

# Schuchardt contra the Neogrammarians, with a view to sociolinguistic studies of modern spoken Danish

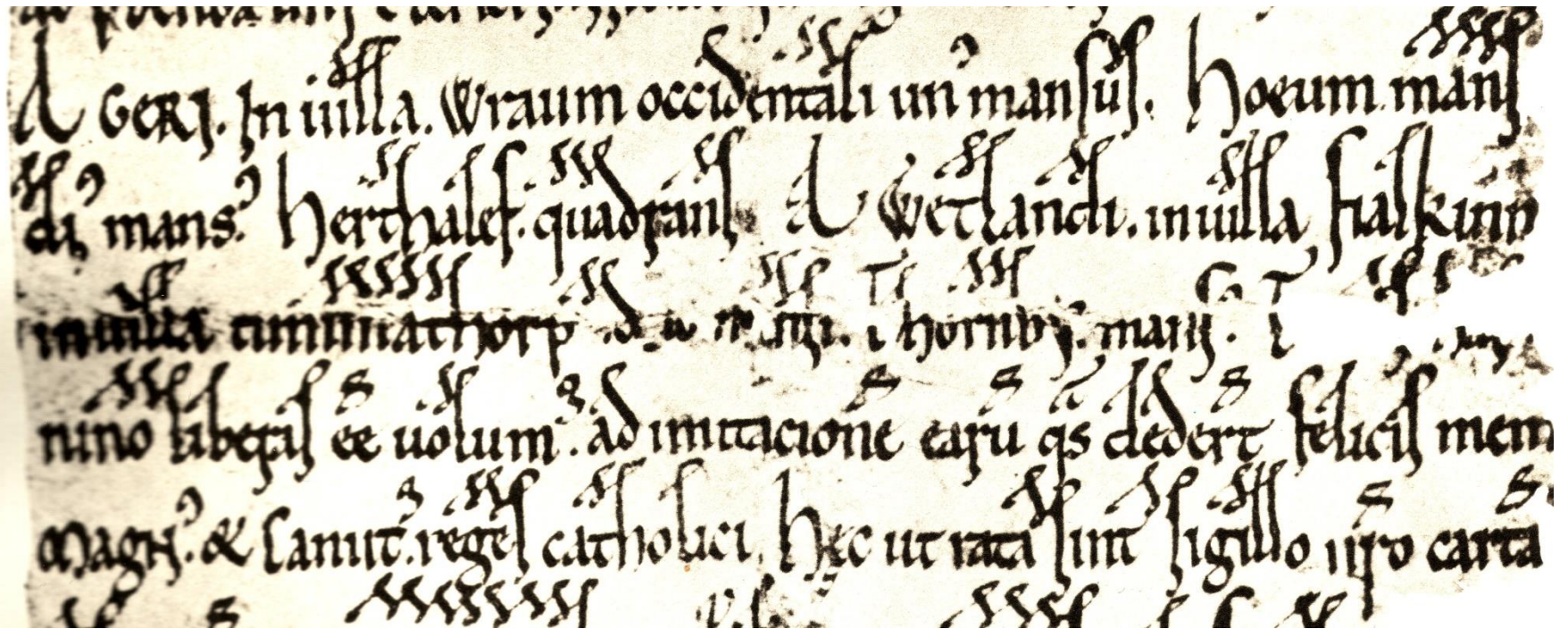
Frans Gregersen, the UCPH LANCHART Centre

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SDU

# The earliest Danish documents: Erik Emune's gift letter to the Lund Cathedral



A photograph of a parchment document in Old Norse script, showing the beginning of Erik Emune's gift letter to the Lund Cathedral. The text is written in a dense, black, Gothic-style script on aged, yellowish parchment. The visible text includes:

A Gora. In iulla. Wraum occidentali un mansus. Hocum mans  
da mans. Herthales. quadran. A Wetlandi. inulla fialking  
inulla aminnathorp. a. n. m. i. homby. man. i  
nino libetis ee uolum. ad imitacione casu qs dederit felicit mem  
onagy. & sanut. reges catholici. Hec ut rata sunt sigillo nro carta

# Schleicher, the theoretician

- Linguistics is a natural science
- From comparison to reconstruction
- Positing theoretical entities like the non-attested Indo-European Grundsprache and its elements
- BUT: *What ontological status do the elements have?*

# The Neogrammarians

- The Credo
- The context: Verners Law, Saussure's *Mémoire*, Winteler's *Die Sprache des Kerenzer Mundart Kanton Glarus*
- The physical and the psychical: *Das physiopsychologische Problem*
- The notion of a law
- The status of the credo

# Excursus: Lyngby as Schleicher's pupil

- The first Danish dialectologist, Kristen Jensen Lyngby forged his own transcription system in order to record the dialect of his Jutland informants
- His analysis took the reconstruction of the Old Norse sound system as a given and ordered the 'reflections' in the various neighbouring dialects of Jutland
- The result was neat and orderly, cf. Bjerrum 1942: 149

# Schuchardt's critique

- Naturgesetz vs. Lautgesetz
- Analogy as a psychological process
- Is linguistics actually a natural science?

# Saussure

- The idea that everything had to be reviewed
- To show the linguist what he is actually doing (or what his doing presupposes)
- Methodology is never innocent in its relations to theory, nor straightforward

# P.K. Thorsen on glidninger og spring

- The gradual and the leap
- HOW sounds change versus the result of the process:
- The process may be gradual but the result is categorical
- From counterpart (Rask) to temporal relationships (Neogrammarians, Lyngby)
- The workings of analogy



# Weinreich et al.

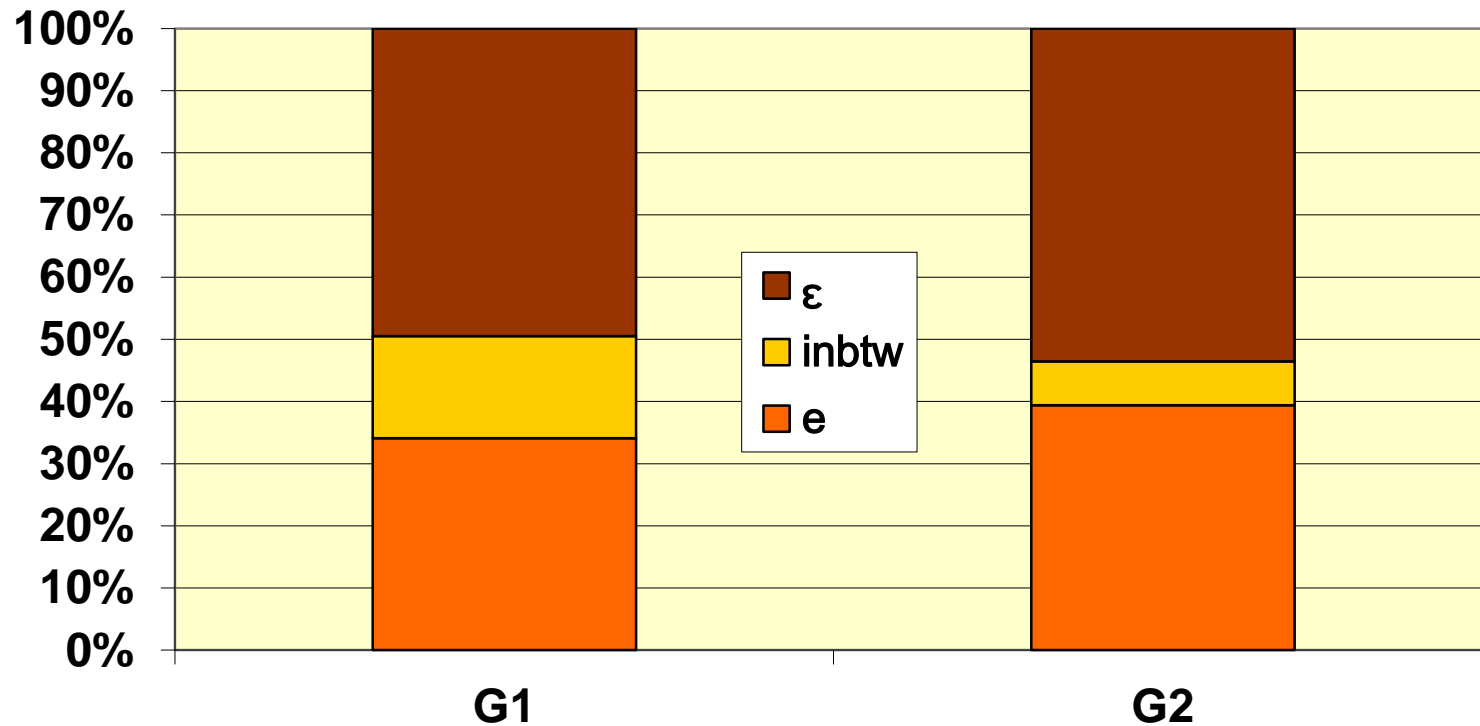
- The empirical basis for a theory of language change
- Hermann Paul as the theoretician to be discussed with
- The separation of the famous five problems:
- The Constraints problem, The Transition problem, The Embedding problem (a in the linguistic structure; b in the social structure), The Evaluation problem, and the Actuation problem

# Labov

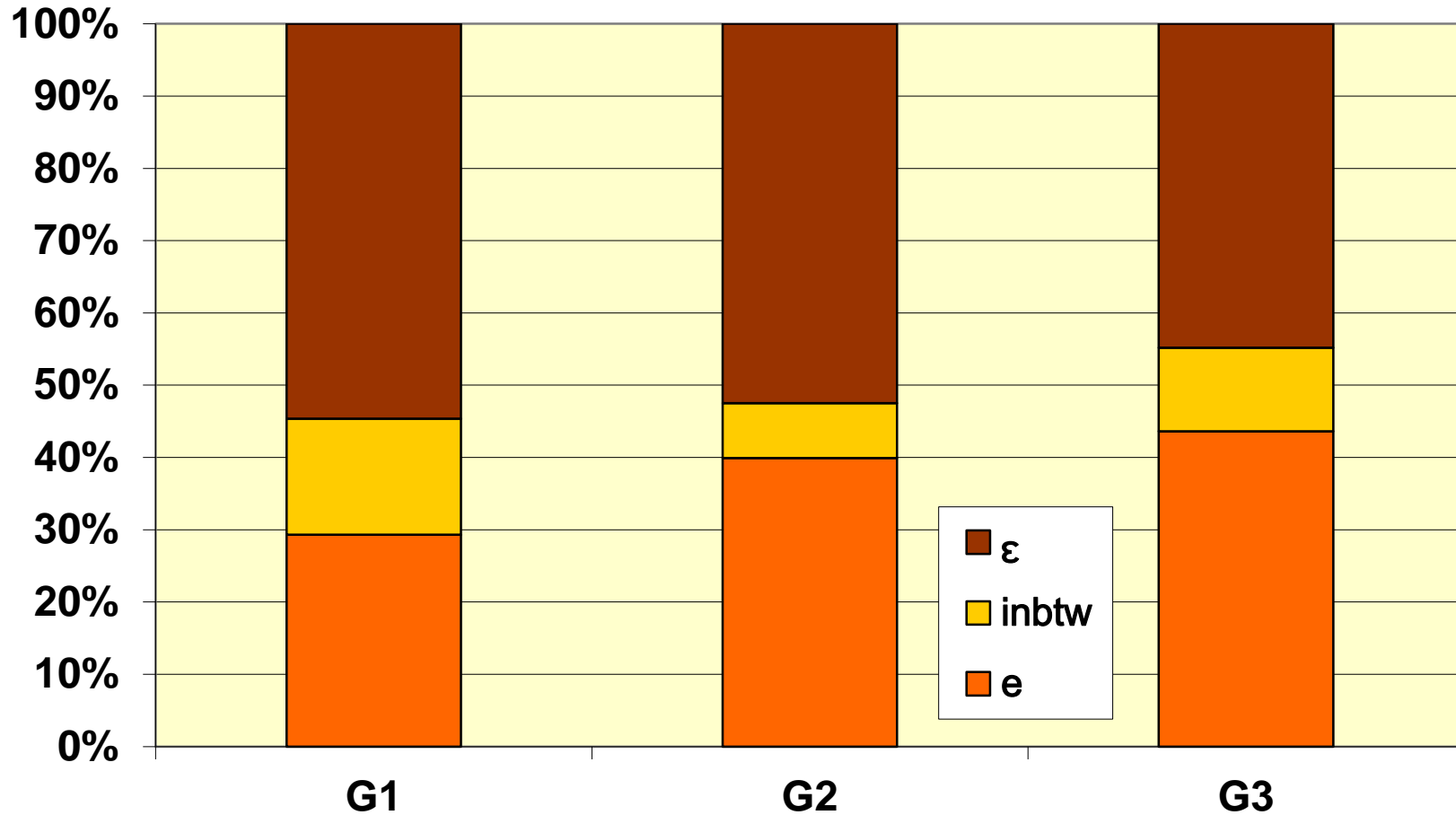
- The introduction of the toolbox of modern sociolinguistics:
- the (socio)linguistic variable (vs. the phoneme)
- the quantitative patterns (vs. coherent lectal forms)
- the locus of variation: society (vs. the idiolect)
- style as intra-individual variation

# Some examples: The ENG variable

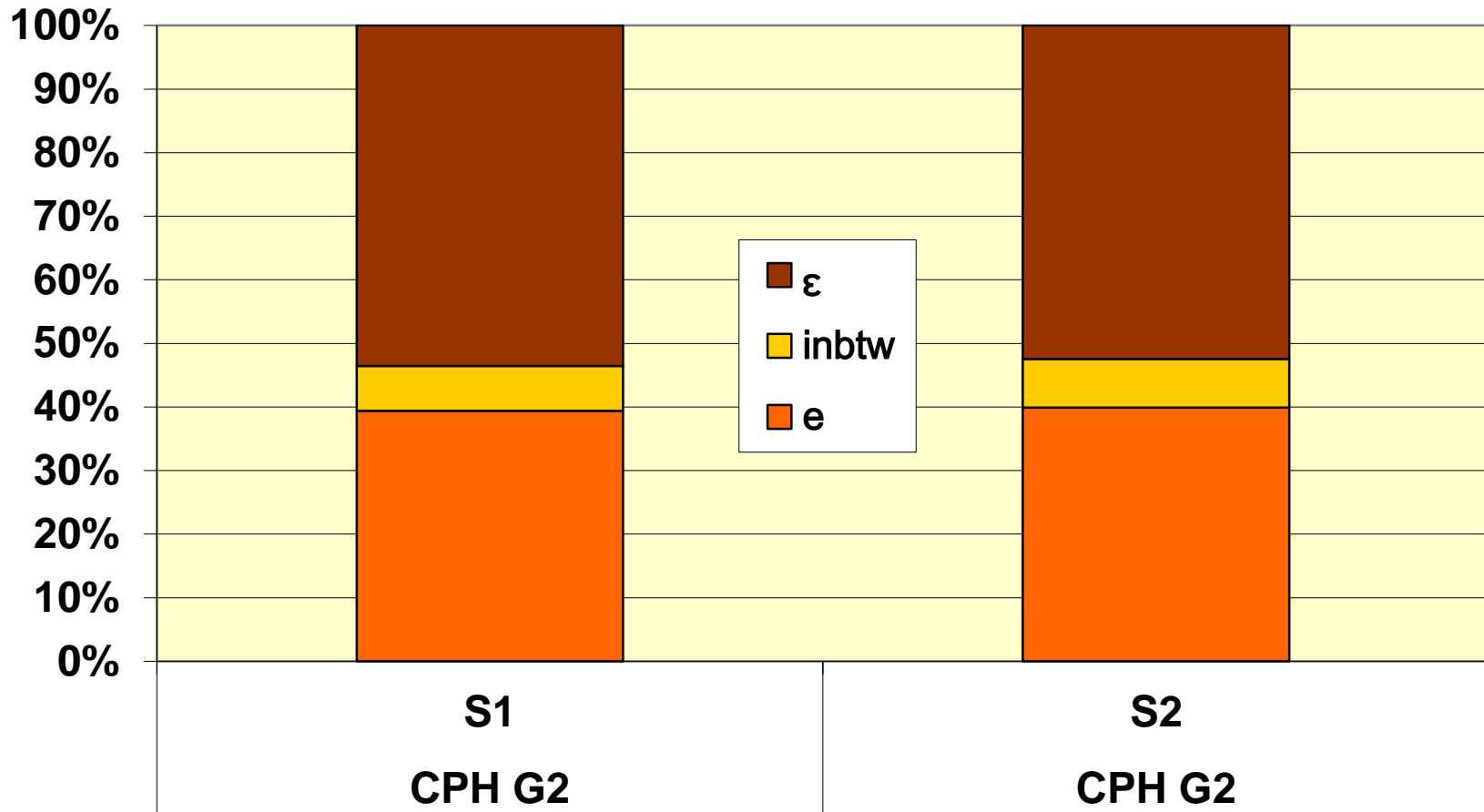
The Copenhagen G1 and G2 in apparent time in S1  
(N=1085)



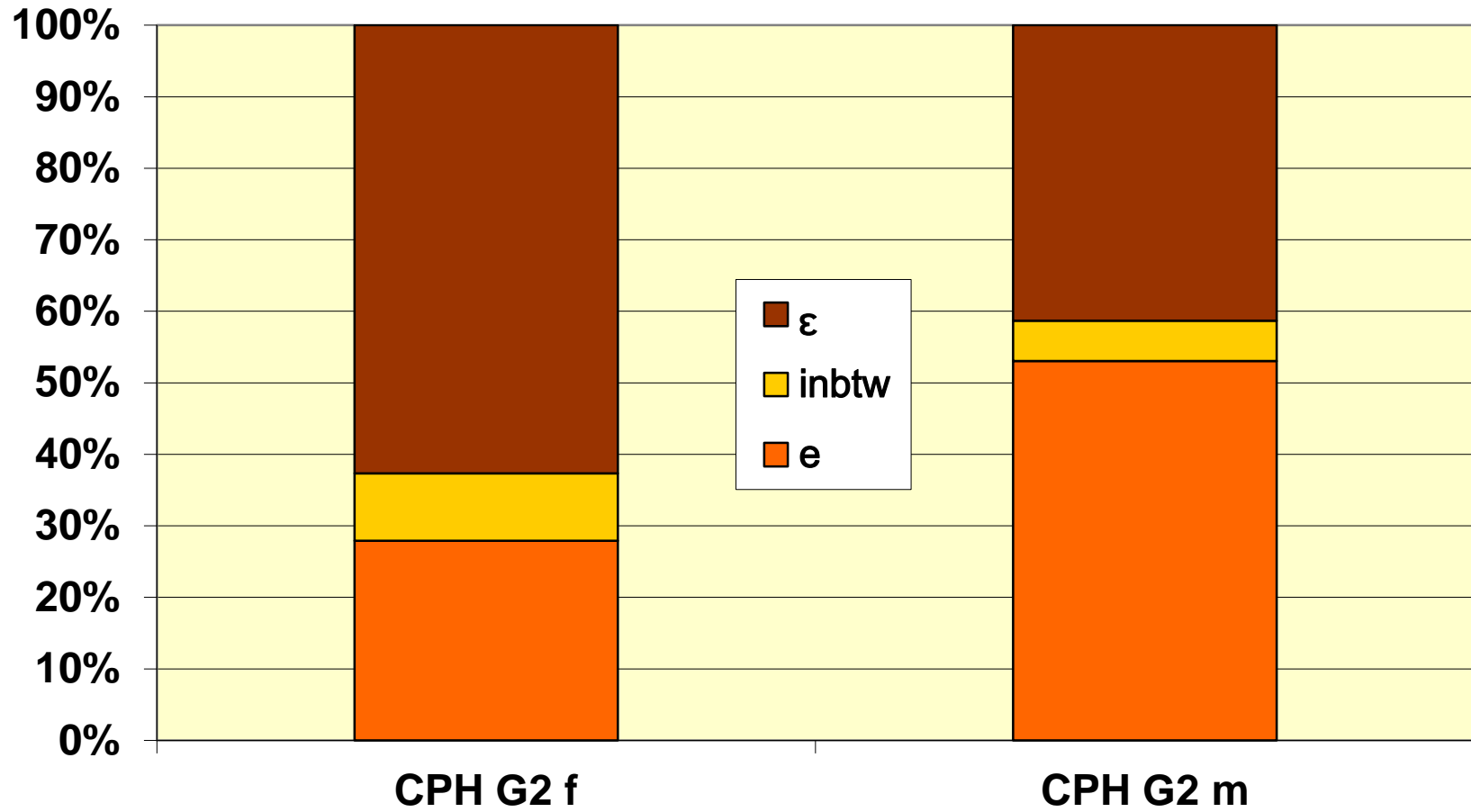
# The Copenhagen G1, G2 and G3 in apparent time: S2 (N=1470)



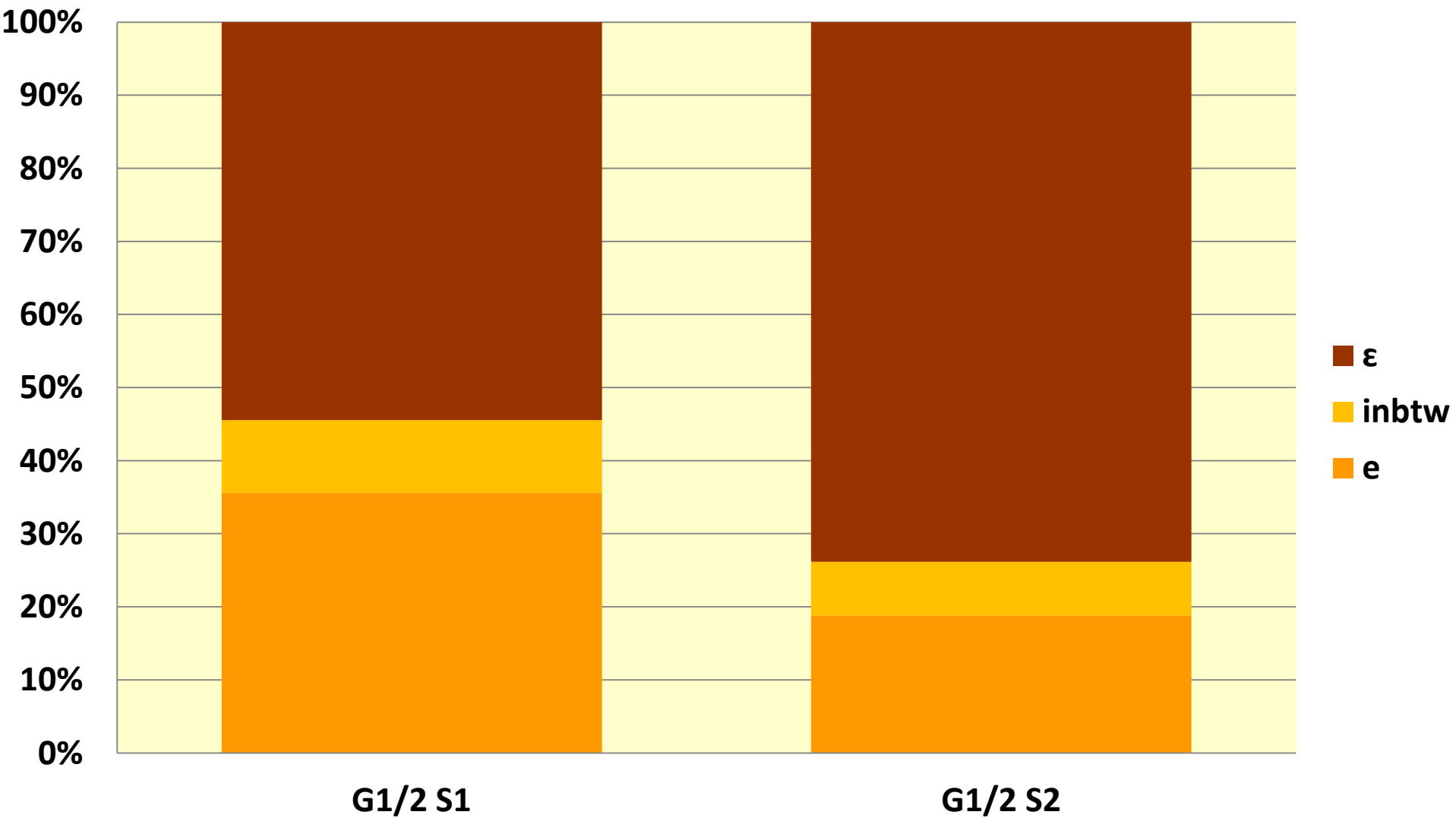
# The Copenhagen G2 in real time (N=842)



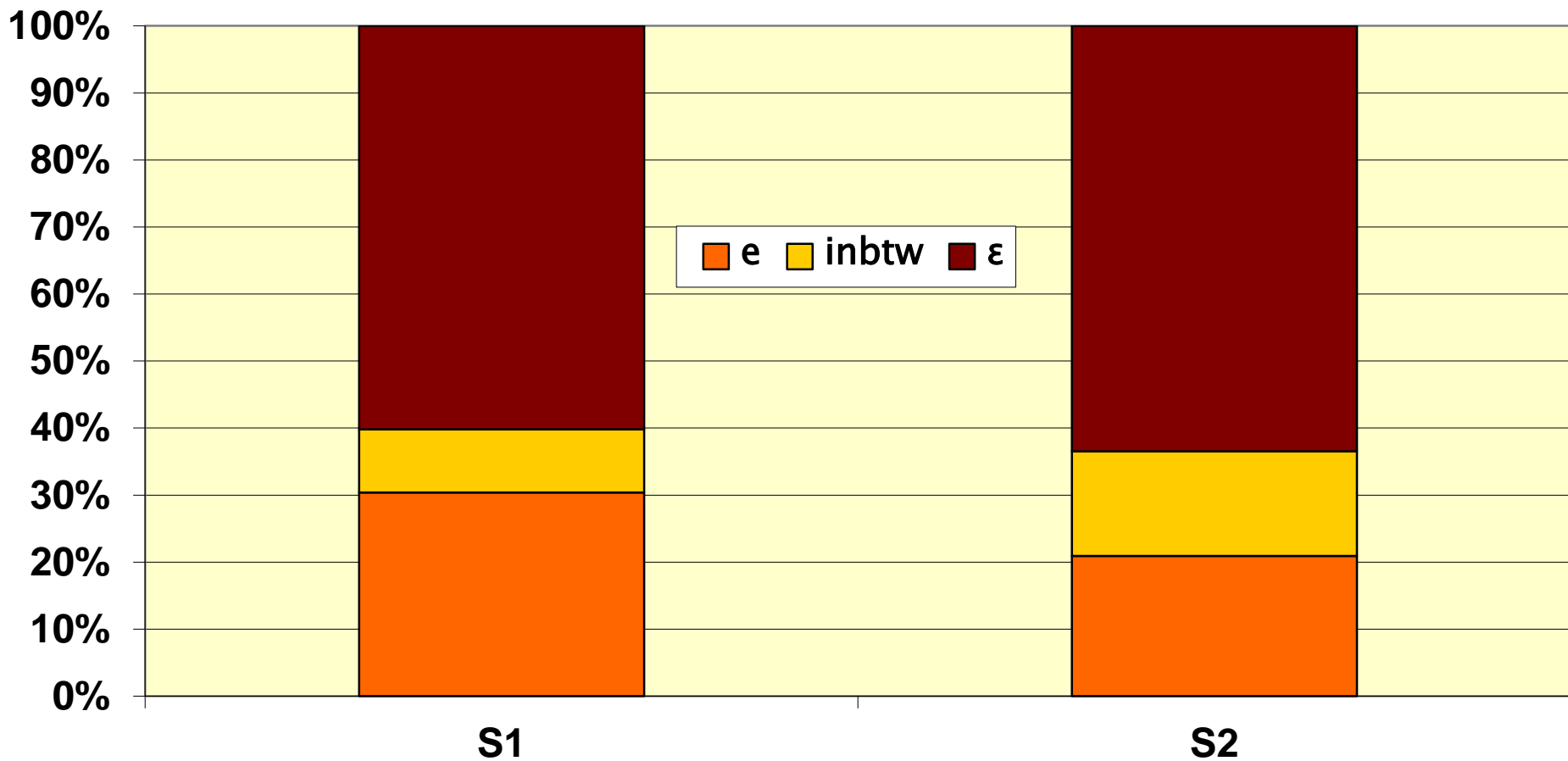
## The CPH G2 in S2: Gender (N=446)



# Word profile for 'engelsk' (English) in real time G1 and G2 combined

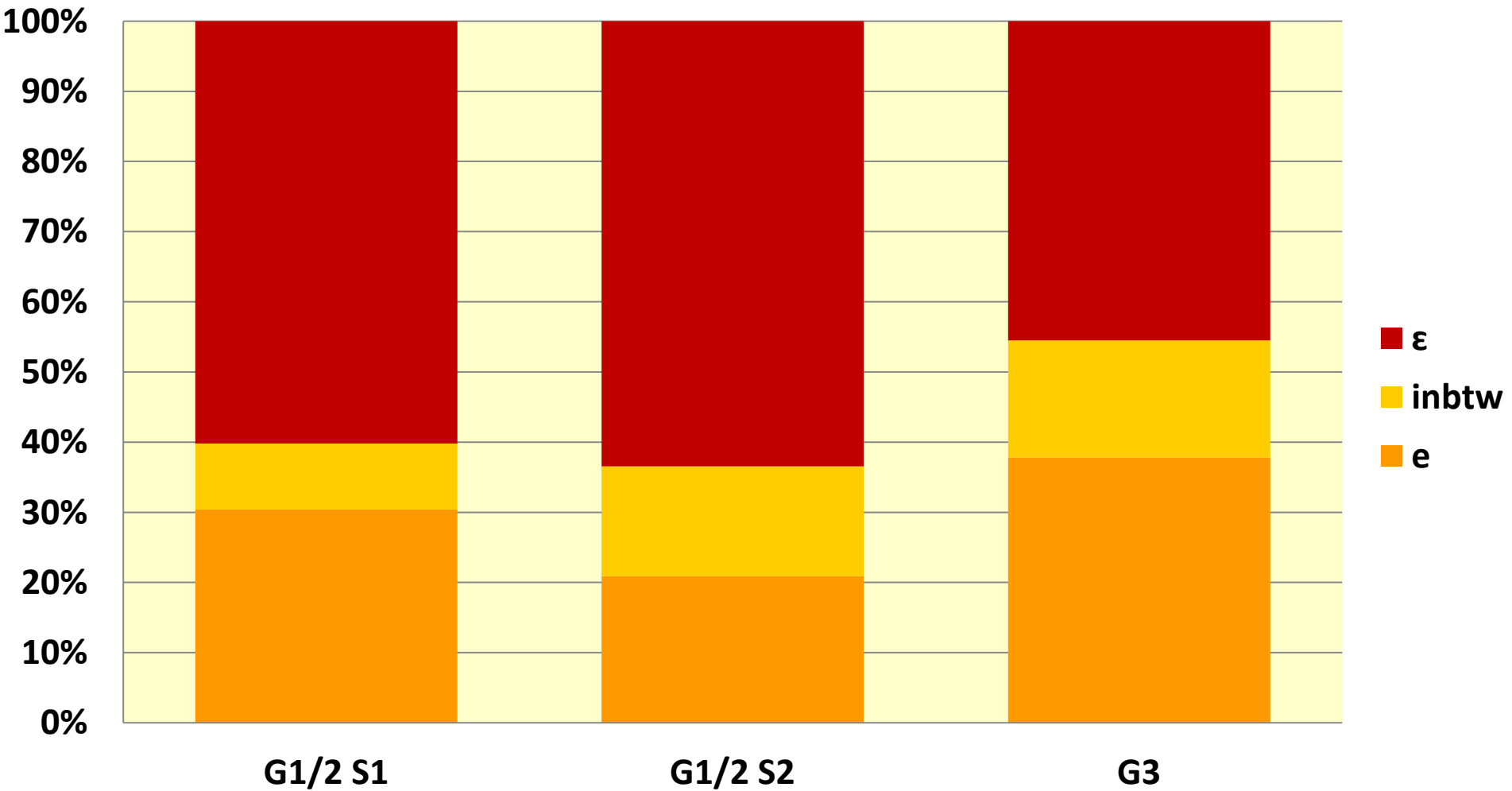


# Word profile for 'penge' (money); S1 and S2 (N= 870)

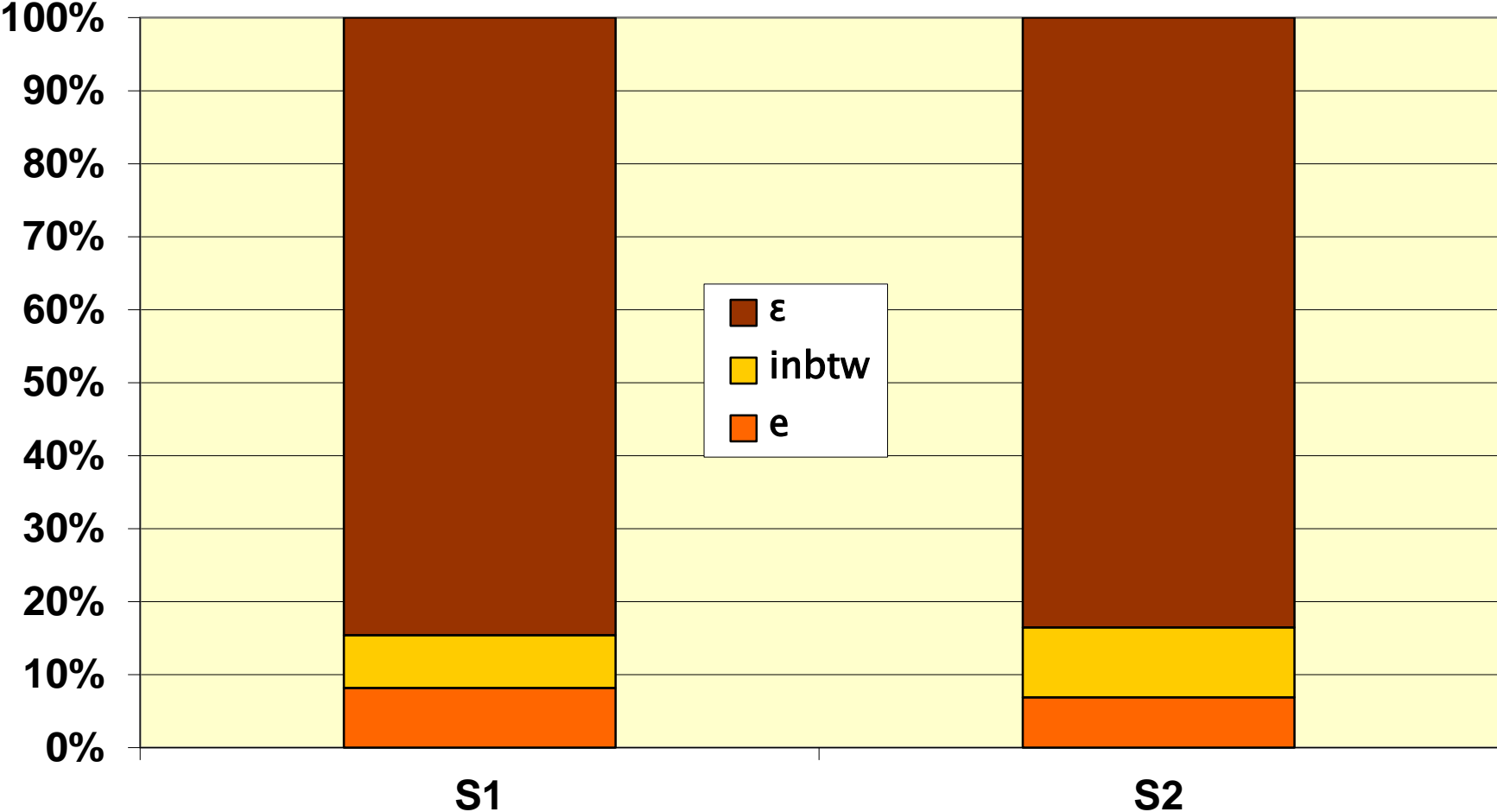




Word profile for 'penge' (money) in real time and through generations: Gs 1 and 2 in real time and G3

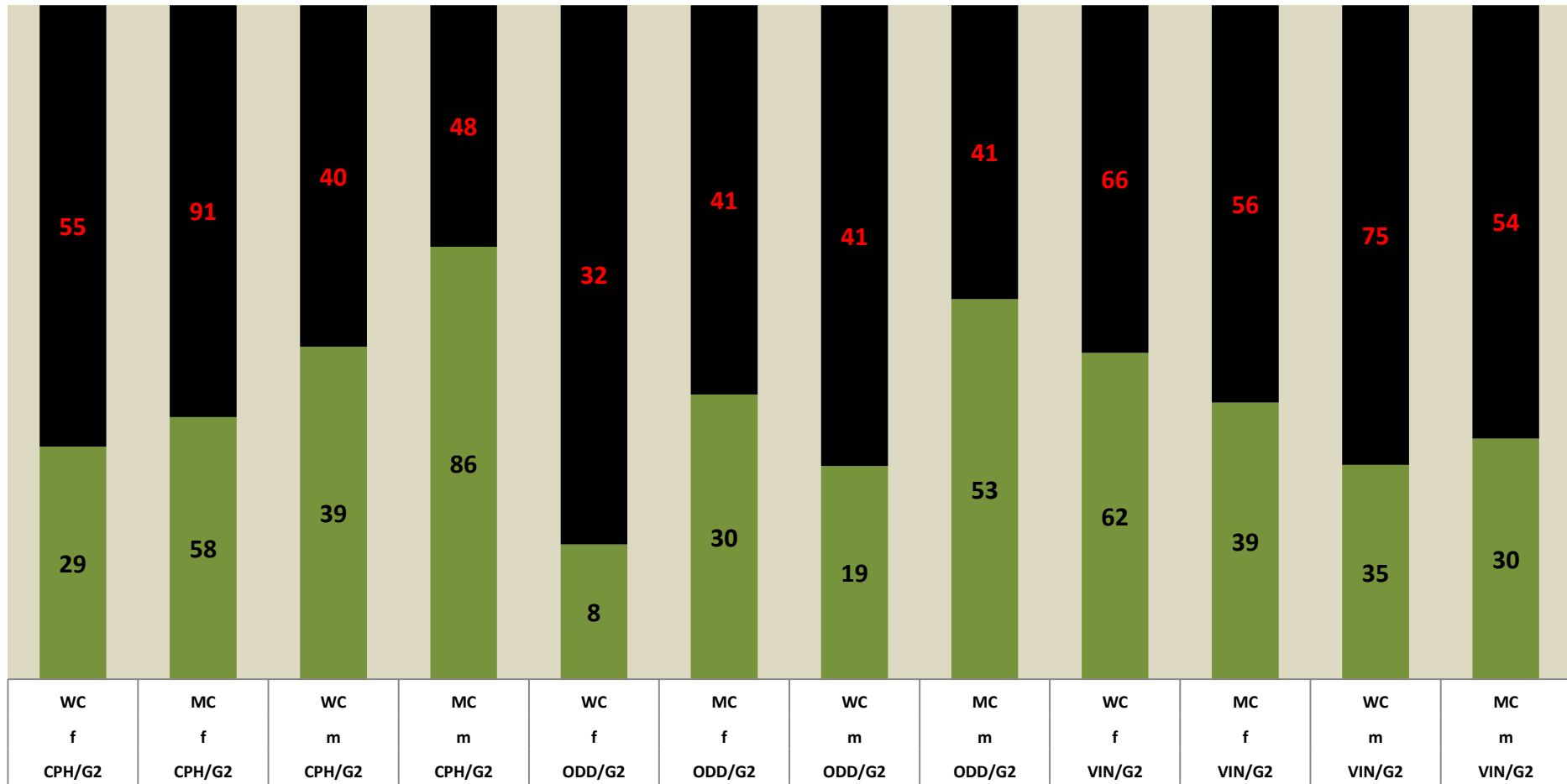


# Word profile for 'læng-' (longer) in S1 and S2 (N= 870)



## Generation 2 in Copenhagen, Odder and Vinderup; ENG

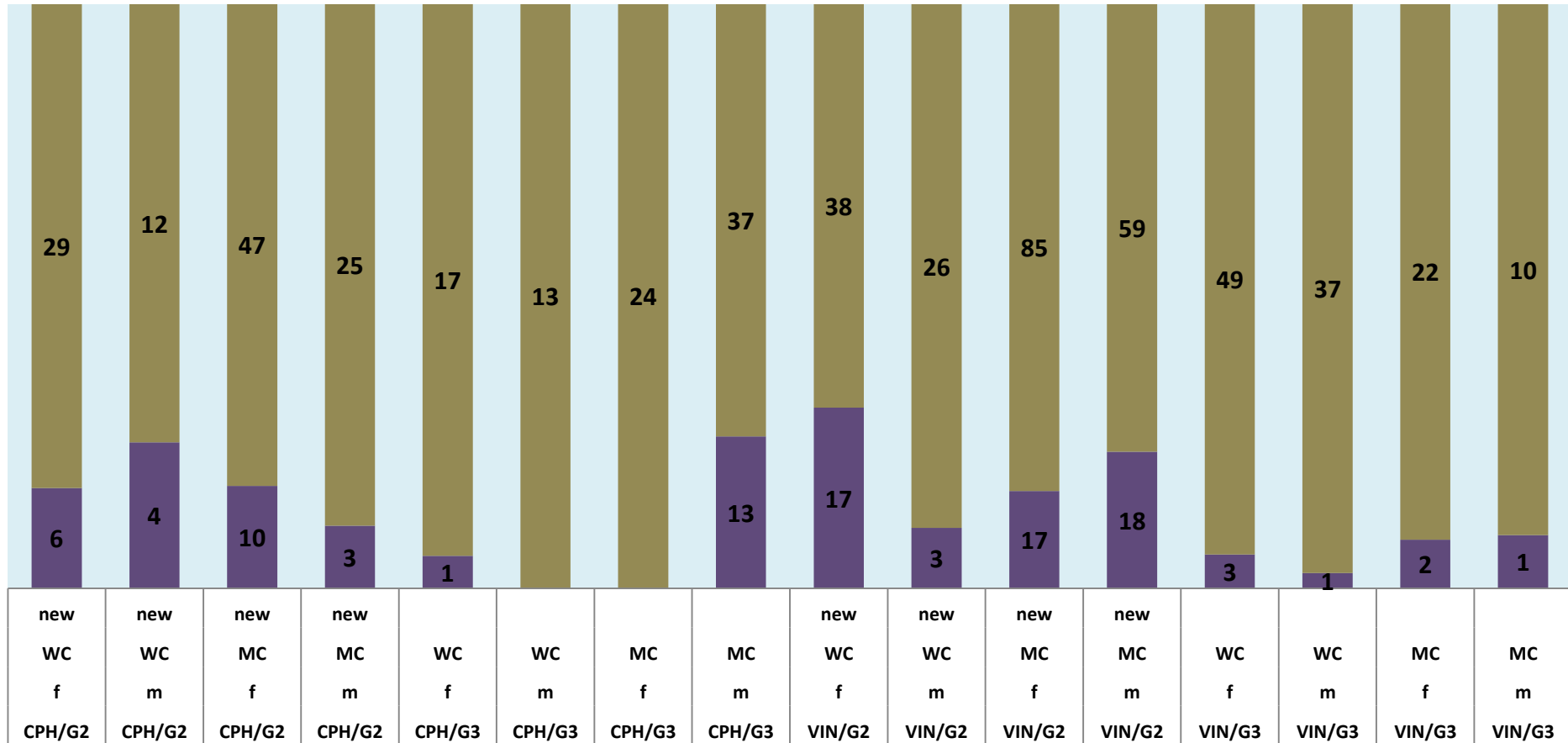
■ e+inbtw ■ ε



# New variable: RU/RO

Generations 2 and 3 in Copenhagen and Vinderup, only new recordings

stand.u nstand. o



# HOW sounds change

- It is prudent to see the Neogrammarian doctrine as a working hypothesis for reconstruction only
- It is necessary to study the relationship of production and perception to solve the riddles of sound change
- It is necessary to review the relationship between speech and writing for each historical epoch separately in order to separate what is sound change and what is letter change
- Thorsen's distinction between leaps and gradual shifting may be relevant for letter change and sound change respectively
- Age grading seems to be more relevant now or we have just focussed on it lately. There may be a societal explanation.
- Sounds do not seem to change in the orderly fashion a post hoc view like the Neogrammarian one would predict: social factors and lexical factors may e.g. interact
- Stable variation may last considerably longer than we expected
- On the other hand: New and vigorous changes may also occur
- Social embedding is always relevant and so is evaluation or subjective factors; conscious and non-conscious are relative terms

# WHY sounds change

- We have not solved the actuation problem and yet we may give two kinds of causes for sounds to change: social processes (e.g. industrialization) and ideologically significant events (e.g. 1864)
- Urbanization is a factor in all societies; it is slow but unidirectional
- De-dialectization/standardisation seems to be a factor all over Europe today: Dialect levelling is the order of the day
- A global view of Europe has to include the gentrification of Europe at the expense of the poor world; The service society we live in presupposes the existence of production in poor countries
- New contacts seem to be ubiquitous due to extended migration and ensuing superdiversity, in particular in the cities; the effect of contact of all kinds is never straightforward
- But however that may be, it does create a diversity in the linguistic market which may put at the disposal of the individual countless alternatives for the construction of new personae
- Intra-individual variation is more important now and possibly more important than inter-individual variation, cf. the service society