The Development of English and Dutch Pronouns
an analysis of changes and similarities in the paradigms

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Introduction

If you compare an English text from the fifteenth century with today's newspaper, it becomes obvious that the language has changed considerably. Though everybody agrees that languages change, opinions widely differ on what motivates these changes. There are, of course, many different reasons why languages change and the theories themselves have also changed over the last two centuries. While Jakob Grimm once suggested that the "superior gentleness and moderation" of northern Germanic tribes prevented their language from undergoing the Second Sound Shift, today, the most important theories on language change involve language acquisition and language contact (Crowley and Bowern, 12).

Most historical linguists believe that language change is gradual. Lightfoot, however, argues that while languages may change gradually, in grammar, abrupt changes occur (83). In addition, he claims that whether language change seems gradual depends on which lens is used: "If we think macroscopically, […], using a wide-angle lens, then change always seems to be gradual" (ibid., 83). There is also a difference between how a language changes in an individual, which is usually abrupt, and how these changes then gradually spread across a language community.

In this paper, the development of the English and Dutch pronominal paradigms will be discussed. Changes in the pronoun systems are especially interesting because pronouns are part of the "Core Vocabulary," the part of the lexicon that linguists believe to be more resistant to change. This idea of particular word categories being more resistant to change stems from the fact that categories belonging to the Core Vocabulary show to be resistant to change in all languages (Crowley & Bowern, 138). However, when comparing the development of the English and Dutch paradigms, it becomes clear that many changes have taken place.

English and Dutch are both Germanic languages and therefore closely related. This becomes obvious when the Old English and Old Dutch pronominal paradigms are compared. If we compare the Modern English and Modern Dutch paradigms, though, we can see that not only have the paradigms changed, they are also less similar than they were a thousand years ago. Taking all this into consideration, the following thesis can be formulated: Although pronouns are in certain respects highly resistant to change, in other respects we find in the history of the English and Dutch pronominal paradigms numerous examples of spontaneous innovation and new distinctions associated with new forms that suddenly appear in a language and sometimes disappear again after a century or two.

Theories on Language Relationship and Language Change

Language Relationship and Proto-Indo-European

In an after-dinner speech in 1786, Sir William Jones, a British judge, suggested that Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit were similar in ways which implied that they had derived from a common ancestor language no longer spoken (Lightfoot, 29). Jones was not the first to suggest languages are historically related. In *De vulgari eloquentia,* for example, Dante (1265-1321) discusses how the Romance languages are descendents from Latin (ibid., 29). However, before Jones introduced the idea of "parallel" development (languages stemming from a common ancestor and developing individually) and the concept of a protolanguage, it was generally believed that languages developed into other languages: instead of sharing a common ancestor, Greek, for example, was thought to have developed into Latin (Lightfoot, 29; Crowley and Bowern, 7).

Scientific evidence for language relationships is provided by analyses using the comparative method. By comparing vocabularies and searching for similarities or "correspondences" that are not due to chance or borrowing, linguists have been able to determine historical relationships among languages. Germanic and the Romance languages (Italic) are believed to stem from a common ancestor called Proto-Indo-European[1]. If we examine the words for "father" in the Romance (*père* in French, *padre* in Italian) and Germanic (*father* in English, *vader* in Dutch, *vater* in German) languages, for example, it becomes clear that these words cannot be similar by accident. However, there are also differences that must be explained. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Rasmus Rask compared the German consonants with those of ancient European languages (Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit), and noticed that the *p* sound in the ancient languages showed an *f* in Germanic

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[1] Proto-Indo-European is usually divided into: Germanic, Celtic, Italic, Hellenic, Anatolian, Tocharian, Albanian, Armenian, Balto-Slavic, and Indo-Irian. For a complete overview of the Proto-Indo-European language tree, see Algeo and Pyles, 62-63.

languages in the corresponding words (Lightfoot, 30). Jakob Grimm built on Rask's work and formulated the first Germanic consonant shift, also known as "Grimm's Law," which shows a chain reaction turning aspirated voiced stops ([bh], [dh], [gh]) into regular voiced stops ([b], [d], [g]), voiced stops into voiceless stops ([p], [t], [k]), and voiceless stops into fricatives ([f], [θ], [h]) (Lightfoot, 31; Van Gelderen, 37).

The relationship between languages are often portrayed in cladistic models, which were introduced by Schleicher in 1861. Schleicher's *Stammbaumtheorie* reflects the methods used by biologists to classify the botanical species (Lightfoot, 23). The cladistic model resembles an upside down tree and shows the degrees in which languages are historically related. The problem with this model is that it only shows relatedness on the basis of homologies (features inherited from a common ancestor), while other influences such as borrowings due to language contact are not taken into account (Lightfoot, 28; Miller, 61). English and Dutch, for example, both belong to West Germanic, as is shown in figure 1. Though historically closely related, due to strong influences from Scandinavian languages and French, Present English has remained little of its Germanic heritage (Miller, 61). Scientists from the nineteenth century realized this limitation and came up with the *Wellentheorie*, implying "waves of changes which might spread over a geographical area through linguistic contact" (Lightfoot, 27).
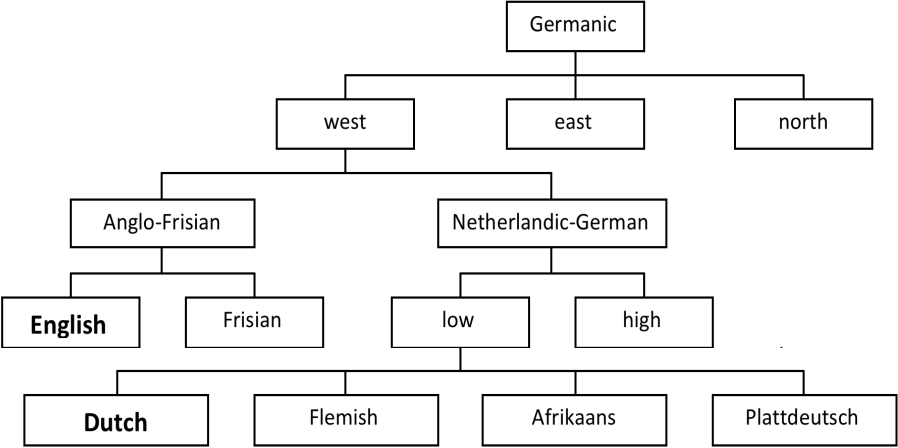
Figure 1

Though attempts to determine the exact geographical origin of Proto-Indo-European have been unsuccessful, with suggestions ranging from the Near East to Scandinavia, most linguists agree that the Germanic people settled somewhere near Denmark (Bourcier, 19; Algeo and Pyles, 76). Now that we have established that languages can be historically related and that they are subject to change, some theories of language change will be discussed.

Theories on Language Change

Due to the limited scope of this paper, it is impossible to provide a complete overview of all the theories and conflicting opinions regarding language change that can be found in the literature. Therefore, the most common theories will be discussed below, including relevant theories that can explain the changes found in the English and Dutch pronominal paradigms.

In the nineteenth century, some scholars believed that language change, and particularly sound change, could be related to cultural differences between people. Jakob Grimm, for example, proposed that the northern Germanic tribes contented themselves with the First Sound Shift because of their "superior gentleness and moderation," and that their language was therefore not affected by the second shift that did occur in the south (Crowley and Bowern, 12). Others[2] suggested that languages could be divided into "primitive" and "civilized" languages. The primitive languages were said to contain more harsh sounds, which were associated with the "laziness that characterized modern civilization" (ibid., 12). Besides these cultural, bordering racial, views, there were also scholars who proposed that harsh sounds were the result of a harsh climate (ibid., 13). Languages spoken by people in very cold, mountainous, or exceptionally hot areas, would contain harsher sounds. Besides that the term "harshness" is not properly explained, there is plenty of evidence to prove that this

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[2] Unfortunately, Crowley and Brown do not say who these "others" were.

theory is false. The phonetic system of the Aborigines of Central Australia, for example, has been called "euphonic", meaning that it has relatively few guttural sounds and consonant clusters, despite of the climate of the geographical area its speakers inhabit (ibid., 13).

Not surprisingly, the theories mentioned above have been thoroughly discredited. However, if harsh climates and lazy people do not explain language changes, what does? Over the years, many theories on language change have been proposed. Though historical linguists disagree on practically everything, it is widely accepted that language acquisition plays an important role in many changes that have occurred or are observed to be happening today (Miller, 24). One linguist who emphasizes the connection between the development of languages and language acquisition is Lightfoot. He suggests that changes in the input, or "primary linguistic data" (PLD), result in the acquisition of a grammar different from the grammars that provided the input. In *The Development of Language*, Lightfoot focuses on changes in grammars and argues that, though languages may change gradually, grammars can change abruptly, and he refers to these abrupt changes as "catastrophes" (89).

Lightfoot argues that grammars are "individual entities that exist in people" and that the "grammar of English" as such does not exist (78). His theory on language change is grounded in the distinction between I (internalized) grammars and E (external) grammars (like Dutch), first proposed by Chomsky (Miller, 25). Lightfoot argues that if a language changes overtime, what is really occurring is that grammars are changing in certain individuals and that this change then spreads through a population of speakers (107).

If we assume that changes in the primary linguistic data result in languages change, the next question that needs to be answered is what causes the PLD to change. Miller, among others, argues that "drastic systemic changes" can only come about by language contact (150). Language contact plays an important role in many different ways. Loanwords may be the most obvious sign of language contact, but contact can affect grammar and a language's

phonetic system as well. In the Old Dutch period, for example, Germanic /u:/ changed to /y:/, as in Present Dutch *vuur*, presumably under French influence, and in the Middle Dutch period, even more French sounds entered the language, such as the /ʃ/ from *chauffeur* and the /ʒ/ from *horloge* (watch) (Van der Sijs, 75). Proof that language contact can cause changes in the grammar is provided by the appearance of the th- pronouns (they, them, their) in Middle English, which were adopted from Scandinavian (Algeo and Pyles, 145).

There are different ways in which language changes can be divided. Two distinctions that often appear in the literature are external/internal and social/functional. An external factor is language contact and examples of internal factors are imperfect transfer and ease of articulation. A problem with these distinctions is that the boundaries are seldom clear-cut (Miller, 150). In addition, linguists have different opinions on what constitute "social" and "functional" factors. While Crowley and Bowern use "functional need" to refer to borrowing and coining of new words to refer to new concepts, Miller only uses "functional motivation" to explain grammatical changes. The authors do agree on what changes are "socially motivated," though, both giving local/social identification as an example (Crowley and Bowern, 14; Miller, 125). In Papua New Guinea, a former Australian colony, for example, Papua New Guineans speaking English, while trying not to sound like their former colonialists, have come up with a number of interesting expressions such as "That guy, he's really waterproof ia!," meaning that someone does not bathe on a regular basis (Crowley and Bowern, 15).

Though none of the theories on language change in the literature suggest that a few individuals could be successful in stopping a change from happening or even reversing a change that has already occurred, there are always people who are very passionate when it comes to preventing their beloved language to change.

The Language Mavens

Languages change and will always keep changing, but that does not mean that everybody is willing to accept that. Since the eighteenth century, so-called prescriptivists and language purists have tried to make people speak and write in ways they consider "correct." In France, this rise in prescriptivism resulted in the establishment of the "Academie Française," which has attempted to purify and standardize the language ever since (Van Gelderen, 225). The Netherlands has the Nederlandse Taalunie[3], which started as a cooperation between The Netherlands and Flanders to protect the Dutch language. This is the institution that has tried desperately, but quite unsuccessfully, to prevent people from using the objective pronoun *hun* in subject position. Though there is no Academy to "protect" the English language, a great number of prescriptive dictionaries and grammar books have been published telling speakers of English not to strand prepositions and use dangling participles.

Linguists, however, do not concern themselves with the question of what is "correct" or "incorrect." According to Pinker, claiming that dangling participles is ungrammatical makes as much sense as a biologist reporting that pandas hold bamboo in the wrong paw and that "monkey's cries have been in a state of chaos and degeneration for hundreds of years" (382). Nevertheless, prescriptivists can have some success, as will be shown in the chapter on early Modern English and Dutch.

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[3] For more information, visit the website of the Taalunie: www.taaluniversum.org

Old English (450-1150) and Old Dutch (500-1200)

The Old English period starts when Germanic tribes (The Angles, Saxons, Frisians, and Jutes) reach the British Isles. Most Old English texts are charms, recipes and epics or religious, medical, and legal documents. One of the most famous Old English epics is *Beowulf*. Though the oldest manuscript that has survived is from c.1000, it is based on an earlier version (Van Gelderen, 48). During the Old English period, there were influences from Celtic languages, Scandinavian languages, Latin through missionaries from the Roman Catholic Church and after the Normans invaded the isles in 1066, there were French influences as well.

  The Old Dutch period begins in the sixth century. Around this time, the High German Consonant Shift occurs, separating the Old High German dialects from the Old Dutch and Old Saxon dialects (Sijs, 36-37). In the seventh and eighth century, the Christianization of the Low Countries by Angle-Saxon missionaries resulted in the adoption of a great number of loanwords from Latin, but also from English. In Limburg, for example, people still use the words *Godmoeder* (Godmother) and *Godvader* (Godfather) (Sijs, 53-55).

Old E/D		Singular		Dual	Plural	
		English	Dutch	English	English	Dutch
First	NOM	ic	ik	wit	we	wi
	GEN	min	min	uncer	ure	unsar
	DAT	me	mi	unc	us	uns(ig)
	ACC	me/mec	mi	unc(et)	us/usic	uns(ig)
Second	NOM	þu	þu	git	ge	gi
	GEN	þin	þin	incer	eower	iuwar
	DAT	þe	þi	inc	eow	iu
	ACC	þe/þen	þi	inc(it)	eow(ic)	iu
Third	NOM	he/heo/hit	he/*siu(?)/it	-	hi/heo	sie/sia
(M/F/N)	GEN	his/hire/his	sîn, si/iro/-	-	hira/heora	iro
	DAT	him/hire/him	imo/iro/-	-	him	in
	ACC	hine/hi(e)/hit	imo/sia/it	-	hi/hie	sie/sia

The pronouns in the table are given in spelling. The relevant phonetic symbols will be provided in the text below.

Because they are used very frequently and because they have a specific reference, "the personal pronoun in all languages is likely to preserve a fairly complete system of inflections" (Baugh and Cable, 59). In Old English and Old Dutch, this is shown by the existence of different forms for persons, gender, number and case, as is shown in the table above.

In OE and OD, there is great variation in orthography. For practical reasons, some of the most common forms of the Dutch pronouns are provided in the table above and for English, the West Saxon dialect is used, mainly because most of the manuscripts that have been found were written in that dialect (Baker, 10). One could also argue, of course, that the spelling variations are actually representations of variations in pronunciation or dialectal variation. However, many manuscripts contain inconsistencies when it comes to the spelling of pronouns. All in all, we cannot be certain about the precise phonetic representation of the pronouns (Van Gelderen, 17; Toorn et al., 199). Because of this, information about specific sounds will be provided below when the pronouns are discussed individually.

The alphabet used in most Old English and Old Dutch[4] texts is not identical to the alphabet used today. The most important symbols for the discussion of pronouns are the *þ* (thorn) and *ð* (eth), which were used interchangeably and are nowadays both written as *th*. The *ð* and *þ* did not represent the voiced and voiceless sounds as *ð* and *θ* do nowadays in the International Phonetic Alphabet (Van Gelderen, 48).

Because English and Dutch are so closely related, it is not surprising that the pronominal paradigms show many similarities. The most prominent difference between the two languages is the lack of a dual system in Dutch. However, though the dual had already disappeared in Old Dutch (500-1200), in Old English (450-1150), the dual system was becoming very rare as well (Baugh and Cable, 59; Loey, 135). Since there are so very few

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[4] A modified Roman alphabet was introduced in England by Irish missionaries. Dutch scribes used Old English and Old German next to Latin as examples (Van Gelderen, 48; Toorn, 42).

texts, it is difficult to exemplify the distinctive dialects in OE and OD (Van Gelderen, 75).

More information on dialects will be provided in the next chapters.

First Person

Under the process of palatalization[5], the *c* ([k]) in OE *ic* became [tʃ]. Consonants in other

Germanic languages, such as Dutch, did not undergo palatalization, hence the difference

between Dutch *i*[k] and English *i*[tʃ]. In OD, /k/ was written as *k* before *e* and *i* and as *c* before

a,o and *u,* as was the case in Middle Latin (Toorn et al., 42). The first person singular

genitives are identical in OE (*min)* and OD (*min*). In OD, the ACC and DAT forms had

already merged, but in English, this process had not been completed given the different forms

for the ACC: *me/mec* for the singular, *us/usic* for the plural. The OD plurals are very similar

to both the OE plurals and duals. Van den Toorn et al. note that the predominant occurrence

of the ACC and DAT form *unsig,* stemming from German, is striking because for the first and

second person singular, the use of German forms is very rare (52).

The vowels in the OE pronouns are long (*us* = [u:s]), which is to be expected with OE

stressed monosyllables. However, the pronouns had weak-stressed variants as well and they

would have had a short vowel (*us* = [ʊs]) (Bourcier, 92). In the OD pronouns, the *i*s were

probably long as well, considering that they eventually diphthongized: [i:] > /ɛi/. The Dutch

uns- forms and *ik,* on the other hand, have short vowels today, so it is likely that those vowels

were short in OD as well. The fact that there are many examples where the short /u/ became a

short /o/ supports the theory of a short vowel in the *uns-* forms as well (Toorn et al, 80).

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[5] Palatalization does not refer to the same process in historical linguistics as it does in phonetics. Trask explains the change from [k] to [tʃ]: "In these cases […] the palatalization of the [k] […] went so far that the closure moved all the way to the front of the palate, resulting in the palato-alveolar [tʃ]" (61). (see also McColl Millar, 75).

Second Person

The NOM and GEN singular pronouns are the same in OE and OD (*þu* and *þin*). However, during the Old Dutch period the Germanic /u:/ changed to /y:/, though not in all dialects, presumably under French influence, resulting in a sound similar to the vowel in French *tu* (Van der Sijs, 39). For the ACC and DAT, the vowels differ: OE *þe* versus OD *þi*. Though the OE and OD plurals seem quite different at first, they may have been more similar: in OE, [iu] coalesces into an *io-* diphthong, which is then regularly lowered to *eo* (Bourcier, 92). This process apparently did not occur in OD, resulting in the different forms: *eower, eow* in OE and *iuwar, iu* in OD.

Third Person

In Old English, demonstratives and third person pronouns were inflectionally identical. In "Phonology and Morphology" Lass proposes that, from the point of view of historical morphology, pronouns should be classed as personal (only first and second person) or impersonal (third person, demonstratives, possessives etc.) (Vol.I, 142). However, for practical reasons the third person pronouns will be discussed together with the others.

According to Bourcier, the third person paradigm is so systematic that it would almost justify a "purely synchronic analysis, with little recourse to historical elucidation", using **hi* as the stem (92). Though this is true for practically all third person pronouns, including the feminine *heo*, considering the sound change discussed above (*iu>io*, lowered to *eo*), the only odd one out would be the NOM singular masculine *he*. Bourcier argues, however, that this pronoun shows the root "with the vowel lowered one degree and lengthened under full stress" (92).

In Old Dutch, there does not appear to be one stem for all the third person pronouns. Besides that, there is no specific form for the GEN and ACC singular neuter. Interestingly,

pronouns used in the very south of the area where Dutch was spoken often start with an *h*.

These pronouns are the same in German, but also more similar to the OE paradigm.

Middle English (1150-1500) and Middle Dutch (1200-1500)

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, English disappears as a language used for the church, the court, and literature. After 1300, English gains influence: in 1349, English is first used at Oxford University and in 1362, Edward III opens parliament in English (Van Gelderen, 112). Among the works from Middle English are *Gawain and the Green Night* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, both from the fourteenth century. In the Middle English period, French has a great impact on the English lexicon. Middle Dutch is greatly influenced by French as well, mainly because members of the upper classes speak French.

In both Middle English and Middle Dutch, a standard has not yet arisen. While Middle English dialects can roughly be divided into Northern, Midlands, and Southern dialect, the Middle Dutch dialects are: Flemish, Brabants, Limburgs, Hollands, and Eastern (Saxon) (Van Gelderen, 135; Vooys, 34-39). During most of the Middle Dutch period, Brabants is the most important dialect, because of the province's strong economy (Sijs, 56).

Middle E/D		Singular		Plural	
		English	Dutch	English	Dutch
First	NOM	ic	ic	we	wi
	GEN	min	mins	ure/our	onser/onses
	Obj	me	mi	us	ons
Second	NOM	thou	du	yee	ghi
	GEN	thi(n)	dins	your	(j)uwer/uwes
	Obj	thee	di	you	(j)u
Third	NOM	he/she/(h)it	hi/si/(h)et	they	si
	GEN	his/her/-	sins/hare/sins	their	haer
	ACC	him/her/hit	hem/hare/(h)et	them	hun

The Middle English and Dutch paradigms provided in the table above are not from the same century. The English paradigm is from late Middle English and the Dutch paradigm is from

approximately 1300[6]. The reason for this difference is mainly because of a lack of data available for Middle Dutch pronouns. The English paradigm provided above is from a later period because at that time, a more standard English had arisen.

The change from Old English and Dutch to Middle English (1150-1500) and Dutch (1200-1500) is quite dramatic. Word order becomes relatively fixed and endings disappear. In both English and Dutch, there is much variation in spelling and pronunciation due to lack of a standard and a great variety of dialects (Van Gelderen, 133; Toorn et al., 69). The pronominal paradigms change considerably as well. In both languages, the accusative and dative merge, with the dative form generally favored (*mec, þen, hine, usic, eowic,* and, *hie* are lost, the Old Dutch DAT and ACC had already merged). In addition, the duals are lost early on. According to Lass, they had completely disappeared by the thirteenth century (Vol.II, 117).

In Middle Dutch, cases are used relatively freely: "hem gruwt van zo'n daad", "daarover rouwt mij", "haer vergeet sijner woorden". In all these cases, the DAT is used instead of the "correct" NOM form. The fourteenth and fifteenth century show a simplification of the case system. The GEN is often replaced by *van* (*of*, as in "an uncle of mine") (Horst and Marschall, 45-51).

First Person

The Middle English pronouns are the same as in Old English, except for the occurrence of the plural *our* next to *ure*. This pronoun rises while the Great Vowel Shift[7] is taking place, under influence of which the [u:] diphthongizes into [oʊ] and ultimately develops into [aʊ] before

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[6] At the end Middle English period, the language had become fairly standardized. However, the Dutch paradigm provided in the table is from an earlier date. In Toorn et al., this paradigm is called the standard system, though there was no standard Dutch at the time. However, it is likely that this was the paradigm used in the southern dialects, considering the influence of German on the third person plural pronouns, the fact that Limburg's dialects were more influenced by German than other dialects, and that Limburg was most authoritative in the early Middle Dutch period (Sijs, 56).

[7] The Great Vowel Shift refers to the shift of the Middle English long vowels. This shift took place between the fourteenth and seventeenth century. Most long vowels were raised and the ME high vowels [i:] and [u:] were dipthongized to [aɪ] and [aʊ] respectively (Algeo and Pyles, 160).

the eighteenth century. Modern English *house*, for example, was pronounced as [hu:s] in Old English. In some Modern Dutch varieties such as Twents, spoken in the east of the country, *house* is still pronounced as in Old English.

In the Middle English first (and second) person GEN singular, the distinction between *my* and *min* is purely phonological, comparable to the *a/an* distinction (Algeo and Pyles, 182). During the Middle English period, these genitives are "syntactically 'detached' from the pronoun paradigm, and [come] to function rather as adjectives than as true case forms" (Blake, 119). In the late twelfth century, a new genitive arises (yours, hers etc), which, as was the case with many innovations, first appears in the North and gradually spread southwards (ibid., 119).

For some reason, the *k* in the Dutch first person singular *ik* is replaced by *c* in spelling. Though this probably does not say anything about the pronunciation, it is quite remarkable, especially because the old spelling will eventually reappear. In the GEN singular (*mins*), an *s* is added, forming *mins*[8], while the Obj (*mi*) stays the same. For the plurals, the NOM stays the same, but the vowels in the GEN (*onser*) and Obj (*ons*) cases change from short /u/ to short /o/ (Toorn et al., 80).

Second Person

In the Middle English period, the *ð* is replaced by *þ* in spelling, while in Old English they were used interchangeably. Eventually, in late Middle English, the *þ* also disappears and is replaced by *th*. This *th* was used in/adopted from French sources. Before the *þ* is replaced, though, its shape changes to *y* (Van Gelderen, 113). This process, together with the diphthongizing of [u:] under influence of the GVS, explains the change of the NOM singular from *þu* to *thou*, as well as the changes in the GEN and Obj: *þin>thi(n)*, *þe>thee*. The NOM

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[8] Though Dutch has lost the GEN over time, it could be that this form is the only remnant of the GEN in Present Dutch. In Dutch, you can say "mijns inziens" (in my opinion), which means the same as "het inzicht van mij", but the latter is a quite unusual construction in this particular case.

plural changes to *ye(e)*: the g becomes a /j/, and by the fifteenth century, the /e/ would have been raised to a /i/ under the influence of the Great Vowel Shift (Lass Vol.III, 72). The GEN plural changes from OE *eower* to *your*. The diphthong /eo/ may first have changed to /o:/, meaning that "the first mora regressively assimilates to the second," after which the /o:/ changed to /ɔ:/, an example of the "complex, controversial and ill-understood change called Open-Syllable Lengthening" (Lass Vol.II, 43, 47).

Until the mid sixteenth century, *ye* remains the prevailing form in the nominative over *you*. *You* first appears in the fourteenth century and mainly occurs after verbs. Some authors use *ye* as an unstressed form of *you* (Mustanoja, 126), as can be observed in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales:

> But first I praye *you* of youre curteisye
> That *ye* n'arette it nought my vilainye
> Though that I plainly speke in this matere
> To telle *you* hir wordes and hir cheere

The Middle Dutch second person pronouns do not show any dramatic changes. The *þ* in the singular changes to *d* (*þu>du*), and an *s* is attached to the GEN, as is the case for the first person singular (*þin>dins)*. In the plural, the initial *i/j* is disappearing, giving a form more similar to the Present Dutch *u/uw*.

In the Middle English and Middle Dutch period, speakers of English and Dutch begin to use the second person plural (E *yee* and D *ghi*) as a formal singular, and the singular (E *thou* and D *du*) as a familiar or to address people from a lower class. An example of this use is provided in the lines from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* provided below, where the King uses the singular to address Laertes, while Laertes addresses the King with the plural:

King   Than is the throne of Denmark to *thy* father.

          What wouldst *thou* have, Laertes?

Laer.   *Your* leave and favor to return to France,

          From whence, though willingly, I came to Denmark

          To show my duty in *your* coronation

According to Bourcier, this change was motivated by social reasons rather than linguistic reasons and produced a serious "impoverishment of the language's resources" (148). With social reasons, Bourcier is referring to language contact and changes in society as opposed to linguistic reasons such as "ease of articulation." It is assumed that the French system served as an example, for both English and Dutch, which itself had adopted it from Latin (Loey, 137). Mustanoja claims that the use of the second person plural as the polite singular form stems from the plural of majesty: the king speaks of himself in the plural and is addressed in the plural as well (125-6). Lass, however, mentions that this theory has not been proven, considering that the use of the singular and plural forms was not consistent in Old French (Vol II, 536).

In Dutch, *ghi* was also used as formal/polite singular (Horst and Marschall, 43), while *du* becomes an 'impolite form' and by the sixteenth century has almost disappeared. However, in Limburg, a Dutch southern province, many varieties of 'du' are still used today (Loey, 137). Contrary to English, a new second person plural (*jullie*) is introduced.

Third Person

There has been a lot of controversy about the genesis of the English third person singular feminine *sche*. One theory is that of a stress shift leading to /hj'o/. After that, the initial /hj/ would blend as /ç/, but because this sound was rare in initial position in early Middle English, many spelling variations occurred: ghe/ge/ʒhe etc. This uncertainty in spelling caused the pronoun to be unstable, and therefore the initial sound was eventually replaced by [ʃ], which

was more common (Bourcier, 146). A problem with this theory is that at the time, most speakers of English were illiterate, which makes it highly unlikely that uncertainty in spelling played any role. Lass supports the first part of Bourcier's theory, suggesting that *she* is an example of the sound change /hj/>/ç/ under heavy Scandinavian linguistic influence (416). Algeo and Pyles propose a different theory. They suggest that *she* might have developed out of the demonstrative *seo* instead of the pronoun *heo*. Because *heo* became phonetically identical to the masculine *he* through regular sound change, a new form was needed. They also claim that the accusative feminine *hi* has simply not survived. (109). Baugh and Cable mention both theories (162).

Though the DAT/ACC distinction is lost in all other forms, it remains for neuters till late Middle English, and *him* is still used for the neuter indirect objects in many non-standard dialects today (Lass Vol.III, 118). The neuter also differs from the other pronouns in that the DAT overruled the ACC, the exact opposite of what occurred with all the others. The reason for this, according to Bourcier, is that "with grammatical gender obsolescent, pronoun-usage had come to be governed by animate/inanimate opposition, and this was served by keeping the original accusative *hit* and abandoning the dative *him* shared with the masculine" (145).

The third person plurals were replaced by the th- pronouns, adopted from Scandinavian *þei-r/ þeim/ þeira* (Bourcier, 146). The pronouns spread from the North to the South, the South showing to be more conservative when it comes to most grammatical changes (Van Gelderen, 120). First, the NOM *they* spreads south, rapidly followed by the GEN *their*. The Obj *them* was adopted much more slowly, as is shown by the fourteenth century London paradigm provided below (Bourcier, 147).

'Chaucerian'	Singular			Plural
system	M	F	N	
NOM	he	sche	hit	thei
GEN	his	hir/her	his/therof	hir(e)/her(e)
ACC/DAT	him	hir(e)/her(e)	hit	hem

This paradigm is also referred to as the Chaucerian paradigm, because his work provides plenty of evidence for the intermediate state. Consider the following example from the General Prologue of the Canterbury Tales: "The holy blissful martyr for to seeke that *hem* hath holpen whan that *they* were seke."

Bourcier gives the ambiguity of the third person pronouns as an explanation for why the th- pronouns were adopted from Scandinavian. According to him, "the reasons for this borrowing [ambiguities in the paradigm] are plain", but not all scholars agree with him (146). Morse-Gagné, for example, claims that the intense language contact between Brits and Scandinavians led to the adoption of the pronouns instead of any weaknesses in the old pronominal paradigm. "In very late West Saxon texts there are about six examples of a form *þæge* instead of *þa* 'that' nom.pl. It might be tempting to see this as a precursor of PDE *they*, but the temptation should be resisted" (Lass Vol.II, 146)

At first, the change from the Old Dutch third person genitives and objectives (*si, imo, iro,* and *in*) to Middle Dutch (*hare, hem, haer,* and *hun*) seems strange, especially because initial /h/ loss is more often observed in languages than /h/ insertion. However, what has most probably happened here, is that the OD pronouns were first replaced by Old German pronouns (*hiro, himo, hiro,* and *hin*) after which the vowels changed (Toorn et al., 53). Interestingly, though, the *i*s in the German pronouns change to either *a, e, ae,* or *u*. The available literature does not provide a satisfactory explanation for these vowel changes.

Early Modern English and Dutch (1500-1700)

In both the early Modern English and Dutch periods, a standard language arises. Within decades after the introduction of the printing press in 1476, the first spelling guides and grammars books are published. In this period, even more loanwords from French and Latin are added to the English and Dutch lexicons.

First Person

While the Middle English first person pronoun was *ik* (Scandinavian influence) in the North, the most common form was *ic* ([itʃ]) in the South. When weak-stressed, *ic* became [ɪ], but then it also became used in stressed position lengthening the vowel ([ɪ]>[i]). Under influence of Great Vowel Shift, [i] became [aɪ] (Present English *I*) (Bourcier, 147). Eventually, *I* "came to be capitalized, not through any egotism, but only because lower-case i standing alone was likely to be overlooked, since it is the most insignificant letters of the alphabet" (Algeo and Pyles, 182).

Second Person

In English, the use of *ye* as a polite form had died out by the seventeenth century and the old second person singulars (*thou* etc) had disappeared. These th-forms were first lost in the upper-class and had completely disappeared in the standard by the eighteenth century, though kept in use by older-generation Quakers when speaking to each other (Algeo and Pyles, 184). Another exception is the use of *thou* to address the Lord in the Authorized Version of the Bible from 1611 (Bourcier, 148). Bourcier argues that the loss of a singular/plural distinction has resulted in a double impoverishment of the language: practical (is an entire group addressed or only one member of the group?) and social: an intimate/formal distinction that is still available in many other languages, such as Dutch (Bourcier, 148).

While *du* had practically disappeared in late Middle Dutch, in the bible, the form is still used to address God, exactly the same as in English (Horst and Marschall, 69). While in the southern provinces the *gi* forms are used, *jij* occurs in the north. According to Loey, the origin of *jij/je* is identical to *gij/ge*, and therefore these are also used as polite forms[9] (140). However, with the use of *jij/ghij* for the second person singular, a new plural form was introduced: jelui, jullie, derived from "jij lieden" (you guys). Gijlieden, gijlui and ulieden already existed. Besides this, a new polite form arises: *u* (Horst and Marschall, 69). Loey, among others, suggests that this pronoun was derived from the abbreviation UE (Uwe Edelheid, used to address someone from the nobility/aristocracy and pronounced as /y:wə/) (139). Loey and Van der Horst and Marschall differ in how they explain the rise of *jelui*. While Loey argues that the rise of *jelui* limits the meaning of *jij* to only singular, Van der Horst and Marschall suggest that because *jij* was restricted in meaning, a new form for the second person plural was needed. What is clear, however, is that the Dutch prevented the gaps that appeared in the English language.

Third Person

In Dutch, the distinction between ACC *hen* and DAT *hun* is introduced by, presumably, Christiaen van Heule (*Nederduytsche Grammatica ofte Spraec-konst*, 1625), but popularized by the work of Hooft (Horst and Marchall, 65; Vooy, 410). At the time, this distinction was far from common: *hen* and *hun* used to be dialectal variations and in the "Statenbijbel" from 1637, they are used interchangeably (Van der Sijs, 90; Horst and Marschall, 65). Hooft was apparently so enthusiastic about the DAT/ACC distinction for the third person plural that he invented the same distinction for the singular as well: *hem/hum*. This idea never gained enough support to succeed, however (Horst and Marschall, 73).

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[9] In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the pronouns gij, uwe and jelui disappear and u and jullie become standard (Horst and Marschall, 79).

The early Modern English period brings the innovation of neuter genitive *its*, though *his* is still occasionally found in eModE. According to Van Gelderen, "*its* must have come into existence as an analogy to yours, hers etc." (167). *Its* is, till the eighteenth century, also written as *it's*, and many people still confuse them today (ibid., 167). The reason for this innovation is that grammatical gender had been replaced by neutral gender, which asked for distinctive forms for the neuter and masculine third person plural. Though various forms were "tried" (*it, therof*), *its* prevailed (Baugh and Cable, 243). "The neuter hit has survived when stressed, notably at the beginning of a sentence, in some types of nonstandard Modern English. The loss of [h-] in standard English was due to lack of stress and is paralleled by a similar loss in the h- pronouns when they are unstressed." For example: Give 'er the book (Algeo and Pyles, 109).

Modern English and Modern Dutch (1700- the present)

The industrialization and innovations in science and technology cause an immense increase in the English and Dutch vocabulary. The rise of a puristic movement in the Netherlands, opposing influences from foreign languages, especially German, resulted in the formation the "Genootschap Onze Taal" in 1931 (Sijs, 145). However, this organization has been quite unsuccessful in stopping the influx of loanwords.

Modern E/D		Singular		Plural	
		English	Dutch	English	Dutch
First	NOM	I	ik	we	wij
	GEN	my/mine	-	our(s)	-
	Obj	me	mij	us	ons
Second	NOM	you	jij/u	you	jullie/u
	GEN	your(s)	-	your(s)	-
	Obj	you	jou/u	you	jullie/u
Third	NOM	he/she/it	hij/zij/het	they	zij
(M/F/N)	GEN	his/her(s)/its	-	their(s)	-
	Obj	him/her/it	hem/haar/het	them	hen, hun

First Person

In the Dutch pronominal paradigm, all the genitive pronouns are lost. The first person singular NOM spelling changes back to *ik*, which it also was in Old Dutch. Besides that, the vowel in the ACC *mi* has diphthongized, resulting in *mij* [mɛi], as well as in the NOM plural: *wi> wij*. Only the Obj plural (*ons*) remains its Middle Dutch form. After the early Modern English period (1500-1700), the English first person pronouns did not undergo any more changes.

Second Person

In early Modern English, the second person *you* became the pronoun for both singular and plural. The loss of a singular/plural distinction left a gap in the pronoun system. In several English dialects, this gap has been filled in a number of ways. In northern American cities,

youse occurs, which is also found in current Irish English. Other examples are the Inland Southern *you-uns*, which Algeo and Pyles suggest stems from Scots English (185). The only form that has acquired some respectability in Modern English is the southern states' *you-all* or *y'all* (ibid., 185). More recently, *you guys* has appeared, which is similar to the Middle Dutch *jij lieden* (Present Dutch *jullie)*.

Third Person

According to Van der Horst and Marschall, the loss of distinction between the Dutch third person plural DAT and ACC, *hen* and *hun* respectively, is not a loss but an example of an unsuccessful grammatical fabrication dating from the seventeenth century. In many varieties of Dutch, the distinction between *hen* and *hun* was actually never introduced (112). However, the use of *hun* in subject position, as in "Hun zijn boos" (They are angry), is regarded as a "social shibboleth, a confirmation of poor education or common milieu" (119). It is unclear when people began to put *hun* in subject position, but the first linguist to mention the phenomenon is Vor der Hake in 1911 (Horst and Marschall, 120). The authors offer three explanations for the use of *hun* in subject position: the first, proposed by Koefoed, is that the replacement of *zij* by *hun* in subject position would only be a small part of the process to get rid of all case distinctions that have become useless. The second reason is that, because it is identical to the second person singular female pronoun, *ze* (unstressed *zij*) gives the impression that the pronoun only refers to women. *Hun*, on the other hand, can refer to both men and women. The third explanation, suggested by Stroop, is that this use of *hun* stems from the adoption of the pronoun by speakers of dialects with only the third person plural *ze*. In these dialects, no distinction is made between the NOM and ACC. When speakers of these dialects adopted *hun* into their language, some sort of hypercorrection took place and they also began to use *hun* when referring to the subject. The authors believe that it is very

plausible that *hun* will eventually replace *zij*. Bergen et al. have come up with a theory to explain the success of *hun* in subject position. They argue that *hun* can only refer to animate objects and is therefore more specific than *zij*. However, because *hun* can only refer to animate objects and not to inanimate objects, they believe that *hun* will not replace *zij* completely, at least not any time soon.

Algeo and Pyles claim that the English dative of the third person plural pronoun has survived. They say that in "We told 'em about the accident," *em* is the unstressed objective form in Modern English, with the loss of initial *h* (110). However, *'em* could be the unstressed form of *them* as well. Since, in some dialects, the initial *th* is replaced by /d/ anyway, a deletion of *th* would be expected in this example: "tol[d] [d]em". If in cases such as "I have given them the book," the pronoun is reduced to *em* as well*,* it makes just as much sense to argue that *em* is the reduced form of *them* as it is of *hem*, especially because *hem* does not occur in the language at all.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to provide an overview of the changes that occurred in the English and Dutch pronominal paradigms and thereby showing that pronouns are indeed subject to change, despite belonging to the Core Vocabulary. Though both paradigms have preserved a fairly complete system of inflections, the accusative and dative merged in both English and Dutch, and in Dutch, the genitive was lost as well. Another interesting change observed in both languages is the use of the second person plural (*you* and *jij/ghij)* as a polite singular form in the Middle English and Dutch period, eventually replacing the original singular forms. While in Dutch new forms for the plural appeared, this never happened in standard English, though new forms have arisen in other varieties of English. One of the most fascinating changes in the Dutch paradigm is the constructed distinction between third person plural *hen* and *hun*. The fact that this distinction was fabricated by admirers of Latin provides the answer to the question why speakers of Dutch struggle so much with keeping the two apart and why *hen* is disappearing in standard Dutch.

Though it seems that many changes happen gradually, especially in the case of sound changes, grammatical changes are abrupt, especially if we assume that these changes take place in the grammars of individuals. However, even without Lightfoot's theory of catastrophes, the introduction of new forms, such as the *hen/hun* distinction, shows that languages can change faster than is generally assumed. Considering that the English and Dutch languages date back to the sixth century, a change spreading across a language community within a few decades can hardly be called gradual.

Several limitations to this study need to be acknowledged. The most important limitation was the lack of data available for Old and Middle Dutch pronouns. More research will have to be carried out in order to provide a more detailed overview of the way the Dutch

paradigm has developed over the centuries. Furthermore, though the most common forms of both paradigms have been used for this study, it might be interesting to include other dialects, especially because of the role of language contact in language change.

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