



# The 'human' impersonal pronoun in Afrikaans vs European West Germanic

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# Introduction



The **'human' impersonal pronoun**  
in Afrikaans vs European West Germanic

- ▶ HIPs?
  - ▶ e.g. Cabredo Hofherr (2008) and Siewierska (2011)
  - ▶ pronominal expression of impersonalization, i.e. “the process of filling an argument position of a predicate with a variable ranging over sets of human participants without establishing a referential link to any entity from the universe of discourse” (Gast & van der Auwera 2013: 124)

**Je** leeft maar een keer.

**One** only lives once.



# Introduction



The **'human'** impersonal pronoun  
in Afrikaans vs European West Germanic

- ▶ 'human'?
- ▶ e.g. Heine & Kuteva (2002: 232) and Giacalone Ramat & Sansò (2007)
- ▶ HIPs originating from 'human being, man, person'

**On** ne vit qu'une fois.

**Man** lebt nur einmal.

**Men** leeft maar een keer.



# Introduction

The 'human' impersonal pronoun  
in Afrikaans vs **European West Germanic**

- ▶ European West Germanic?
  - ▶ e.g. Weerman (2006) and van der Auwera et al. (2012)
  - ▶ sandwich distribution
    - ▶ from E, D and G + to E - > D ± > G +
    - ▶ E - due to loss of V2 (Los 2002)? – but *men* ↓ too...
    - ▶ E - and D ± due to contact and deflexion? – but
      - ▶ temporal discrepancy between contact and loss/decline...
      - ▶ other highly deflected Germanic languages **with** 'man'-HIP...

# Introduction

The 'human' impersonal pronoun  
in Afrikaans vs **European West Germanic**

- ▶ *man* vs *men*
  - ▶ textual distribution
    - ▶ G no apparent restrictions
    - ▶ D non-fiction (Coussé & van der Auwera 2012) and written academic in particular
  - ▶ suppletive oblique forms in G, from 'one', but not in D (Draye 2014)

**Man** weiß ja nie, was die **einen** fragen / was **einem** zustoßen kan.

**Je/\*Men** weet maar nooit wat ze **je** zullen vragen / wat **je** kan overkomen.

# Introduction

The 'human' impersonal pronoun  
in **Afrikaans** vs European West Germanic

- Afrikaans?
  - not studied in much detail but interesting
    - no *men* anymore... 'despite' persistence of V2
    - new 'man'-HIP... 'despite' massive deflexion in contact situation
  - indefinite article can be left out ~ GZM

*In 'n paar gevalle is die Afrikaans vir ons 'n bietjie plat. Dit geld veral die weglating van die lidwoord "n" in sinne als : 'Wat moet ['n] mens sê vir die meester as ['n] mens weg wil gaan?' (1917, JK)*



# Introduction

The 'human' impersonal pronoun  
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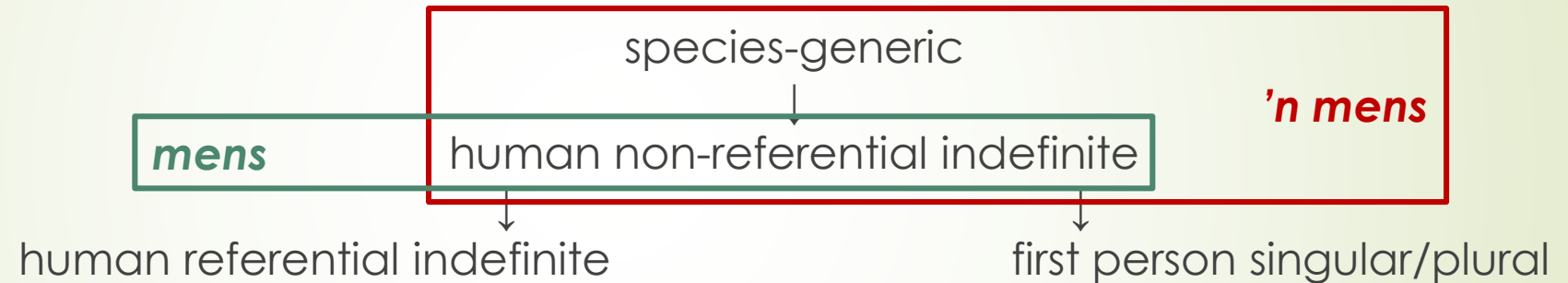
- ▶ suppletive forms from 'you'

... want **'n mens** weet nie wat **jou** sal tref nie. (2010, internet)

- ▶ here, a first exploration of (*'n*) *mens*
  - ▶ as compared to *men* and *man*
  - ▶ of its form & functions, distribution and history
  - ▶ based on native speaker judgments, Johanita Kirsten's corpus of 20th- & 21st-C A (JK), the Taalkommissie corpus (TK) and the internet

# Form & functions

- Giacalone Ramat & Sansò's (2007) GZM path for 'man'-HIPs



*'n Mens se kop is heelwat groter [as 'n skaap se kop] , dus sal 'n mens mos meer harsings hê. (2008, JK)*

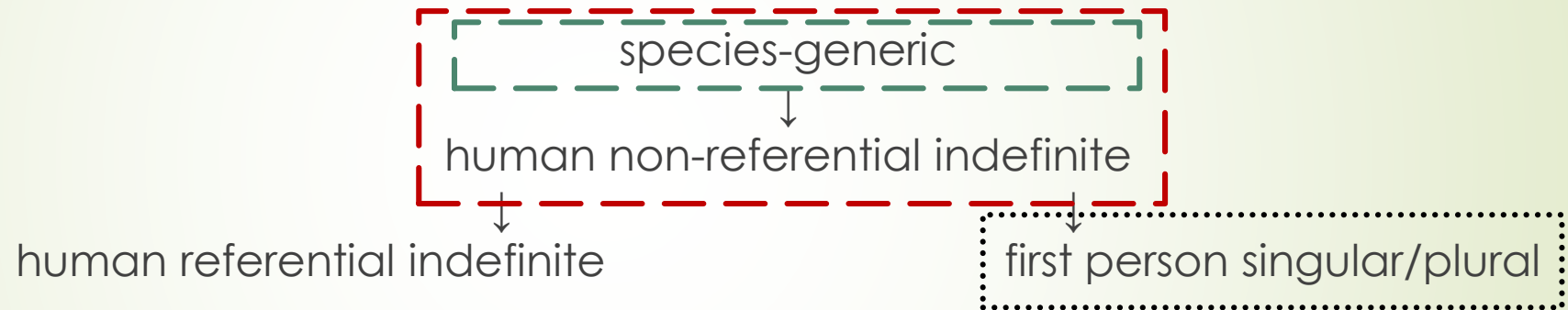
*Dan beseft 'n mens hoe afhanklik jy van jou liggaam is. (2002, JK)*

*Maar mens kan ook nie net vorentoe storm terwyl 'n lang tou mense voor jou staan. (2008, JK)*



# Form & functions

but note!



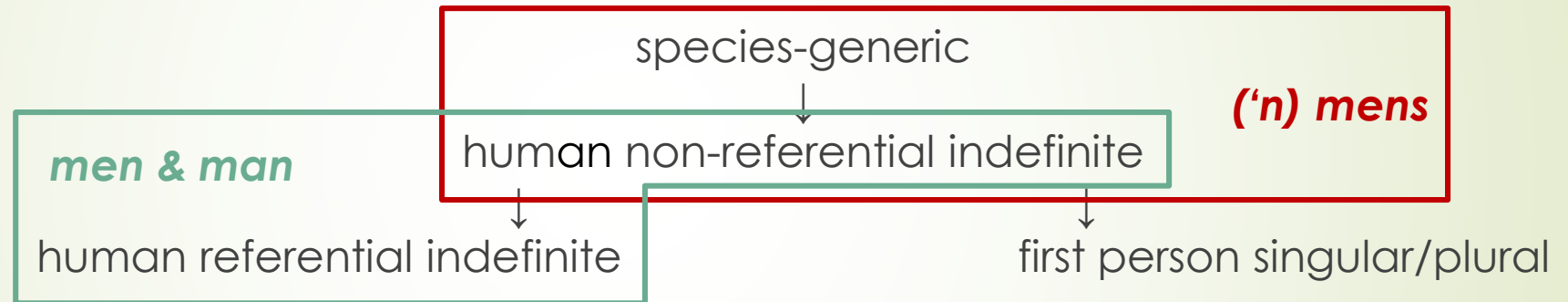
*Ons moet God, soos Henog, deur ons geloof kan behaag. Sonder geloof kan 'n mens God nie behaag nie. (2007, JK)*

*Skaars veertien dae later, toen mens en dier nog in 'n geskokte toestand was... (1971, JK)*

*Ek mis jou vreeslik en verlang baie na jou, ag, hoe sal dit tog gaan wanneer ons maande lank van mekaar sal wees? 'n Mens wil liewer nie te veel daaraan dink nie. (1949, JK)*

# Form & functions

➤ vs *men* and *man*



**Men** klopt op de deur.

**Man** klopft an der Tür.

Hulle/\***(n) Mens** klop aan die deur

**Men** heeft de belastingen weer verhoogd.

**Man** hat schon wieder die Steuern erhöht.

Hulle/\***(n) Mens** het die belastings alweer verhoog.

# Form & functions

- Gast & van der Auwera's (2013) semantic map for **universal** HIPs

In Bali eet **men** libelles.

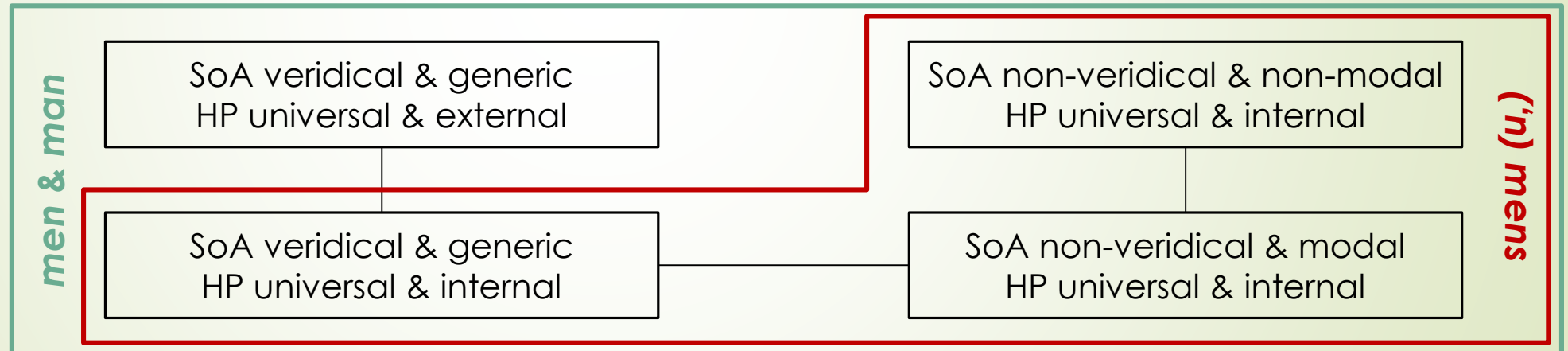
In Bali isst **man** Libellen.

\*In Bali eet **(n) mens** naaldekokers.

Wat gebeurt er als **men** zure melk drinkt?

Was passiert, wenn **man** saure Milch trinkt?

Wat gebeur as **(n) mens** suur 'melk drink?



**Men** leeft maar een keer.

**Man** lebt nur einmal.

**(n) Mens** leef net een keer.

**Men** moet nooit opgeven.

**Man** sollte nicht aufgeben.

**(n) Mens** moet nooit opgee nie.

# Form & functions

- ▶ and a final use...
  - ▶ cf. König & Gast's (2007: 237) "evidential use" and Siewierska & Papastathi's (2011: 604) "people (speech act verb)" use

**Men** zegt dat hij een leugenaar is.

**Man** sagt, dass er ein Lügner ist.

Hulle/\*(**n**) **Mens** sê dat hy 'n leuenaar is.

- ▶ "this particular use requires more (esp. diachronic) investigation" (Gast & van der Auwera 2013: 142)

# Form & functions

- ▶ 'man'-HIP less grammaticalized in A than in D and G
  - ▶ “impersonal pronouns that are exclusively generic may appear syntactically as both subjects and objects” (Egerland 2003: 92)
    - ▶ both 'n *mens* and *mens*, unlike *men* and *man*

*Aknee vertel 'n mens dat jy allergies is vir iets. (internet)*

*Die Fourier transformasie kom kortliks daarop neer dat dit **mens** in staat stel om 'n hele elektromagnetiese spektrum met die gepaardgaande intensiteite as 'n funksie vas te lê en te stoor. (2007, JK)*

*... dat het je/\***men** in staat stelt om ...*

- ▶ but 86% of ('n) *mens* as HIP in JK's 2001-2008 subcorpus are subjects!

# Form & functions

- ▶ “the more grammaticalized a generic noun such as *man* is, the more it behaves like a pronominal or pronoun-like element” (Giacalone Ramat & Sansò 2007: 111) ~ see Weerman (2006)
- ▶ *'n mens* as HIP and *mens* combine with 2SG forms and can occur with a reciprocal

**'n Mens** moet mekaar verloor om mekaar te vind. (1970, internet)

- ▶ according to Donaldson (1993), (*'n*) *mens* cannot be used to refer to same arbitrary referent... but a few exceptions in the corpus and common in colloquial PDA

**Mens** word seker maar ... gestraf wanneer jy eers dood is. (2009, JK)

Wat moet **mens** sê vir die meester as **mens** weg wil gaan? (1917, JK)

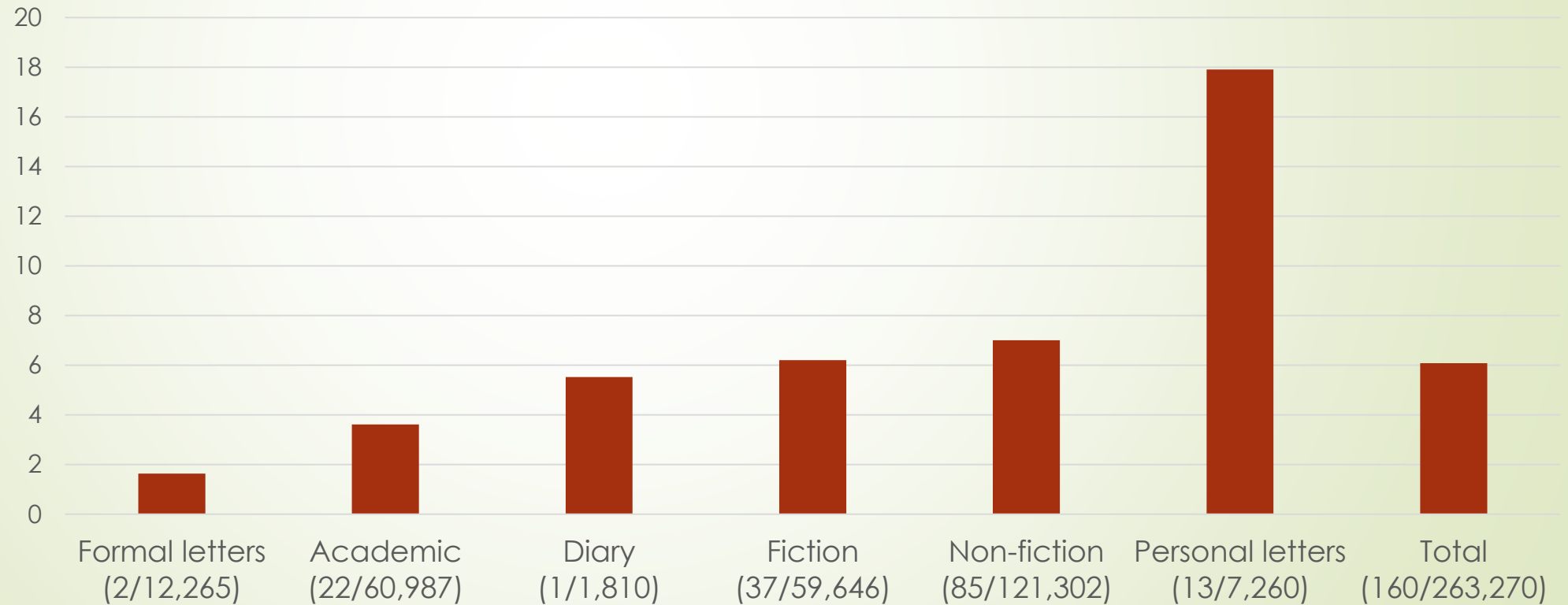


# Form & functions

- ▶ intermediate conclusion
  - ▶ ('n) *mens* vs *men* and *man*
    - ▶ 'universal internal HIP', with still a species-generic use too
      - ▶ no existential, universal external or evidential uses (yet?)
      - ▶ due to suppletive 'you' forms?
    - ▶ still functions as object too, though infrequently
    - ▶ pronoun-like + some indications of even more pronominal behavior
  - ▶ 'n *mens* vs *mens*
    - ▶ no apparent differences in functional range
    - ▶ except for species-generic use

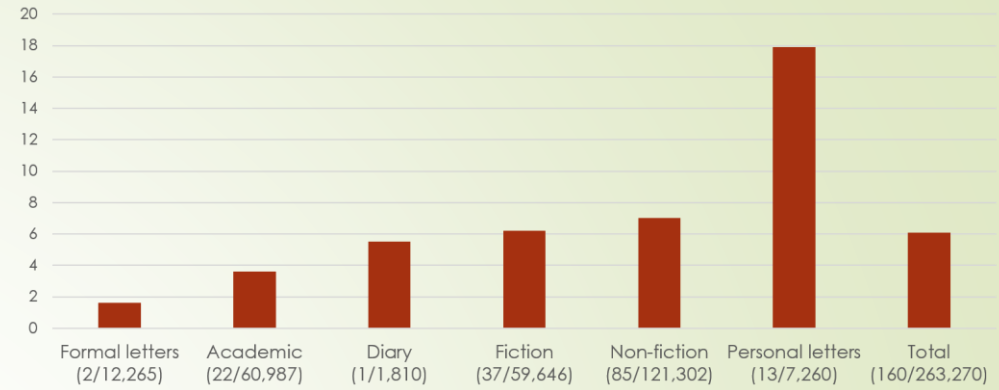
# Distribution

frequency per 10,000 words of ('n) mens as HIP in PDA (JK 2001-2010)





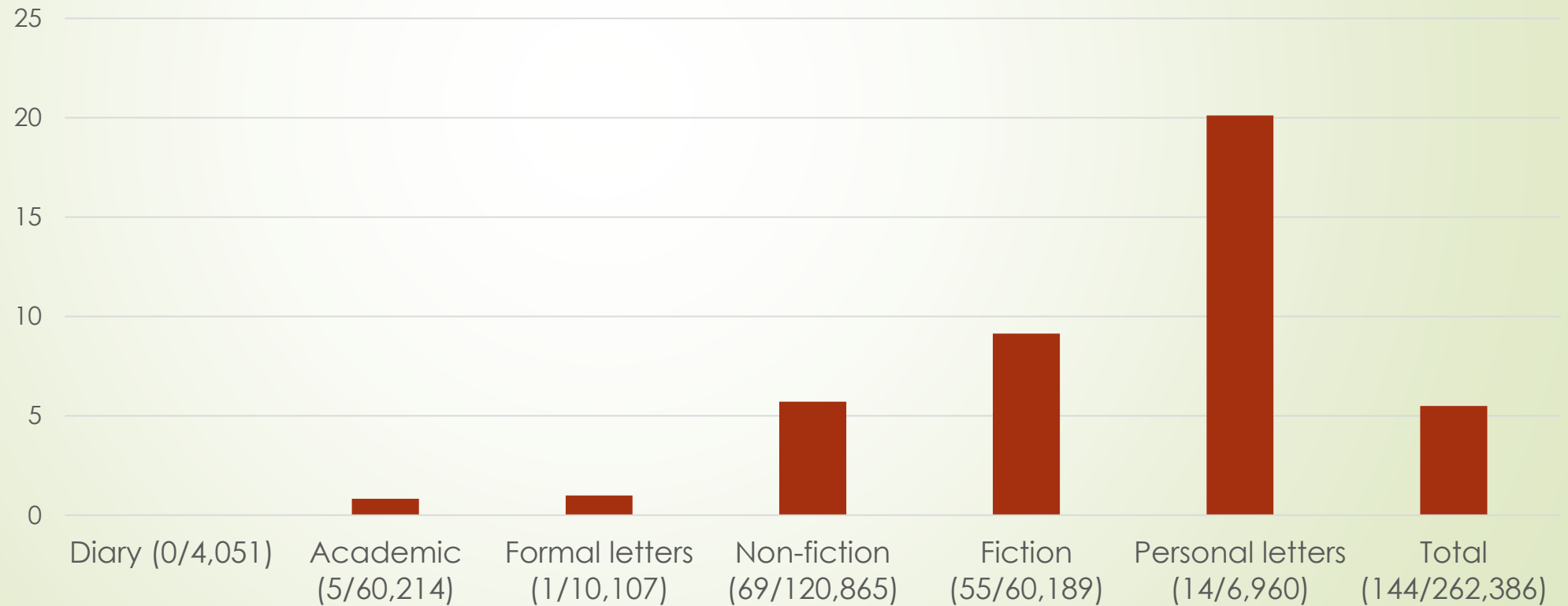
# Distribution



- caveat
  - low frequencies
  - uneven distribution in non-fiction and personal letters
- still
  - 6.08 overall
  - fiction 6.20 > academic 3.61
  - difference in formality, cf. formal vs personal letters?
- vs G and D (Weerman 2006, Siewierska 2011, Coussé & van der Auwera 2012, van der Auwera et al. 2012, Gast 2015)
  - $G > D$  as “*man* epitomizes impersonalization” (Gast 2015: 8)
  - $D \sim A$  but academic 31.00 / non-fiction 17.00 > fiction 3.10/5.00

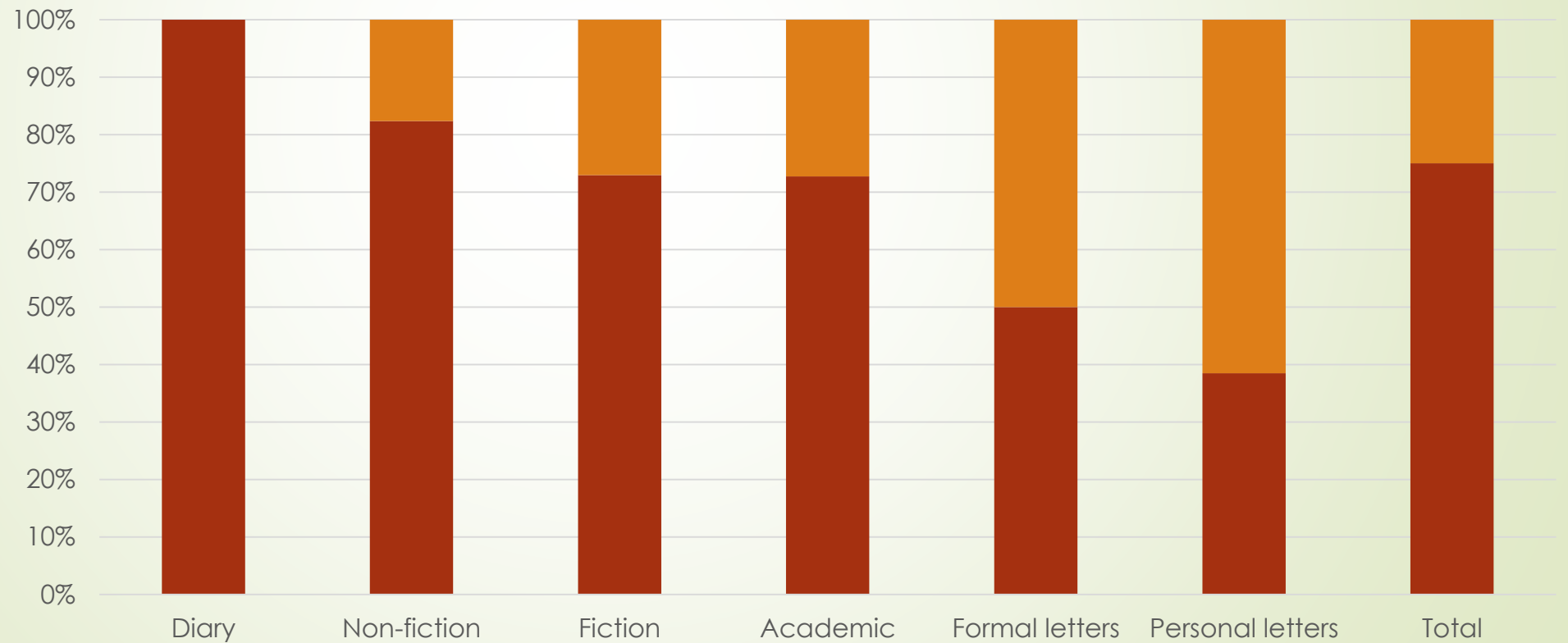
# Distribution

■ similar picture in JK 1971-1980 btw!

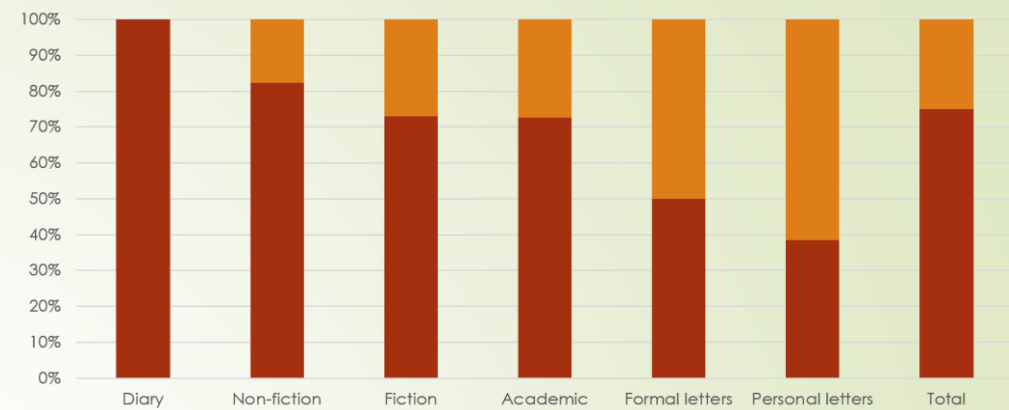


# Distribution

► *mens* vs *'n mens* as HIP in PDA (JK 2001-2010)



# Distribution



- ▶ similar caveat
  - ▶ 2 HIP-heavy non-fiction texts almost exclusively cases of '*n mens*'
  - ▶ 1 personal letter responsible for most cases of *mens*
- ▶ still
  - ▶ 25% of *mens* overall
  - ▶ fiction = academic ( $\approx$  other text types)
  - ▶ individual preferences: cf. caveat and AB on Skype chat?

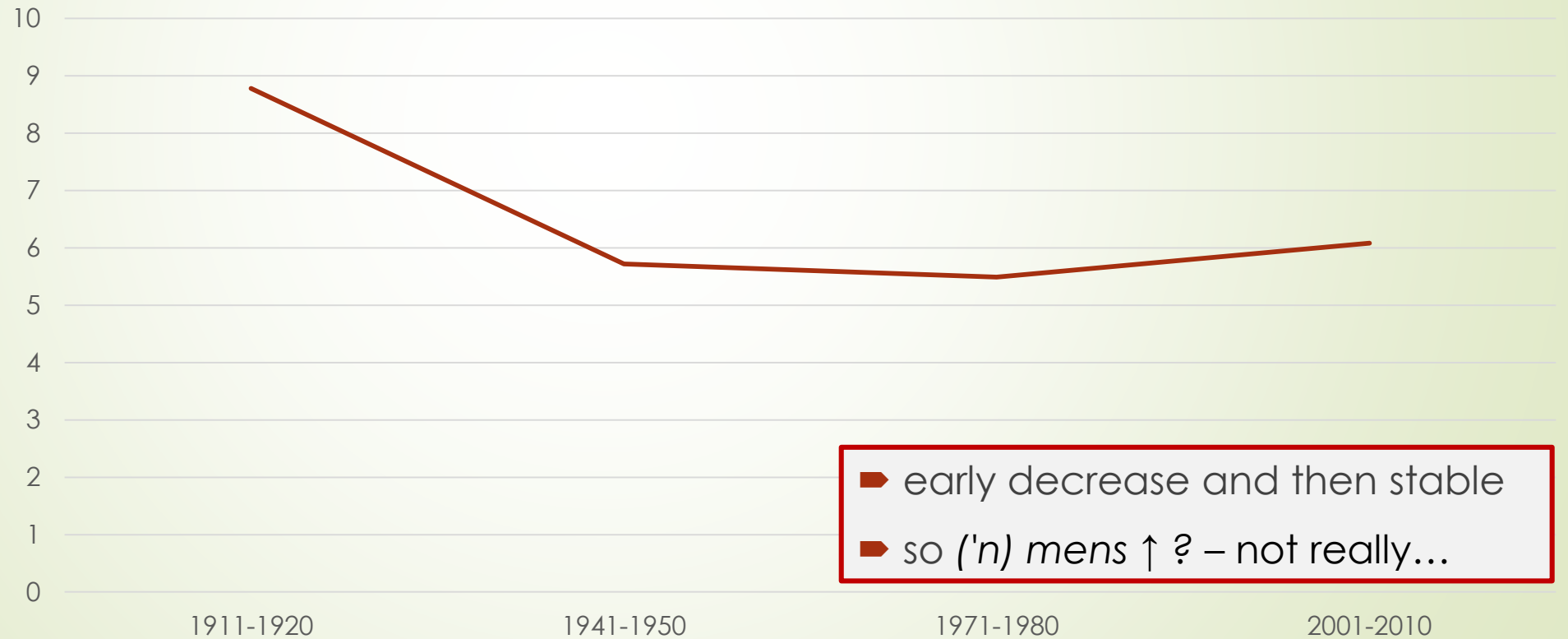


# Distribution

- ▶ intermediate conclusion
  - ▶ ('n) mens vs men and man
    - ▶  $G > A \sim D$
    - ▶ 'despite' functional differences between A and D (~ Siewierska 2011 on infrequency of existential uses for 'man'-HIP)
    - ▶ textual distribution ~ formality: *men* ↓ and ('n) *mens* ↑ ?
  - ▶ 'n mens vs mens
    - ▶ 'n mens > mens
    - ▶ no apparent differences in (written) text types

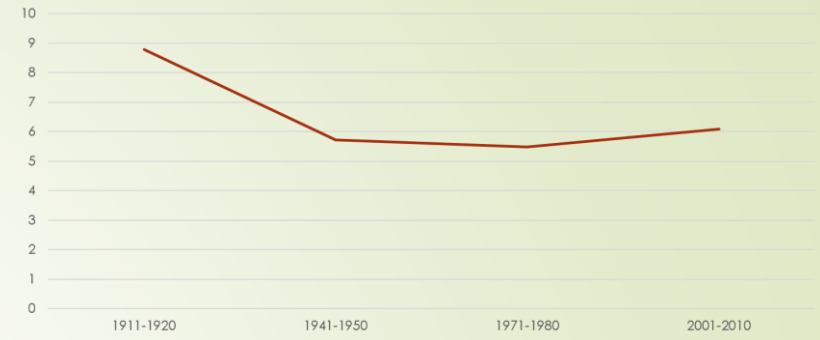
# History

frequency per 10,000 words of ('n) mens as HIP in the last 100 years (JK)

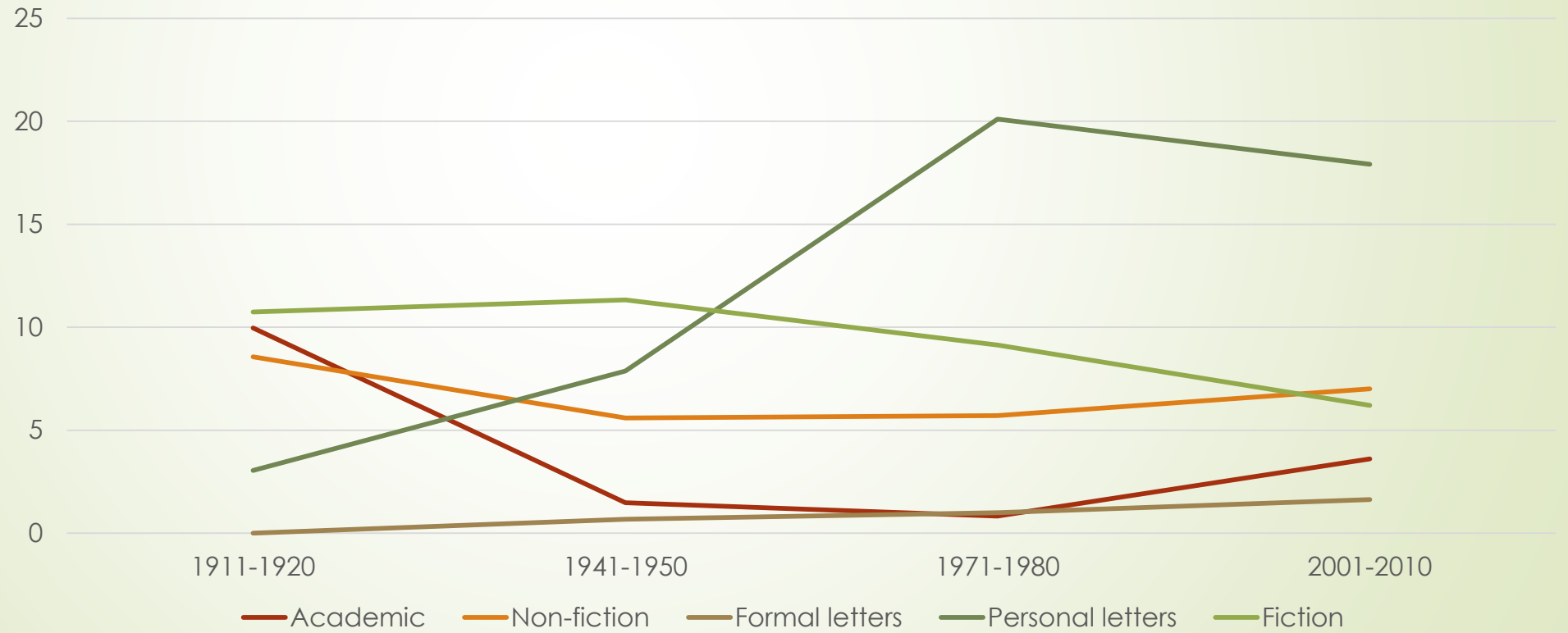


early decrease and then stable  
so ('n) mens ↑ ? – not really...

# History

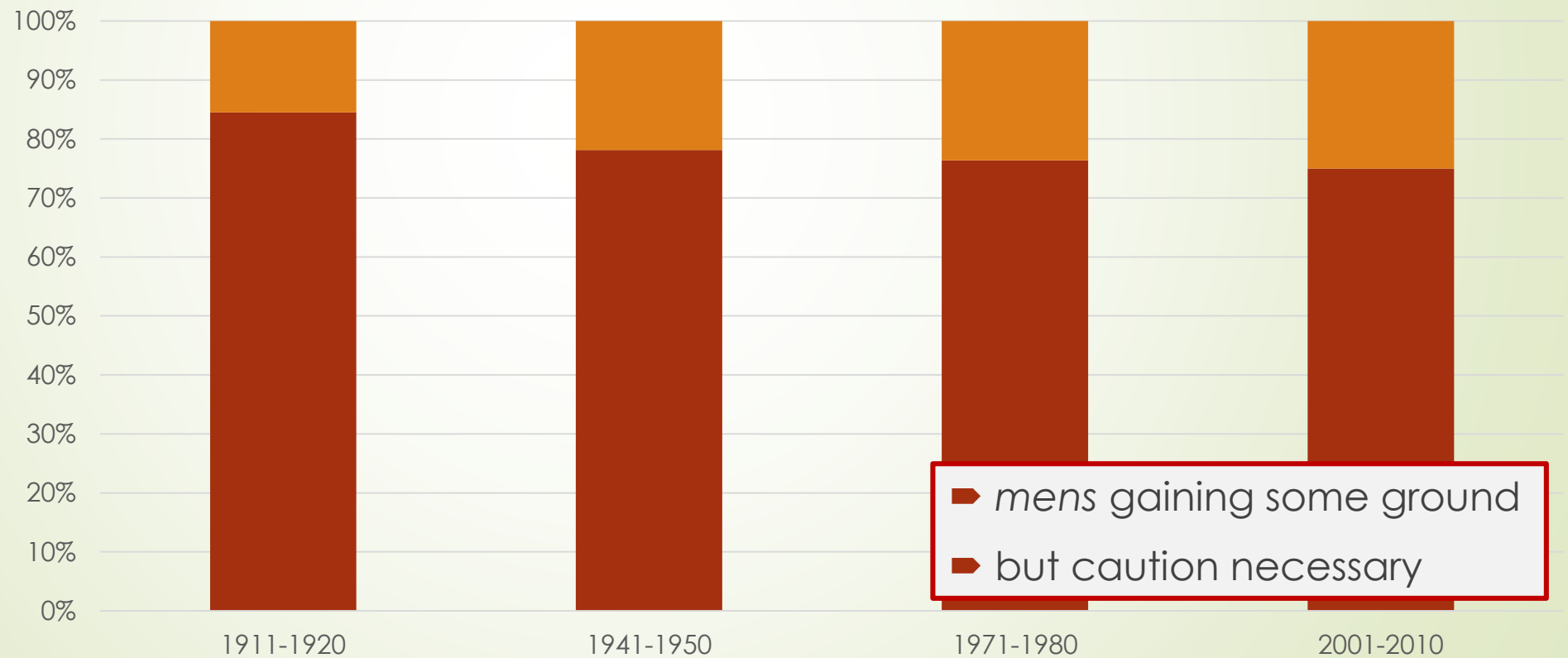


■ considerable variation, though...



# History

➤ *mens* vs *'n mens* as HIP in the last 100 years (JK)







# History



- ▶ and in 1911-1920...

*'n Pleister vir swere: ... Dit bind **men** die aand oor die sweer. **Men** kan dit ook van soet olie, meel en die dooier van 'n ei maak. (1917, JK)*

- ▶ 1.77 cases per 10,000 words (> mens 1.36 and < 'n mens 7.42)
- ▶ '(n) mens-like' behavior...

*En als **men** oppervlakkig gaan oordeel sonder geskiedenis-grond onder jou voete, sal jij sê : Ja, die boer staan tog agter. (1912, JK)*

*En die kleinere, fondament-vormende, feite-verklarende oorsake kan **men** nie uit jou duim suig nie. (1912, JK)*



# History



- ▶ ... but also

*Krijgt **men** nu de wind van achter dan borrelt het stof op in het rijtuig dat **men** geen 5 treden voor zich het pad kan zien. (1911, JK)*

***Men** wou hem hier houden tot woensdag om nog eerst te stemmen, doch hij dacht dat het beter was maar liever in tijd voor de opening van z'n school te zijn. (1911, JK)*

- ▶ so

- ▶ why isn't ('n) mens more like men?

- ▶ diglossia of Dutch (cf. *het stof, dacht*) and Afrikaans (cf. only 1 instance of *men* in fiction subcorpus)



# History

- ▶ suppletive forms?

*Partykeer moet **mens** net **mens se** oë toeknyp en daardie tree vat want miskien maak dit 'n hele nuwe wêreld vir **mens** oop. (2011, internet)*

*Dis boring vir my om die hele tyd oor my loopbaan en dinge te praat en dit te bemark - ongelukkig in showbiz moet **mens** maar **mensself** bemark. (2012, internet)*

- ▶ so...

- ▶ are the 'you'-forms being replaced by *mens*-forms?
- ▶ does English *one*, *one's*, *oneself* play a role? (cf. "boring")?



# History



➤ well...

- possessive not infrequent but reflexive *mensself* or *mens self* very rare online, in TK (4) and in JK (0)

... hoe mens **mensself** moet handhaaf in 'n werksituasie. (TK)

- possessive has been around for a while, though usually triggering suppletion itself (in written language)

In **mens se** eie wa kan jy dit seker beter beheer. (2011, internet)

'n **Mens** se hare rys „ten berge" as jy lees watter grusame marteling in die „goeie ou dae" aan misdadigers uitgemeet is. (1950, JK)



# Conclusion

- ▶ A vs European West Germanic
  - ▶ less grammaticalized in function and form, with no striking differences between *mens* and *'n mens*
  - ▶ less frequent than *man* and very different distribution from *men*
  - ▶ no clear signs of Dutch (*men*) or English (*one*) influence
- ▶ future
  - ▶ more detailed analysis of JK corpus data
  - ▶ study of larger PDA corpus (~ TK)
  - ▶ other HIPs in A, i.e. *hulle* and *jy*



Thank you for your attention!