A diachronic study of the negative polarity item *syn leven* 'his life' > 'ever' in West Frisian between 1550 and 1800

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This article investigates the distribution of the negative polarity item (NPI) *syn leven* (lit. 'his life') 'ever' between 1550 and 1800 in West Frisian using the Frisian Language Corpus. Phonological and syntactic evidence is presented in order to argue that the expression was borrowed from Dutch. An overview of the syntactic contexts in which it is found is presented, and these contexts are characteristic of those in which NPIs are found. The distribution of *syn leven* is shown to conform only partly to Haspelmath's (1997) theory of the semantic map. Furthermore, the extent to which the original expression *syn leven* was grammaticalized as an NPI is investigated. Its distribution is compared to that of the near synonyms and rival expressions *ea* and *oait* 'ever', which turn out to have a broader context of usage. It is argued that *syn leven* failed to become the unmarked way of expressing the semantic content 'ever' for syntactic, semantic, and sociolinguistic reasons.*

Keywords: negative polarity, grammaticalization, semantic map, indefinite pronoun, Early Modern Frisian

1. Introduction.

1.1. Outline. This article investigates some of the changes that took place in the use of the construction *syn leven/libben* (lit. 'his life') 'ever' in West Frisian between 1550 and 1800. *Syn leven/libben* is henceforth abbreviated as *SL*. A global description of the variation involved in its usage is presented, and as is seen below, some of the variation targets the lexical shape of the construction.

The question of how Frisian acquired this construction is dealt with first (§2). Section 3 then charts the syntactic distribution of this expression and argues that its distribution both identifies it as a negative polarity item (NPI) and impressionistically conforms to the theory of the semantic map proposed by Haspelmath (1997). Next, the extent to which *SL* was grammaticalized as an NPI is investigated (§4), and *SL*'s distribution is compared to that of the unmarked quantifiers *ea* and *oait*, its near synonyms. The analysis of the construction's history proposed here is multidisciplinary in its scope, combining insights from syntax, semantics, phonology, and sociolinguistics.

1.2. Data. Our data are taken from West Frisian. Frisian is a language family consisting of three minority languages: North Frisian (on the west coast of Germany near the Danish border), Sater Frisian (in Saterland in the northwest of Germany, close to Oldenburg), and West Frisian. West Frisian is a minority language spoken in the province of Fryslân in the north of the Netherlands. In the early Middle Ages, Frisian was spoken in the coastal area between the river Weser (near the city of Bremen) and the IJ (near Amsterdam). For sociopolitical reasons, in the course of history part of the population switched to Low Saxon, which explains why Sater Frisian is separated from West Frisian by an area in which Low Saxon is spoken. Sater Frisian is the only surviving descendant of East Frisian, which was spoken in Germany west of the river Weser. North Frisian came into existence after two waves of migration (in the eighth and eleventh centuries)

from the area in Germany where East Frisian was spoken (Århammar 2001). For more information about the history of the three branches of the Frisian language family, see the relevant articles in Munske's (2001) *Handbook of Frisian studies*.

Our data come from the period 1550–1800. This period used to be referred to as Middle Frisian, but the term Early Modern Frisian tends to be preferred these days; on the periodization of Frisian, see De Haan 2001 and Versloot 2004. The source of our data is the Frisian Language Corpus, a version of which is available on the internet.[1] It consists of written Frisian from between 1300 and 2000, as well as a sprinkling of runic Frisian.

The Corpus of Early Modern Frisian (1550–1800), a subcorpus of the Frisian Language Corpus, contains all of the surviving Early Modern Frisian documents and includes about a million tokens. It has been tagged for all types of agreement, and the words have been brought under lemmas as well. Various spellings of the same word can be inspected; certain collocational properties, especially for verbs, have been made explicit, and various members of the same inflectional paradigm can be researched. Furthermore, information as to the source is available, such as author, date, dialect, and so on. In short, the subcorpus has been extensively annotated with syntactic, semantic, and bibliographical information.

2. How did frisian acquire the construction? The quantifying construction *syn leven* consists of the noun *leven* 'life', preceded by the possessive pronoun. Interestingly, the construction comes in two forms, built around either the noun *leven* or the noun *libben*.

The noun *leven* exhibits phonological characteristics of Dutch. The letter *v*, here representing the phoneme /v/, does not occur in intervocalic position in native words in Early Modern Frisian. West Germanic /β/, a voiced bilabial fricative, generally became /v/ in Old Frisian (1250–1550), but this was vocalized to /w/ in intervocalic position and subsequently absorbed into the preceding vowel, creating diphthongs or long vowels. West Germanic /b/ survived as a single consonant and is also found, after degemination, in examples like *libben*. As a result of these developments (cf. Siebs 1901:1266ff.), intervocalic /v/ was absent in native Frisian words, though this pattern was sometimes obscured by the operation of analogy and by the introduction of loanwords that, due to Dutch influence, were slow to adapt to Frisian phonology. There are therefore only a few Early Modern Frisian words in which an intervocalic /v/ is found, such as *leven* and *wiven* 'wives, women'. These can plausibly be argued to be due to Dutch influence for the following two reasons: they are homophonous with Early Modern Dutch *leven*, *wiven*, and they have competitors like *libben* and the diphthongized variant *wijuen*, which do exhibit Frisian phonology.

The following facts can be gleaned from a study of the frequency of *SL* in the Corpus of Early Modern Frisian. The construction with the meaning 'ever' occurs sixty-four times.[2] The numbers for *syn leven* versus *syn libben* are given in 1.

(1) Number of uses of *leven* and *libben* in the *SL* construction
    poss pronoun + *leven* 'ever': 28
    poss pronoun + *libben* 'ever': 36

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[1] The address is: http://argyf.fryske-akademie.eu/files/tdb/; choose the option 'Current database 1300–1800; POS-tagged'. A new (beta) version of the Frisian Language Corpus is available at: http://tdb.fryske-akademie.eu/tdb/.

[2] Some sources occur twice or more in the Corpus of Early Modern Frisian, because reprints, which may differ slightly from the original, have been included. The numbers have been corrected so that two or more occurrences that are identical (leaving aside spelling differences) count for just one occurrence.

However, the noun *libben* can also be used outside of this construction in its literal meaning 'life', as in sentences like 'She has a wonderful life', whereas *leven* is exclusively found in this *SL* construction. A count was also made of how often *leven* and *libben* are found in the corpus outside of the *SL* construction.

(2) Number of uses of *leven* and *libben* outside of the *SL* construction
    leven 'life': 0
    libben 'life: 409

This shows that *syn leven* 'ever' was indeed borrowed from Dutch, and that the noun *leven* 'life' was not borrowed as such, but rather the construction *syn leven* was borrowed as a whole, tied to the meaning 'ever'. Apparently, this did not affect the distribution of the Frisian lexical item *libben* in its meaning 'life'. The fact that a construction as a whole was borrowed with a specific semantic interpretation is a case in point for frameworks such as construction grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006, Verhagen 2007, among others) and cognitive grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, among others), which take constructions to be basic elements of grammar that have psychological reality.

What then is the relationship between *syn leven* and *syn libben*? The chronology of the two variants sheds light on this question.

(3) Oldest attestations
    syn leven: 1614, 1641, 1675[3]
    syn libben: 1671, 1675

These facts point to a scenario in which *syn leven* was first borrowed from Dutch, and later some speakers brought it in line with Frisian phonology by changing the word *leven* to *libben*. Both forms continued to exist side by side, however, and there are even examples of one and the same writer using both constructions.[4]

The construction *syn leven* therefore came into existence as a borrowing from Dutch and was later given a Frisian form, thus creating the variant *syn libben*. In the next section, the distribution of the construction in Early Modern Frisian is examined in detail.

3. *SL* as an npi.

3.1. Negative polarity. NPIs are closely related to free choice items (FCIs).[5] There is terminological dispute among semanticists about the definition of these two

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[3] One occurrence of *syn leven* can in fact be found before 1550 in a text containing the annals and memoirs of Edo Jongama. It can be dated with certainty to the time span 1513–1536 (Carasso-Kok 1981:251, in her overview of medieval chronicles and hagiographies). The text has been published by Gerbenzon (1965:68–75). The text is riddled with Dutchisms, however, making it doubtful whether this occurrence is characteristic of Frisian. Because of this uncertainty, this occurrence has not been included in the frequency counts. If it is accepted, then the time lag between *leven* and *libben* becomes even larger than is suggested in the text.

[4] Frisian, being a minority language with a weak normative standard, should not be viewed as a monolithic entity. Rather, it involves a spectrum where one end is 'Frisian' and the other shades off into Dutchified Frisian, that is, Frisian that exhibits interference from Dutch (for a general overview of issues pertaining to interference from Dutch, see Breuker 2001; for a list of interferences from Dutch in all areas of the grammar of Modern Frisian, see Sjölin 1976; for an analysis of such interferences, see De Haan 1997). Hence there may be competition between two forms of the same expression, one being more Frisian (*syn libben*), the other being more Dutch (*syn leven*). Such a state of affairs is well known from dialects, where dialect-specific words compete with, and may be replaced by, words that are more similar to their semantic equivalents from the dominant, standard language.

[5] NPIs and/or FCIs were studied in Fauconnier 1975, Ladusaw 1979, Zwarts 1981, 1995, and van der Wouden 1994, among others. Hoeksema 1983, 1986, De Swart 1991, and Hoeksema & Klein 1995 drew attention to the fact that words of exclusion such as *than*, *as*, *before*, *if*, *deny that*, and relative pronouns preceded by a superlative introduce sentences in which NPIs may be found. Goldberg (2006:171–73, 178–81) notes that polarity is a constructional property in the case of subject-aux inversion in English.

terms (see Giannakidou 2001, 2002 and the references therein), which need not concern us here. The question of whether *SL* can be an FCI is discussed in §3.3. Section 3.2 argues that its distribution identifies *SL* as an NPI, and §3.4 discusses the relevance of Haspelmath's (1997) theory of semantic maps to the problem of understanding the syntactic distribution of *SL*.

NPIs characteristically occur in negative sentences, as in 4a.

(4) a.   Nobody has ever heard of them again.
     b. *I have ever heard of them again.

In 4a, the negative constituent in subject position, *nobody*, licenses the NPI *ever*, in contrast with 4b, where there is no negative to license *ever*. These examples are straightforward, but NPIs also occur in sentence types that cannot directly be characterized as negative, such as rhetorical questions.

(5) a. Dick running for president? Who has ever heard of him?
     b. Dick running for president? Nobody has ever heard of him.

The negative character of rhetorical questions such as 5a can be brought out by a paraphrase, such as that given in 5b.

The formal definition of the set of contexts in which NPIs are found is a subject of ongoing debate among semanticists, especially those working within the framework of GENERALIZED QUANTIFIER THEORY (see Ladusaw 1979, Zwarts 1981, 1995, van der Wouden 1994, Giannakidou 2001, 2002, and others). They are searching for a definition that exhaustively covers the semantic contexts in which NPIs are found. They have convincingly argued that these contexts are, roughly, monotone decreasing,[6] but they have not yet been able to refine the theory of generalized quantifiers in such a way that differences among several NPIs can be accommodated in a generally accepted manner.

3.2. *SL* IS AN NPI. NPIs have a restricted syntactic distribution, which holds true for *SL* as well. In Early Modern Frisian, all occurrences of this construction occur in the following syntactic environments.

- clauses with sentence negation
- rhetorical questions[7]
- comparative relatives
- exclamatives
- in the complement of the universal quantifier 'all'

Two examples of each of these construction types are given below.

(6) Clauses with negation
     a. Goe nacht mijn lieve Hoonne, mijn leven sioegh ick dy   neat weer.
         good night my   dear dog   my   life see   I   you not again
            'Good night, my sweet dog, never in my life will I see you again.'
     b. Dat giet zijn leven net goed!
         that goes his life   not good
            'That will never end well!'

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[6] A monotone decreasing context allows for entailments to subsets. For example, the quantifier *nobody* is monotone decreasing. As a result, entailments to subsets are valid: *nobody sleeps* entails *nobody sleeps restlessly*, where the denotation of *sleep restlessly* is a subset of the denotation of *sleep*. In contrast, no downward entailment is valid for a sentence like *John sleeps*: *John sleeps* does not entail *John sleeps restlessly*.

[7] Generally speaking, many NPIs can show up in plain questions, that is, ones that are not rhetorical. The examples with *SL*, however, all involve rhetorical questions.

(7) Rhetorical questions
    a. Wa het sijn libben herd fen socke botte   dingen?
       who has his life   heard of such   terrible things
         'Who has ever heard of such terrible things?'
    b. Heste   dijn libben zok foelbekjen wol   heard?
       have.2SG your life   such foul.speak indeed heard
         'Have you ever heard such foul speech?'

(8) Comparative relatives
    a. It is zok maol praat az ik mijn leven heard hab!
       it is such crazy talk as I my   life   heard have
         'It is such crazy talk as I have never heard before.'
    b. Hij joeg mij zokke eermhartige en   leæve wudden, az ik mijn leven
       he gave me such tender   and sweet words   as I my   life
          fen   him hân hab.
          from him had have
        'He gave me such tender and sweet words as I had never received from
          him before.'

(9) Exclamatives
    a. Nou hab ik mijn leven! … hoe bijtinke dij   Minschen 't!
       now have I my   life   how think   those people   it
         'Well upon my soul! … How do those people come up with it!'
    b. Wa   het sijn libben, sjugh uws Rinse begint om boostgjen nu   to tinsen.
       who has his life   see   our Rinse begins of marrying now to think
         'Upon my soul! Look here! Our Rinse is thinking of marrying.'

(10) In the complement of the universal quantifier 'all'
    a. Wa   iensen stelt   Is all zijn leuen ien tieeff.
       who once   steals is all his life   a   thief
         'Once a thief, always a thief.'
    b. Ven sokke lieuwe sil   ik al mijn libben spijë.
       of   such   people shall I all my   life   vomit
         'Such people always make me sick.'

It is not surprising that an NPI like *syn leven/libben* is found in sentences with negation. Correspondingly, it is absent in plain, affirmative sentences. As noted above, rhetorical questions are questions that imply a negative answer, so in that sense, it also comes as no surprise that NPIs may occur in them. There are a few examples of the construction occurring in comparative relatives, which may seem surprising, but note that the clause in 8a has a negative implication that may be paraphrased as: 'I never heard such crazy talk in all my life'. The same applies to 8b. For the fourth category, exclamatives, establishing a link with negation is less obvious. These exclamatives express a strong emotion of surprise; the link with negation is possibly a negative implication like 'I would not have expected this', but this is not straightforward.[8] In the fifth category, the construction occurs as the complement to the universal quantifier 'all'. This is not a syntactic environment that is intuitively negative, but it is monotone decreasing in the sense of generalized quantifier theory. Correspondingly, it licenses entailments about subsets (just like negation does): for example, a phrase like *all boys laughed* entails that

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[8] According to Abels (2004), exclamatives can have the same denotation as questions, while differing with respect to the presuppositions that are associated with them, and it is possible to treat exclamatives as rhetorical questions.

all small boys laughed, all naughty boys laughed, and so on. Table 1 lists the frequencies of *syn leven* and *syn libben* in these five types of syntactic environment.

	syn leven	*syn libben*	TOTALS
clauses with negation	19	16	35
rhetorical questions	4	15	19
comparative relatives	2	1	3
exclamatives	2	1	3
after universal quantifier	1	3	4
TOTALS	28	36	64

TABLE 1. The number of occurrences in each syntactic context of *SL*.

Both variants occur in the same types of syntactic environments. The differences in the numbers are not significant, except for rhetorical questions, where *syn libben* occurs significantly more often than *syn leven*.[9] It is unclear why this difference between the two variants exists. If *syn libben* is 'more Frisian' than *syn leven*, although both belong to the Frisian language, then the use of rhetorical questions could be more characteristic of (spoken) Frisian than of Frisian influenced by (written) Dutch. We next investigate whether *SL* is an FCI.

3.3. *SL* AS AN FCI? It could also be claimed that *SL* is an FCI. FCIs have the property that they can occur in certain nonnegative contexts, like the word *any* in the following examples.

(11) a. Pick any card you want.
　　 b. Anything he does he does well.
　　 c. You can come anytime.
　　 d. Anytime is snack time.

Sometimes the same lexical item can be used either as an NPI or as an FCI, as happens to be the case with *any*. An FCI can be very close in meaning to a universal quantifier such as *every*.[10] No stand is taken here on the issue of the formal definition of these items.

NPIs can be distinguished from FCIs on the basis of their syntactic distribution. NPIs cannot occur in affirmative clauses such as those in 11 above. The question arises as to whether *SL* could be used as an FCI, like English *any*. In our corpus, we found no cases where *SL* occurred in nonnegative sentences. But this does not prove with any certainty that *SL* could not be used as an FCI. After all, it is conceivable that the frequency of *SL* as an FCI was too low to be visible in our corpus, though it contains all of the surviving Early Modern Frisian documents. Hence, we can only conclude that if *SL* was used as an FCI, its frequency was lower than when used as an NPI.

Furthermore, it may be added that *SL* can still be used as an NPI in Modern Frisian, though it now takes the form of a PP with *fan* 'of'. We have given four Modern Frisian examples below, each illustrating a separate syntactic context.[11]

(12) Clause with negation
　　 Hy wol　fan syn leven net yn Ljouwert wenje.
　　 he wants of his life　not in Ljouwert live
　　　 'He doesn't ever want to live in Ljouwert.'

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[9] *p* < 0.05 by Fisher's exact test (http://www.langsrud.com/fisher.htm).
[10] Haspelmath (1995:369) notes that FCIs are regularly a diachronic source for universal quantifiers.
[11] All example sentences from Modern Frisian were constructed by the authors.

(13) Rhetorical question
  Wa hat fan syn leven heard fan sokke nuvere dingen?
  who has of his life   heard of such strange things
    'Who has ever heard of such strange things?'

(14) Exclamative
  Wel haw ik fan myn leven!
  well have I of my   life
    'Upon my soul!'

(15) Universal quantifier[12]
  Wa't ien kear stelt, is al syn libben in dief.
  who one time steals is all his life   a thief
    'Once a thief, always a thief.'

By contrast, if *SL* could be used as an FCI in Early Modern Frisian, this use did not survive into the modern language; that is, it is not possible to construct examples in which *SL* functions as an FCI, as seen in the ungrammatical examples in 16.

(16) a. *Meist   dyn leven komme.
        may.2SG your life   come
          'You can come anytime.'
    b. *Syn leven is snackleven.
        his life   is snack.life
          'Anytime is snack time.'

Example 16a is constructed on analogy with 11c, and 16b is analogous to 11d, showing that FCI use of *SL* is ungrammatical in Modern Frisian. To sum up, even if *SL* could be used as an FCI in Early Modern Frisian, instances of such use do not occur in our corpus, nor have they survived into Modern Frisian.

3.4. SEMANTIC MAPS AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF *SL*. The distribution of *SL* is such that it is found in a restricted set of syntactic constructions: in clauses with negation, in rhetorical questions, in exclamatives, in comparative relatives, and following the universal quantifier. The question arises as to whether this is an arbitrary set of syntactic constructions or whether they have something in common. A theory of the relationship between syntactic constructions is presented in Haspelmath 1997. Haspelmath's theory is designed as an explanation of the various functions of indefinite pronouns found across languages. These functions are often correlated with constructions, and it is therefore important that the uses of the indefinite pronoun are well defined, or that it is made clear in which constructions an indefinite pronoun is found. Haspelmath illustrates a number of uses of indefinite pronouns with the following examples.

(17) Specific, known to speaker
  Somebody called while you were away: Guess who!

(18) Specific, unknown to speaker
  I heard **something**, but I couldn't tell what sound it was.

(19) Irrealis nonspecific
  Please try **somewhere** else.

(20) Question
  Did **anybody** tell you anything about it?[13]

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[12] *Al syn libben* 'all his life' is found only in written language nowadays. Spoken language would feature *syn hiele leven* 'his whole life'.

[13] In the semantic map (1997:4), Haspelmath uses the term 'question'; in the characterization of the example sentences (p. 2), he uses the term 'polar question'. The subject index features only the term 'question',

(21) Conditional
     If you see **anything**, tell me immediately.
(22) Indirect negation
     I don't think that **anybody** knows the answer.
(23) Comparative
     In Freiburg the weather is nicer than **anywhere** in Germany.
(24) Direct negation
     Nobody knows the answer.
(25) Free choice
     Anybody can solve this simple question.

The predictions of Haspelmath's theory take the form of implicational universals. Basically, his claim is that the various functions of a given pronoun form an uninterrupted continuum—that is, they are adjacent in the map. Hence, if a pronoun has functions 17 and 19, it must also have function 18. However, a given function can also have three neighbors. For example, the neighbors of 20 in Haspelmath's semantic map are 19, 21, and 22. The implicational relationships between constructions/functions are given in the semantic map in Figure 1 (Haspelmath 1997:4ff.). The map is a way of expressing which constructions differ minimally from each other. In Figure 2, gray shading has been used to mark the uses in which *SL* can be found in Early Modern Frisian.
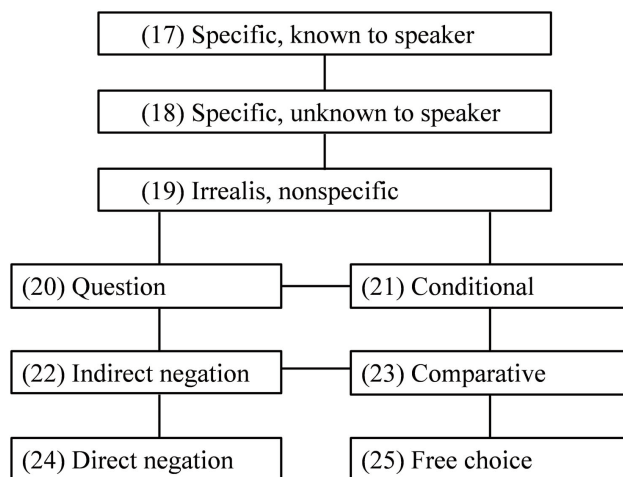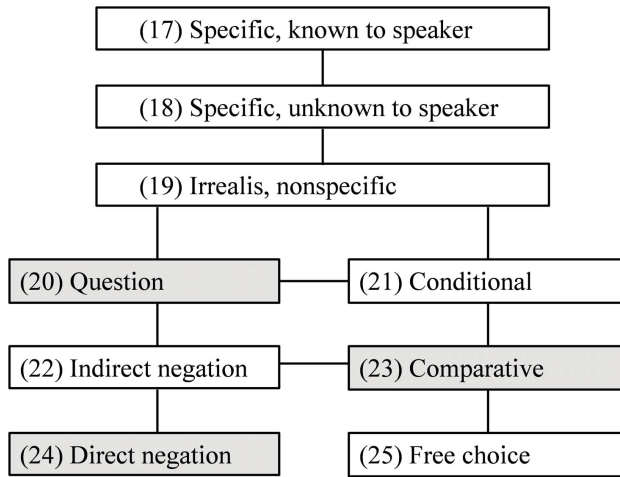

FIGURE 1. Haspelmath's semantic map of functions of the indefinite pronoun.

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not 'polar question'. The same is true for 'conditional' versus 'conditional protasis' (index: both absent) and for 'comparative' versus 'standard of comparison' (index: 'comparative'). This is no petty criticism. The terminological uncertainty reflects the fact that the constructions/uses have not been sharply defined. For example, it becomes clear on p. 247 that 'without' clauses in Dutch are analyzed as cases of indirect negation, as are clauses in the scope of a head with a negative meaning such as 'difficult'. To us, it seems that such constructions are quite different from each other and should be kept separate. In a similar way, Haspelmath uses 'direct negation' to conflate clause negation such as 'not' and negative constituents like 'nobody'. Our data reveal that *SL* was used with clause negation, but not with negative constituents. In addition, there are NPIs that require clause negation to be licensed, but that are ungrammatical with negative constituents, such as the Dutch adjective *pluis* 'safe' (van der Wouden 1994:53). Thus, a conflation of clause negation with negative constituents is not warranted. This makes it clear that Haspelmath's semantic map, though on the right track, must be further refined to accommodate other known uses (constructions) involving the indefinite pronoun.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ (17) Specific, known to speaker          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ (18) Specific, unknown to speaker        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ (19) Irrealis, nonspecific               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
         │                       │
┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
│ (20) Question    │────│ (21) Conditional │
└──────────────────┘    └──────────────────┘
         │                       │
┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
│ (22) Indirect    │────│ (23) Comparative │
│      negation    │    │                  │
└──────────────────┘    └──────────────────┘
         │                       │
┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
│ (24) Direct      │    │ (25) Free choice │
│      negation    │    │                  │
└──────────────────┘    └──────────────────┘
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FIGURE 2. Uses of *SL* on Haspelmath's map, marked in gray.

It can be gleaned from the map of *SL* that its uses almost conform to Haspelmath's generalization. The missing link, so to speak, is the absence of examples of indirect negation. However, this may well be due to the fact that our corpus is small, together with the fact that the indirect negation construction is not very frequent as compared to its neighboring constructions. For Modern Frisian, it is marginally possible to use *SL* in a sentence with indirect negation.

(26) ?Ik hie net tocht   dat ik fan myn leven winne soe!
      I   had not thought that I of my life win   would
      'I hadn't thought that I would ever win.'

In addition to the small size of our corpus, the absence of examples like 26 in Early Modern Frisian may be due more specifically to the infrequency of the indirect negation construction in the texts in which *SL* is found. *SL* is mainly found in informal texts featuring farce or low comedy (see §4.5). This text genre tends to contain (much) more direct speech than other genres, and, correspondingly, less indirect speech. Indirect speech by definition involves syntactic subordination. Hence, subordinate clauses, which are a prerequisite for the construction of indirect negation, are rarer in farce and low comedy than in other genres. Hence, the absence of examples like 26 is not necessarily a problem for the theory of the semantic map.

There is, however, another problem with the semantic map. It was noted that *SL* is also found in exclamatives and following the universal quantifier, and these uses are not represented in Haspelmath's map. Of course, we could view the exclamative use, which represents a high-degree reading, as a special case of the comparative use, but it is not clear whether such an extension of the notion 'comparative' is warranted, nor is it clear whether exclamatives always pattern with comparatives. As for the use of *SL* following a universal quantifier, it is not clear how this should be represented in the map. Thus, it seems that the use of *SL* only partly and impressionistically conforms to Haspelmath's semantic map generalization, and that a further evaluation of his proposal depends on how he would treat exclamatives and universal quantification. But it must be conceded that the type of approach Haspelmath proposes is attractive, since it relates constructions to each other on the basis of semantic or cognitive features such as specific/unspecific. We have not discussed this aspect of his proposal, but it would certainly be

good to have a theory that reveals something about the underlying cognitive building blocks of various constructions and their degree of similarity. Such a theory could predict in which order the extension of the use of the indefinite pronoun will target various constructions. In defense of Haspelmath, it must be noted that *SL* is, strictly speaking, not an indefinite pronoun, at least not with respect to its form, although its meaning comes close to that of an indefinite pronoun of time used as an NPI. It is therefore all the more surprising that *SL* seems to fit his map reasonably well, with the provisos that were noted in this section.

   To sum up, this section shows that Haspelmath's theory of the semantic map can only partly accommodate the distribution of *SL*. In the next section, we discuss the question of how *SL* was semantically grammaticalized as an NPI, why it was not morphologically grammaticalized as a single word, and why it did not become the unmarked way of expressing the semantic notion 'ever'.

   4. ORIGIN OF THE GRAMMATICALIZATION OF *SL* AS AN NPI.

   4.1. ORIGIN OF *SL* AS AN NPI. Literal expressions can become quantificational or functional by a process of semantic abstraction (e.g. Lehmann (2002:1), who cites von Schlegel (1818:28) as one of the first linguists to formulate this idea; see also Postma 1995 for the role of constructions in causing an otherwise literal expression to receive a quantificational interpretation or to be interpreted as an NPI). Such a development, in which ambiguity and reanalysis play a role, may be seen as a step in the process of the grammaticalization of a lexical item toward a functional or quantificational usage (on reanalysis, see for example Harris & Campbell 1995:50ff.). The literal meaning of *syn leven*/*libben* 'his life' implies animate creatures having a certain life span. By metaphorical extension, however, it can also be applied to objects, as in 'This chair had a short life'. This sentence still entails some notion of life span, metaphorically applied to an inanimate object. In its NPI usage, *SL* has become restricted to negative contexts, whereas its metaphorical extension to inanimate subjects is not thus restricted, showing that these two developments must be considered distinct steps in the process of semantic abstraction. It is hard to pinpoint the steps in the process by which a phrase develops into an NPI, but it may well be that the universal quantifier is instrumental in associating *SL* with negative polarity. As it happens, the oldest occurrences of *SL* feature its use following the universal quantifier. Example 10a is repeated here as 27.

   (27) Wa   iensen stelt   Is all zijn leuen ien tieeff.
        who once   steals is all his life   a   thief
           'Once a thief, always a thief.'

In this sentence, the universal quantifier applied to *SL* may have the literal meaning 'for all his life', but it may also have the more abstract meaning 'always'. Furthermore, the universal quantifier is monotone decreasing with respect to its complement, which in this example is *SL*. Hence, this use of *SL* will characteristically associate it with a monotone decreasing environment. This may easily lead language learners to the hypothesis that *SL* is an NPI and, as a result, then lead them to use it in other monotone decreasing environments as well, such as rhetorical questions and negated clauses. Positive evidence for this scenario is lacking, apart from the fact that the oldest occurrences of *SL* are found in the company of the universal quantifier. However, the scenario ties in with what we know about semantic abstraction and the distribution of NPIs. In the next section, *SL* is shown to display some other signs of being grammaticalized as an NPI, in addition to its distribution.

   4.2. SIGNS OF THE GRAMMATICALIZATION OF *SL* AS AN NPI IN FRISIAN. The interpretation of a phrase, literal or quantificational, may be signaled in various ways. Hoeksema

(2005) draws attention to the fact that the phrase *in years* has become an expression of high degree for time in negative contexts. This is illustrated by the sentences below.

(28) a. He hasn't been home in years.
     b. *He has been home in years.
     c. He has been home for years.

The semantics of these two phrases are quite different, which is due to the NPI character of the phrase *in years*. Use as an NPI is signaled in this case by the preposition *in*. To escape negative polarity, a different preposition must be chosen, as in the 28c example.[14] A similar contrast occurs in Modern Frisian in the case of the expression *fan syn libben/leven* 'of his life' (recall that the Modern Frisian equivalent of *SL* features the preposition *fan* 'of'). *Syn libben/leven* has its literal meaning in cases where it is combined with the preposition *yn* 'in', whereas it has its quantificational interpretation as an NPI in cases where it combines with the preposition *fan* 'of'. This distinction can be illustrated by two systematic contrasts. First, when combining with *yn* 'in', it can occur in affirmative sentences in Modern Frisian, but when combining with *fan* 'of', it cannot.

(29) a. Hja hat it twa kear yn har libben meimakke.
         she has it two time in her life   experienced
         'She has experienced it two times in her life.'
     b. *Hja hat it twa kear fan har libben meimakke.
         she has it two time of her life   experienced
         'She has experienced it two times in her life.'

Second, when combining with *yn* 'in', it is restricted to animate subjects, but when combining with *fan* 'of', it can also have inanimate subjects.

(30) a. *De doar woe   yn syn libben net iepen.
         the door wanted in his life   not open
         'The door wouldn't open in a million years.'
     b. De doar woe   fan syn libben net iepen.
         the door wanted of his life   not open
         'The door wouldn't open in a million years.'

Another sign of tentative grammaticalization is that the possessive pronoun is never separated from the noun *leven/libben* by an adjective. It is otherwise quite normal for adjectives to occur between a possessive pronoun and a noun within a noun phrase. The fact that this does not happen with *SL* could be interpreted as a sign of grammaticalization, although it might also be the case that a noun like 'life' is seldom premodified by adjectives anyway.

Early Modern Frisian *SL* did not yet feature a preposition in its NPI usage. The preposition was introduced at the end of the eighteenth century. The absence of a preposition may be taken as circumstantial evidence for the scenario by which the NPI usage of *SL* first originated following a universal quantifier, since the universal quantifier did not combine with a *fan*-PP in Early Modern Frisian, nor does it, for that matter, in Modern Frisian. Thus sentences like 31, considered ungrammatical in Modern Frisian, are absent from Early Modern Frisian as well.

(31) *Wa't ien kear stelt, is al fan syn libben in dief.
      who one time steals is all of his life   a thief
      'Once a thief, always a thief.'

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[14] A referee objected that these sentences are not comparable. Our point is that one of the two phrases is banned from affirmative sentences, which leads us to conclude that it is an NPI, and that it is the choice of preposition that determines whether the phrase in question is an NPI.

In Frisian, the universal quantifier does not combine with a partitive NP, as it can in English. It is not clear why a preposition was introduced before *SL* toward the end of the eighteenth century. But the choice of the preposition that was introduced is not surprising, seeing that *fan* 'of' is the most functional of all prepositions, having in many of its uses very little meaning of its own.

To sum up, *syn libben/leven* 'his life' shows the following signs of grammaticalization in its usage as an NPI. The noun *libben/life* has lost its literal meaning, being associated with a quantificational (NPI) meaning instead. Concomitantly, it is no longer restricted to animate entities. Before 1800, *SL* appears as an NP; after 1800, it takes the more specific form of a PP, built on the preposition *fan* 'of'. Apart from the change in categorical status from NP to PP, there is no visible sign of further grammaticalization in the period after 1800.

4.3. RELATIVE LACK OF LEXICAL FREEZING. Grammaticalization is a term that may have many meanings (Lehmann 2002:8ff.). Following Lehmann (2002:17), grammaticalization is seen as changing analytic constructions into synthetic ones (see also Hopper & Traugott 2003:31). This may entail the reinterpretation or reanalysis of an expression as a single word. This section investigates the question of whether *SL* underwent such reanalysis, and if so, to what extent. We first consider the fact that *SL* consists of a possessive pronoun and a noun, and the possessive pronoun agrees in person and number with the subject of the sentence in the majority of cases. Some examples are given in 32.

    (32) The possessive pronoun agrees with the subject

        a. 1SG
            Ick hie t oors mijn leven neat ljæuwd.
            I   had it else my life   not believed
              'Otherwise, I would never have believed it.'

        b. 2SG
            Du hefste my dijn leven soo folle wille neat joon.
            you have me your life so   much fun net given
              'You never gave me so much pleasure.'

        c. 3SG
            Hij zoe   't zijn libben net dwaan!
            he would it his life   not do
              'He would never do it!'

        d. 1PL
            It   slynnen kinne wy uwz libben næt ney litte.
            the self.spoil can   we our life   net after let
              'We can never resist spoiling ourselves.'

        e. 2PL
            Ried ij   t soo naet, soo rijed ij   t Ion leuen naet.
            guess you it so   not   then guess you it your life   not
              'If you can't guess it like this, you will never guess it.'

        f. 3PL
            (No examples.)

But it is not the case that there is always agreement with the subject. Of the sixty-four examples found in the corpus, five unambiguously exhibit lack of agreement. In those cases, the possessive pronoun is either 1SG or 3SG, while the subject has different person and number features. Two examples are given in 33.

(33) The possessive pronoun fails to agree with the subject

   a. 3SG possessive pronoun, 2PL subject

     Hab jimme zijn leven zok Folk meer heard?

     have you.PL his life   such folk more heard

       'Have you ever heard of such people?'

   b. 1SG possessive pronoun, 3SG subject

     Za hab ik Jjerren lang æak ney de vammen Rjon   der   hat mijn

     so have I years   long also to the girls   walked there has my

        Boese noyt myn leeven net van wjon.

        pocket never my   life   not of   gain

      'I for one went after girls for years; upon my soul, my wallet never

      profited from it.'

The remaining fifty-nine examples show agreement of the possessive pronoun with the subject. Note, though, that, strictly speaking, the first- and third-person singular cases are ambiguous between an agreement analysis and an invariant 1SG/3SG analysis.

The significance of these facts is as follows. For a construction to grammaticalize into a word, its shape must be lexically fixed. In the construction under discussion, the possessive pronoun covaries with the subject. For the construction to become fixed, the possessive pronoun must be invariant. Interestingly, the examples with a fixed, nonagreeing possessive pronoun are all from the end of the eighteenth century. It seems then that the construction shows a slight development toward being reanalyzed as a single word, as indicated by the occasional freezing of the (nonagreeing) pronoun. However, the bulk of the examples exhibit a pronoun that covaries with its antecedent. The lack of grammaticalization of *SL* thus correlates with the covariation of the possessive pronoun.[15]

Lexical freezing of the syntactic construction is a precondition for reanalysis as a single word. It is a gradual process, by which an expression becomes opaque to syntactic processes; this can often be observed in idiom formation. The lack of lexical freezing of the possessive pronoun neatly correlates with the failure of the construction to grammaticalize into a single word. In addition, the split between *leven* and *libben* may have been a further obstacle to grammaticalization, since the two items each have only about half of the total frequency that would have been available for one item.

The development of *SL* in West Frisian contrasts neatly with what happened in Sater Frisian, a branch of the Frisian language family that is almost extinct. Kramer (1970) notes that the Sater Frisian translation of *ever* is *siläärge*. He argues for the following etymology: *siläärge < *siläärege < *siläädege < sien Lääwdoage* 'his life days'. This example is comparable in its phrasal structure to West Frisian *SL*. There is a crucial difference, however: the Sater Frisian construction froze the possessive pronoun, choosing the (unmarked) 3SG. Correspondingly, the construction was able to undergo further grammaticalization and developed into a single word. Kramer reports that speakers of Sater Frisian nowadays are unaware of the (historical) connection between *siläärge* and *sien Lääwdoage*, a sure sign of grammaticalization. The fact that grammaticalization in Sater Frisian coincided with the freezing of the possessive pronoun supports the idea that the agreeing (hence changeable) pronoun in the West Frisian equivalent was an im-

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[15] A referee notes that the real question is why the possessive pronoun covaries with its antecedent in the majority of the examples, thus blocking reinterpretation of *SL* as a single word. Similarly, it may be asked why the possessive pronoun did not covary with its antecedent in Sater Frisian (see below). While we note the correlation between covariation and lack of grammaticalization, we cannot explain why covariation continued to exist in West Frisian, but see n. 16.

portant factor blocking grammaticalization. Seeing that the most common expressions signifying 'ever' and 'never' are single words in the West Germanic languages, the failure of *SL* to develop into a single word may well have been a point disfavoring *SL* and favoring its eighteenth-century competitors *oait* and *noait*.[16]

4.4. DISTRIBUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS OF *SL* AS COMPARED WITH RIVAL EXPRESSIONS. *SL* was not the only way of expressing the semantic content '(n)ever' in Early Modern Frisian. In the seventeenth century, *ea*, the descendant of Old Frisian *ā*, was still in use. It was replaced around 1700 by *oait*, a borrowing from Dutch (*ooit*). The distribution of *ea* and *oait* was studied in Hoekstra et al. 2012.[17] Table 2 summarizes the distribution of *ea* and *oait* in our corpus and compares it to that of *SL*.

	syn leven/libben	*ea*	*oait*
clauses with negation	35	0	27
rhetorical questions	19	6	26
comparative relatives	3	0	0
exclamatives	3	0	0
after universal quantifier	4	0	0
negative NPs	0	5	35
words of exclusion such as	0	10	31
before, *if*, *except*, *shame that*			
relative clauses	0	14	11
TOTALS	64	35	130

TABLE 2. The number of occurrences in each syntactic context of *SL*, *ea*, and *oait* (1550–1800).

What this table makes clear is that *SL* was apparently excluded in syntactic contexts that in themselves were relatively frequent. Thus, it could not occur (or occurred so sporadically as to remain outside our corpus) in the following contexts, in which either *ea* or *oait*, or both, scored occurrences.

- sentences with negative NPs
- sentences introduced by words of exclusion
- relative clauses

These are syntactic contexts that are not infrequent, certainly when compared to the comparative relatives, in which *SL* WAS attested. Therefore, the absence of *SL* in these frequent syntactic contexts is a telling fact, from which it may reasonably be deduced that *SL* could not be used in them.[18] *SL* scored either no occurrences in those syntactic

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[16] A referee claims that lack of grammaticalization is not something that needs to be explained or studied: lack of change is unsurprising; only change is surprising and deserves to be studied, since change entails a cause of change, and lack of change does not require a cause. However, a body of facts involving lack of change (e.g. lack of grammaticalization) may become an object of scientific inquiry when there is an expectation that there will be change or when there is no a priori reason to expect either change or the absence of change. When a theory would lead us to expect change, lack of change is interesting. In the case at hand, the lack of grammaticalization of *SL* is interesting since expressions such as *SL* often do grammaticalize, as happened in Sater Frisian. Hence studying the linguistic behavior of such expressions is relevant. This topic is extensively discussed by Walkden (2012), who presents arguments countering views similar to the one expressed by the referee.

[17] On the semantic development of these words in the transition from Old Frisian to Early Modern Frisian, and the loss of their aspectual properties, see Slofstra 2011.

[18] A referee asks whether our corpus is not too small to deduce anything from the absence of *SL* in a given syntactic context. To this, it may be replied that the relevance of a corpus depends on its size relative to the frequency of a given syntactic context: our corpus would be irrelevant for very infrequent syntactic contexts. Conversely, our corpus is big enough to be relevant for syntactic contexts that are frequent, and, as noted

environments, or at best very few, which lowered its overall frequency as compared to *ea* and *oait*. This was not compensated for by the syntactic contexts in which only *SL* was allowed to occur, but in which it did not score many occurrences.

- comparative relatives
- exclamatives
- following the universal quantifier

These contexts had low relative frequencies and therefore hardly contributed to raising the overall frequency of *SL*. *SL* did have one big advantage over *ea*, which was not allowed to cooccur with sentence negation, but this advantage disappeared in the eighteenth century when *ea* was replaced by *oait*, which could cooccur with sentence negation. Thus distributional restrictions prevented *SL* from competing optimally with *ea* and *oait*.

4.5. SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESTRICTIONS. There is evidence that *SL* was felt or came to be felt by writers to be substandard. The writer Gysbert Japix, who writes in a high register, is responsible for most of the textual material that survives from the seventeenth century (Breuker 1989), but he never uses *SL*. The most productive writer of the eighteenth century is Jan Althuysen, who translated most of the psalms. He never uses *SL* in the psalms, but he uses it twice in lighter work (smaller in size than the psalm translations). In addition, we have a farce and a comedy dating from the eighteenth century. The farce, *Waatze Gribberts Bruyloft* ('The wedding of Waatze Gribberts', 1701) generally features *SL*, to the exclusion of *ea* and *oait*. The comedy, *It Libben fen Aagtje IJsbrants* ('The life of Aagtje IJsbrants', 1779), written by Eelke Meinerts, regularly but not exclusively uses *SL*. The substandard character of *SL* is due to its being a maximizer (on maximizers and minimizers, see Israel 2001), just like, for example, the expression *in a million years* in 34.

  (34) It's not going to happen in a million years.

Maximizers, and exaggeration in general, tend to be avoided in higher registers of language use. Thus *SL* has a tendency to show up in the lower register to which comedies belong and not in the high register of the psalm translations. This corroborates the idea that *SL* was felt to belong to a lower register. The main rival of *SL* in the eighteenth century, *oait* 'ever', does not show signs of being thus restricted. It may equally well show up in the psalm translations of Jan Althuysen as in the comedy of Eelke Meinerts. *SL* was apparently felt to be subject to sociolinguistic restrictions, which helps to explain why it lost out against its eighteenth-century rival *oait*.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS. In this article, we investigated the distribution of *syn leven*/*libben* in Frisian in the period 1550–1800, arguing that *syn leven* originated in Frisian as a loan from Dutch. This explains why the variant *syn leven* displays a phonological characteristic of Dutch: the presence of an intervocalic /v/. The form *syn leven* was adapted to Frisian phonology by replacing *leven* with native *libben*. Evidence for this scenario came from the fact that the oldest attestations of *syn leven* predate the oldest attestations of *syn libben*, and from the fact that *leven* is only found in this construction, whereas *libben* is also found outside of this construction. The distribution of *SL*

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above, we even found occurrences of *SL* in infrequent syntactic contexts like comparative relatives. In addition, we also have a sort of control. We can partition our corpus of *SL* occurrences into two subcorpora: one defined by *syn leven*, the other defined by *syn libben*. By and large, both subcorpora display the same distribution of *SL* over syntactic environments, which is encouraging.

across syntactic environments made it clear that *SL* was an NPI. It was also shown that its distribution partly confirmed the semantic map of the relationship between various uses of indefinite pronouns proposed in Haspelmath 1997. Evidence was presented that *SL* failed to occur in certain frequent syntactic contexts in which its near synonyms *ea* and *oait* 'ever' could be found. In addition, *SL* was slightly substandard, which also contributed to its markedness as compared to its eighteenth-century rival *oait*. *SL* was not reanalyzed as a single word, as the possessive pronoun agreed with the subject of the sentence. In comparison, the possessive pronoun was fixed in Sater Frisian, and the Sater Frisian equivalent of *SL* was frozen into a single word. To sum up, sociolinguistic, distributional, and semantic-syntactic factors conspired in order to prevent *SL* from becoming the unmarked way of expressing the semantic content 'ever'.

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