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Inflectional economy and politeness : morphology-internal and morphology-external factors in the loss of second person marking in Dutch

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Chapter 7

Summary and discussion

1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will summarize the results of the study and discuss implications of the results for theories on language change. Sections 2 through 4 relate the results of this dissertation to the research questions formulated in chapter 1. The research questions in chapter 1 are concerned with two objectives. The first objective is to formulate a falsifiable theory that incorporates multiple sources of syncretism. The second objective is disentangling morphology-internal and morphology-external factors in the loss of the original second person singular pronoun and suffix in Dutch. After summarizing the results of this study, we will discuss the implications of these results for the study of language change.

Sections 2 and 3 are concerned with the first objective of this study, namely formulating a falsifiable theory of syncretism. The central claim in section 2 is that frequent, cross-linguistic patterns of syncretism are related to learnability. In section 3, we summarize several types of independent empirical evidence for morphology-external sources of syncretism. Section 4 is concerned with the second objective of this study: disentangling morphology-internal and morphology-external factors in the loss of the original second person singular pronoun and inflection in Dutch. The central claim in section 4 is that the loss of the second person singular pronoun and inflection in Dutch is the combined result of morphology-external and morphology-internal factors. We argue that politeness strategies and inflectional economy both contribute to the loss of second person singular.

If we accept the notion that there are multiple sources of syncretism, then the loss of the second person singular in Dutch can be attributed to morphology-internal and morphology-external factors. The question is whether this deflection pattern of Dutch is an exceptional case or whether it follows a more general pattern of language change. In the discussion in section 5, we argue for the latter option. If multiple sources contribute to the deflection process, language users can adopt a simpler system while simultaneously remaining faithful to the input. This type of superficial faithfulness to the input is typical for language change in multidialectal speech communities. If this is a more general characteristic of language change in multidialectal speech communities, we expect to find more cases of interaction between sources of syncretism. In addition to politeness, we also argue that

phonology is another morphology-external source for deflection. In section 5, we will look at an example of how phonology interacts with morphology-internal sources of syncretism.

2 Cross-linguistic prevalence and learnability

Baerman, Brown & Corbett (2005: 170) claim that morphological patterns which are based on feature structure are cross-linguistically common because they (i) are available to all languages, (ii) can arise spontaneously and (iii) are self-generating in case of disruptions. In this study, we interpreted these three characteristics in terms of learnability. Being available to all languages means being a part of an acquisition strategy. Morphological patterns that line up with the expectations of language learners can arise spontaneously, that is without a morphology-external trigger like phonology. For example, learners of Italian sometimes overgeneralize third person plural forms in contexts where first and second person plural forms would be appropriate, despite the fact that this type of overgeneralization is not target-like (Leonard, Caselli & Devescovi 2002). This spontaneous form of neutralization in language acquisition corresponds with spontaneous forms of language change as described in chapter 2. If learners are confronted with enough positive evidence, they will end up using a target-like system. However, if the input is disrupted, the new pattern will be retained. This lines up with being self-generating in case of disruptions. Our first research question was:

(1) *Research Question 1*

Can we understand cross-linguistically frequent patterns of syncretism in terms of learnability?

In chapter 2, we considered some common patterns across languages. We focused on three aspects: (i) markedness relations between values of a feature; (ii) the context for neutralization; and (iii) a hierarchy of features. There is an implicational relationship between values of a feature. For example, the presence of a value [dual] implies the presence of the value [plural] and the presence of the value [plural] implies the presence of the category [singular]. The context of neutralization is frequently determined by dependent values. For example, the dependent value [plural] can neutralize features that are expressed in the independent value [singular]. The expression of a feature in the context of a dependent value like [plural] usually implies the expression of that same feature in the independent value

singular. The direction of neutralization depends on the relative proximity of an affix to its stem. Affixes that are expressed closer to the stem neutralize features that are expressed further from the stem. For example, tense is expressed closer to the stem than person. We find that tense features are more likely to neutralize person values than vice versa.

The claim in chapter 2 is that we can indeed understand these common patterns of inflection in terms of learnability. Following Pinker (1996), we assumed that children will only acquire paradigmatic distinctions when they encounter formal differences between variants of the same word in their input. Learners will assume the smallest number of distinctions necessary to account for the input. We related the implicational relationship between values of a feature to cognitive dependency. The concept [dual], for example, hinges on the concept of the more general [plural]. Learners cannot assume the dependent value [dual] until they have acquired the more general category [plural].

The observation that dependent values neutralize features that are expressed in the context of independent values was related to Pinker's notion of limited paradigm splitting. Limited paradigm splitting means that learners do not hypothesize a distinct cell for every cross-product of features. For example, learners do not immediately assume a distinct cell for all possible combinations of person, number and feature values. They expect some features to be neutralized in the context of other features. Learners expect less distinction in the context of dependent values than in the context of independent values. For example, if learners acquire a marked tense value such as [past], they initially begin with the single marked value [past]. After this assumption, learners assume that other features are expressed in the unmarked context, i.e. [present] and that features such as person are not expressed. A learner bases the direction of neutralization on a hierarchy of functional categories. Categories high up on the hierarchy are expressed close to the verb stem and they neutralize categories which are further down the hierarchy. These categories are expressed further from the stem.

After considering general principles of paradigm building on the basis of cross-linguistic tendencies, we zoomed in on two features that play a central role in this study, namely person and number. There is one hierarchy for number features, there are two hierarchies for person features. The first person hierarchy is related to markedness and appears as follows: $3 > 1 > 2$. In this hierarchy, third person is a general default form and second person is the most marked form. The second hierarchy: $1 > 2 > 3$, is related to animacy or definiteness. First person is considered most animate and third person is considered the least animate.

If two person features are expressed with one affix, there are two likely possibilities. Either first and second person can group together or, second and third person can group together. First and third person rarely group together. We followed Greenberg (1993) and Kerstens (1993) who hypothesize that there are two basic person values: [participant] and [speaker]. The two most common person grouping can now be described with one feature. The system where first and second person are expressed by a single affix and third person by another can be characterized as [+participant] for first and second person versus [-participant] for third person. Since the value [-participant] implies [-speaker] the feature [speaker] can remain unspecified. The system where second and third person are expressed by one suffix can be characterized as [+speaker] for first person and [-speaker] for second and third person. Since the value [+speaker] implies the value [+participant], the feature [participant] can remain unspecified.

If second person is distinctively marked in a language, it requires the specification of both the values speaker and participant. Second person can be characterized as [+participant] and [-speaker]. The value [+participant] does not necessarily imply the value [-speaker] and the value [-speaker] does not necessarily imply [+participant]. Therefore, second person requires specification of both the values: [speaker] and [participant]. Bennis & MacLean (2006) relate the marked status of second person to the hypothesis that second person requires the specification of two features, whereas first and third person require specification of only one value.

The hypothesis that [speaker] and [participant] are basic values can explain two observations. First, we can understand why we rarely find grouping of first and third person as opposed to second person: there is no feature that first and third person share that can distinguish them from second person. Secondly, we can understand why second person is in the middle in the animacy hierarchy. Because of the value [+participant], second person behaves more like an animate subject than third person and because of [-speaker], second person behaves less like animate subjects than first person.

Apart from the behaviour of person marking, we also considered the hierarchical relation between the features: person and number. Much is possible with person and number marking. If we look at the ordering of person and number affixes, we find that, in most cases, person and number features are expressed by a portmanteau affix. If number and person are encoded separately, there is no universal fixed order. If we consider the direction of neutralization patterns, we find evidence for both person features neutralized in the context of number and for number features neutralized in the context of person. There is thus, no fixed

hierarchical relation between number and person features. This does not mean, however, that all forms of neutralization are available in all situations.

If we look at languages where number is neutralized in the context of person, we observe that number marking depends on animacy. Number marking is most likely to appear on subjects which are high on the animacy hierarchy. We related the dependency of number on person to the rise of agreement. Number marking rises first on subjects which are highly animate. If deflection takes place in a language with number marking on first, second, and third person, we find the loss of person features in the marked context of the plural. Neutralization of features in the context of marked features values is in line with our concept of limited paradigm splitting. Language learners acquire number marking on third person first because third person is a common default form. The presence of number on third person implies number marking on the more animate first and second person.

With regard to person and number marking, we expect the following from language learners: Initially, person and number marking are absent. If there is evidence for number marking, learners will first assume the feature: plural. If there is evidence for person marking, learners will assume either the feature [speaker] or the feature [participant]. If one person feature cannot explain variation in the input, learners will assume both values ([speaker] and [participant]). If number is encoded on third person, we expect the paradigm to split in favour of a general plural marker.

3 Independent empirical evidence for morphology-external sources

While morphology-internal sources of syncretism can explain common patterns of syncretism, morphology-external sources of syncretism can explain infrequent patterns. Allowing different sources of explanation in a theory of syncretisms has the advantage that we can explain the statistical distribution of syncretic patterning. Cross-linguistically, common patterns can be explained in terms of feature structure. From a morphological perspective, rare patterns are the result of historical accidents. At first sight, it might seem that allowing multiple sources of explanation creates a theory which cannot be falsified. One goal of chapter 2 was to present evidence for the role of morphology-external factors in the neutralization of inflectional distinctions. The research question in (4) aims at finding evidence for the role of phonology in inflectional homophony.

(2) *Research Question 2*

What forms of independent empirical evidence support the claim that inflectional homophony results from a phonological rule?

We discussed two types of evidence that suggest that a phonological rule can lead to syncretism. One source has to do with phonological conditioning and the other with effects of the phonological rule outside the domain of inflectional economy. If we find that changes occur in specific phonological contexts, we can reason that the change is motivated, at least in part, by phonology. For example, if the suffix *-t* is most likely to be substituted in the context of a sound with a low sonority level, then we know that phonology plays a role in the substitution. Effects of the level of sonority are related to articulatory complexity. Articulatory complexity is relevant in the domain of phonology, but irrelevant to the domain of morphology. A second piece of empirical evidence for the role of phonology is the observation that the substitution occurs in a more general pattern. For example, if we find *-t*-deletion in simplex words like *rijst* ('rice') as well as in words where *-t* is used as inflection, we would expect that the change is motivated, at least in part, by phonology.

Apart from phonology, politeness is another morphology-external factor that can affect the verbal paradigm. The research question in (3) aims at finding empirical evidence for the role politeness plays in change in the verbal paradigm.

(3) *Research Question 3*

What empirical evidence supports the claim that inflectional homophony results from a politeness-induced change?

Inflectional homophony that is triggered by morphology-external sources of syncretism begins as online substitutions that do not affect the underlying system. For example, the first uses of second person plural as a singular polite form can be understood in terms of a metaphorical extension. In this stage, the underlying morphological system is not affected. Politeness-triggered substitutions have a specific socio-stylistic distribution. They begin in formal situations and are preferred in face-threatening contexts such as requests. The distribution of this politeness-triggered neutralization contrasts with morphology-internally motivated neutralization. Morphology-internally motivated deflection begins in informal situations and its use does not correlate with face-threatening contexts.

Once a polite form is the only form left, we can no longer find evidence for politeness in the choice for that form. Evidence for the role of politeness in a change can thus only be provided by synchronic or diachronic variants of a language. A second type of evidence for the role of politeness in substitutions can be provided by agreement. For example, if a speaker intends to express politeness by using a second person plural form of a verb to address a singular addressee, he is likely to also use

the second person plural pronoun. A change that is motivated solely by morphology-internal factors only affects inflection and not other categories.

4 The loss of second person singular as a case study

After considering sources of syncretism, we will move on to our case study of the loss of second person in Dutch. In the introduction, we saw that all changes from Middle Dutch to the modern Standard Dutch concern second person. Second person singular and second person plural inflection are both lost. At first sight, both losses in the inflectional paradigm seem to co-occur with changes in the pronominal paradigm. In present-day standard Dutch, there is a new form of verbal inflection as well as new pronouns for second person singular and second person plural. The loss of second person is also understandable from the perspective of feature structure. Second person is marked as opposed to first and third person which are less marked. We expect that marked features are lost before less marked features. We are able to explain the loss of second person from both the perspective of socio-pragmatic change, as well as from the perspective of inflectional economy. The second objective of this study was to disentangle the role of feature structure and the role of politeness in the loss of second person.

The research question in (4) aims at finding out to what extent changes in the pronominal paradigm and in the verbal paradigm are related.

(4) *Research Question 4*

To what extent are changes in the pronominal paradigm and the verbal paradigm connected in diachronic and synchronic variants of Dutch?

In chapter 3, we observed that the change in second person singular in Dutch is, at least partially, related to a pragmatic change. The second person singular pronoun and inflection were substituted by the second person plural pronoun and inflection as a politeness strategy. In chapters 5 and 6, we saw that there is a tight connection between the presence of the subject pronoun *du* and the suffix *-s(t)*: the presence of one implies the presence of the other in both synchronic and diachronic variants of Dutch. There is no such relationship between the pronoun *jullie* and the suffix *-en*. We find variants of Dutch where the pronoun *jullie* combines with the suffix *-t* and we also find variants of Dutch where the pronoun *gij/jij* combines with the suffix *-en*. In short, the answer to research question 4 is that only in second person singular changes in the pronominal and the verbal paradigm are related.

Now we know that loss of the original second person singular pronoun and inflection are related, the next question is: What triggered this combined change? The research question in (5) aims at investigating how diachronic change in the pronominal paradigm is motivated by socio-pragmatic factors.

(5) *Research Question 5*

To what extent are the diachronic changes within the Dutch pronominal paradigm motivated by socio-pragmatic factors?

In chapter 3, we saw that all changes in the pronominal paradigm can be related to socio-pragmatic factors. The only change that cannot be fully explained by socio-pragmatic factors is the loss of the second person singular pronoun *du*. We can understand why the use of *du* decreased, but we cannot understand why the pronoun was lost completely. The only other language from our set where second person singular is also lost is English. All other languages have a very stable second person singular pronoun. All Indo-European languages from our sample, for example, have a second person singular pronoun that is cognate with *tu*. The answer to research question 5 is thus that the only change in the pronominal paradigm that we cannot understand in terms of socio-pragmatic factors is the loss of second person singular.

If we cannot understand the loss of the original second person singular pronoun and suffix in terms of socio-pragmatic factors, the question rises if inflectional economy plays a role in the loss of second person singular. If inflectional economy plays a role in the loss of second person singular, we expect a correlation between the loss of second person singular and its effects on the verbal paradigm. The research question in (6) aims at investigating this proposed correlation.

(6) *Research Question 6*

Is there a correlation between pronoun loss and its effects on the verbal paradigm?

In chapter 4, we formulated the economy hypothesis. The economy hypothesis states that the combined loss of the second person singular pronoun and inflection is a form of deflection. Speakers prefer the use of the second person plural form in the singular not only on the basis of pragmatic grounds, but also because of inflectional economy. Using a second person plural pronoun in the singular enables speakers to use more simple inflection while maintaining the relation between pronouns and

subjects as provided in the input. In chapter 4, we saw that English and Dutch belong to the small group of languages where substitution of second person singular by second person plural yields a more economical paradigm. The answer to research question 6 is thus that there is indeed a relation between the loss of second person singular and inflectional economy. Only in those languages where loss of second person singular implies a simpler inflectional system, do we observe loss of second person singular. In chapter 6, we observed the same correlation for dialectal variants of Dutch. Second person singular is only lost in dialects if the loss yields a more economical paradigm or in very specific circumstances of bilingual dialect mixing.

If inflectional economy plays a role in a speaker's choice against the original second person singular, then we expect effects of inflectional economy in the distribution of the original second person singular. The research question in (7) aims at finding out if we can find such distributional effects.

(7) *Research Question 7*

Do we observe effects of inflectional economy in the distribution of second person in synchronic and diachronic variants of Dutch?

In chapters 5 and 6, we considered diachronic and synchronic evidence in support of the economy hypothesis. We observed that the original second person singular subject pronoun *du* was lost before its possessive, vocative and object variants. In the synchronic data, we observed that non-subject forms of second person singular are more widely distributed than subject forms. The observation that non-subject forms are retained longer than subjects supports the economy hypothesis. We expect early loss of subjects, because subjects combine with inflection. In chapter 5, we saw that *du* combines longest with high frequency verbs. This observation also supports the economy hypothesis, since high frequency verbs resist deflection longest. In response to research question 7, we can conclude that the distribution of second person in synchronic and diachronic variants of Dutch is affected by inflectional economy. Inflectional economy can explain the early loss of subject-*du* and inflectional economy can explain the preference of *du* to combine with high-frequency verbs.

5 Conspiracy in deflection

Our goal was to disentangle sources of syncretism in the loss of second person singular in Dutch. Instead of finding one source, we saw that the loss of second person singular pronoun and inflection in Dutch is the result of interaction between politeness and inflectional economy. The observation that second person singular

inflection is always lost in combination with a second person singular pronoun, suggests that politeness plays a roll in the loss. This finding is also in line with feature structure. The role of feature structure in the loss of second person singular is further supported by the observation that some diachronic and synchronic variants of Dutch have lost a subject form of *du* and have retained their non-subject counterparts. The preference for *du* to combine with high frequency verbs also supports the role of inflectional economy in the loss of *du*.

Since both politeness and inflectional economy are necessary elements in the loss of second person singular, we can say that politeness and inflectional economy are both responsible for the loss of the original second person singular form. The question is whether this is an exceptional case or whether it follows a more general trend of language change. If we look at the context of language change in Dutch, we find that the contact-induced changes in, for example, the inflectional paradigm result mostly from contact between speakers of mutually intelligible dialects. The fact that dialects are mutually intelligible suggests that the dialects share features. Sharing features implies stability in the input. The more stable the input is, the more important faithfulness to the input becomes.

When adult learners acquire a new dialect, there is more pressure on the inflectional paradigm. The stability of the input requires faithfulness to the input. In languages where pronouns are obligatorily expressed in combination with inflection, faithfulness means maintaining the pronoun suffix relation as presented in the input. An interaction of forces which leads to deflection enables language users to adopt a simpler system while simultaneously remaining faithful to the pronoun suffix relation in the input.

In addition to Dutch, we also observed the combined loss of pronouns in French and in Brazilian Portuguese. In all three languages, the pronoun is obligatorily expressed in combination with finite verbs. Additionally, in all three languages, dialect contact and language contact puts pressure on the inflectional system. There is social pressure to maintain the pronoun inflection combination as provided by the input. The interaction between inflectional economy and feature structure reconciles these two opposing goals (being faithful to the input and simplification of the verbal paradigm). We expect that interaction between feature structure and inflectional economy leads to deflection in circumstances where there is pressure on the inflectional paradigm and where there is pressure to remain faithful to the input. There is pressure to remain faithful to the input in contact situations between mutually intelligible dialects. Additional pressure to remain faithful to the input can derive from a social stigma attached to deflection. Zilles (2005) reports that the omission of inflection is heavily stigmatized in Brazilian

Portuguese. The interaction of the two sources of deflection enables speakers to avoid stigmatization while simultaneously adopting a more simple inflectional system.

If it is possible that the interaction between the two sources leads to deflection, then we would expect to find more cases in Dutch. Apart from politeness, phonology is another morphology-external source of syncretism. We expect to find an interaction between phonology and feature structure as well. In the remainder of this section, we will discuss results from Goeman (1999), who suggests that phonology and morphology can indeed cooperate in the loss of inflection.

Goeman (1999) shows that there are three main areas in the Netherlands where word final *-t*-deletion is productive, namely in the Southern province of Limburg, in the Eastern part of the Netherlands and in the river area combined with parts of the province of Zuid-Holland. *T*-deletion and inflectional homophony differs per area. In the province of Zuid-Holland and the river area, it is primarily finite regular verbs that are affected by the *-t*-deletion rule. In Standard Dutch, first person is encoded by $-\emptyset$ and second and third person are encoded by *-t* as shown in (8). In many measure points in Zuid-Holland and the river area, all singular forms are encoded by $-\emptyset$ (as shown in (10)). Consequently, *-t* deletion in these areas yield inflectional homophony. In some cases, *-t* is reintroduced. When this happens, *-t* encodes first, second, and third person (as shown in (10)). Consequently, there is no way to distinguish person based on the verb form itself. We find the reintroduction of *-t* to the paradigm, primarily in contexts where *-t* is least likely to be deleted, for example following a vowel, in verbs like *doet* ('does') (Goeman 1999: 218).

(8) Singular paradigm Standard Dutch

klop
klopt
klopt

(9) Singular paradigm: Zuid-Holland/River area

klop
klop
klop

(10) Singular paradigm: Zuid-Holland

klopt
klopt
klopt

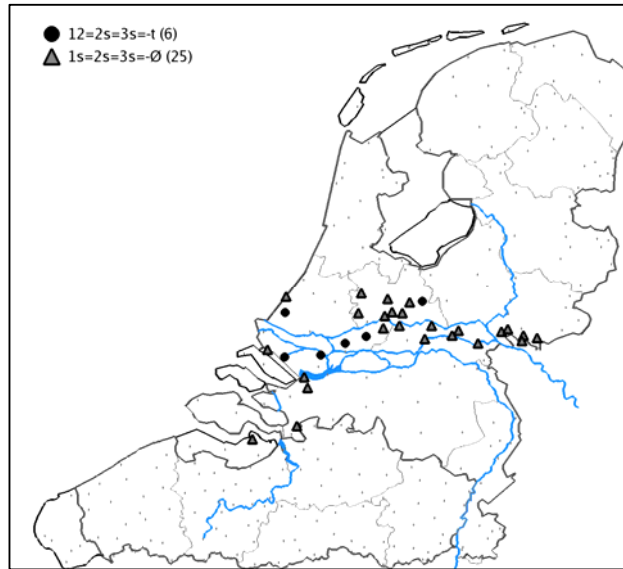
In the Eastern part of the Netherlands, the singular paradigm of weak verbs resembles the paradigm in (8). The only difference is that first person is frequently encoded by *-e*. *-T* deletion usually occurs in the third person singular for strong verbs. For example, for strong verbs, like *breken* ('to break'), *-t* is often deleted in third person singular. This form of *-t* deletion does not result in inflectional homophony (see (11)).

(11) Eastern part of the Netherlands (for example, measure point G076p, Hollandsche Veld)

breke
breekt
breek

In the Southern province of Limburg, *-t* is deleted mostly in nouns and in participles. Thus, *-t* is deleted in nouns like *nest* ('nest') and participles like *geklopt* ('knocked'). In these cases, *-t*-deletion does not yield inflectional homophony.

We have three different areas where *-t*-deletion occurs. In only one of these areas, does *-t*-deletion yield inflectional homophony. Map 1 shows the measure points where we find homophony in the singular paradigm. In map 1 we see that homophony in the singular paradigm is concentrated in the area which neighbours rivers. The correlation between inflectional homophony and close proximity to the river is not accidental. The river is frequently used as a route of travel, via boats and sand paths. Increased travel in these areas implies more communication between people. This means that, in these areas, there was more contact between people with different linguistic backgrounds (i.e. more dialect contact). In chapter 2, we saw that dialect or language contact frequently implies deflection.



Map 1 Neutralization of number in the context of third person

Evidence for more permanent immigration (and thus language contact) in the river area comes from the distribution of family names which are based on place of origin. A family name that refers to a place name is only helpful if people can uniquely identify the person by that name (for example, someone who no longer lives in the city where he was born) (Goeman 1999: 194). For example, the last name *Van Amsterdam* ('from Amsterdam') is useless if all people living in Amsterdam adopt that name. The name is only useful if the person moves to another location where people can identify him based on his name. A person with a surname such as *Van Boxtel* ('from Boxtel') would allow people living in Amsterdam to identify the person. Compared with the rest of the Netherlands, the river area exhibits a very high percentage of last names which refer to place names. This indicates that there was a good deal of immigration and dialect contact in these areas.¹

We observe that in the area where we expect morphologically motivated deflection on the basis of the dialect contact situation we find that a phonological

¹ Note that this generalization only holds for last names based on place names not for any kind of geographically oriented last name. A last name like *De Vries* ('The Frisian'), for example, was adopted mainly by Frisians in the period 1811-1812 during the French regime (see http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/nfd/detail_naam.php?naam=Vries.%20de for more details).

rule yields inflectional homophony. The observation that phonology yielded syncretism between all singular forms is supported by the fact that the absence of $-t$ is phonologically conditioned. It is further supported by the fact that we find $-t$ deletion in other morphological contexts. We also have evidence that feature structure leads to the the loss of person distinctions in the river area and Zuid-Holland. Evidence for this comes from the fact that we find the strongest effects of $-t$ -deletion in an area of intense dialect contact.

Dialect contact implies pressure on the inflectional system. The $-t$ deletion rule yields superficial cases of homophony between first person singular and second and third person singular. This superficial homophony between all singular forms is in line with deflection according to feature structure. Absence of person marking implies a simpler system than a system which draws a distinction between speaker and non-speaker. We observe this system in Standard Dutch (see (8)). Since the output of the phonological rule corresponds with a morphologically systematic reduction of features, it is likely that the phonological output is reinterpreted as systematic. Reinterpretation is most likely to occur in situations where we expect deflection, namely in situations of dialect or language contact. The observation that $-t$ -loss yields inflectional homophony only in measure points where there is increased dialect contact stresses the role of morphology-internally motivated syncretism in the loss of person marking.

The observation that phonology and feature structure can interact to encourage deflection is expected in circumstances of gradual language transmission. Different dialects were still mutually understandable. In contrast to more abrupt change (such as pidginization), faithfulness to the input is important in cases of gradual language change. The interaction between two sources of syncretism makes it possible to remain faithful to the input. For example, by using the pronoun *jij* rather than the pronoun *du*, speakers were able to select a finite verb that corresponds with a simpler morphological system without deviating from the connection between pronouns and suffixes in the input. In early generations, the use of this form was a superficial substitution. Only later, do following generations reanalyse the substitution as morphologically systematic. The reanalysis implies a change in the underlying system, but since the change is connected to a change in the pronoun, speakers remain faithful to pronoun-suffix combinations in the input.

We began this section with the question whether the conspiracy between morphological and non-morphological sources in the loss of second person marking in Dutch deflection was exceptional. We observed conspiracy in deflection in other languages (French and Brazilian Portuguese). Moreover, we observed conspiracy between morphological deflection and another non-morphological source, namely

phonology. The fact that conspiracy in deflection is observed in other languages (French and Brazilian Portuguese) and the fact that conspiracy is not constrained to the interaction between morphology and politeness, but is also visible in the interaction between morphology and phonology, suggests that the conspiracy is not exceptional. We related conspiracy in deflection to the language or dialect contact situation in cases where speakers spoke mutual intelligible variants. Language contact implies pressure on the inflectional system and mutual intelligibility implies stability in the input. If the input is stable this means pressure for the language user to remain faithful to the input. Conspiracy in deflection satisfies both needs that rise in cases of language contact between mutual intelligible variants, namely faithfulness to the input and morphological simplification.