negation), and not necessarily to the meaning of the particles involved. The particle *en* in the SDDs that preserve it is known to not only occur in negative clauses, but also in a number of weak NPI-contexts – conditionals (2a), *before*-clauses (2b), the standard of comparison (2c), and the restriction of a universal quantifier (2d).⁵

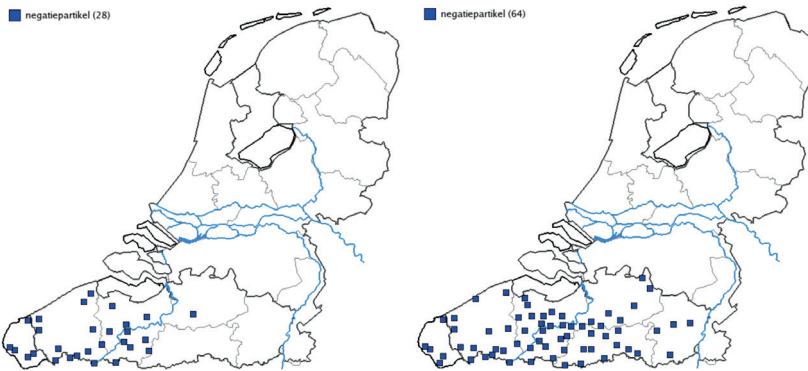


Fig. 3: The geographic distribution of negative *en* in the SAND (maps 48b and 50b⁴)

- (2) a. *en aa=t slecht weer en is*
 and if=it bad weather EN is
 ‘and if the weather is bad’
 (I241p Ghent, Leemans 1966:191)
- b. *Je moet niet komen voordat ik geschreven en heb.*
 you must not come before=that I written EN have
 ‘You mustn’t/needn’t come before I wrote.’
 (N141p Kortrijk, Barbiers et al. 2009:60)
- c. *Marjo heeft nu meer koeien dan ze vroeger en had.*
 Marjo has now more cows than she earlier EN had
 ‘Marjo now has more cows than she had earlier.’
 (P133p Overijse, Barbiers et al. 2009:60)
- d. *Hier is alles wat ik gekregen en heb.*
 here is everything what I got EN have
 ‘Here is everything I received.’
 (P133p Overijse, Neuckermans, 2008:169)

It is also found in the context of restrictive adverbs like *maar* ‘but, only’, (3) (Barbiers et al. 2009).

- (3) *Ik en heb maar drie knikkers.*
 I EN have only three marbles
 ‘I have just three marbles.’
 (H036p Bruges, Barbiers et al. 2009:60)

Besides, *en* is used on its own in fossilized short tag-like replies using the verb *doen* 'do' (Tavernier 1959, Ryckeboer 1986, Van Keymeulen 1975: 116, Van Craenenbroeck 2004), where it may or may not express negation, depending on the context, (4).

- (4) a. A: K=en durve da nie froage, da es su oardig
 I=EN dare that NEG ask that is so inappropriate
 B: Moar t=en doet, da es nie oardig.
 But it=EN does that is NEG inappropriate
 'I dare not ask that, that's so inappropriate – But on the contrary, that isn't inappropriate'
 (I241p Ghent, after Tavernier 1959: 246)
- b. A: Valère verkuopt da nie.
 Valère sells that NEG
 B: J=en doet. Je verkoopt da wel.
 He=EN does – he sells that indeed
 K=een der gisteren gekocht
 – I=have some yesterday bought
 'A: Valère doesn't sell that. B: He does. He does sell that. I bought some yesterday.'
 (I124p Lapscheure, after Haegeman 2002:181)

The distribution of such *do*-tags, the NPI-use and the restrictive use of *en* in the SAND data are mapped in Fig. 4.

Furthermore, it has been shown that *en* can also occur outside negative or NPI contexts altogether (Neuckermans 2008, van der Auwera 2009, Breitbarth and Haegeman 2014, 2015). In (5), *en* is used in a non-negative subordinate clause, seemingly without function.

- (5) Ze pakte eu portefeuille waar da=se eu sleutelke in en doet.
 she took her purse where that=she her key.dim in EN does
 'She took her purse where she puts her little key.'
 (O286p Halle; Neuckermans 2008: 176)⁶

Based on her data,⁷ Neuckermans (2008, 177) concludes that the use she calls 'affirmative', i.e., the use of *en* in non-negative clauses (5), is extremely rare, and mainly occurs in embedded clauses, mostly in Brabantic dialects (in the provinces Antwerp and Flemish Brabant), where negative (and NPI)-uses of *en* are already largely lost, and proposes that this loss of a connection with negation marking, and possibly prosodic/rhythmic factors,⁸ is the reason

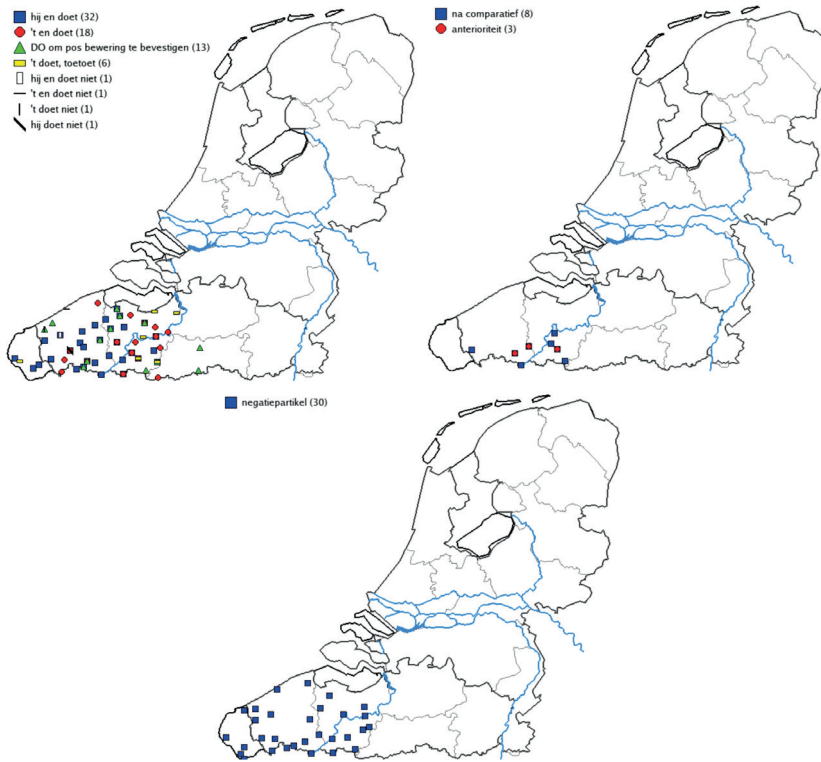


Fig. 4: The geographic distribution of *do*-tags, NPI and restrictive *en* in the SAND (maps 48a, 51b, and 52a, respectively)

for these ‘affirmative uses’. The use she calls ‘expletive’, namely the use in weak NPI-contexts (2), is, according to Neuckermans, rare or sporadic. It is mostly manifested in the form of restrictive clauses with *maar* ‘just’ (Neuckermans 2008, 168–76). Furthermore, in the additional (telephone) questionnaires, *en* is produced spontaneously (also) by younger speakers. Based on these observations, Neuckermans raises the possibility of *en* having undergone grammaticalization, without going into further detail. Based on the distribution of *en* in her data, Neuckermans (2008, 181) proposes an implicational hierarchy of contexts where *en* is licensed in SDDs as seen in (6).

- (6) affirmative subclauses $\Rightarrow$ restrictive main clauses $\Rightarrow$ negative main clauses
 $\Rightarrow$ negative subclauses

This hierarchy captures that if a variety has *en* at all, it will be in negative subordinate clauses. If it has *en* in any other context, that will be negative main clauses. All varieties that use *en* in restrictive main clauses also use

en in negative main and subordinate clauses. Finally, *en* is only found in non-negative ('affirmative') subordinate clauses in varieties that also have *en* in all three contexts on the right of the implicational hierarchy. Neuckermans (2008: 181) then goes a step further and submits that the hierarchy may be the reflex of a diachronic development, whereby *en* retreats from non-negative and restrictive contexts, with negative embedded clauses being the last remaining context in which *en* is licensed.⁹ This scenario predicts that historically, there should be more cases of non-negative uses of *en* than there are now. It furthermore seems to suggest that restrictive (main) clauses somehow form a bridging context, and that there is a logic to a retraction from a context in subordinate clauses to a context in main clauses, and back to subordinate clauses. Building further on Neuckermans's (2008) and Overdiep's (1933a: 22–23, 1933b, 1937, 1940) observations, van der Auwera (2009: 61–62) proposes that the final stage of Jespersen's Cycle in Dutch is that *en* becomes a marker of "embeddedness" or "subordinatedness". According to him, a "restriction of this 'meaningless' *en* to subordinate clauses makes sense" because "*en* survives best in subordinate clauses" and such a "subordinateness marker" is only expected "in dialects which have completely lost the negative use" (van der Auwera 2009: 62). His proposal is therefore that *en* first becomes restricted to *negative* subordinate clauses, which are the last of all possible contexts allowing it, and then loses the connection to the expression of sentential negation (presumably because it is no longer involved in the expression of negation in any other context), and is reanalysed as a "subordinateness marker".

As suspected by Neuckermans (2008: 176, fn. 38), however, such non-negative uses are not in fact restricted to subordinate clauses, and do not only occur in Belgian Brabant dialects. The examples in (7) are anecdotal observations from a West Flemish dialect provided by Liliane Haegeman (p.c.).

- (7) a. ik kom eenen tegen met buikgriep, k=en en der van
I come one against with stomach bug I=EN have there of
'I meet someone with a stomach bug: I pick it up.'
(I124p Lapscheure; L.Haegeman, p.c.)
- b. (To the cleaning lady after her surgery:)
K verwachten je de eerste weke nie vu te kusen. K=en gon=t wel
I expect you the first week not for to clean I=EN go=it well
zelve doen
self do
'I don't expect you'll come in for cleaning the first week. I'll do it myself'
(I124p Lapscheure; L.Haegeman, p.c.)

In (7a), the speaker expresses surprise at how quickly she picks up viral infections at just cursory contact, and in (7b), she states that contrary to the expectations of the addressee (the cleaning lady), she will do the cleaning herself. Therefore, we have reasons to suspect that the non-negative, non-NPI use of *en* in SDDs is not restricted to subordinate clauses, *pace* van der Auwera (2009).

Together with the observation that *en* seems to encode a certain pragmatic function in the clause it is used in, most notably polarity emphasis,¹⁰ with overtones of unexpectedness/surprise, this has lead Breitbarth and Haegeman (2014, 2015) to propose that *en* is no longer a negative marker, but has become associated with a low focus projection, and has from there developed into a discourse marker, both in negative and non-negative clauses.

If, as argued by Breitbarth and Haegeman (2014, 2015), *en* is a discourse marker, elicitation can be expected not to work so well in determining the distribution and licensing conditions. Neuckermans (2008) bases her conclusions largely on elicited data, and only makes limited use of spontaneous data to counterbalance this bias against naturalistic discourse contexts, by including 21 recordings of spontaneous speech in SDDs in her dataset, only 10 of which she investigates in more detail. A second issue concerns Neuckermans' proposed analysis, under which *en* retreats from non-negative contexts to negative contexts. This scenario predicts that historically, there should be more cases of non-negative uses of *en* than there are now. It furthermore seems to suggest that restrictive (main) clauses somehow form a bridging context, and that there is a logic to a retraction from a context in subordinate clauses to a context in main clauses, and back to subordinate clauses. In the current paper, I would like to propose a different scenario, based on more spontaneous data from the same collection that Neuckermans used, supplemented by historical data.

3 New old data: Voices from the past

The data collected for the RND, on which Koelmans' (1967) map is based, as well as the SAND-data, are elicited data, based on questionnaires. While there are numerous advantages to collecting dialect data this way, particularly for phonological and morphological variation, ensuring that the availability and concrete form of all phenomena is checked in a uniform fashion,¹¹ there is at least one noticeable drawback, especially for syntactic phenomena. Due to the lack of context, questionnaires tend to underreport syntactic phenomena influenced by specific discourse conditions. While the

influence of certain information-structural conditions can still be controlled for with sufficient context, other discourse phenomena may resist elicitation. The field notes of the SAND-researchers give several examples of such cases. For instance, the field notes on non-inverted V₃ after circumstantial adverbial framesetters, a common phenomenon especially in West Flemish dialects (Lybaert et al. 2019) mention for various places that informants reject the V₃ sentence presented to them (8a), yet produce such word orders frequently in spontaneous speech (8b', 8c').¹²

- (8) a. Met zo'n weer je kun nie veel doen.
with such=a weather you can not much do
'With such weather, you can't do much.'
(SAND-sentence 359 as presented by the field worker)
- b. Met zukke weer kun je nie veel doen
with such weather can you not much do
(H116p Torhout, informant's response)
- b'. *De drie informanten keuren deze zin af; nochtans komen er nogal wat inversieloze zinnen voor in spontane spraak.*
'The three informants reject this sentence; nevertheless, non-inverted clauses do appear quite frequently in spontaneous speech.'
(field notes on H116p Torhout)
- c. Met zuk n were kunje nie vele doen buiten
with such a weather can=you not much do outside
(N034p Hooglede, informant's response)
- c'. *Hoewel in spontane spraak toch geregeld hoofdzinsvolgorde is gevonden waar inversie wordt verwacht in AN, dus niet helemaal betrouwbaar, deze afwijzing?*
'Even though in spontaneous speech, main clause word order is found regularly where inversion is expected in Standard Dutch, therefore, this rejection is perhaps not fully reliable?'
(field notes on N034p Hooglede)

Using spontaneous dialect speech data could be a way of remedying such blind spots of elicitation-based dialectology, provided sufficient data of sufficient quality from a dense grid of places were available. Fortunately, Ghent University hosts a unique collection of 783 recordings (ca. 700h) of spontaneous dialect speech from 550 places (Vanacker and De Schutter 1967). These places are mainly concentrated in East and West Flanders, but also French Flanders, Zeeland Flanders, and to a lesser extent the provinces of Antwerp, Flemish Brabant, and Limburg.¹³ The recordings were

made between 1960 and 1975, and have been available in digitised form on www.dialectloket.be since 2014 under the name *Stemmen uit het verleden* ('Voices from the past'). Older men and women born around 1900 (the oldest in 1871) with a low education, who had always lived in the same village, as had their parents and spouses, speak for about 45 minutes each about life in the village when they were young, about agriculture and industry, leisure and celebrations, the wars, and the arrival of technological innovations such as bicycles, cars, or electricity.

Neuckermans (2008) used 21 of these recordings for her research, but at a time when they had not yet been digitised, and only existed on magnetic reel-to-reel tapes. For 318 of the 783 recordings, there were transcriptions available on paper at the time of her research, but not in searchable digital form.¹⁴ This may explain why Neuckermans did not use more of this material. Currently, funded through several FWO-projects,¹⁵ the recordings are digitally transcribed according to a unified transcription protocol in two layers, one closer to the dialect, the other closer to the standard (Ghyselen et al. 2020a,b), and linguistically annotated with the aim of building a parsed corpus of the SDDs (Breitbarth et al. 2020, 2021, Farasyn et al. 2022).¹⁶

For the current paper, 65 of these new transcriptions were selected (see Table 3 in the appendix), amounting to ca. 400,000 tokens (only the transcription layer closer to the standard was used). The interviews are not evenly distributed in space, there are fourteen each from French Flanders and West Flanders, twenty-two from East Flanders, three from the Flemish-speaking parts of (southern) Zeeland in The Netherlands, four (Belgian) Brabantic ones (three from the province of Antwerp and one from Flemish Brabant), and, finally, eight from (Belgian) Limburg. Because it is difficult to search for *en* automatically, as it is homophonous with the conjunction *en* 'and', the corpus was searched manually. All occurrences of *en* were coded for whether the clause was main or subordinate, negative (with *niet* 'not', or a negative indefinite such as *niemand* 'nobody'), with a restrictive adverb (like *maar* 'but', *juist* 'just', or similar¹⁷), or non-negative. It was also recorded whether *en* appeared in a fossilized emphatic reply (*tendoet* 'yes!/no!', lit. 'it=EN=does', SAND-map 48a). For negative clauses (with a second negative element such as *niet* 'not' or a negative indefinite), the percentage of *en* was computed, i.e., the incidence of *en* in all negative clauses. For the other contexts, the normalized frequency of *en* per 10,000 words (pttw) is reported, because it non-negative clauses with and without *en* cannot directly be compared because they are unlikely to be functionally equivalent. NPI contexts such as in (2) above are not attested, but different NPI contexts are, as discussed in more detail below. Table 1 summarises the data, Fig. 5–9 visualise them.

Table 1: The particle *en* in spontaneous dialect speech (65 interviews)

negative clauses									
<i>en</i> ... <i>niet</i> / <i>n-indef</i>						single <i>en</i>			
main		sub		all		main		sub	
#	%	#	%	#	% <i>en</i>	#	pttw	#	pttw
439	9	118	17.2	5453	10	5	0.13	2	0.05
non-negative clauses									
<i>tendoet</i>		polarity				non-NPI			
		restrictive		NPI		main		sub	
#	pttw	#	pttw	#	pttw	#	pttw	#	pttw
21	0.53	26	0.66	2	0.05	25	0.63	4	0.1

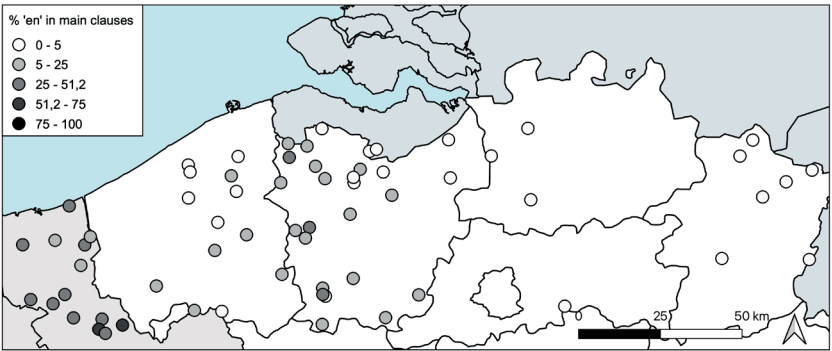


Fig. 5: The particle *en* in negative main clauses (percentage of all negative main clauses)

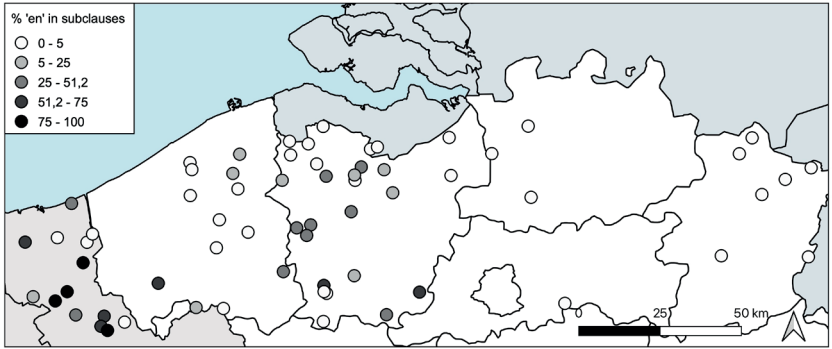


Fig. 6: The particle *en* in negative subordinate clauses (percentage of all negative subordinate clauses)¹⁸

Largely confirming Koelmans' older and the SAND's newer findings, *en* in negative clauses is widespread in East, West and French Flemish, while it is absent in Brabantic and Limburgish. Overall, Neuckermans is right that

in negative clauses, *en* is more frequent in subordinate clauses (17.2%) than in main clauses (9%), but this varies from place to place, and in 17 out of the 65 places (26.1%), *en* is in fact more frequently used in negative main clauses, as a comparison of Map 1 and Map 2 shows.

In line with Breitbarth and Haegeman's (2014, 2015) observations, *en* particularly occurs in negative clauses that express that the negative statement stands in contrast to expectations in the discourse, either on the side of the speaker or of the addressee. In (9a), this contrast is underlined by the presence of the predicate *raar* 'strange', in (9b), the contrast is implicit: while one may expect that cars did not yet exist around the beginning of the 20th century, the fact that bicycles, too, did not yet exist in the village, may be surprising for the addressee.

- (9) a. Het was raar dat het geen twee millimeters te groot en was.
 it was strange that it no two millimetres too large EN was
 'It was strange that it wasn't two millimetres too large.'
 (Noggp Bavinchove)
- b. ewaar en die mensen traptten dat natuurlijk te voet
 PRT and the people stepped that of=course to foot
 af want uh fietsen en bestonden er nog niet
 off because INT bicycles EN existed there yet NEG
 'Well, and the people walked that (distance) on foot, of course, because
 (contrary to what you may think) bicycles didn't exist yet.'
 (I227p Vinkt)

The data indicate that Neuckermans' findings must be nuanced, and in some cases, revised. Non-negative uses, found in 13 places, seem to be largely independent from restrictive uses, found in 16 places, only five of which are places where also non-negative *en* is found. Fig. 7 shows the restrictive use, Fig. 8 the non-negative use in main clauses, and Fig. 9 the non-negative use in subordinate clauses.

There does therefore not seem to be any clear implicational relationship between the non-negative and restrictive uses. Further contrary to Neuckermans' findings, non-negative uses are not restricted to embedded clauses, and are in fact more frequent and more robustly attested in main clauses (25 occurrences in 10 places, vs. four occurrences in four places for embedded clauses). A link between non-negative uses and subordination, as hypothesised by van der Auwera (2009) for Brabantic, cannot be discerned; clearly, more data from more places are needed.

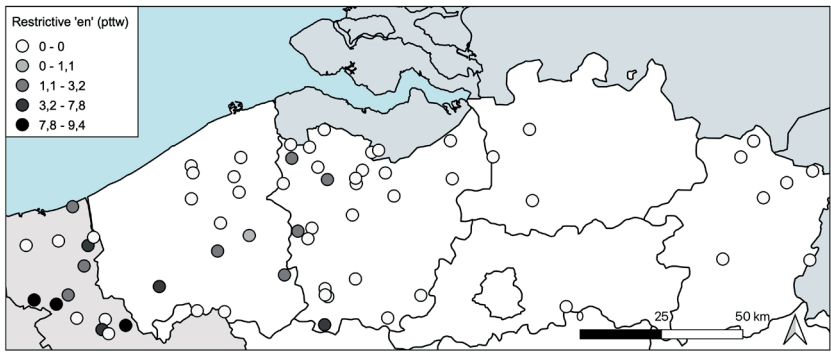


Fig. 7: Restrictive use of *en* (per ten thousand words)

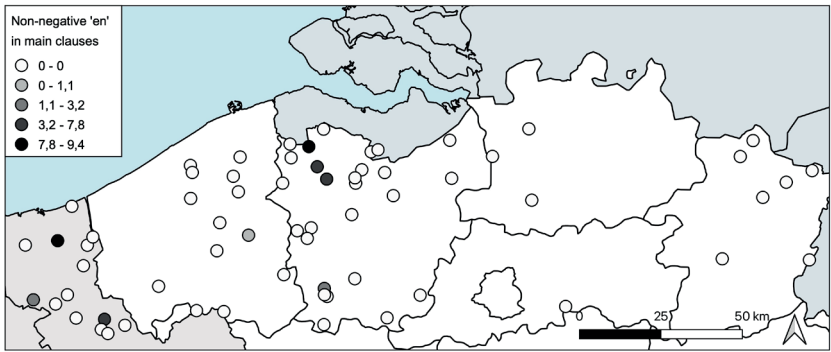


Fig. 8: Non-negative use of *en* in main clauses (per ten thousand words)

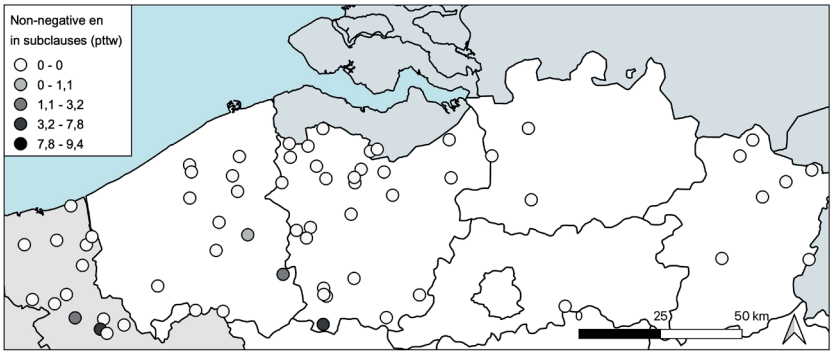


Fig. 9: Non-negative use of *en* in subordinate clauses (per ten thousand words)

(10) illustrates such non-negative uses in main clauses with examples from East Flemish (10a) and French West Flemish (10b). The West Flemish example in (10c) is special in that *en* occurs before the non-finite verb.¹⁹

- (10) a. Maar wil jij jonge gasten, we en hebben al een keer
 but want you young people we EN have already once
 jaren gehad dat we een paar jonge gasten hebben hé dus
 years had that we a few young people have INT thus
 studenten van de universiteit hé
 students from the university INT
 ‘But if you want young people, we have already had years where we
 had a few young people, so, university students, you see.’
 (I158p Eeklo)
- b. Ik en had ik ik kunnen blijven wi.
 I EN had I I could stay INT
 ‘I could have stayed, you know.’
 (No05p Bergues/Sint-Winoksbergen)
- c. Met zijn beste kleren aan ... je had DIEN een keer
 with his best clothes on you had this one once
 moeten en zien
 must EN see
 ‘With his best clothes on ... You should have seen that one!’
 (No42p Pittem)

As already anecdotally observed by Breitbarth and Haegeman (2014; 2015), also in non-negative clauses, *en* expresses or helps express that the proposition of the clause is unexpected or surprising, either to the speaker or to the addressee. This can be seen from the fact that non-negative clauses containing *en* are often introduced by lexical items expressing a contrast to a previous utterance. In (11a), this is clause-initial *nee* ‘no’, in (11b), it is *maar* ‘but’.

- (11) a. nee hij en had wat speciaals
 no he EN had something special
 ‘No, he (unexpectedly) had something special.’
 (Ho76 Zuidkote)
- b. Maar we en hebben eerst eerst in dingen gelegen in
 but we EN have first first in thingie lain in
 uh ... in Casteau
 INT in Casteau
 ‘But (contrary to what you may think), we were first stationed in
 Casteau.’
 (O152p Ninove)

However, the real advantage of using more spontaneous data is that they bring to light that *en* is used in more and different contexts than those that were elicited in the SAND-survey. As regards NPI-contexts, for instance, *en* is also found in polar (*yes/no*-)questions, as in (12).

- (12) ja maar en bestaat dat nog? dat weet ik niet.
 yes but EN exists that still that know I NEG
 'Yes, but does that still exist? I don't know that.'
 (Oo8op Waregem)

The complement of negative clauses is known to be a weak NPI-context, too, as can be seen from the use of NPI-indefinites in (13). Haspelmath (1997) calls this context 'indirect negation'. Interestingly, in the spontaneous SDD data, there are cases of what one might call 'indirect restrictive', with a restrictive adverb in the matrix clause and *en* in an embedded (here, a relative) clause, (14). Such cases have not been reported in the literature before.

- (13) It is not possible that he knows anything about this
- (14) en ze danste maar het waren maar juist haar voeten die
 and she danced but it were only just her feet that
 van de grond en gingen
 off the ground EN went
 'And she danced, but it was just her feet that went off the ground.'
 (No42p Pittem)

Besides this 'indirect restrictive' uses of *en*, there are more contexts which have escaped the attention so far, and were not elicited in the SAND-survey. For instance, *en* can be found to express sentential negation on its own in the presence of certain lexical items or syntactic environments. In (15a), the negative polarity item *meer* '(not) anymore' is used alongside *en*, without the sentential negator *niet* 'not' that would normally be required to license *meer*. It seems as though *en* is enough to license *meer* here, and express sentential negation, too. In (15b), *en* is the only negation particle in a matrix clause with the verb *weten* 'to know', which takes an indirect question as its complement clause. Still, it appears to express sentential negation in this context.

- (15) a. van aan de hoek van het Oostakkerstraatje is dat
 from at the corner of the Oostakkerstraat.DIM is that
 misschien overgenomen die apothekerij?
 perhaps taken.over that pharmacy
 Dat ze zij dat meer en doet?
 that she she that anymore EN does
 ‘There at the corner of Oostakkerstaat, has that perhaps been taken
 over, that pharmacy? Because she doesn’t do it anymore?’
 (I241p Gent)
- b. ik en weet of dat nu nog veel meer gedaan werd
 I EN know if that now still much anymore done is
 ‘I don’t know if this is still done so much anymore.’
 (O265p Ronse)

Both these contexts are known from Middle Dutch, in fact. In the next section, therefore, we take a fresh look at the diachronic development of *en*, in light of the new data from spontaneous dialect speech in the present SDD corpus.

4 Continuity, change, and recycling of *en*

4.1 Diachronic scenario

Based on the distribution of *en* in her data, mainly based on elicitation, Neuckermans (2008) proposed an implicational hierarchy of contexts according to which the attestation of *en* in non-negative (subordinate) clauses is restricted to places where it is also found in (main) clauses with a restrictive adverb. As discussed above, the larger dataset from spontaneous the speech corpus indicates that the implicational relation between these two contexts may need to be revised. Also the diachronic scenario that Neuckermans proposes based on the implicational hierarchy, under which *en* retreats from non-negative subordinate clauses via restrictive main clauses to negative clauses, faces problems.

First, the diachronic facts contradict the scenario: a retraction scenario would imply (more frequent) attestation at an earlier stage in the context from which *en* retreats. While the literature agrees that *en* in negative contexts is historically lost first from main clauses (e.g. van der Horst and van der Wal 1979, de Haan and Weerman 1984, Burridge 1993), and Neuckermans’ scenario is correct in this respect, the negative use (whether in main or embedded clauses), the supposed endpoint of Neuckermans’ scenario, is the oldest context in which *en* is attested, and the uses in weak negative

polarity contexts, with NPIs or with restrictive adverbs, are younger. The non-negative uses are not attested in historical sources at all.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that sentential negation with *niet* is an innovation reinforcing the original negative particle *ni*, later *ne/en* under Jespersen's Cycle, the single use of *en* expressing sentential negation with an NPI is old. The Middle Dutch examples in (16) quoted from Postma (2002) (who does not name the sources), are the exact equivalent of (15a) and (15b) above, respectively, with NPI *meer* 'anymore' in (16a) and an indirect interrogative clause complement to the verb *weten* 'to know' negated by *en* alone in (16b).

- (16) a. I=n werde meer blide nacht ende dach
 I=EN become anymore happy night and day
 'I won't be happy anymore night and day'
 (MDu; Postma 2002: 55)
- b. Ic en weet of si overeen die name mingen
 I EN know whether they together these names mix
 van desen tween.
 of these two
 'I don't know whether they mix the names of these two together'
 (MDu; Postma 2002: 50)

Postma (2002) in fact argues that it is the NPI-character of *meer*, but also of the indirect question selected by *weten*, that licenses en, which in other negative contexts in texts from the same period already needs to co-occur with *niet* or negative indefinites in order to be licensed.

While not attested in the spontaneous data investigated for the present study (but found in the SAND-data, see (2) above), also the single use of non-negative, or expletive, *en* in weak NPI contexts is old, though perhaps not as old as the negative use together with lexical NPIs. In weak NPI-contexts, examples of expletive *en* can be found from the 16th century. In (17), for instance, *en* is found in the standard of comparison.

- (17) mitsgaders wy daer in beter gheaccommodeert weren
 and equally we there in better accommodated were
 dan=t moghelic en was in=t stede te zynne
 than=it possible EN was in=the city to be
 'And equally, we were better accommodated than it would have been possible in the city.'
 (Reyse van Bruussele 154, 1570–1585; from Beheydt 1998: 96)

The restrictive use of *en*, too, goes back to at least the 16th century, as the examples in (18) testify.

- (18) a. ende mijn vaeder en leefde maer ix maenden nae ons moeder
 and my father EN lived only nine months after our mother
 ‘And my father survived our mother by only nine months.’
 (diary of Jan de Pottre 12; 1549–1620; from Beheydt 1998: 97)
- b. ... dat wy nauwelijck en derfden spreken in sijne presentie
 that we hardly EN dared speak in his presence
 ‘... that we hardly dared to speak in his presence.’
 (memoirs of Maria Petyt 25; 1623–1677; from Beheydt 1998: 97)

That is, both the expletive and restrictive contexts, in which *en* no longer expresses negation, but where some form of negative polarity is present, are old, and negative uses of *en* without negation, but with lexical or structural NPIs, are even older.

The emphatic and ‘unexpectedness’ uses of *en* that Breitbarth and Haegeman have identified, are younger. In negative clauses, these uses have not yet been studied in much detail in the literature, as they are superficially just negative clauses. However, recent studies have shown that emphatic and unexpectedness uses are at least attested from the 17th century onwards, for which van Koppen (2019) and Dietz et al. (2021) have intensively studied the logbooks of the Dutch admiral Michiel de Ruyter (1607–1676). In (19), the negative clause carries a sense of emphasis; the people just could not *not* operate the pumps.

- (19) den Capteyn andrijnga en vander saem waren soo leak
 the Captain Andringa and Vander Saem were so leak
 dat het volck van de pompe nijet en conde blyven
 that the people from the pumps NEG EN could stay
 ‘The Captain Andringa and Vander Saem [two ships] were leaking so badly that the people could not stay away from the pumps.’
 (Michiel de Ruyter 1676/01/17; from Dietz et al. 2021)

In (20), the logbook reports that unexpectedly given the auditory input of hearing the surf of the sea on the land, no land could be seen.

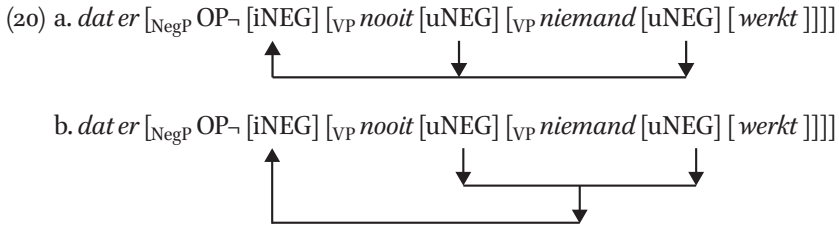
- (20) Wy hoorden de lant see ruysen, maer wy en sagen geen lant.
 we heard the land sea rustle, but we NEG saw no land
 ‘We heard the surf of the sea on the land, but we couldn’t see the land.’
 (Michiel de Ruyter 1664/10/19; from van Koppen 2019)

In the historical data, however, *en* is restricted to negative clauses, whether expressing polarity emphasis or unexpectedness. Non-negative uses outside affective contexts as in (5) and (7) are not attested historically. They are only found in the spontaneous dialect data, already reported for selected places by Neuckermans, and for more places here. Based on the enlarged dataset investigated here, we cannot conclude that there is an implicational relationship between the contexts here, or that this is indicative of the direction of a diachronic retraction.²⁰ The historical data suggest that the non-negative use outside affective (weak NPI) contexts is an innovation after the Early Modern Dutch period, whereas the restrictive use is old.

4.2 Formal analysis

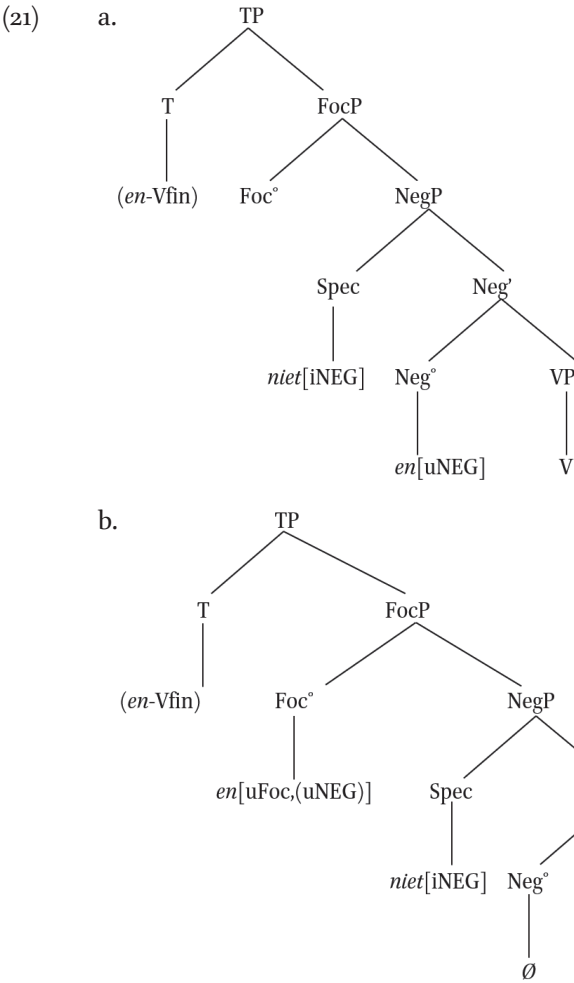
Based on the dialectal and historical data discussed above, we can now sketch a more refined scenario for the diachronic development of *en*, and propose a formal analysis for it. This analysis assumes a version of a Minimalist analysis of sentential negation and Jespersen's Cycle as outlined in e.g. Zeijlstra (2004) or van Gelderen (2011). It is grounded in the principle of Full Interpretation (Chomsky 1986), which requires that every element present in a derivation must receive an appropriate interpretation – be licensed – at the LF and PF interfaces. The interplay of elements within a syntactic derivation is mediated by formal features (corresponding to grammatical categories), which under the version of the theory assumed here can be either interpretable at LF or uninterpretable. The latter kind of features must therefore be eliminated before the derivation reaches LF. This licensing is a form of abstract syntactic agreement, which can be illustrated with number agreement on verbs. Number is uninterpretable on verbs (it does not contribute to the interpretation of the predicate), and a finite verb requires a subject to agree with, on which number is interpretable, to form a well-formed clause. The notation used is [uF] for uninterpretable and [iF] for interpretable features. Elimination ('checking') of [uF] typically happens through agreement with the bearer of a corresponding [iF]. Negation as a logical operator is interpretable at LF, with languages varying greatly as to how this operator is formally expressed. In case there are two elements involved in the expression of sentential negation, as e.g. in negative clauses with *en* and *niet* in many SDDs, or in case of Negative Concord (the co-occurrence of an indefinite able to express sentential negation in isolation with the standard expression of negation, or with another such negative indefinite, or both), only one of the elements involved may be the carrier of an interpretable negation

feature [iNEG], any others must either be [uNEG], or perhaps not bear any negation features at all. Carriers of a [uNEG] feature must enter into an agreement relation with the carrier of the [iNEG] feature in order to have their uninterpretable feature eliminated ('checked') before LF. Proposals vary as to whether a single [iNEG] feature can license multiple instances of [uNEG] at the same time (Zeijlstra 2004 and subsequent work; (20a)), or whether successive pairwise agree is needed to eliminate [uNEG] features one by one (Haegeman and Lohndal 2010; (20b)).²¹



Such a feature-driven mechanism is also assumed to be behind Jespersen's Cycle (e.g. Zeijlstra 2004: 249–258, van Gelderen 2011: 292–339, Breitbarth et al. 2020: 92–111), coupled with the idea that grammatical change is driven by economy principles in language acquisition. All else being equal, van Gelderen's (2011) Feature Economy postulates that uninterpretable features are preferred over interpretable ones. Therefore, an element carrying an [iNEG] feature may at some point be reanalysed as an element carrying a [uNEG] feature, hence requiring another [iNEG]-element licensing it, and eventually, a [uNEG] feature may be lost altogether. This is where e.g. originally non-negative minimizers may be reanalysed as new carriers of [iNEG]. Negative indefinites that were originally arguments of the verb may be reanalysed as adverbial expressions lexicalizing the negation operator OP_¬ [iNEG].²²

Given these background assumptions, the formal analysis of the proposed diachronic changes runs as follows. First, after the grammaticalization of *niet* as a new [iNEG] sentential negator through Jespersen's Cycle, *en* loses its negative feature ([uNEG] > Ø) and is reanalysed as a marker of polarity focus, associated with a low focus projection just above VP, as proposed by Breitbarth and Haegeman (2014, 2015). In both cases, the particle is picked up by the finite verb as it moves through the functional heads. (21) illustrates their analysis (based on Breitbarth and Haegeman 2014: 80). The fact that this position is low can account for the fact that *en* is not a root clause phenomenon, unlike other focus and contrast phenomena (Breitbarth and Haegeman 2015: 90).



This position above VP had already been identified by Haegeman (1998), who noticed that *en* had to precede complex verb clusters together with the finite verb (22).

- (22) a. da Valère nie [willen dienen boek lezen] (*en) eet
 that Valère NEG [want that book read] (*EN) has
 b. da Valère nie (en) ee [willen dienen boek lezen]
 that Valère NEG (EN) has [want that book read]
 (from Haegeman 1998: 641; (23))

Van Koppen (2019) adduces evidence for this syntactic change from Neg° to Foc° affecting *en* occurring in the 17th century. Based on Haegeman's (1998)

Table 2: Change in position relative to verb cluster between Middle and Early Modern Dutch (van Koppen 2019)

	CorpusGysseling (<1350)	letters P.C. Hooft (1610–1638)
V2– <i>en</i> –V1	802 (60%)	1 (5%)
<i>en</i> –V1–V2	532 (40%)	19 (95%)

observation on the positioning of *en* with respect to complex verb clusters (22), and Breitbarth and Haegeman's (2014, 2015) analysis of this position as a low focus position at the left edge of the VP, van Koppen presents quantitative evidence for a diachronic change between Early Middle and Early Modern Dutch, by which nearly free word order variation within two-verb clusters is replaced by near-categorical VP-initial placement of *en*+finite verb (Table 2).

Against the background of a Minimalist analysis of Jespersen's Cycle as sketched above, the diachronic development of *en* can then be analysed as follows. At stage II of Jespersen's Cycle, *en* is a clitic attaching to the finite verb as it passes through the head of NegP. It bears an uninterpretable negation feature [uNEG], which needs to be licensed by a carrier of an interpretable [iNEG] feature, such as the incoming negator *niet* 'not', in order to make the sentence well-formed (Full Interpretation). In some languages, [uNEG] elements have been shown to be able to self-license by forcing the insertion of a covert [iNEG] operator (OP₋) licensing them as a last resort in syntactic configurations where the insertion of an overt carrier of [iNEG] is not possible (Zeijlstra 2004). Italian negative concord indefinites such as *nessuno* 'nobody', for instance, can occur without the negator *non* 'not' in clause-initial position and in fragment answers, but require the presence of *non* in all other positions. Middle Dutch *en* was apparently not capable of self-licensing in this fashion and therefore either required the presence of an overt carrier of [iNEG], such as *niet* (Zeijlstra 2004, Breitbarth 2013), or another element that could trigger the merger of covert [iNEG] operator. As proposed by Postma (2002), it seems that a certain group of NPIs such as *meer* 'anymore' or indirect interrogative complement clauses after certain verbs could serve as such a trigger in Middle Dutch, too. However, normally, NPIs do not self-license, as they do not have a [uNEG] feature. Inspired by Haegeman and Lohndal's (2010) account of negative concord in West Flemish, I therefore propose that these specific NPIs bore an uninterpretable quantificational feature, and that the covert negative operator in Middle Dutch in fact was [iNEG, iQ].

Still in Middle Dutch, *en* underwent a lexical split. While the [uNEG] version in Neg° continued to be involved in the expression of negation and required a – possibly covert – [iNEG(iQ)] operator to license it (23a), a new

version of *en* undergoes upwards reanalysis (Roberts and Roussou 2003) to the low, VP-related FocP as outlined above. This reanalysed version carries an uninterpretable focus feature [uFOC], and eventually loses its original [uNEG]-feature (23b).

- (23) a. Middle Dutch (I)
- (i) [CP *dat* [TP *hij* [NegP *niet*_[iNEG] [vP ...] [Neg_o *en*_[uNEG]=kwam]]]]
- (ii) [CP *dat* [TP *hij* [NegP OP_[iNEG,iQ] [vP ... *meer*_[uQ] ...] [Neg_o *en*_[uNEG]=kwam]]]]
- b. Middle Dutch (II)
- (i) [CP *dat* [TP *hij* [FocP OP_[iFOC] [NegP *niet*_[iNEG] [vP ...] [Neg_o]]] [Foc_o *en*_[uFOC(, uNEG)]=kwam]]]

At this point, the polarity emphasis use in negative clauses became available. This use expresses a strengthened opposition of the containing proposition with alternative propositions (as opposed to merely reversing the truth value of the proposition, and potentially denying any available presupposition), which carries the conversational implicature of the clause expressing the unexpectedness of the proposition. Both the Northern and Southern Dutch dialects first participated in this development, but in the north, the particle was lost (at least in the written sources studied in the literature) in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries (at least in part) due to dialect levelling and koinéization brought about by migration from within the Low Countries and from outside during the economic boom after the 80 Years' War (Goss 2002, Howell 2006, Rutten et al. 2012, Vosters and Vandenbussche 2012, Nobels and Rutten 2014).²³ Departing from Trudgill's conjecture that exactly such a sociolinguistic situation, involving short-term adult language (or dialect) contact, leads to simplification, Walkden and Breitbarth (2019) propose that the loss of *en* constitutes a syntactic simplification in Northern Dutch. Following Trudgill, they take linguistic complexity to be L2-difficulty (Dahl 2004, 294), and define it adopting the Interpretability Hypothesis (Hawkins and Hattori 2006, Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou 2007) according to which uninterpretable features are not accessible to adult L2 acquirers as part of the initial state, which makes uninterpretable features universally L2-difficult, regardless of the closeness or distance of the languages or varieties in contact. Given these assumptions, [uNEG]/[uFOC] *en* is lost during the 17th century in the north (and Walkden and Breitbarth discuss similar scenarios in eastern Middle Low German, Middle English, and varieties French). Meanwhile, the SDDs, due to the very different sociolinguistic situation without such increased mobility and contact, remained in an intermediate stage (Burridge

1993, Beheydt 1998, Breitbarth 2013). *En* was available on the one hand in polarity emphasis contexts, carrying the conversational implicature of unexpectedness, and on the other – in remnants – also in negative contexts with NPIs triggering the merger of a covert negative operator. Given the fact that the licensing conditions did not apply in all negative clauses (only in those with polarity emphasis, or in the rare cases with licensing NPIs), *en* was used at a low, but stable frequency. This prepared the ground for a further change. In a final step, the conversational implicature of unexpectedness is conventionalised, allowing *en* to also be used outside negative clauses carrying this meaning.

4.3 Recycling as a mirative strategy

I propose that being the marker of a category that is not expressed in all sentences (polarity emphasis, with a conventionalised implicature of unexpectedness) led to its co-optation as a marker of another category also not expressed in all sentences: as a mirative strategy. Aikhenvald (2012) summarises the range of mirative meanings found in languages to varying degrees as (i) sudden discovery, sudden revelation or realization, (ii) surprise, (iii) unprepared mind, (iv) counterexpectation, and (v) new information, for which a marker can encode whether this affects (a) the speaker, (b) the addressee, or (c) the main character of a story. She carefully distinguishes between mirative *markers*, whose only function is to encode one or several mirative meanings, and mirative *strategies*, which are markers of other categories (e.g. a marker of a specific tense or evidentiality), but are co-opted to carry one or several mirative meanings.

Given its link to the discourse participants speaker and addressee, mirativity typically correlates with (independent) illocution (cf. Van de Velde 2012, Authier and Haegeman 2019), and mirative markers are therefore expected to be restricted to main clauses. Mirative strategies, on the other hand, should not be restricted in such a way. Analysing *en* as a mirative strategy (instead of a full-blown mirative marker) can account for the fact that it still mostly occurs in negative (embedded) clauses in the SDDs, which is the environment where it had been available since Early Modern Dutch for marking polarity emphasis. It can also account for the emergence of *en* in non-negative clauses where it expresses surprise (ii) and/or counterexpectation (iv), either on the part of the speaker or the addressee. Most importantly, it covers the fact that these mirative meanings are also available in subordinate clauses, which is perhaps not expected given the link between mirativity and (independent) illocution – it remains a polarity emphasis marker, which becomes co-opted as a mirative strategy.

4.4 Summary

Summing up, the distribution of *en* in the SDDs, which superficially looks like a very extended transition from stage II of Jespersen’s Cycle with a bipartite expression of sentential negation to stage III, is actually the result of several overlapping changes. *En* developed first from a negative marker to a marker of polarity emphasis, and was then co-opted as a mirative strategy. In more conservative varieties, all these layers are present. There is no evidence of a retraction from non-negative contexts, in fact, these are the most recent innovation.²⁴

5 Summary and conclusions

Using a 400,000-word corpus of spontaneous dialect speech data from 65 locations in the southern Dutch dialect area, the present paper aimed at arriving at a more fine-grained picture of the functions that *en*, a remnant of Jespersen’s Cycle, can have, and at proposing an account for the diachronic genesis of these different functions. This led to a revision of the scenario proposed by Neuckermans (2008). Based mainly on elicited data, complemented by a smaller number of spontaneous dialect speech data, she had concluded that the implicational hierarchy she observed in the geographical distributions of contexts for *en* was the result of a diachronic retraction. In the current paper, it was argued instead that rather than a retraction from non-negative and restrictive contexts, we see the synchronic co-existence of several layers of change that affected *en* since Middle Dutch. Due to the specific socio-linguistic situation of the SDDs, *en* was preserved long enough as a marker of polarity emphasis (and in vestiges, negation) to be available for later co-optation as a mirative strategy.²⁵

Appendix

Table 3: Places in the corpus of transcribed interviews used in the present study, by province/region

French Flanders	West Flanders	Zeeland Flanders	East Flanders	Antwerp & Flemish Brabant	Limburg
H076p Zuidkote	H024p Oudenburg	I152a Eede	I131p Waterland-Oudeman	i180p Zwijndrecht	L282p Achel

French Flanders	West Flanders	Zeeland Flanders	East Flanders	Antwerp & Flemish Brabant	Limburg
N005p Bergues	H026p Westkerke	I162p Sas van Gent	I146p Meerdonck	K226p Brasschaat	L314p Overpelt
N012p Killem	H036p Brugge	I166p Westdorpe	I154p Maldegem	K293p Duffel	L319p Molenbeersel
N013p Hondschoote	H064p Ichtegem		I156p Sint-Laureins	P130p Sint- Joris-Weert	L360p Bree
N057p Bambecque	H068p Loppem		I158p Eeklo		L364p Meeuwen
N094p Hardifort	H070p Waardamme		I164p Ertvelde		L372p Maaseik
N098p Zuidpene	H117p Lichtervelde		I169p Wachtebeke		Q002p Hasselt
N108p Hondegem	L196p Kluizen		I175p Sint-Niklaas		Q013p Uikhoven
N110p Vleteren	N038p Roeselare		I185p Knesselare		
N158p Strazele	N042p Pittem		I190p Waarschoot		
N159p Mer里斯	N072p Ieper		I200p Wippelgem		
N162p Belle	N130p Wervik		I205p Zeveneken		
S007p Broekkerke	N137p Rekkem		I227p Vinkt		
S020a Buysscheure	O080p Waregem		I235p Meigem		
			I241p Gent		
			O014p Deinze		
			O098p Oudenaarde		
			O113p Munkzwalm		
			O152p Ninove		
			O197p Leupegem		
			O228p Geraardsber- gen		
			O265p Ronse		

References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra. 2012. "The essence of mirativity." *Linguistic Typology* 16: 435–485.
- Authier, J.-Marc, and Liliane Haegeman. 2019. "The Syntax of Mirative Focus Fronting: Evidence from French." In Deborah Arteaga (ed.), *Contributions of Romance Languages to Current Linguistic Theory*, 39–63. Cham: Springer.
- Barbiers, Sjef, Hans Bennis, Gunther De Vogelaer, Magda Devos, and Margreet van der Ham. 2005. *Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten*, Volume I. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Barbiers, Sjef et al. 2006. *Dynamische Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten (DynaSAND)*. Amsterdam: Meertens Institute. Online: <http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/sand/>.
- Barbiers, Sjef, Johan van der Auwera, Hans Bennis, Eefje Boef, Gunther De Vogelaer, and Margreet van der Ham. 2009. *Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten*. Volume II. Amsterdam: AUP.
- Beheydt, Griet. 1998. "Het gebruik en de vorm van de negatie in het zuidelijke Nederlands in een diachronisch perspectief (15e–20e eeuw)." Licentiate's thesis, University Leuven.
- Blancquaert, Edgard. 1948. "Na meer dan 25 jaar dialect-onderzoek op het terrein." *Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* III. 5–62.
- Breitbarth, A. 2013. "Negation in the history of Low German and Dutch." In D. Willis, et al. (eds.), *The development of negation in the languages of Europe and the Mediterranean*, vol. 1: *Case studies*, 190–238. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Breitbarth, Anne. 2014a. *The History of Low German Negation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Breitbarth, Anne. 2014b. "Dialect Contact and the Speed of Jespersen's Cycle in Middle Low German." *Taal & Tongval* 66 (1): 1–20.
- Breitbarth, Anne, and Liliane Haegeman. 2014. "The distribution of preverbal *en* in (West) Flemish: syntactic and interpretive properties." *Lingua* 147, 69–86.
- Breitbarth, Anne, and Liliane Haegeman. 2015. "'En' *en is n et wat we dachten*: a Flemish discourse particle." *MITWPL* 75: 85–102.
- Breitbarth, Anne, Christopher Lucas, and David Willis. 2020. *The History of Negation in the Languages of Europe and the Mediterranean*. Volume II: *Patterns and Processes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burridge, Kate. 1993. *Syntactic change in Germanic: Aspects of language change in Germanic with particular reference to Middle Dutch*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1986. *Knowledge of language: its nature, origin and use*. New York: Praeger.

- Dahl, Östen. 2004. *The growth and maintenance of linguistic complexity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Dal, Ingerid (1966). *Kurze deutsche Syntax auf historischer Grundlage*. 3rd ed. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Dietz, Feike, Marjo van Koppen, and Mees van Zanten. 2021. "Spelen met verwachtingen: De functie van tweeledige negatie in de scheepsjournalen van Michiel de Ruyter." Ms., Utrecht University.
- Farasyn, Melissa, Anne-Sophie Ghyselen, Jacques Van Keymeulen, and Anne Breitbarth. 2022. "Challenges in Tagging and Parsing Spoken Dialects of Dutch." *Journal of Historical Syntax* 6, No. 4–11. doi:10.18148/hs/2022.v6i4-11.92.
- Gelderens, Elly van. 2011. *The Linguistic Cycle. Language Change and the Language Faculty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ghyselen, Anne-Sophie, Anne Breitbarth, Melissa Farasyn, Jacques Van Keymeulen, and Arjan van Hessen. 2020a. "Clearing the Transcription Hurdle in Dialect Corpus Building: The Corpus of Southern Dutch Dialects as Case Study." *Frontiers of Artificial Intelligence* 3: 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2020.00010>
- Ghyselen, Anne-Sophie, Jacques Van Keymeulen, Melissa Farasyn, Lien Hellebaut, and Anne Breitbarth. 2020b. "Het transcriptieprotocol van het Gesproken Corpus van de Nederlandse Dialecten (GCND)." *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Commissie voor Toponymie en Dialectologie/Bulletin de la Commission Royale de Toponymie et Dialectologie* 92: 83–115. <https://doi.org/10.2143/TD.92.0.3288999>
- Goss, E. L. 2002. Negotiated language change in Early Modern Holland. Immigration and linguistic variation in The Hague (1600–1670). University of Wisconsin-Madison Ph.D. dissertation.
- Haan, Gert J. de and Fred Weerman. 1984. Taaltypologie, taalverandering en mogelijke grammatica's: Het Middelnederlandse en. *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 100, 161–190.
- Haegeman, Liliane. 1995. *The syntax of negation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haegeman, Liliane. 1998. "Verb Movement in Embedded Clauses in West Flemish." *Linguistic Inquiry* 29 (4): 631–656.
- Haegeman, Liliane, and Terje Lohndal. 2010. "Negative Concord and (Multiple) Agree: A Case Study of West Flemish." *Linguistic Inquiry* 41 (2): 181–211.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 1997. *Indefinite pronouns*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hawkins, Roger, and Hajime Hattori. 2006. "Interpretation of English multiple *wh*-questions by Japanese speakers: a missing uninterpretable feature account." *Second Language Research* 22: 269–301.
- Horst, Johannes M. van der and Maria J. van der Wal. 1979. Negatieverschijnselen en woordvolgorde in de geschiedenis van het Nederlands. *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 95, 6–37.

- Howell, R. B. 2006. "Immigration and koinéisation: The formation of early modern Dutch urban vernaculars." *Transactions of the Philological Society* 104: 207–227.
- Jäger, Agnes. 2008. *History of German negation*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Jespersen, Otto. 1917. *Negation in English and Other Languages*. Historisk-filologiske Meddelelser I,5. Copenhagen: A.F. Høst.
- Koelmans, Leendert. 1967. "Over de verbreiding van het ontkennende *en*." *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 60: 12–18.
- Koppen, Marjo van. 2019. Negation in the letters of P.C. Hooft: combining literary studies and linguistics. Lecture at Discovering Linguistics – Linguistic Discoveries, Ghent University, 15/03/2019.
- Lockwood, William Burley (1968). *Historical German Syntax*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lybaert, Chloé, Bernard De Clerck, Jorien Saelens, and Ludovic De Cuypere. 2019. "A corpus-based analysis of V2 variation in West Flemish and French Flemish dialects." *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* 31 (1): 43–100. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1470542718000028>
- Neuckermans, A. 2008. "Negatie in de Vlaamse dialecten volgens de gegevens van de Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten (SAND)." PhD diss., Ghent University.
- Nevalainen, Terttu, and Gijsbert Rutten (eds.). 2012. *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 113(3), special issue on comparative historical sociolinguistics and the history of negation. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/140133074>
- Nobels, Judith, and Gijsbert Rutten. 2014. "Language norms and language use in seventeenth-century Dutch: Negation and the genitive." In: Gijsbert Rutten, Rik Vosters, and Wim Vandenbussche (red.), *Norms and usage in language history, 1600-1900. A sociolinguistic and comparative perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 21–48.
- Overdiep, Gerrit Siebe (1933a). Dialectstudie en syntaxis. *Onze Taaltuin* 2, 18–23.
- Overdiep, Gerrit Siebe (1933b). Dialectstudie en syntaxis: een overgangsklank. *Onze Taaltuin* 2, 44–45.
- Postma, Gertjan. 2002. De enkelvoudige clitische negatie in het Middelnederlands en de Jespersen cyclus. *Nederlandse Taalkunde* 7, 44–82.
- Roberts, Ian, and Anna Roussou. 2003. *Syntactic Change. A Minimalist Approach to Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryckeboer, Hugo. 1986. Het hulpwerkwoord doen in replieken. In Magda Devos and Johan Taeldeman (eds.), *Vruchten van z'n akker. Opstellen van (oud-)medewerkers en oud-studenten voor Prof. V.F. Vanacker hem aangeboden bij zijn afscheid van de Rijksuniversiteit Gent*, 321–337. Gent: Seminarie voor Nederlandse Taalkunde en Vlaamse Dialectologie, Rijksuniversiteit Gent.

- Tavernier, C. 1959. Over negatie en expletief en in het Gents dialect. *Taal en Tongval* 11, 245–252.
- Tsimpli, Ianthi Maria, and Maria Dimitrakopoulou. 2007. “The Interpretability Hypothesis: evidence from *wh*-interrogatives in second language acquisition.” *Second Language Research* 23: 215–242.
- Vanacker, Valeer F., and Georges De Schutter. 1967. “Zuidnederlandse dialecten op de band.” *Taal en Tongval* 19: 35–51.
- Van Craenenbroeck, Jeroen. 2004. Ellipsis in Dutch Dialects. Doctoral Dissertation, Universiteit Leiden.
- Van de Velde, Freek. 2012. “A structural–functional account of NP-internal mood.” *Lingua* 122(1): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2011.10.007>
- Van der Auwera, Johan. 2009. ‘The Jespersen Cycles’. In Elly van Gelderen (ed.), *Cyclical change*, 35–71. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Van Keymeulen, J. (1975). Enkele syntactische kenmerken van het Wichels dialect. Licentieproefschrift. Gent: Universiteit Gent.
- Vosters, Rik, and Wim Vandenbussche. 2012. “Bipartite negation in 18th and early 19th century Southern Dutch. Sociolinguistic aspects of norms and variation.” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 113(3), 343–64.
- Walkden, George, and Anne Breitbarth. 2019. “Complexity as L2-Difficulty: Implications for Syntactic Change.” *Theoretical Linguistics* 45 (3–4): 183–209. <https://doi.org/10.1515/tl-2019-0012>
- Wallage, Phillip W. 2005. Negation in Early English: Parametric variation and grammatical competition. Doctoral dissertation, University of York.
- Zeijlstra, Hedde. 2004. “Sentential negation and negative concord.” PhD diss., University of Amsterdam. Utrecht: LOT.

Notes

1. I thank Liliane Haegeman, Marjo van Koppen, the audiences of the linguistics seminars at Stuttgart and Wuppertal Universities who invited me to speak about this, Johan van der Auwera, and another anonymous reviewer for *Taal en Tongval* for their invaluable feedback on earlier versions of this paper.
2. *Reeks Nederlandse Dialectatlassen* (1925–1986) (E.Blancquaert; questionnaires with 141 sentences; 1925–; 1.956 places).
3. *Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten*, Barbiers et al. (2005, 2009). The SAND is also available online; cf. Barbiers et al. (2006); <https://www.meertens.knaw.nl/sand/zoeken/>.
4. The maps show the availability of *en* in main and embedded clauses, respectively.

5. The alphanumerical code before the placename is the so-called Kloeke-code, a unique code for each village or farmstead in Flanders and the Netherlands.
6. Neuckermans (2008: 176) gives the Kloekecode "O248" for this example, but Halle in Flemish Brabant has the Kloekecode O286p, while the Kloekecode O248 does not seem to exist.
7. Neuckermans (2008) combines SAND data for 111 places in the SDD area with (i) 231 additional questionnaires (via telephone) asking about the optionality of negative markers, (ii) 21 transcriptions of recordings of spontaneous speech from 1960s–70s (more on which further on), ten of which she analysed in more detail, and (iii) various other sources, such as the RND-sentences, or material from the ethnological museum in Ghent (Huis van Alijn). She still heavily relies on elicited data despite a clear recognition of potential drawbacks, such as observer's paradox and lack of information on optionality. Her main argument against the use of spontaneous data is that things that may be possible in a variety may not be attested in the recording due to chance.
8. As proposed by Overdiep (1933a: 22–23, 1933b, 1937, 1940) for the emphatic, and possibly prosodic/rhythmic, use of *en* in subordinate clauses in the Southern Hollandic (not Southern Dutch by the definition used here) dialect of Katwijk aan Zee.
9. Neuckermans (2008: 182) writes: "We vermoeden dat er een dimensie van evolutie in deze semantische hiërarchie aanwezig is. We veronderstellen dat wanneer het gebruik van het negatiepartikel in een dialect afneemt, dit gebeurt via deze hiërarchie. We vermoeden dat het negatiepartikel eerst verdwijnt in affirmatieve zinnen, dan in restrictieve zinnen en pas in laatste instantie in negatieve zinnen." ('We presume that there is a dimension of evolution present in this semantic hierarchy. We conjecture that when the use of the negation particle decreases in a dialect, this happens via this hierarchy. We surmise that the negation particle first disappears in affirmative clauses, then in restrictive clauses, and finally in negative clauses', translation mine, AB)
10. Overdiep (1937: 453) reports an emphatic function for *en* in subordinate clauses in early 20th century South-Holland dialect of Katwijk aan Zee, besides the East Flemish dialect of Ghent. Cf. also Overdiep (1933: 22, 1940: 203). As we will see below, data from SDDs, particularly Flemish dialects, suggest that a restriction to subordinate clauses as also argued for by van der Auwera, can probably not be generalised.
11. Nevertheless, already Blancquaert (1948: 12) noted also for the RND that ideally (and given sufficient funding), elicited data should be complemented by recorded spontaneous speech data.
12. In (5), the subject is marked in **boldface**, the finite verb in *italics*. Source of the responses and field notes: <https://www.meertens.knaw.nl/sand/>.
13. The reason for the imbalance in the data points has to do with the fact that informants were often found through mediation by students at Ghent

- university, who mainly come from East and West Flanders, and much less frequently from Antwerp, Brabant, or Limburg.
14. See also Ghyselen et al. (2020a,b) for more details on these transcriptions.
15. A small research grant ('krediet aan navorser', 1.5.310.18N) to Anne Breitbarth (2019–2020), a postdoctoral fellowship (1.2.P79.19N) to Melissa Farasyn (2018–2021), and a medium-size infrastructure grant (1010120N) with Anne Breitbarth as PI (2020–2024). Further funding comes from grants from the provinces of West Flanders (KIOSK-projectID 29575), East Flanders (KIOSK-projectID 29311) and Zeeland (reference of confirmation letter: 19004695) to the dialects organisation Variaties vzw.
16. The *Gesproken Corpus van de zuidelijk-Nederlandse Dialecten* ('Spoken corpus of the SDDs'; GCND), www.gcnd.ugent.be.
17. Also *uitsluitend* 'exclusively' and *met ruzie* 'hardly, with difficulty', lit. 'with a fight' as in (i) were counted:
 - (i) het is vermindert. we hebben nog geweest met zevenhonderd
it is reduced we have still been with seven hundred
als ik ging in de school. En nu het en is met ruzie vijfhonderd.
when I went to the school and now it EN is with fight five hundred
'It is reduced. We were still with seven hundred when I went to school
and now it is hardly five hundred' (So20a Buysscheure)
18. Note that the two values of 100% are due to the fact that there are only one (Merris) or two (Zuidpene) negative subordinate clauses, which happen to contain *en*.
19. Neuckermans (2008: 175) discusses two similar examples ((i) being one of them) from East Flemish Merelbeke, her only two examples of non-negative non-NPI use of *en* in main clauses, and hints at the possibility of a prosodic/rhythmic analysis as proposed by Overdiep (1933b) for South-Hollandic Katwijk aan Zee (Neuckermans 2008: 177).
 - (i) Ij zal wel nog en komen.
He shall well yet EN come
'Surely, he will still come.'
(Oo22p Merelbeke; Neuckermans 2008, 175)
20. Cf. fn. 9.
21. Note that the carrier of the [iNEG] feature need not be overt, but can also be a covert operator in a language, whose presence is only signalled by the overt carriers of [uNEG] features licensed by it.
22. To be sure, this brief enumeration of the background assumptions is only a very simplified summary of the vast literature on this topic. See e.g. Breitbarth et al. (2020) for a more detailed overview and references.
23. As Overdiep's (1933a,b) discussion of the South-Holland dialect of Katwijk and "neighbouring villages" (see fn. 25 below) indicates, spoken dialects may have been more conservative. A study of northern Dutch dialect data based on recordings of spontaneous speech (as collected in the Nederlandse Dialectenbank, <https://www.meertens.knaw.nl/ndb/>) is still lacking.

24. Johan van der Auwera remarks that this is neither new nor controversial. However, it is the opposite of the diachronic scenario proposed by Neuckermans (see fn. 9), which the current paper set out to disprove.
25. Using the current corpus, it is impossible to say more about van der Auwera's (2009) proposal that *en* develops into a subordination marker in (Belgian) Brabantic dialects (and possibly South Hollandic Katwijk as described by Overdiep). More data from the respective areas will be needed to reach any conclusions here. In particular for the dialects of the provinces Antwerp and Flemish Brabant, this should be possible in the near future, when the GCND-project (see fn. xvi) is completed. Given that Overdiep (1933a: 22) refers to neighbouring villages of Katwijk which also allow *en* in main clauses ('In een hoofdzin als "Ik doe het niet", die ik **in een naburig Zuidhollandsch dorp** wèl eens als "Ik **en** doe't niet" heb horen spreken...'), 'In a main clause such as "Ik doe het niet", which I have heard pronounce as "Ik en doe't niet" in a neighbouring Southern Hollandic village', translation and emphasis mine, AB), an evaluation of the recordings of the Nederlandse Dialectenbank (see fn. 23 above) might be useful in the future to help evaluate the details of the developments in that group of dialects.