## S Berkeley Linguistics Society

Variation in Modern Dutch D-Weakening: A Historical Perspective Author(s): Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl

Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: General Session and Parasession on Historical Issues in Sociolinguistics/Social Issues in Historical Linguistics (1995), pp. 503-510

Please see "How to cite" in the online sidebar for full citation information.

Please contact BLS regarding any further use of this work. BLS retains copyright for both print and screen forms of the publication. BLS may be contacted via <a href="http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/bls/">http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/bls/</a>.

The Annual Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society is published online via <u>eLanguage</u>, the Linguistic Society of America's digital publishing platform.

## Variation In Modern Dutch D-Weakening: A Historical Perspective Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl University Of California, Berkeley

1. INTRODUCTION. In modern Standard Dutch an optional rule exists by which d may be weakened in intervocalic position, followed by either a glide insertion across morpheme boundaries or a word contraction. Thus, goede 'good' can become goeie, brede 'broad' becomes breeë, and leder 'leather' becomes leer. (see example 1). These forms are subject to considerable (regional and social) dialectal, stylistic (esp. casual speaking style), and individual variation. The phenomenon, however, is not a recent one but can be traced back to perhaps as early as the 11th century (van Loon 1986:141). The earliest evidence shows up in old place names (cf. 12th century Nerisca for earlier Netherisca) and in the earliest Middle Dutch (e.g. woensdag<br/>
Wodanesdag 'Wednesday') and is well-documented by the 14th century. The change appears to have spread from the South to the North of the Low Countries, and Middle Dutch and early Modern Dutch texts already show a significant amount of dialectal and stylistic variation.

Historically, a number of sociolinguistic factors played an important role in this process, while synchronic variation is to a great extent constrained by historical factors. Thus far, the majority of the research devoted to this issue has consisted of either phonological or historical approaches (Cohen 1959; Franck 1910; Goossens 1974; van Loey 1957; van Loon 1986; Schönfeld 1947). Neither approach, however, captures the sociolinguistic reality of modern Dutch d-weakening. In this paper, I will present an analysis of synchronic variation in Dutch d-weakening which takes into account the historical processes which have affected it. Understanding the principles involved in the historical development of the problem may provide insight into the seemingly random patterns of synchronic variation and may explain the choices open to native speakers with respect to the degree of acceptability of these forms.

2. ZONNEVELD'S (1978) ANALYSIS. Most recently, Zonneveld (1975, 1976, 1978, 1981) and Smith (1973, 1975) have considered the phonological constraints of dweakening. Zonneveld'S (1978) dissertation presents the most detailed phonological analysis thus far. He proposes a two-rule solution to the problem: (1) a weakening process, which occurs across suffixal boundaries (e.g. goede-goeie 'good') and (2) a contraction rule which occurs intramorphemically (e.g. broeder-broer 'brother'). He distinguishes three classes within the d-weakening process.

Class I undergoes weakening and gliding across suffixal boundaries. Between a stressed tense vowel or diphthong and an unstressed morpheme of the shape -e [ə], -en [ən], -er [ər], -ig [əx], d is weakened to a palatal or labial glide (Zonneveld 1978:27). Some examples are:

(1) a. attributive -e: brede breeë 'wide' b. infinitive -en: riiden 'to drive' rijen 'spices' c. noun pl. -en: kruiden kruien d. comparative -er: breder 'wider' breeér e. derived adj. -ig: goedig goeiig 'good-natured'

In Class II, d is deleted intramorphemically, accompanied by contraction of the following schwa:

(2) leder - leer 'leather' ader - aar 'vein'

lade - la 'drawer' zijde - zij 'silk'

Zonneveld (1978:37) describes this rule informally as "-de is deleted after long vowels and diphthongs in word-final position or before the consonants g, k, m, l, or r." He perceives this process as a contraction rather than a weakening process and therefore argues for two different rules for intervocalic d-weakening.

Class III contains a small number of exceptions to the above two classes.

These forms may undergo:

(3) a. both the weakening process of class I and the contraction of Class II, resulting in three possible realizations of a word:

bodem - booiem - boom 'bottom' kade - kaai - ka 'quay'

b. the Class II contraction across morpheme boundaries:

bladeren - blaren 'leaves'

c. the weakening of Class I intramorphemically:

poeder - poeier 'powder'

D-weakening thus appears to take place in the environment following long vowels (the front vowels [i:] and [e:], and the back vowels [u:], [o:], and [a:]) and

diphthongs and before an unstressed morpheme.

Zonneveld (1978:22) only briefly refers to the sociolinguistic factors which affect this phenomenon by noting that "[t]here is considerable dialectal and even, so it seems, personal variation as regards the acceptability or nonacceptability of these forms." His analysis, however, as any of the historical approaches before him, oversimplifies the complexities of individual and stylistic variation. For instance, in his 1981 article, Zonneveld (1978:28) simply notes that "d-weakening is triggered by casual style of speech," ignoring the considerable variation among native speakers with respect to the acceptability of these forms. Before addressing this issue, I will present an overview of the historical background of d-weakening.

- 3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND. Historically, d-weakening appears to have spread in the Low Countries from the South, now approximately the southwest of Belgium, to the North. Schönfeld (1947:34) suggests that a possible explanation for the phenomenon might be found in the influence of French of Westflanders. In French, d became syncopated (4a) but remained intact after l (4b):
- (4) a. Lat. audire > Fr. ouir 'to hear' Similarly, West-Flemish maintained a distinction between, on the one hand, forms such as broer (<br/>broeder 'brother'), rijen (<rijden 'ride, drive'), zaal (<zadel 'saddle') and, on the other hand, those forms which subsequently underwent l-vocalization, such as houden (cf. Ger. halten 'hold'), oude (cf. Ger. alt 'old'), and koude (cf. Ger. kalt 'cold'). Schönfeld hypothesizes that when d-syncope spread from West-Flanders northwards, l-vocalization had already taken place, so that the difference between forms containing the l and the other forms does not exist elsewhere.

Although Schönfeld (1947:67) suggests that the d-deletion process may have started as early as the 11th century, an opinion based on the hypercorrection Odeka for the 10th century place name Hoica, clear examples can be found in the 14th century in the provinces (North- and South-) Holland and Utrecht. Some early examples are:

(5) Mi.D. roeien Mod.D. roeden 'rods' hoymaker hoedemaker gerechtigheien gerechtigheden 'justices'

Franck (1910: 102) reports the following examples from 14th century manuscripts:

(6) ghecroeien < ghecroden sint < sident vlerc < vlederic 'wing'

According to Schönfeld (1947:67), the oldest and most prevalent forms of dsyncope are those where d is followed by vowel + consonant (preferably l or r) + syllable; for example:

(7) E. Mod.D. Mi.D. vlederik vlerc < 'wing' Bokele **Bodokenlo** (placename) seware sedeware seaweed' goedelic goelijc 'good-natured'

Schönfeld (1947: 67) suggests that d-syncope must have spread northward and subsequently in eastward direction via the Brabant dialect. D-syncopated forms appear earlier and with much greater frequency in that particular dialect. He hypothesizes that the change moved north to the province Utrecht, which influenced the northern part of South-Holland, which in turn influenced the North-Holland dialects, specifically that of Amsterdam. To the east the change appears to have reached de Betuwe, which is a region in the river valley just east of the province Utrecht. This northward direction of d-syncope is supported by historical facts, particularly the fall of Antwerp which occurred in 1585 and caused many southerners to flee to the north, especially Amsterdam. The geographic distribution of d-deletion can be seen in placenames, such as the following cited by Schönfeld (1947: 35:

(8)	Limburg	<i>Venray</i> from	Venrade
		Leverooi	Leverode
	N. Brabant	Gijzenrooi	Gijzenrode
		Wanrooi	Wanrode
	Betuwe	Wadenooien (also: Wayer	noyen) Wadenode
		Ravenswaai	Ravenswade

Similarly, d-weakening appears to be more widespread in the literary works of Southern writers than of Northerners.

3.2 SCHÖNFELD'S ANALYSIS. Schönfeld (1947) provides the following historical

analysis of those forms that have undergone d-syncope by early modern Dutch. (9)Rule I. Syncope:

- with loss of syllable: word-final d- assimilated to the stem syllable:

reu Mi.Du. reude/rode 'male dog' sloe sloede gutter'

- with loss of syllable, where d- is followed by a liquid or nasal consonant:

Leerdam Mi.Du. Lederdamme place name beul bodel 'executioner' roer roeder 'rudder'

- without loss of syllable; glide-formation to [y] after [xi] or

[ɛi] and to [w] after [aw]:

kuieren Mi.Du. koderen 'to stroll' opruien opruiden 'to incite' vouwen vouden 'to fold'

## b. Rule II. Glide-formation from [d] to [y]: ooievaar <Mi.Du. odevare 'stork' rooien roden 'to dig up'

Schönfeld distinguishes Rule II from the glide formation rule under I, in that the latter is a case of homorganic glide formation, while in Rule II a front glide follows

the back vowels [o:] and [a:] and is the result of d-weakening.

Many of the early syncopated forms have become stabilized in modern Dutch, while others are synchronically only acceptable with d or remain open to variation. A variety of phonological, dialectal, semantic, and sociolinguistic factors are responsible for this. A first consideration is dialect mixture. Several of the Middle Dutch dialects did not allow d-weakening, and the varying political and cultural influence of such dialects resulted in variations in the standard language. Particularly also city versus country distribution resulted, with d-weakening seen as a low-status rural variant. Second, the influence of the written language and the competition between socially more and less prestigious varieties, and formal and colloquial registers were responsible for later spelling pronunciations which in turn resulted in restoration or retention of the d in more formal or less common forms. Examples of this in modern Dutch are aanbieden 'to offer', gebieden 'to order', verluiden 'to be rumored', strijden 'to combat', etc. Third, there exists a large group of early hypercorrections which occurred in the period from Middle Dutch to Te Winkel (1901:94) mentions two environments which early modern Dutch. were particularly conducive to hypercorrections:

a. d-insertion after Middle Dutch î: <Mi.Du ghescîen geschieden 'to happen' vlîen 'to flee' vlieden castîen 'to punish' kastijden b. epenthetic d between l, n, or r and (a)r; 'cellar' kelder selderii 'celerv' Hendrik 'Henry'

- 3.3 EARLY MODERN DUTCH TO PRESENT. From early Modern Dutch to the present, the forms which had undergone earlier d-weakening either stabilized in d-less form or were subsequently restored, with the result that d-weakening, in many cases, became possible again. Thus, three patterns can be seen.
- 3.3.1 STABILIZED D-LESS FORMS. A great number of words became stabilized in their d-less forms. All the examples listed under Schönfeld's analysis in 3.2 above, and many others, have remained that way into the modern period. These forms appear to be the result of a completed sound change. Te Winkel (1901:93) gives the following examples:

```
(11)
          a. contraction
                            <*bleude (OS bloði)
                                                    'shy'
          bleu
          gedwee
                            <MHG getwedic
                                                    'submissive'
                             <veder (OLF fethera)
                                                    'feather'
          veer
                             <OHG fledarmus
                                                    'hat'
          vleermuis
          b. glide formation
                             <Mi.Du. roden
                                                    'to dig up'
          rooien
                             <Mi.Du. roeden
                                                    'eradicate'
          uitroeien
                                                    'stork'
                             <Mi.Du. odevare
          ooievaar
```

- 3.3.2 RESTORED FORMS NO SYNCHRONIC WEAKENING. A small number of forms which had undergone d-weakening by early modern Dutch were subsequently restored and do not allow synchronic weakening. Two examples cited by Schönfeld are:
  - (12) Mi.Du. vadem > Early Mod.Du. vaam> Mod. Dutch vadem 'fathom' vader 'father' vader vaar
- 3.3.3 RESTORED FORMS SYNCHRONICALLY VARIABLE. In quite a large number of words, the d was restored subsequent to its weakening, which then created a renewed environment for d-weakening. This type of hypercorrection differs from the one described above in that it puts a deleted d back where it previously was rather than inserting it in an analogous environment. Thus a cyclical pattern of dweakening, restoration, and synchronic variability occurs. Among the forms cited by Schönfeld, the following fall into this pattern:

(13) Mi.Du. lieden > early Mod.Du. lui > Mod.Du. lieden/lui 'people' slede/slee 'sled, sleigh' slede slee

3. 4 SEMANTIC CHANGES. The availability of dual forms also facilitated a number of semantic changes. As noted earlier, style and register played historically as significant a role as they do synchronically. A number of forms exist where these stylistic options have become lexicalized, splitting along stylistic lines. For example, the word moeder 'mother', which cannot be weakened in any way synchronically, shows up in weakened form in a number of colloquial expressions. Following are some examples of this type of split, where the d-less forms denote the lower register:

> (14)a. compounds

> > Standard Dutch but colloquial/dialectal:

moeder bestemoer moervos

'mother', 'granny' 'female fox'

Standard Dutch but colloquial/dialectal: parelmoer 'mother-of-pearl' 'father', vader 'granddad' bestevaar 'chatterbox'

b. adjectives:

dode 'dead',

praatvaar

Standard Dutch but colloquial:

op z'n dooie gemak 'at one's leisure'

op z'n dooie akkertje

op z'n dooie eentje 'all by himself'

c. nouns:

Standard Dutch

weduwe 'widow'.

weeuwtje 'merry little widow' but denigrating:

Stylistic differences in the other direction, i.e. higher register, appear to account for the preservation of d in the following forms:

broer 'brother' (15)

but: broederschap broedermoord 'fraternity' 'fratricide'

In a number of cases, it is impossible to detect any such pattern and the dcontaining and d-less forms appear to have split haphazardly to accommodate various semantic uses.

'down' (16)neer

nederig nederlaag

'humble' 'defeat'

'the Netherlands' Nederland

however:

Neerlandistiek neerbuigend

'Dutch studies' 'condescending'

In some instances, stylistic differences led to semantic differentiation between the forms containing d and the syncopated forms:

(17) boedel 'property' broeder 'monk/male nurse vergaderen 'hold a meeting' ijdel 'vain' teder 'tender'

boel broer vergaren ijl teer 'a lot'
'brother'
'collect, hoard'
'thin (air)'
'delicate'

- 4. SYNCHRONIC SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS AFFECTING D-WEAKENING. Though stylistic choice appears to be the primary motivating factor for d-weakening, it does not present itself as a simple dichotomy between casual and formal styles. Additional (socio)linguistic and functional variables play a role as well.
- 4.1 STYLE. As Zonneveld (1981:28; 1978: 100) noted, d-weakening occurs most frequently in casual style. However, considerable individual variation is present among speakers of Western Standard Dutch with respect to the acceptability or non-acceptability of the weakened forms. For a limited number of forms the weakened form has become the preferred or even required variant, while other forms remain heavily stigmatized. A small number of high-frequency individual words have begun to be accepted in all styles of speech, even the most formal, with their d-containing counterparts being regarded as overly formal and stilted in spoken Dutch. Examples are goeie 'good' (especially its compounds goeiemorgen 'good morning', goeiemiddag 'good afternoon', etc.) ouwe 'old', and kouwe 'cold'. These are becoming increasingly acceptable in informal written styles as well, suggesting perhaps a renewal of the cycle noted above.

On the other hand, many forms remain highly stigmatized, even in the most casual styles; forms such as zouwen instead of zouden 'should, houwen instead of houden 'hold' tend to be labelled as nonstandard by most people, while many forms are ruled as unacceptable in most situations (e.g. \*brooien for broden 'breads, \*ouwerdom for ouderdom 'old age'). Yet another small set is labeled as belonging to children's style or 'childish' (especially bloeden-bloeien 'to bleed' and verkleden-verkleeën 'to dress up'). Thus, there appear to be a continuum of options stylistically, ranging from acceptable/preferred to acceptable in casual style

to stigmatized and/or unacceptable.

4.2 SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS. While d-weakening in general tends to be socially stigmatized to some extent and stratified along socioeconomic lines (with the exceptions noted above), it also appears to have a significant amount of covert prestige among (upper) middle class, college-educated speakers of Standard Dutch. Particularly among males from western college towns (e.g. Leiden Utrecht, Delft), the extent of acceptability seems to be much greater than among other groups. Conversely, lower middle class hypercorrection is common as well. The examples in (17) show d-insertion in environments which appear to have undergone d-deletion.

(18)	*breiden	for	breien	'to knit'
	*blaude		blauwe	'blue'
	*kauden		kauwen	'to chew'
	*beeldhouden		beeldhouwen	'to sculpt'

4.3 REGISTER. An important variable in d-weakening is register, particularly since Dutch has a wide gap between its spoken and written language (spreektaal versus schrijftaal). A large percentage of Zonneveld's class II words has become differentiated in spoken and written form, where the d-containing variants (for example, leder, slede, lade) occur only in formal written contexts (e.g. advertisements) and are generally unacceptable or highly marked in spoken form (spelling pronunciations), while their d-less counterparts are used in all styles of speaking and informal written contexts.

Less frequently used words which are felt to belong to higher registers also tend to resist d-weakening. Thus, synchronically, the following forms are

generally considered unacceptable:

(19)

\*versmaaien - versmaden 'to slight'
\*geschieën - geschieden 'to happen'
\*vermijen - vermijden 'to avoid'
\*beduien - beduiden 'to indicate'

- 4.4 DIALECT. Dialectal variation, which played historically a major role in the distribution of d-weakening, remains an important factor. The West-Flemish dialects of Blegium and the Brabant dialect of the Netherlands seem to be the most tolerant toward d-less variants.
- 4.5 FUNCTIONAL FACTORS. Avoidance of homonyms appears to be of only minor significance in blocking the application of the weakening rule. While a number of examples can be found (e.g. waden 'to wade' cannot be weakened to waaien 'to blow'; goden 'gods' cannot become gooien' to throw'), an equal number of counterexamples is readily available (rijden 'to drive' becomes rijen, also 'rows'; luider 'louder' can become luier, also 'diaper').
- 4.6 WORD CLASSES. Among the Class I forms, nouns (plural ending -en) appear to allow d-weakening less freely than adjectives or verbs. Of the examples presented by Zonneveld (1981:28), none of the nouns were acceptable among the ten native speakers I consulted (e.g. broden -\*brooien 'breads', hoeden-\*hoeien 'hats', kruiden-\*kruien 'herbs', treden-treeën 'steps').
- 5.0 CONCLUSION. Even though modern Dutch d-weakening is generally perceived to be an innovation resulting in stylistic variation, the process itself originated quite early on in the history of the Dutch language. After seven or eight centuries of repeating patterns of change (dialect mixture, stylistic differentiation, hypercorrection, spelling pronunciation, etc.), a stable sociolinguistic variable (Labov, 1994; 1972) has developed which synchronically operates under two phonological conditions (weakening and contraction). However, while phonological analyses, such as Zonneveld's (1978), may indicate the phonological constraints of d-weakening, they cannot account for the seemingly random and highly idosyncratic patterns employed by speakers of modern Standard Dutch. A sociolinguistic approach may provide some insights, yet without a historical perspective a great many puzzling exceptions remain. Historical patterns of dweakening intersect with synchronic ones and produce a complex array of partially completed changes which may block further variation or trigger subsequent hypercorrections. The historical development of the d-weakening process, then, should not be seen as an example of a change in progress, but rather as the creation of a highly complex, widespread, and purely sociolinguistic marker.

## REFERENCES

- Cohen, A. et al. 1959. Fonologie van het Nederlands en het Fries. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Franck, Johannes. 1910. Mittelniederländischen Grammatik. Leipzig: Tauchnitz.
- Goossens, Jan. 1974. Historische Phonologie des Niederländischen. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Labov, William. 1994. Principles of linguistic change, Volume I: Internal Factors. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- ----. 1972. Sociolinguistic patterns. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Loey, A. van. 1957. Middelnederlandse spraakkunst. Vol. 2: Klankleer. Groningen: J.B. Wolters.
- Loon, Jozef van. 1986. Historische fonologie van het Nederlands. Leuven: Acco.
- Schönfeld, M. 1947. Historische grammatica van het Nederlands. Schets van de klankleer, vormleer en woordvorming. Zutphen: W.J. Thieme and Co.
- Smith, Norval. 1975. In support of D-deletion. Spektator 5.17-22.
- ----. 1973. The phenomenon of D-deletion in Standard Dutch. Spektator 2.421-37.
- Weijnen, A. 1960. Zeventiende-eeuwse taal. Derde druk. Zutphen: Tieme and Co. Winkel, J. te. 1901. Geschiedenis der Nederlandse taal. Culemborg: Blom en Oliviere.
- Zonneveld, Wim. 1981. Verbal paradigms in Dutch. Phonology in the 1980's, ed, by D.L. Goyvaerts, 27-38. Gent: E. Story-Scientia.
- ----. 1980. The looking-glass war: on the role of hypercorrection in phonological change. Dutch Studies. Vol. 4: Studies in Dutch phonology, ed. by Wim Zonneveld et al. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- ----. 1978. A formal theory of exceptions in generative phonology. Lisse: Peter de Ridder Press.
- ----. 1976. Nope 2: D-deletion as Peyton place. Spektator 6, 29-35.
- ----. 1975. A re-analysis of d-deletion in Dutch. Spektator 4, 231-9.