Voor de sessie:
'Quantitative Analysis of Language Variation in Time and Space' -
The rise of the reflexive pronoun ‘zich’ in a Netherlands’ border dialect in the 15th century: language-internal response-mechanisms in a language contact situation.
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Dutch between 1400-1650 is marked by relatively rapid change in the grammatical systems of its varieties while at the same time the standard language is taking shape. We argue that rapid change in the grammatical system was triggered by language contact resulting from interregional migration/contact.

We focus on the rise of the standard reflexive ‘zich’ (SE) at the cost of the older reflexive use of the pronoun ‘hem’ (=him), common in the entire middle-Dutch and Frisian area. Roughly until 1400 the Drenthe-dialect only used the pronominal ‘hem’ (=him, them) instead of any specific reflexive form. In the course of one century, this dialect shifted almost completely to reflexive forms such as ‘sick’ and ‘sich’. Using a corpus-based quantitative research on Drenthish texts with a precise localisation in space and time (225,000 words), we argue that this change is not a result of prestige of eastern dialects imposing those forms, but that the change has a language-internal trigger that attracted those eastern forms.

Using the constant-rate hypothesis (Kroch 1989), we show that the rise of reflexive forms (SE) correlates with a change in the system of the personal pronouns in pronominal use: number-underspecification on ‘hem’ (=him/them) is disappearing, and ‘hem’ is gradually being used as a singular.