

# Changing pronominal gender in Dutch: transmission or diffusion?

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## **1. Introduction: gender in Dutch**

As in many Germanic languages, the Standard Dutch gender system has been subject to change. For instance, the former masculine and feminine gender have merged to one so-called ‘common’ gender. This is clearly visible in the adnominal domain, e.g. in the choice of the definite article (common *de* vs. neuter *het*). As was the case in the traditional three-gender system, no semantic regularities can be found in the assignment of common and neuter gender. Hence the system is described as a ‘grammatical’ gender system. Apart from adnominal gender, Dutch also marks gender in pronouns. Traditionally, pronominal gender matched the grammatical gender of the antecedent noun, as is still the case in German. In present-day Standard Dutch however, the pronominal gender appears to be shifting from a grammatical system to a semantic one (Audring 2006): count nouns are increasingly referred to using masculine pronouns such as *hij* ‘he’ and *hem* ‘him’, mass nouns are referred to with the neuter pronoun *het* ‘it’.

Some varieties of Dutch, most notably the varieties spoken in Belgium, have preserved the traditional three gender system quite well. But the gender systems in these dialects are subject to change as well: Pauwels (1938) discusses the results of a number of surveys on gender in Belgian varieties of Dutch carried out between 1872 and 1927. All Belgian Dutch dialects at that time still distinguished masculine, feminine and neuter gender, but there is a lot of variation on the level of the individual items: for instance, *bos* ‘forest’ is masculine in some dialects, but neuter in others; *kraag* ‘collar’ is feminine in some dialects, masculine in others, etc. For most nouns, the variation is geographically conditioned (cf. the maps in Pauwels 1938).

## ***2. Investigating gender in East and West Flemish dialects***

This situation described in section 1 raises many questions. For instance, to what extent do the developments in these three-gender dialects compare to the shifts that have taken place in northern varieties and Standard Dutch? In addition, it is not clear to what extent the developments in southern gender must be explained as diffusions from Standard Dutch or as own developments. To provide answers to these questions, I will compare the data from Pauwels (1938) with my own, recent data from the Belgian provinces of East and West-Flanders, which were gathered in 2006 by

means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 50 nouns, selected from the items discussed by Pauwels (1938), and focused on pronominal gender (see appendix). It consisted of sentence completion tasks of the type shown in (1): the informants had to fill in a subject pronoun referring to a (bold-faced) noun that was used in a previous sentence. The previous sentence did not contain any elements marking the gender of the noun (such as a definite article or an inflected adjective).

(1) Example sentence from the 2006 questionnaire

Er is **sneeuw** gevallen maar \_\_\_\_\_ is gesmolten.

There is **snow** fallen but \_\_\_\_\_ is melted.

‘**Snow** has fallen but \_\_\_\_\_ has melted.’

The questionnaire was sent to a large number of dialect speakers, viz. the informant network of the Dictionary of Flemish dialects. This network was established in the 1970s, and requires its informants to be native speakers of their local dialect rather than of a standardized variety of Dutch, who use their dialect on a daily basis, and who still live in the relevant location (see Van Keymeulen 2003 for details). Since most informants in the network were recruited in the 1970s, they are overwhelmingly aged 50 or older. In total, 138 questionnaires were returned, from 103 different locations.

In comparing data gathered in the period 1872-1927 with contemporary data, the present investigation is, essentially, a trend study, dealing with change in real time. The composition of the informant network has important consequences for the representativity of the results. On the one hand, the fact that informants in the 2006 survey are required to be non-mobile makes their answers very comparable to Pauwels's (1938) data, which were indeed also gathered from non-mobile speakers. On the other hand, non-mobiles have become increasingly rare in the relevant area, where geographical mobility has increased dramatically since the 1960s. In addition, recent decades have witnessed extensive dialect levelling and dialect loss in the relevant area, so there is little doubt that an investigation into younger generations would yield significantly different results.

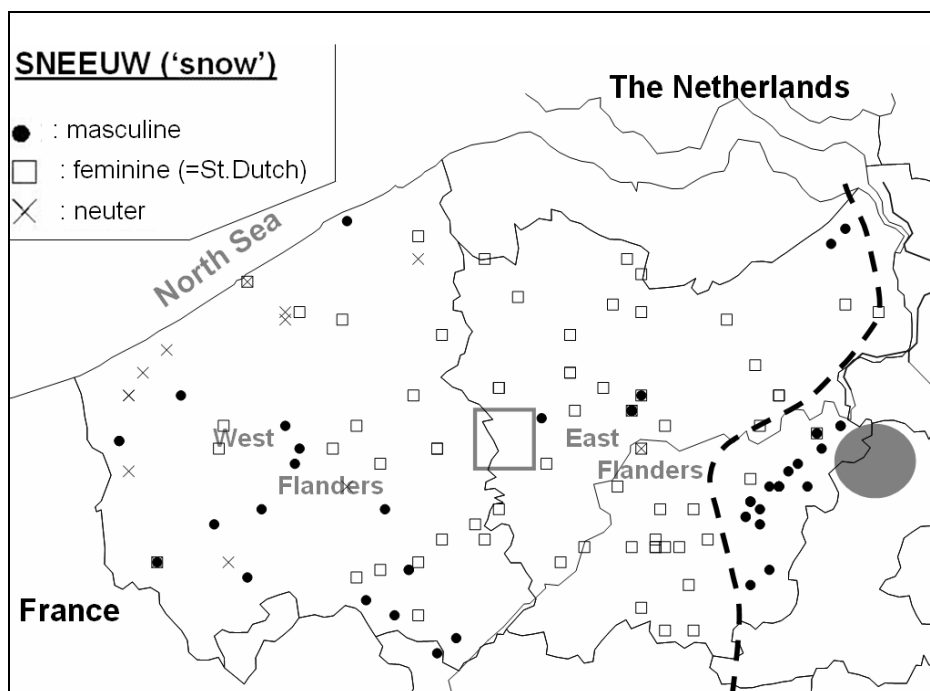
### ***3. Hundred years of gender shifts***

#### *3.1 The overall stability of Flemish gender*

The results of the 2006 questionnaire do not show a radical breakdown of the gender system: in all dialects the three genders are still used. 64,92% of the answers correspond to the grammatical gender that could be expected on the basis of Pauwels (1938). An example map may illustrate this. Map 1 shows the results for the noun *sneeuw* 'snow', a noun which is , according to

Pauwels (1938), feminine in the vast majority of East and West Flemish dialects. This is shown on the map with a large grey square. The dotted line marks the border between the area in which *sneeuw* ‘snow’ is feminine, and an eastern zone in which *sneeuw* ‘snow’ is a masculine noun (cf. the large grey dot). In the 2006 survey, the question was answered by 135 informants; the small symbols show the results. Of these informants, 21 live too close to the border (the dotted line) to warrant any conclusions as to the grammatical gender of the relevant noun in their dialects in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (note that the 1938 map is drawn using data from only 27 locations). Hence only 114 of the 135 answers that are mapped are taken into account for further statistical analysis. The majority of these answers (69/114, or 60,53%) provide the gender that could be expected according to the map in Pauwels (1938). For the area where *sneeuw* ‘snow’ traditionally is a feminine noun, 86 informants were consulted, 27 of which used the masculine pronoun *hij* ‘he’ to refer to *sneeuw* ‘snow’. This yields a ratio of expected feminines shifting to masculine of .314 (= 27/86). Fourteen used *het* ‘it’ (yielding a ratio of expected feminines shifting to neuter of .163). In this case masculine gender is more stable than the feminine: for *sneeuw*, only 4 of the 28 informants in the ‘masculine’ area (a ratio of .143) refer to the noun with the feminine *ze* ‘she’, and no shifts to the neuter are observed here.

*Map 1. Gender of the pronoun referring to sneeuw ‘snow’*



Since grammatical gender is a property of individual nouns and as such may undergo all sorts of idiosyncratic developments (cf. the existence of lexical diffusion; cf. also Gilliéron's slogan 'chaque mot a son histoire'), it comes as no surprise that some of the developments on map 1 are hard to explain. For instance, it is not clear how the extensive use of the masculine pronoun *hij* 'he' in West Flanders should be explained: this cannot be a case of standardisation, and it seems equally unlikely that the masculine gender is taken over from Brabantic, since in that case one would expect more attestations of *hij* 'he' in East Flanders as well, the province neighbouring the Brabantic area. Difficulties such as these can be overcome if one takes into account the developments for a large number of nouns. Therefore, in the

next sections the data for all the items on the 2006 questionnaire will be subjected to statistical analysis.

### 3.2 *Standardisation effects*

Many dialects of Dutch suffer from large-scale dialect loss and levelling. And although the Flemish dialects are considered among the most conservative ones in the Dutch language area, standardisation here too has caused gradual convergence with the standard language (Tældeman 2005:89-102 for East Flanders, Devos & Vandekerckhove 2005:142-148 for West Flanders). The effects of standardisation on the gender system are rather complex. For instance, traditionally masculine nouns that are feminine in Standard Dutch tend not to take over Standard Dutch gender, and vice versa. The most important Standard Dutch influence concerns traditionally masculine and feminine nouns which are neuter in Standard Dutch. In this case, there is a strong tendency to take over the neuter gender. This shift towards the neuter is somewhat remarkable given the fact that the 'default' gender in Dutch is the masculine, i.e. loanwords, abbreviations etc. are assigned masculine gender, not neuter. The most conspicuous examples that are undergoing this shift include *artikel* 'article', for which 80 informants were expected to provide a masculine pronoun, but 74 used the neuter *het* 'it' (i.e. a ratio of 74/80, or .925). Similar results are obtained for the masculines *bos* 'forest' (with 74/92 informants shifting to the neuter, a ratio

of .804) and *boek* ‘book’ (94/123, or .764), and for the feminines *feest* ‘party’ (59/68, or .868) and *dozijn* ‘dozen’ (66/92, or .717).

Table 1 collapses the data for all the relevant nouns, i.e. all nouns for which non-neuter gender is attested in Flemish dialects according to Pauwels (1938). 10 of these nouns are masculine in Standard Dutch, 25 are feminine, and 14 are neuter. The table shows the average ratio of the expected ‘non-neuter’ answers having shifted to neuter. It is obvious that the average ratio of shifts towards the neuter is much higher when the shift boils down to convergence with Standard Dutch (with an average ratio of .419).

*Table 1. Shifts to neuter gender under the influence of Standard Dutch*

Gender in Standard Dutch:	<u>avg. ratio ‘non-neuter shifting to neuter’</u>	
<i>masculine:</i>	<b>.136</b>	(n=10)
<i>feminine:</i>	<b>.117</b>	(n=25)
<i>neuter:</i>	<b>.419</b>	(n=14)

ANOVA: p < .001

The explanation for the results in table 1 must be sought outside the realm of pronominal gender. The main reason why neuter gender is taken over much more easily from Standard Dutch is that the difference between the masculine or feminine on the one hand and the neuter on the other is much more salient than the difference between the masculine and the feminine. This has to do with the way gender is marked in the noun phrase. For instance, in definite noun phrases Flemish dialects mark feminine gender in the same way as common gender is marked in Standard Dutch, i.e. with the



use of the definite article *de*, and an inflectional *-e* on the adjective. The marking of the Flemish masculine resembles this strongly: in Flemish dialects, masculine gender triggers the use of the ending *-en* on the adjective, from which the /n/ is often dropped, levelling out the differences with the Flemish feminine gender. The same holds for the definite article: masculine *den* often surfaces as *de*, i.e. the same form that is used for Flemish feminines. This is shown in table 2.

Table 2. *Definite noun phrases in Flemish dialects vs. Standard Dutch*

<i>Flemish dialects:</i>	<u>masculine</u>	<u>feminine</u>	<u>neuter</u>
	<b>de(n)</b> grot- <b>e(n)</b> man	<b>de</b> grot- <b>e</b> vrouw	<b>het</b> klein kind
	the tall man	the tall woman	the little child
<hr/> <i>Standard Dutch:</i>	<u>common</u>		<u>neuter</u>
	<b>de</b> grot- <b>e</b> man/vrouw		<b>het</b> klein- <b>e</b> kind
	the tall man/woman		the little child

The neuter, however, combines with the definite article *het* and zero-inflection on the adjective, giving rise to a difference with non-neuter gender that is never levelled out. Hence the fact that the dialectal gender does not correspond to Standard Dutch gender will be noticed much more easily when the difference involves neuter gender, increasing the likelihood that speakers accommodating towards the standard will take over the Standard Dutch gender (cf. Trudgill 1986:10-11, 37).

Given this explanation, it is to be expected that the standardisation effect is not limited to pronominal gender: if shifts towards the neuter are indeed fuelled by salient differences between dialectal and Standard Dutch

adnominal morphology, it would be unexpected if shifts in pronominal gender would not be paralleled by similar developments in adnominal gender. Although there are no data available on adnominal gender from the 2006 questionnaire, other sources show that non-neuter nouns indeed tend to take over adnominal morphology associated with neuter gender. For instance, the database of the SAND-atlas (Barbiers et al. 2006) contains dialectal equivalents to Standard Dutch sentences containing both *boek* ‘book’ and *feest* ‘party’, in which examples surface of the noun combining with neuter adnominal morphology (e.g. *dat boek* ‘that boek’, *het feest* ‘the party’). For details on the relation between developments in pronominal vs. adnominal gender in a Brabantic dialect, see Hoppenbrouwers (1983:15-16).

### 3.3 *Interdialectal influence: ‘Brabantic expansion’*

Apart from influence of Standard Dutch, Dutch dialects also tend to converge with each other (see Hinskens 1993 and Vandekerckhove 1993 for examples from Dutch). In Belgium, the most significant form of interdialectal influence is the tendency of central, Brabantic dialect features to diffuse over more peripheral regions such as the provinces of East and West Flanders (Taeldeman 2002:12-15). The Brabantic dialects are among the most stable ones in the Dutch language area when it comes to the preservation of the three-gender system. This is illustrated by the fact that, unlike in northern varieties, even loanwords can be assigned feminine

gender (Treffers-Daller 1994:123-141). In the present data it is indeed observed that Flemish nouns tend to take over Brabantic gender. Table 3 shows consistently higher ratios for shifts that lead to convergence with Brabantic dialects. Two concern nouns which are traditionally neuter in Flemish dialects. These tend to take over both masculine and feminine gender from the Brabantic dialects at a ratio of .283 and .745, respectively, which is significantly higher than the ratio of nouns shifting towards non-Brabantic gender (cf. the first and second column). Examples from nouns undergoing these shifts include the original neuter nouns *lak* ‘varnish’, *marmmer* ‘marble’, *zink* ‘zinc’, *boek* ‘book’ and *zerk* ‘tombstone’, taking over masculine gender, and *olie* ‘oil’ and *venster* ‘window’, taking over feminine gender. In addition, originally masculine nouns, such as *meloen* ‘melon’, *ekster* ‘magpie’ and *limonade* ‘lemonade’ tend to adopt feminine gender from Brabantic (at a ratio of .301; cf. the third column).

*Table 3. Shifts under the influence of Brabantic dialects*

Gender in Brabantic:	<u>avg. ratio ‘neuter shifting to masculine’</u>	<u>avg. ratio ‘neuter shifting to feminine’</u>	<u>avg. ratio ‘masculine shifting to feminine’</u>
<i>masculine:</i>	<b>.283</b> (n=10)	<b>.131</b> (n=10)	<b>.107</b> (n=20)
<i>feminine:</i>	<b>.081</b> (n=2)	<b>.745</b> (n=2)	<b>.301</b> (n=9)
<i>neuter:</i>	<b>.032</b> (n=3)	<b>.413</b> (n=3)	<i>no data</i> (n=0)
	ANOVA: p > .05	ANOVA: p > .001	ANOVA: p > .05

The highest average ratio in the table, the one for neuters shifting to feminine, is extremely high (.745), but this is due to the fact that only two nouns are taken into account. Here a more elaborate survey including more nouns in the relevant category will undoubtedly yield a lower ratio. Overall,

then, the influence from Brabantic expansion seems to be less strong than the influence of standardisation. It is hard to say whether Brabantic expansion remains limited to the categories of nouns for which the present study finds significant results. Unlike for the standardisation effects, it is not immediately clear why precisely these three categories of nouns would be sensitive to Brabantic influence. For some categories the absence of significant results may be due to data sparsity: sometimes there are simply too few relevant items to yield significant results. It has been pointed out above that there are very few traditionally neuter nouns in the list which are feminine or neuter in Brabantic. Also, the questionnaire did not contain items which are masculine in a substantial part of East or West Flanders, but neuter in Brabantic.

As was the case for the standardisation effects, the results of the 2006 questionnaire do not provide any information concerning shifts in adnominal gender due to Brabantic expansion, but there are other recent data for one of the items under investigation. The MAND-atlas includes a map with the article for the noun *ekster* ‘magpie’ (map 70b), which, compared to the map in Pauwels (1938), shows that in the adnominal domain too the use of masculine gender has decreased dramatically. This development is completely in line with the developments in pronominal gender, and hence it appears that Brabantic expansion affects both pronominal and adnominal gender.

### 3.4 *Resemantisation?*

The final development under investigation is the tendency to abandon the grammatical gender in pronouns, in favour of a semantic gender system. Such a tendency is well-known to occur in present-day spoken Standard Dutch. Audring (2006) describes the innovative semantic gender system of spoken Standard Dutch as follows: all mass nouns are referred to with the neuter pronoun *het* 'it', count nouns with the masculine *hij* 'he'. The feminine pronoun *ze* 'she' is only used to refer to female humans and animals.

At first sight the Flemish dialects show no significant tendency towards a resemanitisation of the pronominal gender of mass nouns: taking all data into account, the average 'non-neuter to neuter'-ratio is .192 for mass nouns and .215 for count nouns (ANOVA:  $p > .10$ ). However, many of the nouns for which strong convergence with Standard Dutch neuter gender was observed, were count nouns (see section 3.2). Hence it seems as if any tendency towards semantic gender could be masked by the much stronger tendency to converge with Standard Dutch. Table 4 shows the results if all nouns are left out of consideration that are neuter in Standard Dutch (both count and mass nouns). It appears that in the Flemish dialects there is indeed a statistically significant effect to use the neuter pronoun *het* 'it' to refer to mass nouns,

whether they are grammatically neuter or not: the ratio of expected non-neuter answers have shifted to neuter gender is higher for mass nouns than for count nouns (.197 and .078, respectively). Examples of nouns undergoing this shift are *achterdocht* ‘suspicion’ (37/87 non-neuters shifting to neuter, or .425), *diamant* ‘diamond’ (24/97, or .247), *pels* ‘fur’ (15/61, or .246), *olie* ‘oil’ (25/108, or .231), and *kalk* ‘lime’ (20/92, or .217). Quite surprisingly, no tendency is observed to use the masculine *hij* ‘he’ for all count nouns.

*Table 4. Shifts to neuter gender as a result of resemantisation (excluding nouns that are neuter in Standard Dutch)*

	<u>avg. ratio ‘non-neuter shifting to neuter’</u>	
Noun semantics:		
<i>mass nouns</i> :	<b>.197</b>	(n=13)
<i>count nouns</i> :	<b>.078</b>	(n=22)
	ANOVA: $p < .01$	

Unlike the other tendencies under investigation, resemantisation seems to affect pronominal gender only (cf. similar tendencies in other varieties of Dutch, as described by Siemund 2002 and Audring 2006). In section 4, this observation will be related to the fact that resemantisation is the result of a different mechanism of change.

#### **4. Mechanisms of gender change: diffusion vs. transmission**

It is well-known that there are different mechanisms of language change. Labov (2007), for instance, distinguishes between transmission and diffusion. In two of the three developments under discussion, viz. standardisation and Brabantic influence, it is obvious that contact is taking place, and, hence, that the relevant linguistic phenomena are diffused. As for the tendency towards resemantisation, this may in principle be the result of diffusion or an independent development: resemantisation of gender system along count-mass distinctions is indeed found in spoken Standard Dutch (Audring 2006), but the phenomenon has also emerged independently in many other Germanic dialects (see Siemund 2002 for examples from English). Different mechanisms of change yield different predictions as to the geography of the relevant phenomena. Diffusion is the result of contact between speakers, which is typically observed between neighbouring dialects, or, alternatively, between large population centres (cf. Trudgill's 1974 gravity model). From this it can be expected that the Brabantic influence will be much stronger in the neighbouring province of East Flanders than in the west. Also, it may be the case that locations closer to the Netherlands are exposed to stronger pressure from Standard Dutch, but this effect should be rather limited, since contact with the standard language does not mainly depend on the proximity of areas in which the standard language stands strong. For standardisation, a larger influence can be expected of sociological factors such as geographical and social mobility, degree of urbanisation, literacy, etc., and, indeed, there is agreement in the field that

the dialects spoken in West Flanders, a peripheral and probably the most rural province in Dutch-speaking Belgium, show less standardisation than East Flemish dialects.

Table 5 correlates, on the one hand, the ratio with which the three main tendencies from section 3 manifest themselves in the different localities under investigation with, on the other hand, the geographical location of the relevant places, expressed by means of Greenwich coordinates. These coordinates determine how many degrees a given location is situated to the east of the Greenwich Meridian (X-coordinate) or to the north of the Equator (Y-coordinate). In this way, it can be detected whether a given change mainly affects the east rather than the west (or vice versa in the case of a negative correlation), or the north rather than the south. The strongest correlation in the table is the one between the X-coordinate and Brabantic influence, which indeed increases the closer one gets to the Brabantic dialect region. A similar but weaker correlation is observed between the Y-coordinate and standardisation: the closer a sampling point is situated to the North, i.e. to the border with the Netherlands, the stronger the influence from Standard Dutch. Other correlations are less expected. For instance, the Brabantic influence is more strongly felt in the south of the area than in the north. This may be due to the fact that the dialects in southeast Flanders have been subject to heavy Brabantic influence for at least five centuries, whereas the Brabantic expansion has only affected the more northern and



western areas of East Flanders more recently (see Taeldeman 2002:12-15 for further explanation). The most unexpected effect, however, is the fact that Standard Dutch influence has been stronger in the west than in the east. Clearly, this is not in line with the results from most sociolinguistic research in Belgium.

*Table 5. Correlations between gender change and Greenwich coordinates*

	<u>X-coordinate</u>	<u>Y-coordinate</u>
1. Standardisation: <i>non-neuters &gt; neuter</i>	<b>-.315**</b> West > East	<b>.300**</b> North > South
2. Brabantian expansion: <i>neuters &gt; masc./fem.</i>	<b>.459**</b> East > West	<b>-.268*</b> South > North
3. Resemantisation: <i>non-neuter mass nouns &gt; neuter</i>	<b>-.344**</b> West > East	<i>no significant effect</i>

(\*\* : correlation significant at the .01-level; \* : correlation significant at the .05-level)

Apart from standardisation and Brabantian expansion, table 5 also shows the correlation between geographical location and the tendency towards resemantisation of pronominal gender. This tendency too is stronger in the west than in the east. No differences are observed between the north and the south here. This suggests that the resemantisation of pronominal gender has not diffused from Standard Dutch, for two reasons: first, the lack of a correlation between resemantisation and the Y-coordinate constitutes a clear discrepancy with the geographical pattern observed for the ‘non-neuter to neuter’-shifts under Standard Dutch pressure. And second, intensive dialect geographical research in Flanders has shown that a clear north-south orientation is typical for dialect borders predating the rise of Standard Dutch

(Tældeman 2005:78-80, Devos 2006:37-41). While the strong tendency towards resemantisation seems to contradict the general characterisation of the western dialects as conservative, it has been observed before that, with respect to grammatical gender, West Flemish gender has moved further away from the original system than East Flemish (or Brabantic, for that matter). This is most obvious in adnominal gender: maps 67a and 69a from the MAND-atlas show, for instance, that most West Flemish dialects pattern like Standard Dutch in that they no longer have a morphologically distinct masculine indefinite article, whereas all East Flemish and Brabantic dialects still distinguish between masculine *ne(n)* ‘a (man)’ and feminine *een* ‘a (woman)’. Hence it appears as if a development in West Flemish is witnessed that is clearly parallel to Standard Dutch, which would make it a likely case of transmission in Labov’s (2007) terms: in both varieties gender-marking morphology is lost, and, correspondingly, parallel innovations are witnessed in pronominal gender.

Tentatively, this may also provide an explanation for the larger degree of standardisation that is observed in West Flemish. The fact that West Flemish pronominal gender is undergoing large-scale restructuring may have made the system more susceptible to Standard Dutch influence, in two ways: first, due to the stronger resemantisation of pronominal gender speakers of West Flemish dialects witness variation in the gender assignment for certain nouns, which may contribute to an overall uncertainty with respect to

grammatical gender (cf. Trudgill 1986:10-11). And second, due to the loss of gender-marking morphology the language input provides these West Flemish dialect speakers with less morphological clues to rely on in determining the gender of a noun, which is another factor that may facilitate change. Quite evidently, this explanation needs to be tested against further data from West Flemish.

## **5. Conclusions**

Like the northern Standard Dutch system, the gender system in present-day East and West Flemish dialects is undergoing change. The following three tendencies are observed: 1. originally non-neuter words are shifting to neuter gender under the influence of Standard Dutch; 2. especially in East Flanders nouns tend to adopt the gender used in the Brabantic prestige dialects; and 3. a tendency towards resemantisation of pronominal gender is witnessed, mainly in West Flanders (cf. Audring 2006 for (northern) Standard Dutch). The first two developments involve both adnominal and pronominal gender, the latter is restricted to pronominal gender. The tendencies differ with respect to the underlying mechanism of change too: the first two developments are obviously the result of diffusion. As for the latter tendency, geographical evidence is presented that it constitutes a spontaneous development in West Flanders, exemplifying what Labov

(2007) has termed ‘transmission’. Overall, however, the picture is one of stability: all dialects distinguish three genders, and for the vast majority of answers to the 2006 questionnaire the nouns’ gender corresponds to grammatical gender in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (as described by Pauwels 1938).

This article has also left some questions unanswered. For instance, the precise relation between the loss of gender-marking morphology in the adnominal domain and pronominal gender remains to be investigated. And perhaps even more intriguingly, two of the three ongoing developments involve the diffusion of variants that already exist, and hence do not explain why dialects of one language show such extensive variation with respect to the grammatical gender of certain nouns. In other words: we appear to have a much better understanding of the mechanisms that are levelling out dialect variation than of the mechanisms causing them.

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### **Appendix: questionnaire items**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Gender in St. Dutch</i>	<i>Gender in Brabantic</i>	<i>Attested genders in Flemish dialects (Pauwels 1938)</i>
<i>achterdocht</i>	'suspicion'	fem.	fem.	masc. / fem.
<i>amandel</i>	'almond'	fem.	fem.	masc. / fem.
<i>artikel</i>	'article'	neut.	masc.	masc.
<i>beet</i>	'bite'	masc.	masc.	fem.
<i>bijl</i>	'axe'	fem.	fem. / neut.	fem. / neut.
<i>boek</i>	'book'	neut.	masc.	masc. / neut.
<i>bos</i>	'forest'	neut.	masc. / neut.	masc. / neut.
<i>bureau</i>	'desk'	neut.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>chocolade</i>	'chocolat'	fem.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>diamant (stof)</i>	'diamond (mass noun)'	masc.	masc.	masc. / neut.
<i>distel</i>	'thistle'	fem.	fem.	masc.
<i>dozijn</i>	'dozen'	neut.	neut.	fem. / neut.
<i>draak</i>	'dragon'	masc.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>ekster</i>	'magpie'	fem.	fem.	masc. / fem.

<i>fabriek</i>	'factory'	fem.	neut.	masc. / neut.
<i>feest</i>	'party'	neut.	fem.	fem.
<i>gom</i>	'eraser'	fem.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>gram</i>	'gram'	neut.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>horloge</i>	'watch'	neut.	fem.	fem.
<i>jas</i>	'coat'	fem.	fem. / masc.	masc.
<i>jenever</i>	'gin'	fem.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>kalk</i>	'lime'	fem.	masc.	masc. / neut.
<i>kei</i>	'stone'	masc.	fem. / masc.	masc.
<i>kool</i>	'cabbage'	fem.	fem.	fem.
<i>kraag</i>	'collar'	masc.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>lak</i>	'polish'	neut.	masc.	masc. / neut.
<i>limonade</i>	'lemonade'	fem.	fem.	masc. / fem.
<i>machine</i>	'machine'	fem.	neut.	fem. / neut.
<i>marmer</i>	'marble'	neut.	masc.	masc. / neut.
<i>meloen</i>	'melon'	masc.	fem.	masc. / fem.
<i>muil</i>	'mouth'	masc.	masc.	fem.
<i>nest</i>	'nest'	neut.	masc.	masc. / neut.
<i>olie</i>	'oil'	fem.	fem.	fem. / neut.
<i>pantoffel</i>	'slipper'	fem.	masc. / fem.	masc. / fem.
<i>pels</i>	'fur'	masc.	masc.	fem.
<i>peper</i>	'pepper'	fem.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>rol</i>	'rolling pin'	fem.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>schotel</i>	'dish'	masc.	fem.	masc. / fem.
<i>sneeuw</i>	'snow'	fem.	masc.	masc. / fem.
<i>spinazie</i>	'spinach'	fem.	fem.	fem.
<i>stijfsel</i>	'starch'	fem. / neut.	masc. / neut.	neut.
<i>suiker</i>	'sugar'	fem.	masc. / neut.	masc. / fem. / neut.
<i>tas</i>	'cup'	fem.	masc. / fem.	masc. / fem.
<i>vangst</i>	'catch'	fem.	fem.	fem.
<i>venster</i>	'window'	neut.	fem.	fem. / neut.
<i>vernis</i>	'polish'	neut.	masc.	masc. / neut.
<i>vlucht</i>	'flight/escape'	fem.	fem.	masc. / fem.
<i>waarborg</i>	'deposit'	masc.	masc. / fem.	masc.
<i>zerk</i>	'tombstone'	fem.	masc.	masc. / neut.
<i>zink</i>	'zinc'	neut.	masc.	masc. / neut.