SUMMARY

It has been my intention to describe the language of Westerwolde. This dialect region in the south-eastern part of the province of Groningen is to be regarded linguistically as a relic area, as a result of a relative isolation that lasted for several centuries. This makes the dialect eminently suitable as a basis for the investigation of language change, especially change within the dialects of Groningen. At present the Westerwolde dialect is changing rapidly. For this reason I have attempted to describe the dialect as it was before the great changes took place. The basis of my description is formed by written texts from the start of the 20th century and my own recordings of elderly dialect speakers.

Preceding the actual description of the dialect I give a short geographic and historic description of the region in chapter 1. The district consists of a small area of sand surrounded by peat moors. Because of this the region was relatively isolated, and this isolation is reflected in the dialect. When the peat was dug and the moors were cultivated at the start of the 20th century, the traffic infrastructure was greatly improved and the isolation ended. Many typical aspects of the dialect disappeared.

In chapter 2 I critically analyse the available sources for the study of the dialect. The oldest written texts from Westerwolde are mainly legal texts and they show little dialect influence. From the beginning of the 19th century onwards there have been descriptions of the dialect. These linguistic contributions provide often very useful material, especially those that appeared in the 20th century. I have compared the literary texts that appeared in a rather large number in the beginning of the 20th century with the recordings I made of "old-fashioned dialect"-speaking inhabitants of the region. On these recordings, on the writings of J.H. Neuteboom and on the data from the Reeks Nederlandsche Dialectatlassen (RND) I have founded my study.

The actual description of the Westerwolde dialect starts in chapter 3. First I give the framework of my description, subsequently I define all the phonological features that are relevant for the dialect and then determine by means of commutation tests the phonemes of the dialect. Each phoneme is treated in detail and attention is paid to its phonetic realisation.

In chapter 4 the structure of words in the dialect is examined. A word consists of one lexical morpheme with which grammatical morphemes may be combined.

This can have an effect on clusters in prevocalic, postvocalic, postconsonantal position. In chapter 5 attention is paid to the suffixes and their historical and geographic distribution. These maps I drew on the basis of the Reeks Nederlandsche Dialectatlassen (RND) and the appendices I give a list of the regional distribution charts. An appendix contains an index of the central chapters containing at least one example.
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This can have an effect on the consonant structure. I treat all possible consonant clusters in prevocalic, postvocalic and intervocalic positions. Special attention is paid to the suffixes and the influence they exert on the consonant structure.

In chapter 5 attention is paid to aspects of reduction and assimilation. Meaning is relevant here: meaning and stress very often coincide and a reduction in stress may result in vowel reduction. When two words follow each other immediately, adaptations take place; in the case of consonants these adaptations usually relate to voicing. All the occurring combinations are dealt with.

In these three central chapters every detail that is treated is illustrated by at least one example.

In chapter 6 I place a number of soundstructures in the Westerwolde dialect in their historical and geographical context. For this purpose I also make use of dialect maps illustrating some phonological or morphological phenomenon. These maps I drew on the basis of the RND data.

In the appendices I give some 19th century texts with information about the dialect; a list of the phonological features and a number of phonotactic distribution charts. An alphabetical and a retrograde list of the words treated in the central chapters conclude the book.