

The History of Negation in Frisian and Dutch

A corpus-based comparison of Jespersen's Cycle at the North Sea Coast

Since Proto-Germanic times, there have been many syntactic developments that characterise modern West Germanic dialects – including (sentential) negation. As the examples from Old Frisian (1) and Old/Middle Dutch (2) show, the original Germanic negative element was a preverbal (often clitic) particle *ni/ne* (a), which later – due to phonological weakening – had to be reinforced (b) with a second, postverbal particle OFri. *nāwet*/ODt. *niewiht*, Late OFri. *naet*/MDt. *niet* (< PGmc. **ni io wihht* ‘not a thing’). Ultimately, *ne* was dropped completely (c), so that all modern West Germanic languages now only have a single, postverbal negative particle. This phenomenon is known as *Jespersen's Cycle* (Jespersen 1917), with stage II, the so-called bipartite negation, being particularly prominent. Although both negative elements occur simultaneously, they do not cancel each other out; rather, they are only able to reverse the proposition in combination.

In recent years, urgently needed research has been done for the history of negation in High (e. g. Jäger 2008) and Low German (Breitbarth 2014). But even if parts of the Continental West Germanic dialect continuum now can be considered well-studied, there is still a lack of a comprehensive overview that analyses this highly conspicuous pattern in a cross-lingual and comparative way. This is aggravated by the fact that only minor studies exist for the other two languages, Dutch (Vosters & Vandenbussche 2012; Zeijlstra 2002) and Frisian; in the case of the latter, there is only a single short overview (Bor 1990) that focuses neither on diachrony nor on empiricism. Now, I would like to close this gap and take a closer look at the change of negation in the closely related North Sea Germanic languages Frisian and Dutch.

For this purpose, the development of sentential negation is analysed not only diachronically, but also (as far as possible) diatopically, in order to gain an overview of the spatio-temporal spread of this phenomenon. Other factors associated with this cycle (e. g. prefixation and position of the finite verb) will be included as well, so that a comparison with the historical dialects of High and Low German can be made at selected points, leading to a better insight into this process and its areal/dialectal realisation. In the case of (Old) Frisian, this will also provide the first (simultaneously large-scale) empirical evidence ever that Jespersen's Cycle occurred there at all.

Modern corpora such as *Brieven als buit*, *Corpus Middelnederlands*, and *Corpus Oud-nederlands* (Dutch) as well as *Corpus Oudfries* (Frisian), which are balanced according to various criteria, serve as the source of data for this, enabling a comparable analysis of the two languages, their historical stages and dialects. Therefore, during my talk, I will also present what a corpus linguistic methodology that allows a comparison across languages and language stages might look like. In doing so, I not only want to break a lance for the (chronically) under-researched languages Old Dutch and in particular Old Frisian, but also share my experience in the field of comparative historical corpus linguistics, which is also committed to historical dialectology (cf. Wiesinger 2017).

- (1) a. *and nammermar ne mot hi anda godis huse wesa mith ore*
 and nevermore NEG may he in God's house be with other
kerstene lioden
 Christian people
 First Rüstring Manuscript; XVII.6 (*On Killing a Relative*)
- b. *Ief hi dan naet komma ne welle*
 if he then NEG come.INF NEG wants
 Jus Municipale Frisonum; III.57,6 (*Old Skeltariucht*)
- c. *Jsrachel, dines Godes nama scheltu naet wrswerra*
 Israel yours God's name shall=you NEG take in vain
 Jus Municipale Frisonum; II.8d (*Haet is riucht? What is law?*)
- (2) a. *minon eygenen wingardon nemochte ich behoodan*
 my own vineyard NEG=could I cultivate
 Old Dutch (*Leiden Willeram*; f. 16v)
- b. *Want ic ne wille niet, broeder, dat ghi onwetende sijt*
 because I NEG want NEG brother that you unknowing are
 Early Middle Dutch (14th c.) (*Lectioarium van Amsterdam*; 40)
- c. *want menne mach Gode niet deylen*
 because drove may God NEG divide
 Late Middle Dutch (16th c.) (*Gheestelike brulocht*; 1,206)

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