

Verbal inflection patterns in Frisian and Dutch

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Germanic languages have two types of verbal inflection in the past and perfect: weak verbs employ a dental suffix, while strong verbs typically use vowel changes instead of the dental suffix. Only the weak inflection is generally seen as productive in language change and neologisms (cf. Salverda 2006), although changes from weak to strong have been attested in all Germanic languages (e.g. Van Haeringen 1940).

Based on two experiments we attempt to chart to what extent the strong and weak inflection patterns are available to speakers of Frisian:

- what past and perfect forms do Frisian speakers employ for nonce verbs?
- what acceptability judgments do they give to strong and weak past and perfect forms of nonce verbs?

The results of these experiments allow us to determine the relative potential productivity of strong and weak verbal inflection patterns, and of the different inflection patterns within the strong category. We then compare the results to those from a parallel investigation in Dutch (Strik & Knooihuizen 2013a, 2013b). A striking result from that study was the frequent use of [o:] in past and perfect verb forms, regardless of the verb's stem vowel. As the Frisian verbal inflection system does not have a comparably ubiquitous vowel (Eisma & Popkema 2004), the use of [o:] can be employed to investigate the morphological influence from Dutch on Frisian.