

Unraveling prescriptivism

Relations between language advice publications
and language use in the Netherlands

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Wisdom lies neither in fixity nor in change,
but in the dialectic between the two.
Octavio Paz, *The Monkey Grammarian*
(translation Helen Lane). 1974: 10

Some people say there are true things to be found,
some people say all kinds of things can be proved.
I don't believe them.
The only thing for certain is how complicated it all is,
like string full of knots.
Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges are not the only fruit*. 1985: 91

Nein! Ich ärgere mich nicht,
ärgern ist ungesund, ist unwissenschaftlich!
Alban Berg, *Wozzeck*. 1921: Act 1, Scene 4.

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Author contributions

Chapter 1

Thesis only. I carried out all aspects of the research and writing of this chapter. Commentary on draft versions was provided by Nicoline van der Sijs and Helen de Hoop.

Chapter 2

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I carried out all aspects of the research and writing of this chapter. Sebastian Collin and Sander Lestrade provided assistance in extracting the data. The members of the Grammar and Cognition group at Radboud University gave valuable feedback, as did Don Chapman and Carmen Ebner; Annika Nijveld helped out with some logistical challenges.

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The initial concept for this paper was conceived by me; the ultimate research design was developed by Gijsbert Rutten and me. I collected all data; Gijsbert Rutten and I each annotated half of the data; I performed the bulk of the analyses. Of the chapter, Gijsbert Rutten spearheaded the Introduction and Background; I wrote the Methodology and Results of the paper, we worked on the conclusion together. We both commented on each other's work. Commentary on draft versions was provided by Nicoline van der Sijs and Helen de Hoop; after submission, the paper was reviewed by three anonymous reviewers as well as by Raf van Rooy, one of the editors of the journal.

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Chapter 9

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Knowing right from wrong

Two major Dutch newspapers have separate sections just for letters to the editor about language, because readers have more opinions about the papers' language use than about anything else (S. De Jong 2021). A platform called *Taalvoutjes* 'Language Errors' (but deliberately spelled wrong), which publishes pictures of perceived language errors encountered 'in the wild', has almost 800,000 followers across social media platforms. They have published three books as a spin-off, as well as several tear-off calendars, games and other merchandise. The language advice website of the popular magazine *Onze Taal* 'Our Language' received eleven million unique visitors in 2020 (s.n. 2021a). The *Schrijfwijzer* 'Writing Guide', a book that provides advice about everything from spelling to text structure via proper language use, has sold almost half a million copies since it first appeared in 1979 (Renkema 1979).¹ Misinformed news that the new edition of the reference grammar of Dutch in 2021 contained a more lenient approach to the use of certain long-disputed language items led to widespread indignation. Opinion pieces about the matter used terms such as *Vaarwel beschaving* 'goodbye civilization' (Deckwitz 2021) and *Nederlandse grammatica is de doodsteek toegebracht* 'Dutch grammar has been dealt the death blow' (Wirken 2021).

All these examples show one thing for certain: speakers of Dutch care deeply about the correctness of their language. As such, they subscribe to the ideology of *prescriptivism*, or the belief that "in language use (...) things shall be done in the 'right' way" (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 1). But how do Dutch language users know right from wrong? One way of distinguishing the good from the bad is by perusing a specific linguistic resource that focuses exclusively on

¹ According to the website of the editor: <https://www.schrijfwijzer.nl/>

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providing instructions about proper language: *language advice publications*. These publications present verdicts about *usage items* (sometimes called *usage problems*). Usage items are a specific type of *linguistic variable*, i.e., “two or more ways of saying the same thing” (Labov 1982: 49), of which at least one of the variants is considered to be unwanted by at least some speakers of a language (see also Kostadinova 2018a: 47). Language advice publications contain specific evaluations of those usage items, which are called *precepts* (or sometimes *prescripts*; I use *precept* throughout this thesis). The distinction between usage item and precept is similar to that between type and token in corpus linguistics. Examples 1 and 2 show two different precepts on the well-known Dutch usage item concerning the proper use of comparative conjunctions *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’:

- (1) In gesproken taal komen beide vormen voor, maar in geschreven taal is alleen de vorm met *dan* correct
‘In spoken language both forms are found, but in written language only the form with *than* is correct’ (Houët 2000: 79)
- (2) Maar wie (...) schrijft *even lekker dan* of *zoo lekker dan*, die maakt een echte fout.
‘But those who (...) write *as nice than* or *so nice than*, they make a real error.’ (Servaes and Schrijver 1943: 69)

In Dutch, language advice publications are alternatively called *taalzuiveringsboeken* ‘language purification books’ (when the work has a puristic aim), *taaladviesboeken* ‘language advice books’, or *taalverzorgingsboeken* ‘language training books’.² In the Dutch speaking world, this type of works seems to have originated as a new instrument for maintaining the standard language around the late nineteenth century (Haeseryn 1999: 237; Van der Wal and Van Bree 2008: 330-331; Van der Sijs 2021: 552). Since then, several well-known language advice publications have appeared, including the aforementioned *Schrijfwijzer* ‘Writing Guide’ (Renkema 1979, 2020), *Is dat goed Nederlands?* ‘Is that proper Dutch’ (Charivarius 1940), and *In*

² To avoid the sometimes counterproductive demarcational debate about different genres (e.g., usage guides, style guides, writing guides etc) that is widespread in the English/American tradition (see Straaijer 2017), I use the terms *language advice publication* or *prescriptive publication* throughout my thesis. I will come back to the classification of language advice publications in §1.2.3 and §1.2.4.

de doolhof van het Nederlands ‘In the labyrinth of Dutch’ (Damsteegt 1948), to name a few.

Despite the fact that the emergence and subsequent Dutch tradition of language advice publications has not gone completely unnoticed, these works have not been surveyed exhaustively. Subsequently, they have not been thoroughly researched. This is unfortunate, as the great strides that prescriptivism research has seen over the last two decades have shown how much we can learn about this phenomenon (see Rutten and Vosters 2021 for an overview of research). For example, studying language advice publications has provided new insights into the highly contentious matter of how prescriptivism affects and is affected by actual language. But recent years have also seen a reappraisal of the important part of the history of the language that language advice publications can provide (cf. Curzan 2014: 5). Finally, investigating language advice publications can contribute to our understanding of several other aspects of language, such as language change and salience.

This thesis addresses a number of core issues in prescriptivism studies, starting from the rather neglected subject of Dutch language advice publications as an object of study, and progressing to other types of data. I focus on morphosyntactic usage items, and to a lesser extent those concerning lexis, and do not look at other linguistic levels, such as spelling and pronunciation. This thesis revolves around two closely related main research questions:

- Q1: How have precepts in language advice publications in the Netherlands developed since 1900 with regard to stance towards variation, and argumentation?
- Q2: Are there relations between Dutch precepts and usage?

I will specify these two general questions further into more specific sub-questions below. In the remainder of this introduction, I first consider the theoretical background against which this thesis is written. I discuss existing classifications of language advice publications (§1.2), after which I examine prescriptivism and its study in the Netherlands (§1.3). This section also features the methodological demarcation of the language advice publications of this study, and a description of the structure of the works studied. Different strands of prescriptivism research are discussed in §1.4, alongside the subsequent sub-questions that are approached in this

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thesis. Finally, in §1.5, I present readers with a brief overview of the subject matter of the following chapters.

1.2 Theoretical background

The concept of *prescriptivism* has many different meanings and ways of usage in different linguistic contexts. A complete *Begriffsgeschichte* of this term is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I discuss three aspects that are theoretically salient for the work of this thesis. I will first examine how prescriptive norms relate to language norms in general (§1.2.1), after which I situate prescriptivism against the backdrop of models of language standardization (§1.2.2). Thirdly, I explore existing classifications of language advice publications (§1.2.3).

1.2.1 Language norms vs prescriptive norms

The concept of *language norms* plays a central role in prescriptivism studies, as well as in many other sub-disciplines of linguistics. However, it has been noted that the terms *normative* and *prescriptive* are used “inconsistently and often ambiguously” (Millar 1995: 185; see also Ayres-Bennett and Bellamy 2021: 2-4). For this thesis, it is important to distinguish the more general language norms from the more specific prescriptive norms. A good starting point is provided by Bartsch, who states that “norms define a practice in a population” (1987: 173). With regard to language, it can be said that norms govern *all* practices that language users exhibit in their language use, consciously or subconsciously. A similar approach is taken by Hubers, Snijders, and De Hoop (2016), who call violations of general language norms *truly ungrammatical language utterances*. Such utterances are “typically those that are never or hardly ever produced” (2016: 23), are generally uninterpretable, and, when they are interpretable, are perceived to be wrong by “every ordinary speaker of the casual vernacular” (Pinker 1994: 88, quoted in Hubers, Snijders, and De Hoop 2016). Examples include using wrong number agreement (e.g., *de koe zijn moe* ‘the cow are tired’) or impossible word order (such as placing the article after the noun, *koe de is moe* ‘cow the is tired’).

Prescriptive norms are a subset of these general linguistic norms, with some specific characteristics. First of all, in contrast with

general language norms, prescriptive norms target variables that do actually occur in language. As Weiner puts it, “for any item of usage they treat, usage guide writers ought in principle to be able to cite evidence of its actual use” (1988: 174). Of course, not all variation leads to a prescriptive norm, but (perceived) variation in actual usage is a *sine qua non* for the existence of a prescriptive norm. A similar distinction is found for the explicitness of prescriptive norms. Many language norms are made explicit, for example in dictionaries or school books, but it is not a prerequisite. All prescriptive norms are made explicit, either by speakers, or in publications.

Secondly, whereas grammatical norms are accepted by ‘every ordinary speaker’, for prescriptive norms at least one of the variants (which Hubers, Snijders, and De Hoop call *grammatical norm violations*, 2016: 22) is not accepted as grammatical by at least part of a language community. This partial non-acceptance leads to a distinct expression of prescriptive norms, which always features some kind of evaluation or evaluative stance (cf. Ayres-Bennett 2020: 190). Hubers, Snijders, and De Hoop make the additional point that condemned variants are, in fact, accepted by linguists, and are “always perfectly interpretable within a language community (due to the fact that they are frequently encountered)” (2016: 23). Here, they echo Dutch linguist Jan Stroop, who claims that only that which does not occur can be considered ‘wrong’ (2014: 17-18).

Although there are differences between language norms and prescriptive norms, the distinction made in Hubers, Snijders, and De Hoop (2016) may be overly categorical. For example, whether all grammatical norm violations are in fact frequently encountered is unclear: I will come back to this issue over the course of this thesis (see also §1.4.2 below). Also, it seems possible, and even likely, that a linguistic utterance that starts its life as truly ungrammatical can become a grammatical norm violation over time, perhaps even developing into an accepted variant (Haeseryn 1999: 97; Hendrickx 2013: 33). Finally, what may be truly ungrammatical for one person may be only a norm violation for another. Still, the distinction between the two types of norms helps us to understand the scope of language advice publications, and distinguish them from, for example, grammars and dictionaries. Language advice publications only contain prescriptive norms, violations of which result in grammatical norm violations. Other metalinguistic works, such as dictionaries, may contain prescriptive norms but, crucially also contain language norms that are not prescriptive, for example

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because no variation or no problematized variation exists for a particular word.

1.2.2 Prescriptivism and language standardization

There is another difference between language norms and prescriptive norms, which warrants a separate discussion. If we accept that language norms regulate *all* linguistic practices, it seems obvious that such norms exist for all speech communities and all languages. Prescriptive norms, by contrast, are only found in a comparatively small subset of languages: those that have undergone *standardization*. Like prescriptivism, language standardization is an ideology, which aims at a “bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous [...] language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions” (Lippi-Green 1997: 64). Below, I discuss how these two ideologies relate, and what specific phase of language standardization will be investigated in my thesis.

Although language standardization as a phenomenon goes back to the earliest grammars in any language (Ayres-Bennett 2021: 35), the first widely used theoretical model was proposed by Haugen in 1966. He posited a standardization process that showed the development of a language variety “from vernacular to standard” through four phases: “(1) selection of norm, (2) codification of form, (3) elaboration of function, and (4) acceptance by the community” (Haugen 1966: 933). Importantly, these phases or stages do not necessarily follow in linear progression, but can overlap. Various revisions of this basic model were proposed, by Haugen himself and others (cf. Ayres-Bennett 2021: 32-35). The most influential expansion came from Milroy and Milroy, who distinguished four additional hypothetical stages: diffusion, maintenance, acquisition of prestige, and prescription (1999: 22-23). They stress, again, that these stages do not start when an earlier one has finished, but can co-exist.

For this thesis, the crucial standardizing phase is *prescription*. Again, this word is often used interchangeably with *prescriptivism* (cf. Millar 1995: 178-179), but I use it here in the specific meaning as a phase within the model of standardization. Strangely enough, as Ayres-Bennett points out, Milroy and Milroy themselves are somewhat vague about what this process entails exactly. However, the way they present it implies that prescription has to at least be preceded by codification (the phase in which norms of language are

chosen and written down), and that prescription is part of the maintenance of the language (which, to complicate matters, is also the name of another standardizing phase, see Ayres-Bennett 2021: 35). It seems then that we can understand the prescription phase as follows. During codification, particular choices are made with regard to the correctness of specific variants; these are set down in codifying publications, such as grammars. During the prescription phase, these verdicts are already established but are continuously repeated and reinforced by metalinguistic works which Zwicky calls “the engines of correctness” (Zwicky 2006).

The standardization of Dutch started in the sixteenth century, when the first treatises about spelling (Lambrecht 1550) and grammar (Spiegel 1584) appeared. Since then, the process of standardization has been complicated and many-faceted. As the present thesis is concerned almost exclusively with the time period after 1900, and as this process has been described at great length elsewhere, I will not provide a complete overview of the standardization of Dutch (for more on this see, for example, Willemys 2003; Rutten 2016; Noordegraaf 2018; Krogull 2018). It is important to note however that the language advice publications that I study for this thesis are clear examples of the aforementioned ‘engines of correctness’. Rather than enforce the standard, which was done by, for example, the officially sanctioned grammar and spelling that appeared in the beginning of the nineteenth century (Siegenbeek 1804; Weiland 1805), they maintain it (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 51). They are thus all part of the prescription phase of Dutch standardization.

The fact that works appearing in a prescription stage focus on maintaining already existing norms does not necessarily mean that the set of usage items they contain is finite and immutable, let alone that their evaluation is uniform. Although several of the rules that still play a role in Dutch prescriptivism today, such as the comparative conjunctions *als/dan* ‘as/than’, go back to the early codification period of Dutch in the seventeenth century, new usage items are still being introduced. For example, the figurative use of the word *letterlijk* ‘literally’ (which is also hotly debated in English, see (Kostadinova 2018b)), seems only to have arisen as a usage item in Dutch in the 1950s. To what extent the set of prescriptive rules stays the same, both in scope and treatment of items, will be one of the research questions of this thesis, and I will come back to this at length below and in later chapters.

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For the proper demarcation of the scope of this thesis, and the focus of language advice publications, we turn again to the theoretical model of Haugen. He posited that two related but distinct dimensions play a role in models of language standardization: Haugen calls these *form* and *function* (Haugen, 1966: 931). Standardization of form is concerned with particular choices in the structure of the language; standardization of function with when to use particular language varieties and variants. Different stages of the standardizing process are primarily associated with these two dimensions. For example, codification is the attempt to achieve “minimal variation in form”, which would ultimately achieve “a hypothetical, “pure” variety of a language having only one spelling and one pronunciation for every word, one word for every meaning, and one grammatical framework for all utterances” (Haugen 1966: 931). By contrast, the goal of elaboration is to allow this ‘pure’ variety to be used in as many linguistic domains as possible (Haugen 1966: 931).

Related to and intersecting with the distinction between form and function is the division between standardization on the *micro level* and on the *macro level*. Macro level standardization pertains to the choice of specific language varieties. This level plays a role in, for example, choosing which language variety to base the standard on, or determining which variety is to be promoted for use in certain domains. On the micro level, standardization concerns itself with choices about the acceptance of specific variants. Language advice publications are mostly concerned with providing language standardization on the form and micro level, as they are concerned with specific linguistic forms or variants. Still, functional matters can play a role in these books, for example when authors distribute the use of certain variations according to level of formality or mode.

The distinction between macro and micro level prescriptivism is also made in language policy studies. Here, the terms used are *corpus planning*, which is defined as policy focused on the “internal development of the language (grammar, lexicon etc.)”, and *status planning*, which focuses rather on the “functional development of a language in a society” (Hill 2010: 46). A mapping of these terms to a revised model of Haugen by Ayres-Bennett shows that they relate closely, but that there are also some differences (2021: 34). At this point, we need not go into the finer points of the ways in which the different fields use their jargon. For the purposes of this thesis, it is helpful to realize that, against the background of language policy terminology, language advice publications are a form of corpus

planning, because they aim at the development of specific internal elements. One important difference to note is that ‘true’ corpus planning is understood to be enacted by institutions, whereas language advice publications are usually produced by individuals. This also explains why the concept ‘corpus planning’ is rarely used in historical sociolinguistic research, as few publications are produced by institutions.³

1.2.3 Classifications of language advice publications

Precepts, or the specific individual manifestations of usage items, can be found in a plethora of different genres and forms, including grammars, dictionaries, newspapers, schoolbooks, magazines, radio and television shows, CD-ROMs, internet databases, pamphlets, poetic treatises, and many more. Several researchers have concerned themselves with classifications of prescriptive and normative publications (e.g., McLelland 2021). An extensive model is presented by Straaijer (2017), who discusses a variety of genres in the context of the construction of the *Hyper Usage Guide of English database* (Straaijer 2014). Looking at different metalinguistic genres, such as usage guides, style guides, writing guides, dictionaries, and descriptive grammars, Straaijer notes that the borders between various classes are “fuzzy” (2017: 13). This does not stop him from making several demarcations, mostly based on the type of precepts that different metalinguistic publications contain, and their intended target audiences. For example, Straaijer distinguishes usage guides from writing guides, as publications in the latter genre “aim to instruct the reader in various aspects of writing, including the composition and structure of texts” (2017: 15). He furthermore separates style guides as a closely related but distinct genre, as they are “usually designed for in-house use by the organizations that produce them” (2017: 15), and as such contain instructions that are not relevant for a larger audience, for example for correcting copy.

This classification of usage guide, style guide and writing guide as separate genres is not productive for Dutch, for two reasons. Firstly, although style guides and writing guides do contain very specific types of language advice meant for specific groups of language professionals (for example, guidelines for preparing

³ At least for languages such as Dutch and English, for which no language academy exists (although see Rutten 2019). More centralized languages such as French and Spanish are another matter (cf. Paffey 2021)

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newspaper copy), they crucially also contain advice about usage items. For example, most of an early style guide for newspaper *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* ‘New Rotterdam Newspaper’ (s.n. 1935) is made up of lexical and grammatical usage items; specific writing and style advice is discussed in a brief section. Secondly, while this and other style guides may have initially been aimed at the editors of the newspapers themselves, many of them are also explicitly aimed at a broader audience. Looking again to the NRC style guide, the anonymous editors explain in the introduction that, based on popular demand, they decided to also make their work available “voor wie buiten de gemeenschap der N.R.C. staan” ‘for those who stand outside of the community of N.R.C.’ (s.n. 1935: 4). Excluding such works from my survey, then, would result in missing out on a substantial section of prescriptive publications which not only aim at a general audience, but are also known to be perceived by the general audience as norm-setting (cf. (Meesters 2003: 106-107; Debrabandere 2004: 36).

1.3 Language advice publications in the Netherlands

1.3.1 Research into Dutch language advice publications

The standardization of Dutch up until 1804/1805 has been investigated extensively for decades, on a variety of levels. There is a long tradition of studying particular standardizing works and authors: the *Bibliografie van de Nederlandse Taal- En Literatuurwetenschap* ‘Bibliography of Dutch Linguistics and Literature Studies’ (2008) contains thousands of articles on these topics published after 1940 alone; many more were published before then. A number of works also present surveys of larger time periods and overviews of the development of metalinguistic works (e.g., Knol and Maas 1977; D. Bakker and Dibbets 1977; Van der Wal 1995; Van der Sijs 2021). An inventory of usage items mentioned in sixteenth and seventeenth century normative publications in particular (with some more qualitative remarks of their development beyond this period) is provided by Van der Sijs (2021), which includes chapters on pronunciation, spelling, lexicon and morphosyntactic phenomena.

The nineteenth century also received its fair share of attention. Again, individual works, perhaps most notably those by Siegenbeek and Weiland, are well-studied (recently, for example, in Noordegraaf 2018; Rutten 2018). Additionally, there is research that

studies the development of normative publications from a broader perspective (e.g., Noordegraaf 1985). However, the scholarly attention decreases with regard to works published later in the nineteenth century, although there are some exceptions. For example, Vandebussche et al. (2005) describe a number of mostly purist publications that appeared in Flanders up until 1899. An even more in-depth analysis of a number of Belgian prescriptive publications is presented by Schrijvers (1912). In almost 400 pages, he describes and evaluates several Belgian language advice publications and the specific usage items they contain in great detail. For example, for the supposed Germanism *inburgeren* 'integrate', which is mentioned by Muyltermans (1893: 138; see also Siegenbeek 1847: 28-29), Schrijvers gives an extensive appraisal of arguments pro and contra the disapproved variant as well as proposed alternatives (1912: 9-11). However, these works look at Flanders only, and pay no attention to language advice publications that focus on an audience in the Netherlands.

For the twentieth century, there is some research that mention prescriptive publications aimed at particular target audiences and works that list at least a selection of language advice publications. At least two bibliographies focus on educational works dealing with language instruction (H. J. De Vos 1939; Van Dis 1962). These bibliographies also contain references to works that focus on both an educational and a general audience, but do not contain mention of works that aim completely outside of education. A notable work is also Geerts and Smedts (1986), who present an alphabetical index of all usage items found in 29 Belgian language advice publications, indicating per usage item which publications mention it. Haeseryn (1999) describes both theoretical and practical treatises on language advice. For both the Netherlands and Flanders, he names about twenty publications, going into some detail as to their structure, characteristics, and linguistic focus. He also discusses more specialized publications, aimed at, for example, language use in traffic, medical professions, and trade (1999: 242). Finally, selections of language advice publications are mentioned in some other works, including Hermkens (1974), Maureau (1979), and Gillaerts (1989).

Despite the works mentioned in the previous paragraph, there is no clear overview of the language advice publications that have appeared. Perhaps because of this lack of overview, Tieken-Boon van Ostade claims that Dutch "doesn't have a usage guide (or indeed complaint) tradition like that in the UK or US" (2020: 218). Although

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the existing research is admittedly limited, it is obvious that this statement is a considerable underestimation. It is well-documented that language advice publications have been appearing since the late nineteenth century in Flanders and the Netherlands, and several well-known and extremely popular examples can be readily found. However, how many publications there have been, and how exactly they have developed over the years remains to be seen. These questions form the starting point of my thesis.

1.3.2 Parameters for studying language advice publications in this thesis

As mentioned in §1.2.3, existing classification models of prescriptive publications, which are often based exclusively on English publications, are of limited usefulness for studying the Dutch prescriptive tradition. I thus formulated my own set of selection criteria. In doing so, I do not propose a genre classification. I merely describe how I reached the demarcations for my prescriptive collection. All language advice works included in my research were

books written after 1900, whose primary goal is to provide language advice on morphosyntactic phenomena aimed at a general target audience of mother tongue speaking adults in the Netherlands.

Firstly, as my research focused mainly on morphosyntactic usage items (more on which below in §1.4), I included all works that contained such items. In doing so, I was careful not to be restricted by the titles of language advice publications. For example, there is considerable variation as to what language users mean when they use the concept of ‘spelling’. A book like *Foutloos spellen* ‘Errorless spelling’ (Van der Laar 1996) ostensibly deals with spelling matters only, but in practice includes advice about the (clearly morphosyntactic) formation of the comparative and superlative. It was therefore included in the survey.

Secondly, I focused on the language advice publication in the Netherlands. This meant that I excluded prescriptive works that focused solely on Dutch in Belgium (such as Permentier and Van den Eynden 1997). The reason for this methodological choice was that the position and development of Dutch in Belgium have been and are very different from that in the Netherlands (see Veering 1966: 16-17; Haeseryn 1999; Willemys 2003; Vandebussche et al. 2005).

Because of this, the normative tradition is also quite distinct. One example is the puristic focus. Flemish publications pay more attention to French, while Dutch works, especially in the early twentieth century, focus more on German influence (Haeseryn 1999: 238). Moreover, and importantly for this thesis, there are also differences in the discussion of morphosyntactic usage items, with some of the Flemish usage items not occurring in Netherlandic Dutch at all. For similar reasons, I excluded works from the early twentieth century aimed at speakers of Dutch in what were then colonies, most notably present-day Indonesia (cf. De Geus 1922)

Thirdly, I included only written and published *books* on language advice. In doing so, I excluded other types of written publications, for example the popular monthly magazine *Onze Taal* ‘Our Language’, published by *Genootschap Onze Taal* ‘Society Our Language’. The reason for this is that language advice books have a singular focus on providing language advice, whereas for magazines, this is only ever part of their content. Still, the usage items contained in magazines are often the same as those in language advice books, making this demarcation perhaps the ‘fuzziest’. To overcome this issue to some extent, I did include a book published by the *Genootschap Onze Taal* ‘Society Our Language’ in my survey, which contained language advice only (Genootschap Onze Taal 2009).

By focusing on books, I also excluded all digital language advice publications, such as CD-ROMs, websites, forum posts, blogs and other digital forms. These are, again, in many ways similar to written language advice publications, and are clearly a direct continuation of earlier written works. But online resources are crucially different from offline ones on a number of points (see Straaijer 2017: 11fn). One aspect of internet resources is the fact that constraints of space no longer play a role in determining whether a usage items should be included or not. This means that fewer choices have to be made with regard to including or excluding usage items based on their perceived importance. Another issue is the difficulty of dating online sources, which is important for one of the primary goals of this thesis, i.e., studying the development of precepts over time. Finally, including online works, which have increased immensely over the last decade, would create a strong bias towards the most recent time period, influencing our understanding of general prescriptive characteristics.

Fourthly, I only included works aimed at a general audience of language users, leaving out works that were aimed only at a

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specialized audience. Such works with a specialized aim can be found quite readily, and may, for example, aim at employees of newspapers (such as *De Telegraaf* ‘The Telegraph’, s.n. 1916), companies (such as for Philips, s.n. 1953) or municipalities (such as the employees of the municipal government of Amsterdam, Coördinatiepunt Stijl van Amsterdam 2014). Again, when such works were *also* aimed at a general audience, such as the aforementioned N.R.C. style guide, I did include them. The main reason for excluding these works is that their reach is much smaller, making it hard to measure the extent to which they influenced general language use (although see Chapter 7, and §1.4.3 below). This would only be possible once we had access to the particular language use these works target, an approach that is sometimes taken (see Albakry 2007 for an example of studying the degree to which newspapers follow their own style guides).

Related to the previous point, I excluded works that were aimed only at education. Of course, such works are, in a way, the most prototypical type of language instruction, and, as Veering puts it, their importance can hardly be overestimated (1966: 16). However, Veering also notes that these works have a different goal, as language instruction in education aims at teaching a complete language in all its facets (1966: 16). By contrast, language advice publications only provide a maintenance tool for very specific parts of that knowledge. In this sense, the relation between these two types of works is not dissimilar to that between codification and maintenance in the standardization of a language (see §1.2 of this thesis). Furthermore, and similar to specialized style guides, educational works are not aimed at the general population, and thus will not potentially reach every language user, nor can we measure their impact on general language use. The exclusion of educational materials extends to books aimed at second-language acquisition (cf. De Leeuw and Groot 2014).

Crucially, if a publication corresponded only *partly* to my criteria, I did still include it. For example, I included Houthuys and Permentier (2016), which is aimed primarily at a Flemish audience, but also explicitly at an audience in the Netherlands. Similarly, I studied Daniëls (2005), who focuses mainly on editors, but who also explicitly aims his language advice publication towards an audience of general language users.

It should be noted that I diverge from these parameters for the research in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7. For Chapter 5, I take a prescriptive publication from 1847 (so outside of the general scope of

the rest of the thesis). In Chapter 7, I study certain prescriptive publications that are in fact only aimed at a specialized audience, in this case the registrars of the Dutch parliament. In both cases, the motivation for these choices is that they enable me to investigate very tightly controlled case studies. Moreover, in both cases, I was able to study very particular collections of language use that fitted with the aims of language advice publications very well. These two more specialized chapters allow me to test new methodologies in controlled circumstances. Their results tie in with and deepen the observations and results from the other chapters.

1.3.3 Language advice publications studied for this thesis

Based on my parameters, I attempted an exhaustive survey of prescriptive publications. This survey yielded 135 works (see Table 1.1; see Appendix A in this thesis for an overview of all titles).⁴ Where possible, I used the earliest available edition of a work (following the design choice made for Hyper Usage Guide of English database, see Straaijer (2015)). There were two exceptions to this. The first concerns four works for which I initially was only able to obtain a later edition (Rogier 1963; Damsteegt 1964; Kempeneers 1981; Renkema 1989). I was able to obtain the first edition later in the research process (Rogier 1944; Damsteegt 1948; Kempeneers 1974; Renkema 1979). I have used the newer editions for the research, but have added the earlier ones to my overview (these ‘extra’ editions are marked with an asterisk in Table 1.1 below). The second exception concerns several different editions of a particular work published by the Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond ‘General Dutch Union’ (Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond 1917, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1932, 1938, 1941). I did include these different editions, as they contained substantial and relevant additions with regard to specific morphosyntactic usage items.

⁴ In Chapter 4, I use a precept from the Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst ‘General Dutch Grammar’ (Haeseryn et al. 1997a: 572), because for the particular usage item discussed in that chapter, the comparative conjunctions *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’, this precept is well-known and often quoted. However, this work does not strictly fit within my criteria: although it contains prescriptive evaluations for certain variables, the aim of the work is ostensibly descriptive (cf. Ayres-Bennett’s distinction between different levels of prescriptivism 2020: 190). As such, I have not used this work as primary data for analyses in other chapters, nor have I included it in the diachronic overview of usage advice publications.

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Table 1.1. Language advice publications studied in this thesis per decade, with * meaning that a decade included an extra edition

Decade	Number of publications	Number of unique authors
1900	1	1
1910	2	2
1920	5	2
1930	6	4
1940	9**	9
1950	7	7
1960	7	7
1970	6**	6
1980	16	16
1990	34	34
2000	33	26
2010	9	8
<i>Total</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>122⁵</i>

In order to understand some of the methodological choices made in the various chapters, it is important to briefly discuss the way different language publications are structured. Many works (see, for example, Damsteegt 1948; Apeldoorn and Pot 1983; Sanders and Metselaar 2000) follow the ‘prototypical’ dictionary format (see Figure 1.1) that is well-known from the English prescriptive tradition (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2020: 5). In this format, the disapproved words are displayed alphabetically as lemmata, followed by different degrees of explanation as to why they are disapproved, argumentation for this position, examples, and approved alternatives (cf. Van der Sijs 2021: 553).

Other works have very different structures. Some works use several layers of embedded sub-themes, such as Hermkens (1974), who discusses the use of the periphrastic and the inflected formation of the comparative and superlative in section 13.2.2.3 of his book. Others contain lengthy essays, often loosely based around a central linguistic theme. For example, all of chapter 3 of Van Wageningen (1941: 28-44) is dedicated to foreign influence on Dutch. Everything from French loanwords to supposedly German influence on a number of word order phenomena is discussed, liberally interspersed with

⁵ Some books were published by more than one author; in these cases, I count them as a unique pair or group. As some authors published books in different decades, the total number of authors given in Table 1.1 is slightly higher than the actual number of unique authors in my collection, which is 108.

almaar, alsmaar

Beide vormen zijn toegestaan, maar *alsmaar* komt vaker voor in de spreektaal dan in de schrijftaal. Voorkeur: *almaar*. Betekenis: voortdurend.

alma mater [Alma Mater]

Correct is: *alma mater* (onderkast). Latijn: de milde, gevende moeder. Aanduiding van de universiteit waar iemand heeft gestudeerd of nog studeert.

alohashirt [aloashirt]

Correct is: *alohashirt*.

al-Qods [el-Koeds]

Wij schrijven: *al-Qods*. Betekenis: Arabische naam voor Jeruzalem. De Winkler Prins spelt *el-Koeds*.

als, dan

De constructie *groter als* heeft heel oude papieren in de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse taal, maar wij schrijven ‘*groter dan*’.

- *Piet is sneller dan Peter*;
- *Marie is even slim als Kim*;
- *Jan is zeker vele malen zo dwaas als Klaas*.

Figure 1.1. Example of alphabetic lemma structure in a language advice publication (Sanders and Metselaar 2000: 27)

more general linguistic considerations. Such a chapter contains dozens of precepts, sometimes as lists, sometimes in the running text. A similar structural point has to do with the fact that writers alternatively choose a *type* or *token* approach to language advice (see Moschonas 2020). Most alphabetically ordered language advice publications usually focus on token language advice, in which every particular disputed word gets its own entry, as shown in Figure 1.1. However, the type approach focuses on a broader phenomenon, such as Anglicisms or tautologies. In these cases, a chapter or section could contain many different usage items. For example, Haje (1932) contains two series of *modewoorden* ‘fashionable words’, with precepts pertaining to 40 and 24 usage items respectively. Following the design of the Hyper Usage Guide of English database (Straaijer 2015:

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8), I dealt with this variety in build-up by considering the smallest coherent unit in a prescriptive publication as an *entry*. Thus, I considered essays as a single entry; in the case of works such as Hermkens (1974), the lowest subheading would function as one entry. For works such as Sanders and Metselaar (2000), each lemma was an entry.

From the language advice publications in my collection, I extracted *all* entries pertaining to morphosyntactic usage items. Additionally, I took a convenience sample of entries pertaining to other linguistic levels, most prominently lexis, but also stylistics, pronunciation and punctuation. This latter sample was mostly the result of an early attempt to study all language advice publications in their entirety; however, this proved to be unfeasible. This approach resulted in a total number of 5,678 entries. All extracted entries were saved as separate .txt-files, within a folder per language advice publication, which in turn were saved in folders per decade. This structure facilitated searching through the whole collection using concordancing software (Anthony 2019; Brezina, Weill-Tessier, and McEnery 2020; Karsdorp 2018), which I did to extract the samples and selections for the various chapters.⁶

Within the context of specific research questions, different samples of entries were enriched with particular tags. As an example, I tagged all precepts pertaining to the comparative conjunctions *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ that were used for Chapter 5, for stance towards variation, and type of argumentation. The precepts used in Chapter 6 were tagged for type of usage reference, and subsequently, depending on what type of usage reference a precept contained (i.e., quantifier or sociolinguistic), for absolute or diachronic, particular or general, and degree of frequency. In every chapter, my tagging choices will be explained in more detail.

1.4 Studying prescriptivism

For a long time, to study the mechanics of prescriptivism at all was surprisingly controversial. As Milroy and Milroy put it, researchers in linguistics displayed "a general tendency to study language as if prescriptive phenomena play no part in language" (1999: 4). They

⁶ Unfortunately, I was unable to make these files public, due to copyright reasons. See Appendix B of this thesis.

wrote this first in the 1980s, but similar observations are shared in subsequent decades by, among others, Cameron (1995: 3), Kroskrity (2004: 499) and Curzan (2014: 15). Even when scholars did engage with the notion of prescriptivism, its potential influence on actual language usage is often cursorily dismissed. An example of this approach is Weerman (2003); for a refutation of his conclusions and approach see Van der Meulen and Van der Sijs (2020).

Since Milroy and Milroy first made their statement, a lot of research has been done on a great variety of different topics in prescriptivism, standardization studies and adjacent fields (see, for example, all the chapters in Percy and Davidson 2012; Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Percy 2016; Tollefson and Pérez-Milans 2018; Ayres-Bennett and Bellamy 2021b; Chapman and Rawlins 2020; Beal, Lukač, and Straaijer forthcoming). In the subsequent paragraphs, I focus on four particular strands among all this research, on which this thesis builds and to which it contributes. First, I discuss the study of two aspects of the way specific precepts are formulated: the stance towards variation, and the argumentation used to support this stance (§1.4.1). Next, I consider the antithesis between prescriptivism and descriptivism, and the research that has been done into the question to what extent actual language use informs prescriptive publications (§1.4.2). After that, I delve into the way in which precept influences usage, and how usage influences precept (§1.4.3). Finally, I link these two dimensions to a third, namely language attitudes (§1.4.4). For each strand, I give the research sub-questions that follow from them for this thesis.

1.4.1 Variation and argumentation

Language advice publications have been mapped and studied quite extensively, particularly for English, and to a lesser extent for other languages. A recent comprehensive and historiographic work on English and American usage guides is Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2020). Other research that has investigated specific prescriptive publications or collections of them include Bennett (2009), who looks at academic style manuals; Ebner (2016), who studies the 2013 BBC Style Guide; and Busse and Schröder (2009), who scrutinize one of the most iconic English usage guides, *Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Fowler 2015 [1926]). Other languages for which prescriptive publications have been studied include Korean (Park 1989),

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Lithuanian (Vaičekauskienė 2020), French (Poplack et al. 2015), and Croatian (Hudeček and Mihaljević 2015).

Among the many aspects of prescriptive publications that have been studied, two stand out. The first is the stance towards variation. As Milroy and Milroy put it in their seminal work *Authority in language*, “the chief characteristic [of standardization] is intolerance/suppression of optional variability in language” (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 6, 22). This assertion goes back to Haugen, who states that “codification may be defined as *minimal variation in form*” (original italics, 1966: 931). In practice, this means that any precept features an evaluative stance, either explicit or implicit, about the desirability of the use of its variants. At least since Peters and Young (1997), researchers usually distinguish three different stances: variation can be completely accepted; variation can be accepted under certain circumstances (usually this is labelled as limited or conditional acceptability); or variation can be deemed completely unacceptable. This last stance is perhaps the best-known and results in ‘classic’ prescriptive verdicts such as ‘Both X and Y occur, but X is wrong, say Y instead’ (see Moschonas 2021 for a discussion of the formulation of prescriptive verdicts).

Stance-taking in prescriptive publications is studied or mentioned by, among others, Peters and Young (1997), Peters (2006), Albakry (2007), Yáñez-Bouza (2015), and Ebner (2017). These and other researchers come to different conclusions about whether language advice publications are becoming more lenient or not over time. On the one hand, Lukač states that English language usage guides “have not as a matter of course become more lenient” (2018: 8) over the last two centuries; by contrast, Crystal claims that there is “a move away from the prescriptive ethos of the past 250 years” (2006: 408). Whether or not Dutch prescriptivism is becoming more accepting of variation over time is unclear, because stance-taking in Dutch language advice publications has not been studied quantitatively and diachronically. Certain authors however (for example, Haeseryn 1999: 243, Geerts and Smedts 1986: 1) state that there is in fact a loosening of the prescriptive reins, and that language users are increasingly allowed to “make their own choices” (Ooms 2017: 11; though this is claimed for Belgium, it seems to apply to the Netherlands as well). This point of view implies that variation is to a certain extent allowed. As this claim seems to be based on a very limited number of precepts, I formulate the first sub-question of this thesis as follows:

Q1a: Do Dutch language advice publications become more accepting of variation over time?

The second aspect of prescriptive publications that has been quite widely studied is the use of argumentation and evaluative epithets. In this case, researchers study how and why particular variants are disputed or disapproved of. This approach seems to have originated in the study of dictionary labels, as exemplified by studies such as Card, McDavid, and McDavid (1984). An extensive survey is Sundby, Bjørge, and Haugland (1991); they present a categorized overview of evaluative labels used in English prescriptive publications in the eighteenth century. More recently, evaluative labels have been studied by Anderwald (2012; 2016), who looks at English and American normative grammars in the nineteenth century, and Chapman (2019), who looks particularly at the most frequently used labels with regard to a number of usage items in prescriptive publications between 1770 and 2003.

The use of argumentation in Dutch language advice publications has not been studied to any extent, nor do we find classifications of argumentation types like we do for English in the Dutch research literature. However, some Dutch language advice publications themselves reflect on the type of argumentation they use. For example, Renkema distinguishes between seven different norms, including the authority norm (something is wrong because an authority says it is) and the effect norm (something is wrong because it leads to, for example, an unwanted perception of low education, Renkema 2012: 193-194). But this classification has not been applied to study the use of argumentation in language advice publications. Neither is there an overview of arguments used in Dutch language advice publications. This leads to my second sub-question:

Q1b: Which arguments do Dutch language advice publications use to support stances towards variation?

1.4.2 Prescriptivism vs descriptivism

The explicit distinction between the terms *descriptivism* and *prescriptivism* goes back to at least the 1930s (see Jespersen 1933: 1.3). As Chapman puts it, “in a domain dominated by binaries, *prescriptivism vs descriptivism* is one of the most fundamental” (original italics, 2020: 46). In this distinction, descriptivism constitutes the

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supposedly more or less ‘neutral’ position of recording, chronicling and understanding of how language *is*, whereas prescriptivism shows how language *ought to be*. Up until today, this contrast is used by linguists to explain (or even implicitly prescribe) the way in which linguists carry out or should carry out the study of language. The elemental importance of this dichotomy is exemplified by its inclusion in many introductions to linguistics (cf. Fasold 2013: 379; Brown, Attardo, and Vigliotti 2014: 5-7; Ruigendijk, De Belder, and Schippers 2021: 40 and many more).

Despite its omnipresence, the strict binary opposition has been challenged for decades (cf. Cameron 1995: 5-8; Curzan 2014: 15; Joseph 2020; Chapman 2020). These and other critics argue that where linguists claim to be descriptive, they are often actually covertly or even overtly prescriptive. For example, by choosing which variation to mention in an ostensibly descriptive grammar, both in standardized and minority languages (cf. Perkins 2020), linguists make covert prescriptive choices. Conversely, recent years have seen a reappraisal of the descriptiveness of prescriptive publications. As opposed to statements that prescriptivism is “often in defiance of normal usage” (Trask 1999: 246), research has pointed towards the fact that prescriptive authors are in fact informed by current usage. For example, Ayres-Bennett has argued that the work of the French *remarqueur* Vaugelas may “reflect usage and its variation and change well” (2020: 207), and that other writers like Vaugelas were acutely aware of specific cases of language change (see also Ayres-Bennett and Seijido 2011). Similarly, Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (2011: 224-253) has proposed that Lowth’s *A short introduction to English grammar* (1762) was part of a broader tradition of normative grammars, which described some usage as much as they prescribed other usage.

It is, again, unclear to what extent Dutch language advice publications are descriptive, or whether and how they are informed by actual language usage. Thus, the next sub-question this thesis will try to answer is:

Q2a: Does actual language usage influence the precepts in Dutch language advice publications?

Of course, all research of the present thesis contributes not only to a better understanding of Dutch language advice publication, but also to an understanding of prescriptivism as a general phenomenon. For this particular sub-question, however, the broader applicability of

results is particularly pertinent. The reason for this is that existing evidence for the descriptive nature of prescriptive works is based on a comparatively very small set of prescriptive authors. Moreover, the empirical investigation of this aspect of prescriptivism has only recently started to emerge.

1.4.3 Precept vs practice

One of the major questions of prescriptivism studies is how much effect precepts have on actual language usage. Quantitative research into this question arose in Germany in the 1990s (Konopka 1996; Takada 1998; Langer 2001), but gained momentum with the appearance of research by Auer and González-Díaz (2005). For their investigation into the use of the English subjunctive (fleshed out by Auer in Auer 2006; 2009), they used what would later be called the *precept vs practice approach*. For this method, a diachronic corpus of precepts from language advice publications or normative grammars is compared to similarly diachronic usage corpora from the same period. This approach, which presented researchers with a new way of comparing prescriptive norms and usage by quantifying both dimensions, has proven to be quite popular. Since then, many studies have appeared that have adopted it (see, among others, Albakry 2007; Poplack and Dion 2009; Anderwald 2014; Yáñez-Bouza 2015; Havinga 2018; Smith 2019; and several of the chapters in Rutten, Vosters, and Vandenbussche 2014).

Despite its success, the precept vs practice approach is not without its issues. As Moschonas points out in several articles (most recently Moschonas 2021), much of the research suffers from the *post hoc propter hoc* fallacy. This can be understood as the observation that although a certain usage trend may follow a particular language advice publication in time, this does not mean that it is caused by it. Moreover, it is almost impossible to rule out other explanations for changes in usage. A final and somewhat related issue has to do with contact. Although both usage and prescriptivism are quantified, and although most language users will have come into account with prescriptive norms through education at the very least, there is no way of knowing whether they have encountered particular language advice publications and the precepts they contain. Thus, whether particular publications have influenced language users remains uncertain for most of the existing research. Auer, who, as we saw, spearheaded the method, is all too aware of these problems and

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concludes very carefully that “considering that we are not aware of any other intralinguistic and/or extralinguistic factors which are responsible for the development of the subjunctive form in the eighteenth century, it appears that prescriptivists did exert an influence” (2006: 48). One example of a study that tackles these issues head-on is Hinrichs, Szmrecsanyi, and Bohmann (2015), who use sophisticated statistical methods to prove that prescriptivism has a “potentially strong influence on the linguistic choices made by actual language users” (2015: 829).

For Dutch, the lack of investigation into language advice publications has led to a similar scarcity of precept vs practice research, at least for the modern period (for such comparative research in earlier periods of Dutch see, among others, Krogull 2018; Nobels and Rutten 2014). Research that does look more closely at the effects of precepts on language use in the twentieth century was carried out by Haeseryn (1986; 1990; see also Haeseryn and De Rooij 1985); however, in these cases a single norm is taken as a starting point to compare to usage, rather than a quantified corpus of prescriptive utterances. Somewhat similarly, Hubers and de Hoop (2013), in their investigation of the comparative conjunctions *als* ‘as’ and *dan* ‘than’, only use two prescriptive sources to justify their standpoint that “it is well known that prescriptive grammars and language advisory councils strongly recommend the use of *dan*” (2013: 90, we will come back to this in Chapter 5). In an attempt to use the precept vs practice method for Dutch, I formulated the follow sub-question:

Q2b: Do Dutch language advice publications influence actual language usage?

Rather than perform a ‘classic’ precept vs practice study, I investigate a more contained linguistic situation. The reason for this is the lack of availability of usage data. Although recent years have seen the creation and expansion of several very large databases of Dutch (most notably Delpher and Nederlab), containing billions of words, these databases are not corpora themselves, and are thus not sufficiently balanced nor sufficiently sampled to be used in diachronic language studies (cf. Van der Sijs 2019b). Therefore, I limit myself to a more defined usage situation. In doing so, I use a similar approach as employed by Krogull (2018). In Krogull’s thesis, the effect of the aforementioned officially sanctioned Dutch spelling and grammar by

Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805) were studied. Because these publications were official, they were distributed through educational channels, ensuring that all teachers would come into contact with them. Importantly, this approach neatly avoids the contact problem, allowing for much more robust claims about actual influence of particular publications.

1.4.4 Precept, usage and attitude

By far the majority of prescriptivism research focuses on what language users do (actual language usage, or practice) and what rules there are for telling them what to do (precepts). How language users feel about particular varieties and variants (in other words, what their attitudes are), is an obviously related issue. Indeed, attitudinal research is often carried out with normative and standardization issues as its subject. However, most of this research focuses on the macro level, i.e., how, for example, different varieties or dialects of a language are perceived (see Grondelaers 2013 for an overview of such work on Dutch). Research into attitudes towards particular usage items is comparatively scarce (although see, for example, Ebner 2017 for English; Grondelaers and Van Hout 2021 for Dutch). More pertinently, when such research is performed, it is rarely connected to precepts and usage, although some exceptions can be found (cf. Geeraerts, Grondelaers, and Speelman 1999). This is unfortunate, as research in language policy studies has shown that the development of an approach that combines research on all three dimensions together can yield worthwhile results. Exemplary for this tripartite integration is Spolsky, who states that language policy as a whole is made up of “three inter-related but independent components” (Spolsky 2012: 5), which, although slightly differently worded, correspond to language use, precepts, and attitudinal data.

In prescriptivism research, such a tripartite approach has been employed only very sparingly. For example, Nevalainen (2014) considers data from all three dimensions in her exploration of the (normative) development of spelling and lexical features in seventeenth century English. Bennis and Hinskens (2014) rank nine morphosyntactic and one lexical usage items, using reported usage and attitudinal data. However, none of the existing approaches in prescriptivism research use quantitative data on all three dimensions. As such, it is unclear whether integrating attitudinal data into the more traditional quantitative precept vs practice approach

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can help us understand how these dimensions relate to and influence each other. In performing such research within a prescriptive context, I aim to move beyond the current precept vs practice method. Thus, in chapter 8, I integrate these three linguistic dimensions, and try to answer the final sub-question:

Q2c: Are there relations between precepts, language usage and speakers' attitudes?

1.5 This thesis

1.5.1 Goals of this thesis

The goal of this thesis is to gain insight into the mechanics of prescriptivism. This will lead to an increased understanding of Dutch prescriptivism, and contributes to a more complete picture of prescriptivism as a general sociolinguistic phenomenon. Aside from these aims, the research intends to contribute to the development of new methodologies in prescriptivism research. As an example, Chapters 5 and 6 look into novel ways to test how usage influences precepts, Chapter 7 introduces a new approach to investigating the interplay between usage and precept, while Chapter 8 proposes a new framework for studying precept and usage in relation to attitudes.

Two caveats apply to the present thesis. Firstly, due to the lack of research into modern Dutch prescriptivism, the present research is, to a certain extent, exploratory in nature. Before we can interpret patterns and phenomena, we have to describe them. For this reason, I devote considerable space to simply reporting what I observe. Secondly, there is some inevitable overlap among different chapters with regard to the background information and explanation of materials and methods. This is due to the fact that all chapters were prepared as separate articles before they were included in this thesis, and thus had to be self-explanatory. I have not made substantial adjustments to the data and methods of these articles, but have only changed some errors, clarified some issues, and harmonized the terminology.

1.5.2 Outline of this thesis

The first half my thesis focuses on Q1, and investigates the development of precepts in language advice publications over time. In **Chapter 2**, I consider both Q1a and Q1b, by investigating the stance towards variation and the use of argumentation for a sample of usage items from my whole collection of language advice publications. I describe the general patterns found in my data, as well as the development of these two aspects over time. By studying the evaluative argumentative labels used to condemn or accept certain linguistic variants, I extract the values that prescriptive writers award to language.

In **Chapter 3**, I focus on Q1a, by investigating the development over time of the stance towards variation that prescriptive publications take towards variation. For a number of morphosyntactic usage items, I answer the question whether prescriptivism becomes more accepting of variation as the twentieth century progresses. I focus both on the development of the prescriptive tradition as a whole, and on the trajectories of particular usage items.

In **Chapter 4**, I zoom in on one specific group of usage items, concerning the comparative conjunctions *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’. After collecting all statements about the use of these words from my prescriptive publications, I again answer both Q1a and Q1b. For this case study, I do this on a more fine-grained level than for the previous chapters, disentangling five very specific rules for the use of these grammatical words.

In the second half of my thesis, I connect Dutch language advice publications to usage, thus answering Q2. In **Chapter 5**, I take one particular prescriptive work by Matthijs Siegenbeek (1774-1854), his *Lijst van woorden en uitdrukkingen met het Nederlandsch taaleigen strijdende*, ‘List of words and expressions at odds with the nature of Dutch’ (1847), and investigate the way he references usage, thus addressing Q2a. After analyzing the statements about usage, I take a sample of these statements and assess their correctness regarding the frequency of occurrence of different usage items.

Chapter 6 develops this approach further, while also applying it more broadly. I first map out all statements about recency (e.g., ‘this variant is of recent origins’) and frequency (e.g., ‘this variant occurs very often’) in my whole collection of language advice publications. Then, against the background of Zwicky’s proposed Recency and

Frequency Illusions, I evaluate whether the statements can be considered valid, by comparing these statements against various sources of actual language usage. Here, I look at both lexical and grammatical statements.

In **Chapter 7**, I investigate the interaction between usage and precepts in both directions. Here, I pay particular attention to Q2b. As a well-defined case study, I take the proceedings of the Dutch parliament. I study transcriptions of the original debates, their official reports, and the prescriptive publications used to construe these reports. This enables me to comment on the way rules influence usage, as well as the other way around. I study morphosyntactic usage items as well as a selection of lexical and stylistic ones.

Chapter 8 extends the idea of relations between usage and precepts even further, by adding attitude as a factor, thus answering Q2c. I present and test a tripartite model, starting from the hypothesis that the prescriptive utterances, actual usage and language attitude are interconnected and all influence each other. In this chapter I take this approach to investigate and explain synchronic patterns found for a selection of nine morphosyntactic usage items.

Finally, **Chapter 9** contains a recap and general discussion of all the results for this thesis. I evaluate to what extent the different research questions were answered and I examine the methodological aims of this thesis. After discussing some of the limitations of the present work, the chapter ends with a look towards the future.

Chapter 2

Language should be pure and grammatical: values in prescriptivism in the Netherlands 1917-2016

Abstract

Evaluative epithets are a well-known characteristic of prescriptive writings, and are used widely to argue against condemned variants. It can be argued that such epithets are a surface realization of certain underlying values that writers attribute to language. So, saying that a particular variant is ‘ugly’ reflects the more general value that language should be beautiful. For English, evaluative epithets have been mapped out (e.g., Sundby, Bjørge, and Haugland 1991) and studied (e.g., Anderwald 2012; 2014; Ebner 2016) to some extent. For Dutch, however, prescriptive argumentation and epithets have not been studied to any real degree. Moreover, existing research does not connect argumentation to underlying values. This chapter addresses these two gaps, by mapping out the development of evaluative epithets and their underlying values in the Dutch prescriptive tradition in the 20th century. To do this, I use a collection of 1,578 precepts from 130 language advice publications from the time period 1917-2016. All precepts were annotated for stance towards variation and evaluative epithets. My research shows that, over the course of the twentieth century, the values ‘language should be pure’ and ‘the character of the language should be preserved’ are gradually replaced by ‘there should be a difference between spoken and written language’ and ‘language should adhere to grammatical rules’. Condemnation of variants without explicit reasoning, while common in the early 20th century, becomes increasingly rare over time. There is, however, little change in the epithets used for specific usage items. Finally, while the underlying value of prescriptivism, ‘language should not contain variation’ (Milroy and Milroy, 1999:30), remains important, competing variants are increasingly allowed to be used within certain contexts (i.e., written vs spoken, informal vs formal).

2.1 Introduction

The notion of prescriptivism is built upon a binary distinction between ‘good’ language and ‘bad’ language. This division is made both on the macro level between different linguistic varieties and on the micro level between linguistic variants. On this latter level, the term *usage item* can be used to describe any combination of linguistic variants that seem synonymous, but include one that is condemned by someone. Three fundamental assumptions underlie this distinction between good and bad language:

- i. that it is at all possible to divide linguistic variants into good and bad categories;
- ii. that the category that any linguistic variant falls into can be determined;
- iii. that it is desirable for bad language to be avoided and (if possible) eradicated.

These assumptions are usually unproblematic for both prescriptivists themselves, that is, writers of language advice publications, and their intended target audience, that is, language users. However, as soon as one scrutinizes these premises more systematically, they become rather questionable. For example, how can it be ascertained whether a certain sound, word or phrase is ‘bad’ language? It is a longstanding given in linguistics that there is no inherent reason why any linguistic form should be better than another. Nor is there, in most cases, a law or any other binding social construct that separates the good from the bad. And yet, prescriptivists and language advisors persist in their arbitrary division. This raises the question of how they build their case and what arguments they use to condemn ‘wrong’ linguistic variants. One way of looking at this is by looking at which evaluative epithets are used to express this condemnation.

This chapter studies the evaluative epithets and values found in Dutch prescriptivist publications in the Netherlands. In studying this language, it joins a growing number of studies that focus on prescriptivism in a language other than English. For English, prescriptivism has received a fair amount of attention, especially in recent years (see, for example, several papers in Chapman and Rawlins 2020 and Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Percy 2016). Even though individual papers have appeared on a variety of languages

(e.g., Poplack and Dion 2009 on French; Vaicekauskienė 2020 on Lithuanian), most other languages remain understudied. Dutch is no exception. Some recent efforts attempt to address this research gap (e.g., Rutten, Vosters, and Vandenbussche 2014), but investigations of Dutch prescriptivism as a phenomenon remain scarce, in particular for the twentieth century. This relative shortage of scholarly interest is all the more remarkable given the immense popularity that prescriptive publications enjoy with the general public in the Netherlands. For example, the online language maven community *Taalvoutjes* ‘Language mistakes’ (the word is intentionally misspelled, the <v> should be an <f>) has hundreds of thousands of followers and has spawned several successful books (e.g., Hollebeek and Bogle 2013). Also, language magazine *Onze Taal* ‘Our Language’, which was founded in the 1930s to combat the German influence on Dutch, has tens of thousands of subscribers and even more followers online.

In this chapter, I comment upon patterns in the use of prescriptive epithets, and I look at the values underlying them. In doing so, I argue that studying these values is not only a worthwhile approach in its own right, but also that it gives insight into the language ideologies of prescriptivists. First, I give a general overview of the development and study of prescriptivism in the Netherlands (§2.2.1). Next, I zoom in on evaluative epithets in prescriptivist writings and their argumentative function (§2.2.2). I then proceed to explain how these epithets can be seen as surface realizations of underlying values (§2.2.3). After that, I describe my data collection process and sample build-up (§2.3.1), before explaining the annotation (§2.3.2). In the result section, I comment on the acceptance of optional variability (§2.4.1), the use of epithets for the Dutch prescriptive tradition in general (§2.4.2), the development of the use of epithets over time (§2.4.3), the relation between argument and epithet (§2.4.4), and the relation between argument and level of acceptance (§2.4.5). I finish with some concluding remarks (§2.5).

2.2 Background

2.2.1 Prescriptivism in the Netherlands

The first attempts to standardize Dutch were made in the sixteenth century, with the appearance of treatises about spelling (Lambrecht 1550) and later by writers of grammars (Spiegel 1584). In later

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centuries, hundreds of works on grammar, spelling, and pronunciation appeared (see Knol and Maas 1977 for an overview). Many of these works have been fairly well-studied, as has the history of metalinguistic works in the Netherlands in general (e.g. (Van der Sijs 2021; Rutten, Vosters, and Vandenbussche 2014; Noordegraaf, Versteegh, and Koerner 1992; Noordegraaf 1985). Of all of the grammatical works that appeared between 1530 and 1800, none was ever adopted by the government as an official rule book. This changed in the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Dutch government set out to regulate the Dutch language. This resulted in both an officially sanctioned spelling (Siegenbeek 1804) and a grammar (Weiland 1805). The publication of these works is seen as “the beginning of the official codification of Dutch” (Rutten 2019: 53). For other countries where Dutch is spoken, the implementation of the language took very different paths, which is why I focus only on the Netherlands in this chapter.

With regard to spelling, Siegenbeek’s work proved to be the first in a long line of official spelling guides. At present, there is an official spelling for Dutch, which is updated every five years by the Nederlandse Taalunie ‘Dutch Language Union’, an international organization that is supported by the Dutch, Flemish, and Surinam governments. The use of this official spelling is nominally compulsory in education and government (as is stated in the Spelling Law of 2005)⁷, but no official steps are taken when the law is ‘broken’. In contrast to the official spelling, no governmentally sanctioned grammar was published after Weiland’s. Consequently, no official rules exist for the grammar of Dutch. This gap has been filled, however, by many private grammars. In addition, the early twentieth century saw the emergence of publications that are similar to the English ‘usage guide’ (Van der Wal and De Bree 1992: 330-331). Like the English usage guides, these language advice publications contain “a miscellany of linguistic cruces including spelling, pronunciation, lexical semantics, collocation, and grammar, which are mostly treated in isolation, without systematic appraisal of their place in the language” (Peters 2006: 760).

The Dutch prescriptive landscape is, again, comparable to the English, as it contains various genres. These include style guides and usage guides, magazines, and newspaper columns. Some of these language advice publications focus on one part of the language, such

⁷ <http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0018784/2010-10-10>

as lexis or prepositions; others conform more to Peters' general description. New language advice books continue to appear regularly (cf. Van Wingerden 2017; Houthuys and Permentier 2016). Dutch prescriptivism has also found its way onto the internet. Next to many privately-run language advice websites, two sites in particular seem to be seen as authorities: the online language advice service of *Genootschap Onze Taal* 'Society Our Language', and the online language advice service of the aforementioned *Taalunie* 'Language Union'. Next to these explicitly prescriptive publications, several other (perceived) language authorities exist. One of these is the most well-known and most thorough Dutch grammar of the twentieth century, the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* 'General Dutch Grammar' (Haeseryn et al. 1997a, 1997b). Others include the historical *Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* 'Dictionary of the Dutch Language' and several commercial dictionaries, especially from Van Dale publishers.

Dutch prescriptivism in the twentieth century has been documented to some extent, in the sense that there are (incomplete) overviews of publications (Hermkens 1974; Gillaerts 1989; Haeseryn 1999). The contents of the prescriptive publications, however, have received little attention, neither from a qualitative nor a quantitative perspective. There are a few exceptions, such as Veering (1966) and Maureau (1979), but these only discuss a select number of usage items and a limited number of prescriptive publications. A recent and fairly detailed exception is Hendrickx (2013). In this work, the development of prescriptive comments about a great number of lexical items is mapped out, as part of a study on the impact of prescriptivism on Flemish newspapers in the period between 1958 and 2008. However, all in all, it is safe to say that the Dutch twentieth century prescriptive tradition has not been adequately described or investigated, nor has there been much interest in the specific argumentation used in prescriptivist writings. The current chapter makes a start at remedying this situation.

2.2.2 Arguments and epithets

One of the most fundamental differences between prescriptivist and descriptivist writings is the former's use of evaluative epithets regarding the language that is described (Hendrickx 2013: 10). In doing so, any description of a linguistic variable becomes a prescriptive *usage item*, for which at least one of the variants is considered to be unwanted by at least some speakers. For example,

an ostensibly descriptive dictionary, such as the Van Dale Online Dictionary, simply presents the word type, grammatical gender and plural formation of the word *stellingname* ‘position’ without evaluative terms (s.v. *stellingname*).⁸ By contrast, a language advice publication describes the word using one or more epithets, with the express goal of condemning the wrong variant. This is what, for example, Damsteegt does when he says that the word *stellingname* ‘position’ is “een heel lelijke vorming” ‘a very ugly formation’, and that “iedere andere manier om deze gedachte uit te drukken wel beter [is] dan deze (journalistieke) uitvinding” ‘every other way to express this thought is better than this (journalistic) invention’ (Damsteegt 1964: 53). Many other evaluative expressions are used, including aesthetic judgments (‘this variant is ugly’), puristic judgements (‘this variant is a Germanism’), and effect-based judgements (‘this variant is annoying’). While the type of epithet varies, their purpose is always the same: to judge and/ or evaluate the use of a certain linguistic variant so as to discourage people from using the disapproved variant.

For English, prescriptive epithets or value judgments have, to some extent, been studied. The most thorough example is the *Dictionary of English Normative Grammar 1700-1800* (Sundby, Bjørge, and Haugland 1991). In this comprehensive work, the authors classify “between 500 and 600 different prescriptive epithets” (1991: 38) along several dimensions. Although the considerations are fairly sophisticated, little is offered in terms of analysis. A more profound example of the use of value judgments is given in Anderwald (2012), who links the use of epithets to actual language changes regarding four tense and aspect phenomena in the nineteenth century. In another recent example, Ebner (2016) examines evaluative words in the 2003 BBC News Style guide as compared to two earlier usage guides.

Although the abovementioned and other papers discuss evaluative epithets to different extents, they always do this in relation to another phenomenon, such as language change. Until recently, epithets were hardly studied as a phenomenon in their own right, nor was their development over time studied. Again, a few exceptions can be found. Anderwald (2012) commented on the evolution of epithets

⁸ Whether or not this dictionary and others like it are, in fact, purely descriptive is a matter of debate, and even if they are, this is a very recent development. For example, Theissen (1978) shows how all dictionaries in the 1970s contained terms such as *Germanism* or *Gallicism* to some degree.

in the nineteenth century. Kostadinova, van der Meulen, and Karsdorp (2016) compared Dutch and English epithets for four usage items, looking at, among other things, the relation between type of argument and the acceptance of optional variability. Chapman (2019) maps out words for disapproval in two corpora of usage guides, concluding that the evaluative terms become less harsh over time. Such case studies, while noteworthy, only scratch the surface of the possible research into epithets, and no effort seems to have been made to connect epithets to values.

2.2.3 Epithets and values

In prescriptive publications, evaluative epithets are usually employed regarding a specific usage item, as seen in the example above, or in connection to a broader linguistic phenomenon, such as foreign influence (cf. Moschonas 2019 on type and token in prescriptivism). In both cases, an epithet can be seen as an instantiation of a more general language norm. In the case of the abovementioned example, the more general norm would be ‘ugly language is bad’. This norm, in turn, can be seen as a depiction of a more general value, or a ‘higher-order norm’ (Johnson 1961: 50). Such values are usually implicit, in prescriptivism and otherwise, but they can be brought to the forefront using the simple logical formula known as the *modus ponens* or syllogism. Here, the value corresponds to the major premise. The abovementioned example about *stellingname* ‘position’ is a good example of this:

If language is formed in an ugly way, it is wrong	major premise
The word formation <i>stellingname</i> ‘position’ is formed in an ugly way	minor premise
<hr/>	
Therefore, the word formation <i>stellingname</i> ‘position’ is wrong	conclusion

Although the major premise can be positive, in prescriptivism it is usually negative. In these cases, a positive underlying value can be extracted by (somewhat ironically) cancelling out the negations. In this case, ‘if language is formed in an ugly way, it is wrong’ can be resolved as ‘language should be beautiful’. Using this method, any number of values can be extracted from prescriptivist writings. Some of these values have been commented on in the literature. Most notably, as Milroy and Milroy state, the idea underlying the whole

concept of language advice is the non-acceptability of optional variability (1999: 22). In terms of values, this can be put as ‘language should not contain variation’. In condemning the existence of variation, however, this value interacts with a plethora of other values that are held by prescriptivists. In the next section, I describe which values can be found in Dutch prescriptivist writings, and how these were found.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Collection of language advice publications

Several demarcations were made regarding which material should be included in the present research. Firstly, only language advice publications written in the twentieth and twenty-first century was included. The reason for this is that, while normative publications for Dutch have existed since the late 1500s, the nature of the publications changed in the twentieth century from more normative grammar towards specific usage advice (Van der Wal and Van Bree 2008: 330-331). Secondly, only language advice publications intended for speakers in the Netherlands were used. This means that works intended only for Flanders were excluded. Although Dutch has been used there for centuries as well, and language publications certainly exist, the historical and social development of the language there is vastly different from that in the Netherlands (cf. Vandebussche et al. 2005). It could therefore be expected that the way problems were discussed in Flanders varied significantly as well. For the same reasons, I excluded works written for former colonies of the Netherlands (such as Indonesia, cf. De Geus 1922) and works for second-language speakers. Thirdly, only non-educational works were incorporated in the corpus, because the approach to language advice in school books is mostly formative, as opposed to the corrective approach of prescriptive publications (cf. Veering 1966: 16). Finally, for reasons of comparability between publications, only published books were included, whereas language advice from magazines (such as the popular scientific *Onze Taal* ‘Our Language’) and internet presences such as the *Taaladviesdienst* ‘Language Advice Service’ were not included.

Using these selection criteria, 130 language advice publications were collected (see Appendix A at the end of this thesis).

These language advice publications were written by a total of 101 different authors. Several authors published more than one book, most notably the *Algemeen Nederlands Verbond*, ‘General Dutch Union’ (henceforth ANV), who published eleven prescriptive works between at least 1917 and 1941, seven of which were available for study. In cases where more than one work by an author was included, I took different entries for my sample. The distribution of the 130 works was heavily skewed towards the last quarter of the 20th century. To remedy this, I sampled 100 entries from each decade at random (as far as that was possible, see below). The number of entries that I included in my sample per publication depended on the number of publications in the corresponding decade (see Table 3.1). For example, as the 2000s were represented by 33 guides, I used three entries per guide. In some decades in the early twentieth century, not all guides for a decade reached the required amount. In these cases, I added additional entries from one of the other guides for that decade. For example, as there were four guides from the 1920s, 25 entries were required per guide. However, my collection contained just two and four entries from ANV (1926) and ANV (1927), and thus the remaining number for the sample was taken from Moortgat (1925).

I followed the internal structure of the work to determine what made up an entry. An entry could thus be a chapter, a lemma, a paragraph, or another demarcated unit. This meant that the length of the entries varied considerably, from only one ‘right’ and one ‘wrong’ word (cf. s.n. 1917) to a lengthy essay (e.g., Van Wissen 1995). These longer entries often contained evaluations of more than one usage item, and thus several precepts. For example, in Van Wageningen’s essay entitled *Gewichtigdoenerij* ‘Pomposity’ (1946: 34-36), he discusses six different usage items. Such cases caused the number of precepts to be substantially higher than the number of entries. In the end, my sample contained 1,578 precepts. The number of precepts varies quite heavily between decades, ranging from 101 in the 1920s to 244 in the 1970s, with an average of 153 (see Table 2.1).

2.3.2 Annotation

I annotated entries for two parameters using the open-source annotation tool *brat* (Stenetorp et al. 2012). Firstly, I checked which stance was expressed towards the acceptance of optional variability.

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Table 2.1. Number of language advice publications and precepts per decade

Decade	Number of publications	Number of precepts
1910	2	171
1920	5	101
1930	6	113
1940	7	129
1950	7	139
1960	7	129
1970	4	244
1980	16	142
1990	34	145
2000	33	146
2010	9	119
<i>Total</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>1,578</i>

Following the existing literature (Ebner, 2017; Yáñez-Bouza, 2015; Albakry, 2007; Peters and Young, 1997), I distinguished between three different stances, namely complete acceptance, complete non-acceptance and limited acceptance of free variation. This last category included, for example, instances where free variation was accepted in spoken language but not in written language. Stance could be expressed either explicitly, by using a phrase such as ‘the use of this variant is unacceptable’, or implicitly, when for example only a rule was given: ‘this is the way in which this variant should be used’. In the latter case, when no other arguments were given, the condemnation of the variant was interpreted as being a result of the non-acceptability of variation. However, in the vast majority of cases the stance is explicit, as I will show below.

Secondly, I annotated evaluative epithets. To do this, I built upon the annotation schema used in Kostadinova, Van der Meulen and Karsdorp (2016), who devised a bottom-up approach for tagging epithets. I took their category and created a more detailed version. In the version used for this chapter, epithets were classified into six main categories, as illustrated in Table 2.2 below. These were in turn each divided into several more specific epithet categories. I included separate tags for OTHER_ARGUMENT and OPTIONAL_VARIABILITY. All these arguments, top and lower-level categories, corresponded to underlying values (see Appendix 2.1 for the values that underlie these epithets). The goal was to be as specific as possible in the annotation,

Table 2.2. Epithets used in annotation scheme

Top level category	Lower-level categories
PURISM	ANGLICISM, GERMANISM, GALLICISM, OTHER_LANGUAGE, PUR_UNSPECIFIED
VARIETY	GEOGRAPHIC, MODE, REGISTER, STANDARD, VAR_UNSPECIFIED
AUTHORITY	AUTHORITY_SOCIO, AUTHORITY_DICTIONARY, AUTHORITY_GRAMMAR, AUTHORITY_LITERARY, AUTHORITY_FREQUENCY, AUTHORITY_UNSPECIFIED
USE	USE_SOCIO, USE_DICTIONARY, USE_GRAMMAR, USE_LITERARY, USE_FREQUENCY, USE_UNSPECIFIED
QUALITY	LOGIC, BEAUTY, CARE, QUANTITY, EFFECT, QUAL_UNSPECIFIED
SYSTEM	HISTORY, NATURE, GRAMMATICAL, SYS_UNSPECIFIED

so in general, lower-level categories were tagged. However, epithets could be unspecified, or not be interpretable within any of the provided lower-level categories. In these cases, the label UNSPECIFIED was used. For example, Van Nierop explains that a certain variant *klinkt het gewoonst* ‘sounds the most common’ (1963: 129), which was classified as USE_UNSPECIFIED.

The categorization deserves some explanation. The category PURITY contains epithets that are used to condemn foreign influences, specifically from German, English and French. The category VARIETY consists of epithets that denote an awareness of different types of speech, including dialects or other geographically bound varieties (GEOGRAPHIC), spoken and written modes (MODE), formal and informal registers (REGISTER), and standard and non-standard language (STANDARD). The categories AUTHORITY and USE are closely connected. In the case of AUTHORITY, a language variant was condemned or accepted because it was condemned or accepted by a certain group of language users (AUTHORITY_SOCIO), a dictionary (AUTHORITY_DICTIONARY), a grammar or grammarian (AUTHORITY_GRAMMAR), an author (AUTHORITY_LITERARY), or a certain number of speakers (AUTHORITY_FREQUENCY). For example, the statement ‘This is correct because Webster’s Dictionary says it’s correct’ would warrant the label AUTHORITY_DICTIONARY. Closely related to the category AUTHORITY is the category USE. The labels in this category were employed when a usage advice writer mentioned the fact that any of these entities or groups of entities used a certain language variant. For example, ‘this is correct because Shakespeare

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uses it' warranted USE_LITERARY. Next, the category QUALITY contains what are arguably the most 'classic' epithets, which evaluate whether a variant is logical (LOGIC), beautiful or ugly (BEAUTY), whether the user shows care in their language use (CARE), whether a variant is superfluous or unnecessary (QUANTITY), or what kind of effect a language variant has (EFFECT). Finally, the category SYSTEM encompasses those epithets that make a statement about the use of a linguistic variant in the past (HISTORY), whether it conforms to the nature of the language (NATURE),⁹ and whether it conforms to the rules of the language (GRAMMATICAL). If no explicit epithet was used, I used the label OPTIONAL_VARIABILITY.

2.4 Results

I tagged 2,322 epithets in the 1,578 precepts.¹⁰ In this section, I first discuss what the stance towards the acceptance of optional variability is in Dutch prescriptivism in general, and how this stance has developed over the years. Secondly, I describe which epithets are most characteristic for the Dutch prescriptive tradition, after which I highlight some temporal developments in the use of epithets. Finally, I touch on some other noticeable patterns in epithet use.

2.4.1 Acceptance of optional variation in general and over time

Implicitly or explicitly, all precepts take a stance on the acceptance of optional variability. Consequently, I analyzed all 1,578 precepts for this parameter (see Figure 2.1). In 83.9% of cases no optional variability was accepted. Limited acceptance was found in 10.6% of items; in 5.5% of cases there was complete acceptability of variants being used interchangeably.

⁹ In Dutch prescriptivism, the rather curious word *taaleigen* is often used. Its meaning is hard to translate, but it means something like the nature, spirit, identity or soul of the language. For a comparison of this term to the better-known term *Sprachgefühl*, see Foolen (to appear)

¹⁰ A sample of 163 usage items ($\pm 10\%$ of the total) was annotated independently by a student assistant who was uninvolved in the project, with an inter-annotator agreement score (Cohen's Kappa) of $\kappa = 0.83$.

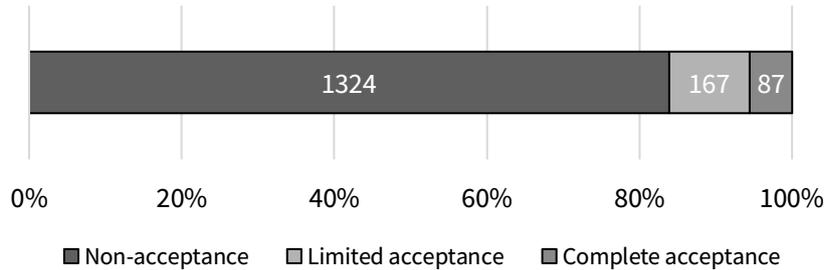


Figure 2.1. Degree of acceptance of optional variability (n=1,578)

This distribution of stances towards optional variation does not remain static over time (Figure 2.2). Two observations about the development can be made. Firstly, there is a marked increase in the (partial) acceptance of optional variation between the 1930s (1.8% at least partial acceptance) and the 1940s (19.4% at least partial acceptance). Secondly, a somewhat irregular but steady increase of the (partial) acceptance of variation can be discerned from the 1940s onwards, towards a share of 28.6% of all precepts in the 2010s. The portion of limited acceptability has always exceeded that of complete acceptability, except during the 1930s and 1980s, when the two labels

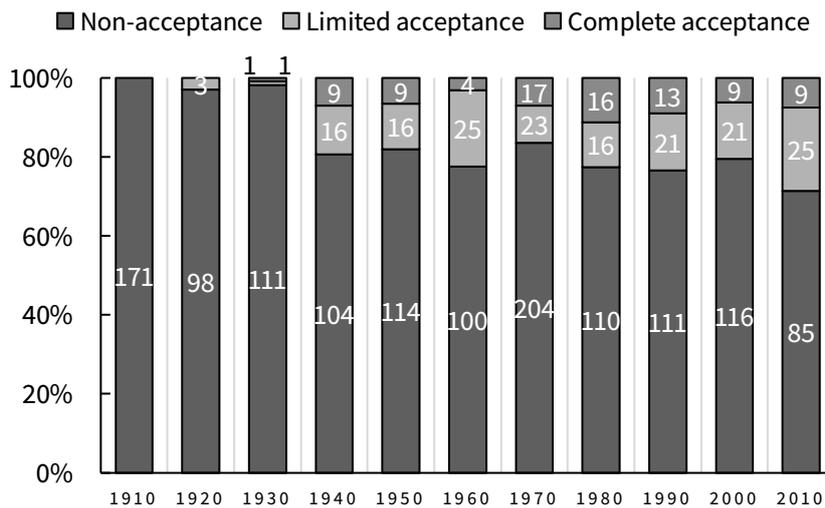


Figure 2.2. Development of the acceptance of optional variability over time

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made up respectively 0.9% and 8.3% each of the total (partially) acceptable cases.

It is noteworthy that the use of optional variability as an argument (or rather the lack of an argument that this annotation represents) remains fairly stable over time, with an average of 23 precepts per decade and a median of 24. This lack of argument is not connected to any specific usage item. There is a peak in the 1970s, when explicit epithets are absent in 73 cases. This is an effect of the preference of one author, as Kolkhuis Tanke (1975) shows 56 cases of suppression of optional variability without any other supporting epithet.

2.4.2 Epithets

As Figure 2.3 shows, epithets in all six top categories are found in the sample, albeit in different distributions. The two most important categories are SYSTEM and PURITY, which together make up more than 53% of all epithets. The other categories are less well represented, making up between 4 and 15% of cases each.

Looking at both top level and lower categories, 31 out of the 34 possible epithets in the annotation schema were awarded more

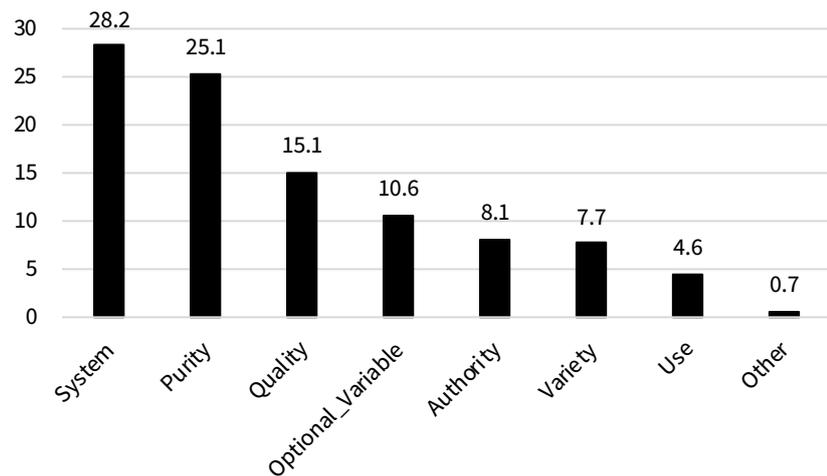


Figure 2.3. Distribution of epithets in % split out per top level category

than once.¹¹ However, as Table 2.3 shows, the vast majority of these epithets was found very infrequently: 11 of the epithets make up less than 1% each of the total number of annotations; a further 9 make up between 1 and 2% each. So, only 11 epithets are found in more than 2% of cases. This analysis reveals three further points. Firstly, PURITY is often unspecified. A possible explanation for this is that writers assume that readers already know what language a word is from, and don't feel the need to repeat this. This assumption is belied, however, by the relative lack of ability that language users seem to have to identify the source language for loanwords (Van Bezooijen, Gooskens, and Kürschner 2009). Secondly, PURITY_UNSPECIFIED and GERMANISM together make up the vast majority of cases in top level category PURITY. Thirdly, GRAMMATICAL accounts for almost 80% of epithets in the category SYSTEM.

Table 2.3. Tagged epithets in %

Lower-level epithets	% of total epithets
GRAMMATICAL	22.4
GERMANISM	12.1
OPTIONAL_VARIA	10.6
PURITY_UNSPECIFIED	9.7
EFFECT	5.6
MODE	4.3
QUALITY	4.1
USE_FREQ	3.9
AUTH_GRAM, AUTH_DICT, LOGIC, HISTORY	2-3
GEOGRAPHIC, GALLICISM, REGISTER, SYSTEM, AUTHORITY, QUANTITY, ANGLICISM, AUTH_FREQ, NATURE	1-2
AUTH_SOCIO, AUTH_LITERARY, OTHER_LANG, USE_SOCIO, USE, VAR, STANDARD, BEAUTY, OTHER_ARG, CARE	<1

¹¹ The three tags that were not awarded all fell in the top-level category USE (USE_DICTIONARY, USE_GRAMMAR and USE_LITERARY). The reason that these were included in the annotation schema was to create symmetry with the category Authority, and because these epithets were found in English usage guides. For example, 'This is good because Shakespeare used it' is found, for example, in *The American Heritage Guide to Contemporary Usage and Style* (Pickett, Kleinedler, and Spitz 2005).

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The level of abstraction on which to analyze the data posed a challenge (as it often does, cf. Karsdorp et al. 2012). Even the 34-fold distribution could be more fine-grained. For example, the epithet EFFECT is found 136 times, and in all cases the underlying value can be analyzed as ‘Language should have a good effect’. Within this category, however, several more detailed values can be distinguished, such as ‘Language should be understandable’ and ‘Language should not upset people’. Even within these groupings more fine-grained values could be distinguished. For example, the group ‘Language should not upset people’ includes epithets such as *aanstootgevend* ‘causing offence’, *storend* ‘troublesome’, and *ergerlijk* ‘annoying’. These specific epithets are only found in a few cases each, so for the purposes of the present investigation a rather abstract level of analysis is used. It is, however, important to realize that these other levels exist, and that they deserve further exploration.

2.4.3 Development of epithets over time

The development of epithets over time for the top-level categories is shown in Figure 2.4. The average number of epithets per precept does not vary greatly over time. Leaving aside the 1910s, which has an average of 1 epithet per precept, the average number of epithets between 1920 and 2016 per precept is 1.5.

The first striking development is the decline of the epithet PURITY.¹² In the 1910s, PURITY is really the only argument to condemn any language variant, taking up 99.3% of all epithets; the only other epithet used in this decade is GRAMMAR, which is used twice. The primacy of PURITY already recedes in the 1920s and 1930. Even World War II does not seem to have slowed down the decreasing importance of PURITY and GERMANISMS: use of the epithet PURITY plummets in the 1940s and becomes marginal in later decades.

The second trend that can be observed is the development of the epithet SYSTEM, which as a whole has steadily gained importance. At its peak, in the 1980s, epithets from the category SYSTEM are used in 44.8% of all cases. After that, however, this group of epithets gradually declines in relative importance, by approximately 2% per

¹² While the number of language advice publications makes the findings fairly robust, they should not be interpreted as saying that purism has died out in the Netherlands. Anti-English sentiments especially have run high in the last few decades, and pamphlets and other publications condemning the use of English continue to be published (e.g., F. Bakker, Ulje, and Van Zijderveld 2015).

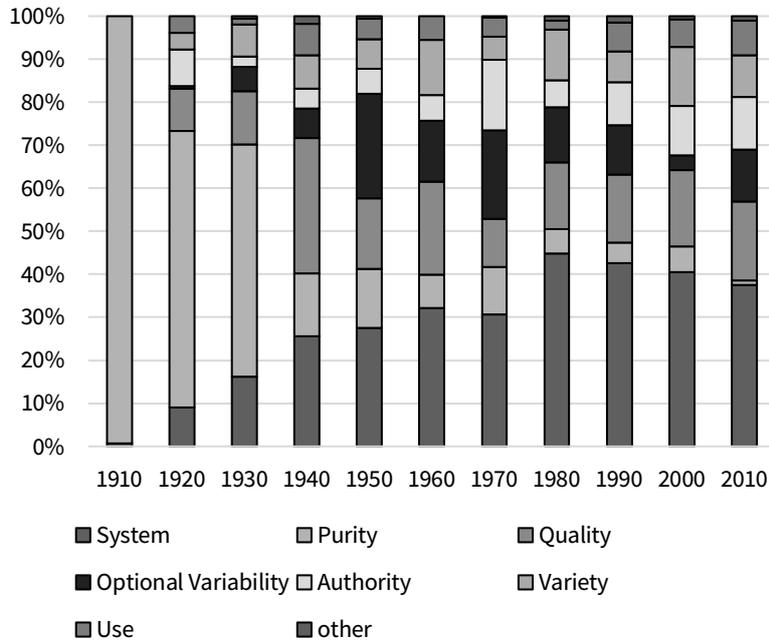


Figure 2.4. Development of top-level epithets 1910-2016

decade. Again, looking at the specific epithets within this category (SYSTEM, NATURE, HISTORY and GRAMMAR) gives a more nuanced view (see Figure 2.5). Here we see that the relative importance of GRAMMAR increases steadily, ending up with more than 90% of cases in the category SYSTEM since 2000. The advance of GRAMMAR is at the cost of NATURE and HISTORY, although this last category has a minor revival in the 1960s and 1970s.

The overall development, then, is from the use of epithet PURITY to epithet GRAMMAR. Aside from this, there are a few other minor trends in the use of epithets. The 1970s see a large increase in the use of the epithets AUTHORITY and AUTHORITY_DICTIONARY. This is the result of a single work, namely *Germanismen in het Nederlands* by Theissen (1978). This work, which is a popular reworking of the academic dissertation by the same author, specifically examines the role that dictionaries play in the acceptance of usage items. Another example is the epithet MODE, which seems to have an unusual strong

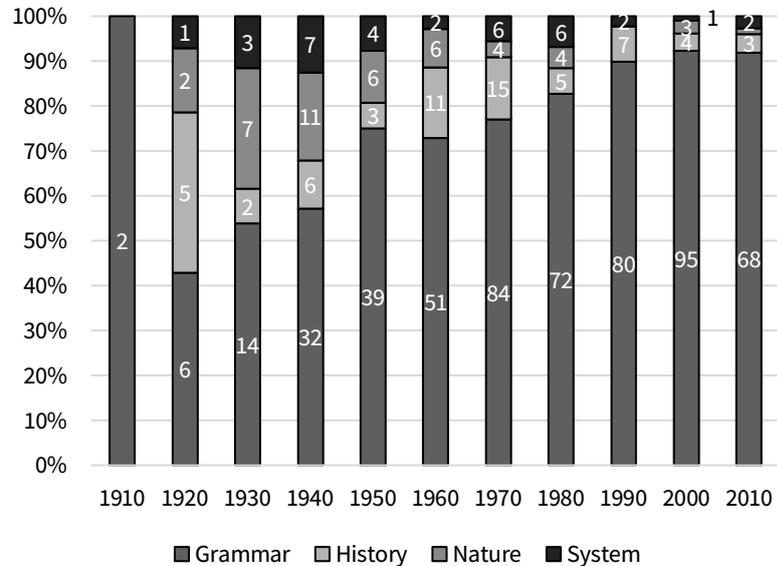


Figure 2.5. Relative development of epithets in category SYSTEM over time

presence in the 2000s. This is due to an overrepresentation of a specific usage item in the sample: the comparative markers *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’. This usage item, one of the most well-known in Dutch (cf. Hubers and De Hoop 2013), accounts for almost half of all cases of the epithet MODE in the sample of this decade (14 out of a total of 30 occurrences). As I show in Chapter 4, the epithet MODE is strongly associated with this issue.

2.4.4 Relation between usage item and epithet

The data on which this chapter is based is very rich, and many details deserve exploration. Because of space constraints, I limit myself to discussing two key observations. First, specific epithets are rarely bound to specific authors or specific usage items. Only in a few cases (as discussed in the preceding section) do authors show a more than average preference for any specific epithet. Similarly, specific usage items do not generally correlate with specific epithets (again, some exceptions aside, such as *als/dan* ‘as/than’), nor do specific epithets occur exclusively with certain usage items. For example, the epithet LOGIC (n=58) is found in 28 works by 27 different authors and is connected to 38 different usage items. In contrast to this, the

condemnation of the usage item *tot de beste behoren* ‘belong to the best’ does frequently happen by making use of the epithet LOGIC, namely in 77.8% of cases. This usage item is, however, very low-frequent: it only occurs nine times in the sample, seven times of which LOGIC is used. However, it does raise the question of whether there are indeed different patterns in use for frequent vs low-frequent items: perhaps the low-frequent category is more likely to be condemned with the same argumentation.

2.4.5 Relation between argument and level of acceptance

Another issue is the possible connection between level of acceptance and argumentation. To see whether this connection existed, I examined the 87 cases where optional variability was deemed completely acceptable. These cases were given 140 epithets. The distribution of these epithets is indeed somewhat different compared to the whole set. Notably, AUTHORITY epithets make up 28% of arguments used in relation to complete acceptance, as opposed to their 8% for the whole dataset. Specifically, AUTH_DICTIONARY is found a lot more frequently in the set of accepted precepts (11.4%) than would be expected based on the whole number of tags (2.3%). Another notably different distribution is found in USE_FREQUENCY (11.4% with acceptance vs 3.9% total).

A connection to the complete acceptance of variation does not necessarily mean that an epithet is used to argue in favor of this acceptance. In several cases, arguments both for and against a linguistic variant are presented in the discussion of a usage item (van der Meulen 2020a). For example, when Theissen (1978: 15) discusses the usage item *aantrekken (arbeidskrachten)* ‘hiring (of workers)’, he states that although some purists and the Van Dale dictionary consider this word a GERMANISM, it is generally accepted, even by Koenen, another dictionary. So, three arguments are used against the acceptance of the variant (GERMANISM, AUTH_DICTIONARY, AUTHORITY) and two in favor (AUTH_DICTIONARY, AUTH_FREQUENCY). Such a careful consideration of arguments in favor and against the acceptance of a certain usage item is, however, rare: in the 87 cases where variation is completely acceptable, 81.1% of arguments supports the acceptance.

2.5 Conclusions

The study of evaluative epithets yields valuable insights into the values that language users attribute to their language. Of course, the values found in the publications used for the current chapter should not be taken as completely representative for the whole population of Dutch speakers, present or past. Rather, they represent the values of the writers of prescriptivist publications, whose views may or may not be representative for the general population. Whether this is the case is unclear: there has been no research into the relationship between judgments by usage advisors and judgments by ‘normal’ language users.

Based on the research presented in this chapter, we can conclude that the dominant values in twentieth century Dutch prescriptivism are ‘the Dutch language should be pure’ (and its subsidiary ‘the Dutch language should not be influenced by German’) and ‘the Dutch language should be grammatical, should obey the rules’. Additionally, like in English, the prescriptive value ‘language should not contain variation’ is pervasive and continues to play an important role in Dutch prescriptivism. Furthermore, a variety of other values play a role in Dutch prescriptivism, including ‘language should have a good effect’ and ‘good language is determined by what an authority says’. This final value seems to tie in with the acceptance of variation to some extent, which could mean that an additional value of some importance is ‘variation in language is acceptable when an authority says it is’.

Several changes in the relative importance of values can be observed over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Although in the early 1900s the dominant (even ubiquitous) value in Dutch prescriptivism is ‘the Dutch language should be pure’, this value starts to disappear from the 1940s onwards, becoming marginal in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. In its place, ‘the Dutch language should be grammatical’ becomes the most important value expressed. However, in recent years, there seems to be a slow but steady decline in importance of this value. As for the acceptance of optional variation, there is again a slow but steady increase in the acceptance of variation, either completely or in restricted contexts, from the 1940s onwards. The acceptance of variation is to some extent connected to the value ‘language should follow what an authority says’.

In general, while the number of different values is limited, there seem to be few patterns in their distribution. First of all, authors do not appear to have a preference for certain values, with the exception of Kolkhuis Tanke (1975) and Theissen (1978). Secondly, specific usage items seem only to be related to specific values in a few cases (*als/dan* ‘as/than’, *behoren tot de beste* ‘belong to the best’), and, conversely, specific values do not seem to be exclusively connected to specific usage items. So, it seems as if value judgements are made ad-hoc. This raises the question of how language advisors determine their evaluations and what kind of role intertextuality plays in Dutch prescriptivism. Some guides do mention other language advice publications (notably Hermkens 1974), but whether this has any effect on their treatment of usage items remains to be seen. At this point it seems as if Dutch prescriptivists follow their English colleagues in their preference for *ipse dixit* judgments (cf. Algeo 1991; Peters 2006).

Research into Dutch prescriptivism since 1900 remains sparse, so more research would be welcome. For example, in several cases, arguments both in favor of and against accepting variation are given. It is unclear at this point, however, if there are patterns in whether any argument is deemed the most important, and if so, which argument this is. Looking into this matter could give more insight in the relative importance of values in the Dutch prescriptive system, and in the interaction between values in general. Other possible paths of research involve widening the parameters of this chapter, which can be done in several ways. Firstly, the set of entries can be expanded, for more robust findings. Doing this can also shed more light on the development of specific usage items. Secondly, the use of epithets in the post-standardization twentieth and twenty-first century can be compared to earlier stages of the standardization of Dutch. This could shed light on the supposed *ipse dixit*-ness of the judgments. And finally, the research can be widened to include other language areas, such as Flemish, or completely different languages, such as English.

Appendix 2.1 Annotation schema used with underlying values

This appendix contains all values associated with the lower-level epithets.

Category	Value
PURITY	Language should be pure, free of the influences of other language
ANGLICISM	Language should be free of English influence
GERMANISM	Language should be free of German influence
GALLICISM	Language should be free of French influence
OTHER_LANGUAGE	Language should be free of the influence of another language
VARIETY	A specific variety of language is the right one
GEOGRAPHIC	The language spoken in certain geographic regions is right/wrong
MODE	Language should be used in the proper mode
REGISTER	Language should be used in the proper register
STANDARD	Language should be used in accordance to the standard
AUTHORITY	Good language is determined by what an authority says
AUTH_SOCIO	Good language is determined by what a certain group of people says
AUTH_DICTIONARY	Good language is determined by what a dictionary says
AUTH_GRAMMAR	Good language is determined by what a grammar or grammarian says
AUTH_LITERARY	Good language is determined by what an author says
AUTH_FREQUENCY	Good language is determined by what a number of people say
USE	Good language is determined by what an authority does
USE_SOCIO	Good language is determined by what a certain group of people does
USE_DICTIONARY	Good language is determined by what a dictionary does
USE_GRAMMAR	Good language is determined by what a grammar or grammarian does
USE_LITERARY	Good language is determined by what an author does
USE_FREQUENCY	Good language is determined by what a number of people do
QUALITY	Language should be qualitative
LOGIC	Language should be logical
BEAUTY	Language should be beautiful
CARE	Language should be well taken care of

Language should be pure and grammatical 51

Category	Value
QUANTITY	Language should be used in the right quantities
EFFECT	Language should have good effects
SYSTEM	Language should adhere to the system
HISTORY	Language should be used according to history
NATURE	Language should be used according to the nature of the language
GRAMMAR	Language should be grammatical
OTHER_ARGUMENT	There is some other reason why language is good or bad
OPTIONAL_VARIA	Language should not contain variation

Chapter 3

Prescriptivism and the evaluation of variation: a changing relationship?

Abstract

The suppression of optional variability has long been assumed to be a key aspect of all phases of the standardization process. Recently, however, it has been claimed that in prescriptivism this position is diminishing in strength, while others hold that prescriptivism has not become more lenient. Both positions, however, are based on limited evidence. In this chapter, I investigate the development of the prescriptive stance towards the acceptability of optional variation in Dutch. I do this using 461 verdicts for eleven morphosyntactic phenomena from 117 prescriptive publications in the 20th and 21st century. Results show that of the eleven variables, five stay the same over time with regard to the acceptance of variation. In three cases verdicts become more lenient, while in three other cases they become stricter. While this seemingly shows that language norms do not necessarily become more lenient over time, I argue against such a conclusion, as it implies a state of inertia. Rather, I would say that the suppression of optional variability remains important in prescriptivism, but that stances are changing for particular usage items, both towards more leniency and towards more strictness. In general, as suppression of variation is only barely the dominant position, I argue for a more nuanced approach to this theoretical concept in the study of prescriptivism.

3.1 Introduction

In 1985, James and Lesley Milroy published their seminal book *Authority in Language*. In this work, they critically approach a large number of different aspects of the English standard language ideology, including its implications for education, the interplay with social factors, and the ways in which the standard language ideology is maintained and strengthened. One of the central points they make is that “the process of language standardization involves *the suppression of optional variability in language*” (original emphasis, Milroy and Milroy 1999: 6). This phenomenon, they argue, plays a role in all stages and levels of the standardization process. For example, in selecting a language variety or dialect as the basis for the standard variety, other varieties are suppressed on a macro-linguistic level. On a micro level, we see this suppression, or intolerance, as they call it somewhat more nuanced elsewhere (1999: 22), playing a role in the choice between language variants “at all levels of language—in pronunciation (phonology), spelling, grammar (morphology and syntax) and lexicon” (1999: 30). Specific micro-level cases of variation, where one of several existing functionally more or less equivalent variants is condemned, are usually called *usage items* or *usage problems*. Some of these usage items are *old chestnuts*: cases of variation which are repeated again and again in prescriptive publications, such as the split infinitive, preposition stranding and the greengrocer’s apostrophe. Others are recent additions to the prescriptive canon, such as the use of *literally* (Kostadinova 2018b) or the pronunciation of *GIF* (Van der Meulen 2020a).

Since Milroy and Milroy’s book, the principle of suppression of optional variability has been used extensively for empirical research into language norms, both on the macro and the micro level. On the micro level, there has been quite a substantial amount of research that studies precepts (i.e., particular manifestations of usage items as found in, for example, language advice publications) based on a threefold distinction in the level of acceptability of optional variation. This approach distinguishes between complete acceptance, limited acceptance, and complete non-acceptance of optional variation for a given usage item. Since its introduction by Peters and Young (1997, although see also Cresswell 1975), this framework has been used by many authors for as many circumstances and languages (although with a strong emphasis on English). For example, Yáñez-Bouza (2015) uses it to classify remarks

about preposition stranding in the history of English until 1900, while Albakry employs the framework to investigate five usage items in eighteen usage guides and style manuals from the second half of the twentieth century (2007). For a slightly different operationalization in French of essentially the same approach, see Poplack and Dion (2009). While results indicate that the other stances (i.e., limited and complete acceptability of variation) are not completely absent from prescriptive works, it seems to be generally assumed that the ‘basic’ viewpoint in prescriptivism is indeed a complete unacceptability of optional variation.

There is debate, however, whether or not the suppression of variation may be diminishing in strength over time. It has been widely observed that recent years have seen a broader inclusion of language variants and varieties in many standardized European languages (see the contributions in Kristensen and Coupland 2011). For Dutch, for example, Grondelaers and Van Hout state that there is “evidence that SLI [standard language ideology] is being ‘relaxed’ to accommodate (some) variability” (2011: 115). Most of the existing evidence, however, stems from attitudinal research: to what extent a similar trend can be observed in prescriptivist publications is less clear. On the one hand are those who say that this is indeed the case. For example, Crystal posits that we are witnessing “a move away from the prescriptive ethos of the past 250 years” (2006: 408). On the other hand, we find researchers like Lukač, who asserts that usage guides “have not as a matter of course become more lenient” (2018: 8) over the last two centuries. For Dutch, the investigation in Chapter 2 of this thesis showed that prescriptive comments became more lenient across a sample of 1,600 precepts over the 20th and 21st century, but the sampling method used for that chapter prevents us from zooming in on particular usage items.

Whether or not prescriptive publications are becoming more lenient in general, then, remains up for debate. An additional question is whether there are differences with regard to the evaluation of particular usage items. As Anderwald notes, in research studying the effects of prescriptivism on language use, there seem to be substantial differences between usage items, and as a result, “rather than take prescriptivism as a given wholesale, then, detailed investigations of individual [usage items] are essential” (2019: 102). There is no reason to assume that this is not also the case with regard to the prescriptive treatment of usage items. Thus, the present research sets out to investigate whether the stance towards variation

in prescriptive publications stays the same over time, or whether it develops, either towards a more lenient or a stricter evaluation of optional variation. As a starting point I take a set of morphosyntactic usage items, which I study both as a whole and on a case-by-case basis. Also, as the vast majority of research into prescriptive publications focusses on English, I look into Dutch prescriptive publications, which form a substantial genre, in particular in the 20th and 21st century. In the rest of this chapter, I firstly describe the data and methods I used (§3.2), before moving on to results (§3.3) and a general discussion (§3.4).

3.2 Data and method

The Dutch normative situation is comparable to the English, insofar as that there is no language academy or governing body which enforces a single top-down language norm. As a result, we see private publications by self-appointed authorities appearing, which contain precepts about particular cases of linguistic variation on all linguistic levels (i.e., pronunciation, grammar, lexis, etc.). For Dutch, the normative tradition goes back to the 1550s, but prescriptive publications that focus only on specific cases of unwanted only started to appear from the late 19th, early 20th century onwards (Van der Sijs 2019a: 183). Since then, hundreds of prescriptive publications have appeared. These have differed on a number of parameters, for example their intended target audience (general or specialized); linguistic focus (again, general or specialized); and geographic focus on either the Netherlands, Flanders, or both. I use publications with a general linguistic focus that appeared between 1900 and 2018, and which were aimed at a broad audience of adult mother tongue speakers in the Netherlands (see Chapter 2 for more details).

For the current research, I focused on morphosyntactic variables. As a starting point, I used nine of variables used by Bennis and Hinskens (2014, see also Chapter 8). However, I removed two of their variables (*hij heeft/hij heb*, ‘he has’, and subject-*zij/hun* ‘they/them’), as precepts about these cases were found only very infrequently in the prescriptive publications. Instead, I added four other cases: verb order in subordinate clauses, double negation, the use of 3rd person personal pronoun direct and indirect object *hen/hun* ‘them’, the use of the infinitival complementizer *om* ‘for to’, which are

among the most frequently found usage items in Dutch prescriptivism (see Van der Meulen 2021). This brought the total number of variables to eleven.

For each of these variables, I extracted statements about usage, using a selection of 117 prescriptive publications from the period 1940-2018. The reason for beginning with 1940 is that before that year we find very few references to the grammatical problems under scrutiny here. All in all, my approach yielded 461 statements about the eleven variables from 103 prescriptive publications (see Appendix A at the end of this thesis for all sources used). Table 3.1 gives an overview of the variables and the frequency with which they were found.

Table 3.1. Variables studied in present research with translations and number of occurrences in language advice publications

Standard variant Dutch	Non-standard variant	English translation ¹³	No. of precepts
<i>het boek dat</i>	<i>het boek wat</i>	the book that/which	68
<i>een aantal mensen is</i>	<i>een aantal mensen zijn</i>	a number of people is/are	65
<i>ik geef hun een boek</i>	<i>ik geef hen een boek</i>	I give them a book	57
<i>hij beloofde \emptyset te komen</i>	<i>hij beloofde om te komen</i>	he promised to/for to come	45
<i>de vrouw van wie</i>	<i>de vrouw waarvan</i>	the woman whose/of which	43
<i>u heeft</i>	<i>u hebt</i>	you.POL have	36
<i>ik heb nooit</i>	<i>ik heb nooit geen</i>	I have never/never no	35
<i>dat hij is gekomen</i>	<i>dat hij gekomen is</i>	that he has come/come has	34
<i>je kunt</i>	<i>je kan</i>	you can	27
<i>een aardig meisje</i>	<i>een aardige meisje</i>	'a nice/nice.INFL girl'	26
<i>een heel mooie auto</i>	<i>een hele mooie auto</i>	'a very/very.INFL nice car'	25

¹³ In this chapter, I use the gloss POL to mean 'polite form' and INFL to mean 'inflected form'.

The 461 statements were tagged for their stance towards variation, following the threefold distinction mentioned before. This meant that statements could show a complete acceptance of variation (Example 1), a limited acceptance of variation (Example 2), or considered optional variation to be completely unacceptable (Example 3). Due to the distribution of the results over time, I classified the results per decade.

- (1) In een groot aantal gevallen kan *om* naar keuze gebruikt worden.
'In a large number of cases *for to* can be used optionally.'
(Overduin 1986: 318)
- (2) Daarom doet men verstandig als men deze verbuiging beperkt tot de spreektaal.
'That's why one would be wise to limit this inflection to spoken language.'
(Meijers 1959: 37)
- (3) "*We hadden veel last van het stof wat overal lag.*" 'Wat' is hier onjuist gebruikt; 'dat' is in dit geval de correcte vorm.
"We were bothered by the dust which was everywhere." 'Which' is used incorrectly here; in this case, 'that' is the correct form.'
(De Rijk 1994: 74)

3.3 Results

Figure 3.1 shows the overall distribution of the three stances towards variation for the whole data set of 461 precepts. It is clear that non-acceptance of variation is the dominant stance, with 53.8% of the

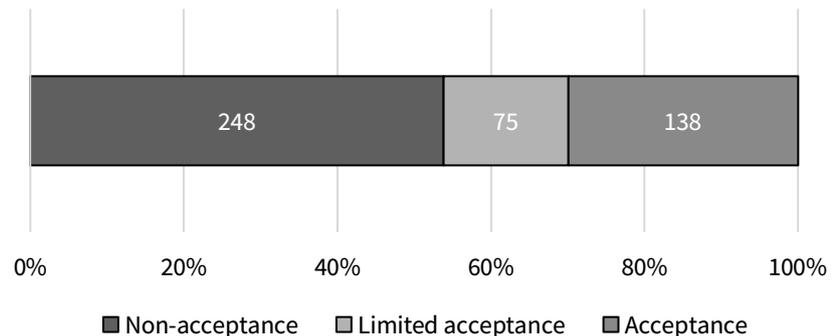


Figure 3.1. Overall distribution of statements across stances towards variation (n=461)

precepts labelled as such. However, both limited (16.3%) and complete acceptance (29.9%) are present to a much larger degree than would be expected based on the categorical nature of the statement by Milroy and Milroy. Condemnation of variation, then, is definitely not the only stance towards variation in Dutch prescriptivism, an observation that is echoed by results from other research (e.g., Peters and Young 1997; Poplack and Dion 2009).

3.3.1 General development of stance over time

Next, I looked at the development of stance towards variation over time, initially again for all usage items and precepts combined (see Figure 3.2). Here we see that there are substantial fluctuations in the level of acceptance of optional variation in different decades. On one extreme, in the 1940s the majority of precepts dismissed variation altogether (twenty precepts, 64.5%). Conversely, we see that in the 1970s, only six precepts categorically dismissed optional variation (31.6%). However, this peak in acceptance of variation in the 1970s is due to one very lenient language advice publication, Theissen (1978). When we leave this outlier out, the degree of complete unacceptability of variation wavers between 64.5% in the 1940s and 45.6% in the 1980s.

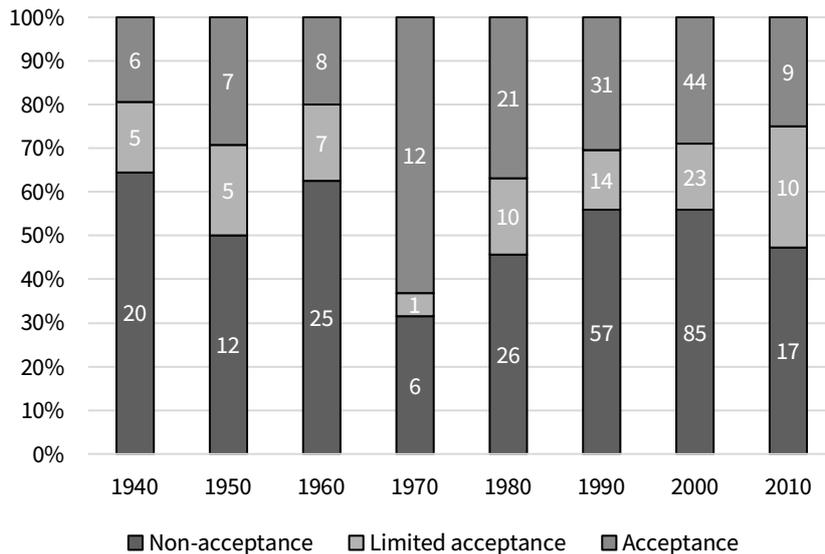


Figure 3.2. Distribution of statements across stances towards variation over time

As Figure 3.2 shows, our data mirrors the aforementioned statement by Lukač (2018: 8): similar to English, Dutch prescriptive publications do not seem to become more lenient over time. This does not mean that the degree of acceptance of variation is stable: rather, there is a general wavering between the two extremes, with little linear progression over time. One additional observation is the relation between limited and complete acceptability. We see that the degree of limited acceptability varies between 13.7% in the 1990s to 27.8% in the 2010 (leaving out the 1970s again). Although the most recent prescriptive publications show the largest degree of limited acceptability, again, we don't see any definite progression. However, with regard to the degree of complete acceptability of variation we do see a development: starting from the 1980s onwards, this degree slowly declines, from 36.8% in the 1980s to 25.0% in the 2010s.

3.3.2 Development of stance per usage item

For the next stage, I looked at the development of the stance towards variation per usage item, again at first without taken temporal development into account. Figure 3.3 gives an overview of the data for each of the eleven usage items separately, ordered from left to right based on the proportionate degree of complete acceptance of variation. On the far left is the usage item which shows the highest degree of acceptance, *dat hij is gekomen/gekomen is* 'that he has come/that he come has', with 88.2%; conversely, on the far right we see *een aardig/aardige meisje* 'a nice/nice.INFL girl', for which not a single prescriptive author accepts the non-standard variant.

When we compare the results for complete and limited acceptance of variation, we see that six out of eleven variables in our data show some degree of acceptability of optional variability to be the dominant position. What is more, only in one case, *een aardig/aardige meisje* 'a nice/nice.INFL girl', is the condemnation complete. So, again, while suppression is definitely the more prevalent stance towards optional variability, it is far from the only one.

It is abundantly clear from Figure 3.3 that different usage items show very different degrees of acceptance of variation. Two usage items in particular are very lenient towards variation (*dat hij is gekomen/gekomen is* 'that he has come/that he come has' and *u heeft/hebt* 'you.POL have'), with 88.2%; and 86.1% respectively of the prescriptive precepts showing a complete acceptance of optional variation. Next, there are three usage items that show acceptance

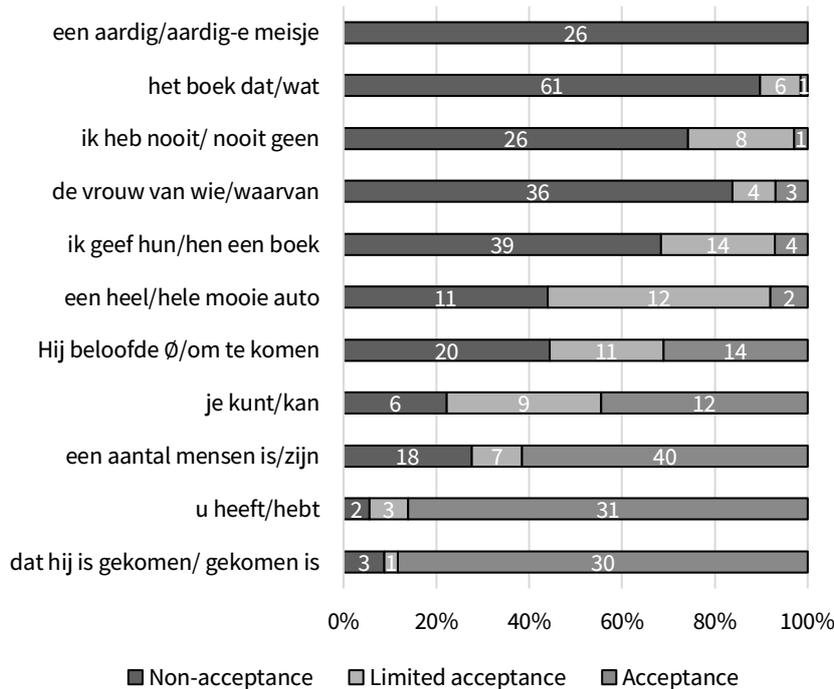


Figure 3.3. Distribution of stances towards variation per usage item

between 61.5% (*een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’) and 31.1% (*hij beloofde \emptyset /om te komen* ‘he promised \emptyset /for to come’). Finally, there are six usage items for which a complete acceptance of optional variation occurs in less than 10% of precepts. Importantly, the distribution amongst different language advice publications is not random for these low-score items. In fact, the eleven precepts where we do find complete acceptance of variation originate in just six different publications, one of which contains four of such precepts (De Taalclub 2008). Thus, for the vast majority of prescriptive writers, complete acceptance of variation for these six usage items is indeed not possible.

The category of limited acceptability shows an additional pattern. When we look at the proportion of precepts displaying limited acceptance of variation, we see that the four variables with the most extreme degree of acceptance (both complete and none) have the least number of precepts with limited acceptability. Moreover, towards the middle of Figure 3.3 the proportion of precepts that do

show limited acceptability increases, with *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very/very-INFL nice car’ (48%) and *je kan/kunt* ‘you can’ (33.3%) showing the highest degree of limited acceptance. Such a pattern could be an indication of a diachronic development, where a usage item goes through a phase of limited acceptability before it becomes completely acceptable. However, as we will see in the next section, such diachronic patterns are not necessarily present in our current data set.

There does not appear to be a correlation between the frequency with which a usage item is mentioned and the degree of condemnation. The most frequently found usage item, *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’, is second to last in acceptance of variation; the second-most frequently found usage item, *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’ is the second-highest ranking in terms of acceptance. Conversely, the highest-ranking item in terms of complete acceptance, *dat hij is gekomen/gekomen is* ‘that he has come/that he come has’, ranks eight in terms of frequency of precepts.

3.3.3 Development of stance per usage item over time

Finally, we look at the development over time for individual variables. Because of the scarcity of the data for especially the earlier decades for most variables, I have divided the data in four time periods of twenty years. Three developments are theoretically possible with regard to any variable: the position towards optional variability can stay the same, the evaluations become more strict over time, or the prescriptivists become more lenient.

All three possible patterns are found in our data. Five variables show no development over time with regard to the acceptance of variation: *een aardig/aardige meisje* ‘a nice/nice.INFL’, *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’, *ik geef hen/hun een boek* ‘I give them a book’, *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’, and *u heeft/hebt* ‘you.POL have’. This group contains variables from all points of the acceptance spectrum. We see variables such as *u heeft/hebt*, for which variation was acceptable to most writers starting in the 1940s and continuing up until present day, but also *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’, for which variation is mostly condemned for the whole time period. In all cases (with the exception of *een aardig/aardige meisje* ‘a nice/nice.INFL’) all variables in this category show certain writers to diverge from the general view, for

example in condemning a variable which is largely accepted, but such evaluations seem idiosyncratic.

In six cases, there is a development over time with regard to the acceptance of variation. Three of these show a trend towards more leniency: the verb order in subordinate clauses, *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very/very.INFL nice car’, and *hij beloofde \emptyset /om te komen* ‘he promised \emptyset /for to come’. In the case of the verb order in subordinate clauses, the two times this variable is mentioned in the 1940s, the word order with the auxiliary verb in final position (*dat hij gekomen is* ‘that he come has’) is condemned. From the 1950s onwards, however, all publications completely accept the variation. Here, then, we do in fact see norms becoming more lenient over time, although ‘over time’ already happened midway through the twentieth century. A somewhat similar development can be observed with regard to *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very/very.INFL nice car’. As Figure 3.4 shows, the period between 1980-1999 showed a large proportion of non-acceptance (83.3%), but the subsequent period saw a decrease of this share to 35.7%, as well as the emergence of two publications that completely accepted both variants.

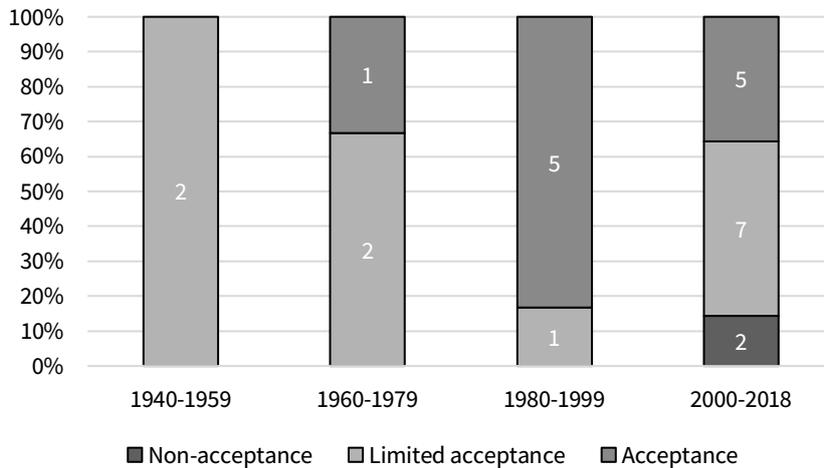


Figure 3.4. Development of *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very/very.INFL nice car’ over time

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The clearest example of change towards leniency can be observed with *hij beloofde \emptyset /om te komen* ‘he promised \emptyset /for to come’ (Figure 3.5). Interestingly, this variable has the best distribution over time, with prescriptivists in all periods mentioning this variable, giving a clear picture of the development. The first precept in which variation is accepted is in 1959, and from then onwards, there is a gradual but substantial increase in the acceptance of variation, towards 40% of authors completely accepting variation and 33.3% of authors partially accepting variation in the final time period. In three cases we see that norms are actually becoming more strict: *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’, *je kan/kunt* ‘you can’, and *ik heb nooit/nooit geen* ‘I have never/never no’. First of all, for double negation, we see that in the period 1940-1990 seven out of seventeen prescriptive publications accept optional variation in spoken language. From 1990 onwards, however, only two out of the sixteen precepts accept variation to some degree (one limited, one complete). For *je kunt/kan* ‘you can’, all but one of the prescriptive publications that mention this variable up until the mid-1980s completely accept variation, with only one showing partial acceptance. From then onwards, however, we see a strong increase in both limited acceptability and complete condemnation of the non-standard variant.

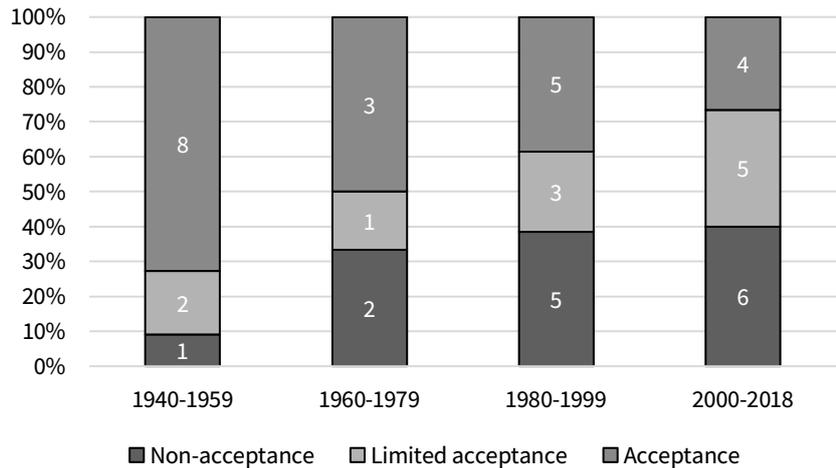


Figure 3.5. Development of stance towards variation concerning *hij beloofde \emptyset /om te komen* ‘he promised \emptyset /for to come’ over time

Finally, we see a decrease in acceptance of variation for *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’. As Figure 3.6 shows, this item showed a complete acceptance of variation of around 80% between 1940 and 1999, but since then the proportion of prescriptive publications that condemn optional variation for this variable has increased greatly.

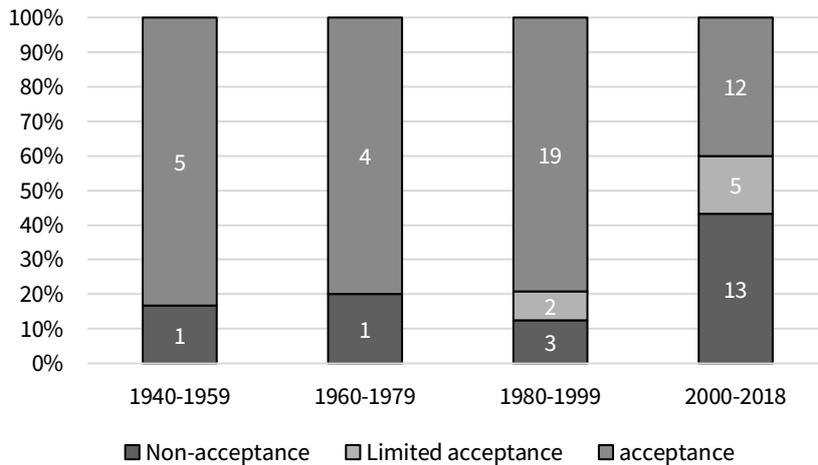


Figure 3.6. Development of stance towards variation concerning *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’ over time

3.4 Discussion and conclusion

The present research shows that, as far as rules for Dutch morphosyntax in the 20th and 21st century go, prescriptivist publications do not as a whole become more lenient over time. When I combined my data, we saw that there is a slight increase in cases where variation is completely accepted, from 19.4% in the 1940s to 25.0% in the 2010s. For the same time period, the proportion of limited acceptability increases from 16.1% to 27.8%. However, earlier decades show comparable (1950s) or even higher proportions of acceptability (1980s). The seemingly safest conclusion to draw from this, then, is that taken as a whole, prescriptive publications in different decades vary somewhat in their condemnation but largely maintain the same level of acceptance of variation.

When we zoom in on specific variables, we do see developments over time. Verdicts about variation stay the same over

time for five variables, but for three variables the verdicts actually become less inclined to accept variation. Conversely, for three variables the verdicts did become more lenient, although in one of these cases the change was already completed in the 1950s. There does not seem to be a relationship between the development of the level of acceptance over time and the frequency with which a usage item is mentioned. This indicates that salience, i.e., the degree to which prescriptivists are aware of particular variation, does not influence the degree of acceptance. Also, the variables that show no development over time show different degrees of acceptance, showing that there is not one path from non-acceptance to acceptance for usage items.

The fact that we find all three possible developments of stance towards variation shows just how crucial it is not to draw too general conclusions about the evolution of prescriptivism based on a limited set of usage items or linguistic variables. As the present research shows, by stating that prescriptivism *as a whole* does not become more lenient, we fail to do justice to a highly complex and variable situation. Moreover, such a general statement implies that prescriptivism is in a state of immobility. However, as we saw, that is not the case: since the 1940s, the stance towards variation has changed for more variables than it has not. In light of the present research, then, I would say that prescriptivism is both inert and in flux over time, depending on which variable you look at. We should, then, focus on nuanced descriptions of individual features, as only by exploring particular variables can we truly start to understand how prescriptivism works.

How and why the prescriptive stance towards variation changes for some variables but not for others remains a question. It is possible that precepts may change as a result of changing attitudes or changing actual language usage, but even that is only shifting the question, rather than answering it. After all, why is actual language usage itself changing? Also, the question whether actual language usage influences precepts or the other way around has not been answered satisfactorily and may well also differ between variables (see Chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis). As Rutten and Vosters state, even though “a host of studies has been devoted to the relationship between norms and usage (...), it is clear that there is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question” (2021: 78). Finally, the grammatical nature of the variable may be another factor in causing precepts to change. This notion is reinforced by results from Chapter 2, which showed that, when we also take lexical prescriptivism into account,

there does seem to be a gradual loosening of norms. Differences in prescriptive approach between different parts of the linguistic system, however, remain under-researched.

On a more theoretical level, it seems feasible to revisit the central tenet of optional variability. As we saw when we looked at all the data together, while there is a slight majority of cases in which variation is completely condemned, both other positions (limited and complete acceptability) make up almost half of all verdicts. This indicates that the suppression of optional variability may be an important part of prescriptivism (and standardization in general), but it is in no way the only position. Disregarding cases in which variation is accepted, either partially or completely, again does not do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon. As studies of prescriptivism have become more nuanced, so should our approach of this theoretical notion (see M. de Vos and Van der Meulen accepted).

Of course, the present research only takes eleven variables into account: there are hundreds more usage items to study for Dutch, let alone for other languages. As usual, more research into other variables could show whether any of the developments we saw may be more common. Moreover, studying more variables could shed light on whether different types of variables display different behavior. Another aspect that could be developed is the medium of the precept. Recent years have seen a decrease of prescriptive books being published, likely as a result of the increase in online prescriptive sources becoming available. Anecdotal evidence shows that these online sources may be somewhat more lenient than their written counterparts. Perhaps the published books become more fringe, and, as a result, also take more fringe positions. Finally, it might be worthwhile to investigate more qualitatively how prescriptive publications are created, and what considerations play a role for prescriptivist in determining their stance towards variation.

Chapter 4

Do we want more or less variation?

The comparative markers *als* and *dan* 'as/than' in Dutch prescriptivism since 1900

Abstract

The *suppression of optional variability* is a cornerstone of English prescriptivism. For Dutch, however, it is unknown whether this concept is equally important. The goal of this chapter is to investigate which stance towards variation is taken in Dutch prescriptivism, and what arguments are used to support this stance. I address these questions by looking at a group of five usage items that concern the use of comparative conjunctions *als* and *dan* 'as/than' in closely related comparative and equative constructions. Using a collection of 236 precepts from 71 Dutch prescriptive publications concerning these usage items, I show a clear division in the allowance of variation between different usage items. With the standard comparative *groter als/dan* 'bigger as/than', variation is often allowed, but with equative constructions, such as *even groot als* 'equally big as/than' only one variant is ever accepted. Furthermore, the acceptance of variation decreases in general over time. The argumentation that is used shows few patterns and is frequently completely absent. These results contradict assertions that (Dutch) prescriptivism is becoming more accepting of variation and show the *shibbolethisation* of certain usage items.

4.1 Introduction

In prescriptivism, language advice is given regarding specific *usage items*, linguistic constructions where at least some degree of unwanted variation exists or is thought to exist. This variation is targeted, so that only one variant is deemed correct. The use of any other variant is wrong and therefore prohibited, or at least discouraged. For English prescriptivism, this approach to variation is seen as one of the most fundamental characteristics, having been dubbed the *suppression of optional variability* (Milroy and Milroy 1999). This notion has been studied fairly extensively and has indeed been shown to exist under certain circumstances (e.g., Albakry 2007; Peters and Young 1997). In most of the cases that were studied, however, no argumentation is given to support a verdict, making the suppression implicit. This implicitness of argumentation, or assertion without explicit proof, is another well-known characteristic of English prescriptivism, and has been called the *ipse dixit-culture* (Peters 2006: 762).

Whether these two characteristics, suppression of variation and ipse dixit-culture, also exist in Dutch prescriptivism, is currently unknown. The reason for this is that Dutch prescriptivism has received little attention, at least for the period since 1900. Only in a few examples have scholars attempted to map out the various prescriptive publications (Haeseryn 1999), or have they studied the development of the norms for specific usage items (Maureau 1979). However, even these works are limited in scope, as they only superficially discuss the prescriptive tradition and its contents. What can be established is that Dutch prescriptivism operates on the same level as English, in the sense that it consists of usage items. What stance towards variation is taken in these usage items, and how this stance is supported, is the purpose of this chapter to describe. By taking one group of five closely related and particularly salient usage items, I study these two aspects of Dutch prescriptivism, in the process also gaining more insight into the Dutch prescriptive tradition since 1900.

The group of usage items studied for this chapter are the uses of the comparative particles *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’, which is one of the most well-known usage items in the Dutch prescriptive tradition. Normative commentary about *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ dates back to the 16th century, when the first works on Dutch grammar appeared (Van der Sijs 2021). This early commentary shows just how important this

case is to language users and prescriptivists, and indeed, for linguists. This importance is also shown by the amount of research that has focused on this case, especially from a diachronic perspective (De Rooij 1965, 1972; Paardekooper 1950, 1970; Postma 2006; Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen 1963; Stroop 2011, 2014), but also from a theoretical perspective (Reinarz, H. de Vos, and De Hoop 2016) and a synchronic perspective (Hubers and De Hoop 2013). Still, while the comparative markers have received their fair share of attention, no research seems to have been done into the way in which their use is discussed in prescriptivism since 1900.

In this chapter, I describe the development of language advice concerning the comparative particles *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ in Dutch prescriptivism since 1900. I do this by looking at two aspects: the suppression of variability, and the argumentation used in the advice. §4.2 describes the parameters used in collecting the data used for this study, the different aspects of the comparative particles that were studied, and the annotation that was employed. In §4.3, I present the results in terms of how often each usage item is commented upon, and which stances towards variation we find, and which arguments are used to support this stance. I look at these aspects for all usage items combined and for each usage item separately, looking at both all precepts for any usage item as well as their diachronic development. In §4.4, I discuss my findings, after which I draw conclusions in §4.5.

4.2 Method

Language advice publications were chosen for inclusion based on criteria concerning time period, geographic aim, target audience and type of publication. Firstly, the work had to have been published between 1900 and 2017. 1900 was chosen because it marks the rise of a new type of normative work, the so-called *taalverzorgingsboekjes* ‘language training books’ (Van der Wal and Van Bree 2008: 330-331). These works, as opposed to earlier normative grammars, only treat certain offending linguistic items “in isolation, without systematic appraisal of their place in the language” (Peters 2006: 760). Additionally, these works started to be aimed at the population at large, whereas the normative works that appeared in the 19th century were either aimed at teachers, or at linguists. 21st century works were also included, in order to give as up to date an overview of the

diachronic development of Dutch prescriptivism as possible. Secondly, a work had to be aimed explicitly at the Netherlands, either partly or completely. Works that aimed only at Flanders were excluded, because of the different sociolinguistic history, which could result in a very different usage tradition (cf. Vandebussche et al. 2005). Thirdly, I included works that were intended for a general public of mother tongue speakers. This meant that works intended solely for secondary and tertiary education, for L2-speakers, and for specialists were excluded, again because these traditions differ in scope and contents (Veering 1966).

Next, in order to maximize comparability, I limited myself to one medium only: published books. This meant that I had to exclude magazines and internet-based resources. Especially the last type of data could potentially be interesting, but because of its very narrow time-depth combined with its probable high frequency in publication would skew the data and befuddle results. Finally, a publication had to include advice about the use of the comparative particles *als* and *dan*. Based on these parameters, I identified 73 precepts about *als/dan* between 1932 and 2017 (see Appendix A at the end of this thesis),¹⁴ written by 61 different authors. These authors come from several different backgrounds, such as journalism, linguistics and teaching.¹⁵

This chapter focusses on the uses of *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ as comparative conjunctions. I classified the usage items into five different categories: the standard comparative (Example 1), the excepting comparative (Example 2), the equal equative (Example 3), the unequal equative (Example 4), and the negative equative (Example 5). Some of these categories are very closely related, but as the language advice publications treat these usage items separately, so do I. Any of the 73 publications could contain either number and combination of these categories. For example, Kolkhuis Tanke (1975) only discusses the double comparative, while Meijers (1959) discusses all five categories. All in all, my sample set contained 236 precepts.

¹⁴ In fact, 71 publications contained advice about the use of *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’. Remarkably, however, two publications contain two separate and dissimilar precepts each (Houthuys and Permentier 2016; Overduin 1986). I have included both precepts and treat them separately from here on out.

¹⁵ As one reviewer suggested, the background of the authors could play a role in determining their stance and argumentation. While this might be interesting to delve into, it presently unfortunately goes beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that there is no clear development with regards to language advisors from any one group ‘taking over’ at any stage in time.

- (1) Anna is knapper als/dan Pieter
(standard comparative)
'Anna is more handsome as/than Pieter'
- (2) Niemand (anders) als/dan Fatima kwam naar het feest.
(excepting comparative)
'Nobody other as/than Fatima came to the party'
- (3) Pieter is even slim als/dan Jelle
(equal equative)
'Pieter is equally smart as/than Jelle'
- (4) Henk is twee keer zo slim als/dan Rogier
(unequal equative)
'Henk is twice as smart as/than Rogier'
- (5) Hij is niet zozeer lelijk als/dan wel irritant
(negative equative)
'He is not so much ugly as/than he is annoying'

Next, the 236 precepts were annotated using the open source annotation tool *brat* (Stenetorp et al. 2012). Firstly, the expressed stance towards optional variability was determined. I follow the established threefold distinction (Albakry 2007; Peters and Young 1997), by differentiating between complete acceptance (Example 6), limited acceptance (Example 7) and complete non-acceptance of optional variation (Example 8).

- (6) Na de vergrotende trap (comparatief) en na *ander(e)*, *anders*, *elders*, *nergens*, *niemand niet(s)*, *nooit* zijn *dan* en *als* even correct
'After the comparative degree and after *other*, *elsewhere*, *nowhere*, *nobody*, *nothing*, *never than* and *as* are equally correct.'
(Smeyers 1955: 25)
- (7) *Duurder als* in plaats van *duurder dan* wordt niet meer onjuist gevonden, maar *dan* heeft de voorkeur.
'*More expensive as* instead of *more expensive than* is no longer considered to be wrong, but *than* is preferred.' (P. J. Van der Horst 1988: 24)

- (8) *als / dan* Het is: *even groot als, tweemaal zo groot als, maar: groter dan.*
'as / than It is: *as big as, twice as big as, but: bigger than.*
 (Schaafsma 2013: 30)

Finally, I annotated the arguments that were used in the precepts, adapting the annotation schema developed for Chapter 2 of this thesis. This annotation schema was developed bottom-up on the basis of a large collection of Dutch language advice, and so was well-suited for the present task. Tags included different kinds of PURISM (an advice is given because it concerns an Anglicism or Germanism), GRAMMATICALITY (an advice is given because of a certain grammatical rule), SUPPOSED EFFECT (an advice is given because it annoys people) and others. When no argument was given, the label IPSE DIXIT was used (see Appendix 4.1 for an overview of the whole annotation schema).

4.3 Results

In this section I discuss various aspects of the acceptance of variation and the use of argumentation with regard to the different categories of *als* and *dan* 'as/than'. First, I describe the distribution of the precepts between the different categories, and between equative and comparative (§4.3.1). §4.3.2 gives an overview of the stance towards variation per category, with a particular focus on those advices that allow for limited acceptability. In §4.3.3, I give an overview of the diachronic development of the stance towards variation. Finally, I describe the argumentation that is used in the precepts (§4.3.4).

4.3.1 Categorical distribution of precepts

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of the 236 precepts over the five usage items. The maximum for any usage item is 73, which is the number of publications. The graph shows that advice is distributed nearly equally among comparatives and equatives, with 117 and 119 precepts respectively. As for the different usage items, however, there are pronounced differences in their level of inclusion across language advice publications. Of the 73 publications, all but one include a precept about the standard comparative. The excepting comparative is found less frequently, but still in 45 publications (61% of the total).

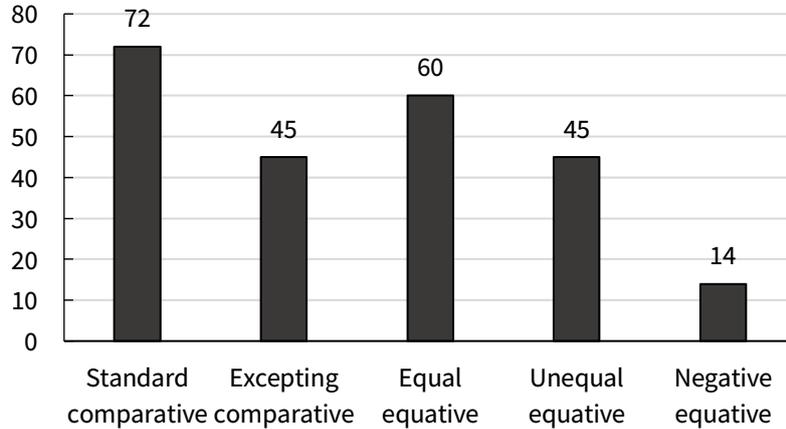


Figure 4.1. Distribution of precepts per usage item (n=236)

Within the equatives the equal equative is the most commonplace, as it is found in 60 publications (82%); advice about the unequal equative is as widespread as the excepting comparative with 45 occurrences (61%). Finally, the negative equative is only addressed in a minority of publications (14, or 19%).

The 73 publications vary in the number of categories that they give advice on. Eight guides give advice about all five categories; conversely, seven guides only give advice about one category. Most publications, however, give advice about three or four categories. However, there do not seem to be patterns that determine which categories of advice are presented together. The only trend is that advice about the negative equative is only given when advice about the equal equative is also given. Also, there are no patterns regarding the distribution of categories over time.

4.3.2 Degree of acceptance of variation per category of usage item

There is a marked division in the level of acceptance of variation for the different categories of usage items (see Figure 4.2). For the comparatives, variation is to some extent accepted. In the case of the standard comparative, almost half (43%) of the advice fully or partially accept variation. With regard to the excepting comparative, this figure is much lower, but still amounts to 16%. As for the three

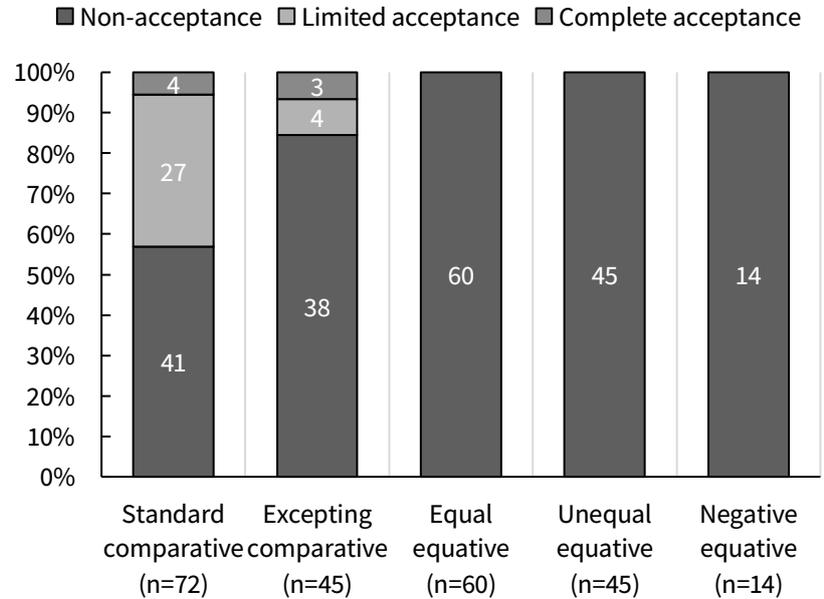


Figure 4.2. Level of acceptance of variation for all precepts per usage item (n=236)

categories of equatives, not a single piece of advice displays any acceptance of variation.

As Figure 4.2 shows, complete acceptance of variation is found in seven cases: four precepts with the standard comparative and three with the excepting comparative. These precepts were distributed over six publications. Of these, only Dezaire (1964) allows for complete variation with the excepting comparative but does not allow variation with the standard comparative. In all cases, publications give more than one precept, showing that acceptance for one category does not mean a general acceptance of variation for all usage items.

A limited degree of variation is permitted in 31 precepts: 27 with the standard comparative and four with the excepting comparative. These precepts are distributed among 25 publications. The advice that is given in these cases can be divided into three types: advice that allows free variation in general, but with a caveat (9), advice that allows free variation in spoken language, but with a caveat (10), and advice that allows free variation in spoken language without a caveat (11).

- (9) 2. Hij speelt beter *als* ik gedacht had. (...) In 2 mag *als* ook, hoewel *dan* beter is.
'2. He plays better *as* I had thought (...) In 2 *as* is also allowed, though *than* is better.' (Edens and Lindeboom 1994: 61)
- (10) *dan*: wanneer men bij vergelijking ongelijkheid vaststelt: *Hij is ouder dan mijn broer*. Opmerking 1: In het laatste geval hoort men heel vaak *als*: *Hij is ouder als mijn broer*. Dat is niet fout, maar *Hij is ouder dan mijn broer* is meer verzorgd Nederlands.
'*than*: when one finds inequality in a comparison: *he is older than my brother*. Remark 1: In the last case one very often hears *as*: *He is older as my brother*. This is not wrong, but *He is older than my brother* is more proper Dutch.' (Apeldoorn and Pot 1981: 21)
- (11) Hoewel *groter als* zeker in spreektaal niet meer fout is, kunt u zich in geschreven tekst maar beter aan de oude regel houden.
'Although *bigger as* is definitely no longer wrong in spoken language, it is better if you comply with the old rule in written texts.' (Ligtvoet 2007: 82)

Of these three types, the second is the most numerous: of the 31 precepts with limited acceptability, 20 allow free variation in spoken language with a caveat of some kind. These caveats are quite varied, and include precepts where use of a variant is discouraged because it is *minder beschaafd* 'less civilized', *minder juist* 'less correct', or because *veel mensen denken dat het fout is* 'many people think that it is wrong'.

4.3.3 Diachronic development of level of acceptance of variation

Figure 4.3 shows the combined diachronic development of the level of acceptance per decade across all five usage items. While there is a marked increase in the number of precepts per decade, the level of acceptance gradually diminishes.¹⁶ In the 1940s, 40% of all precepts accepted at least some variation, but this number had fallen to 11.6% in the 2000s. In the 2010s, variation is no longer allowed in a single

¹⁶ For the 1970s only two publications included advice about the use of the comparative particle *als* and *dan*. This makes it hard to compare with other decades, and so, this decade is ignored in the rest of the analysis. Why the 1970s seem to have produced so few usage advice publications is unclear.

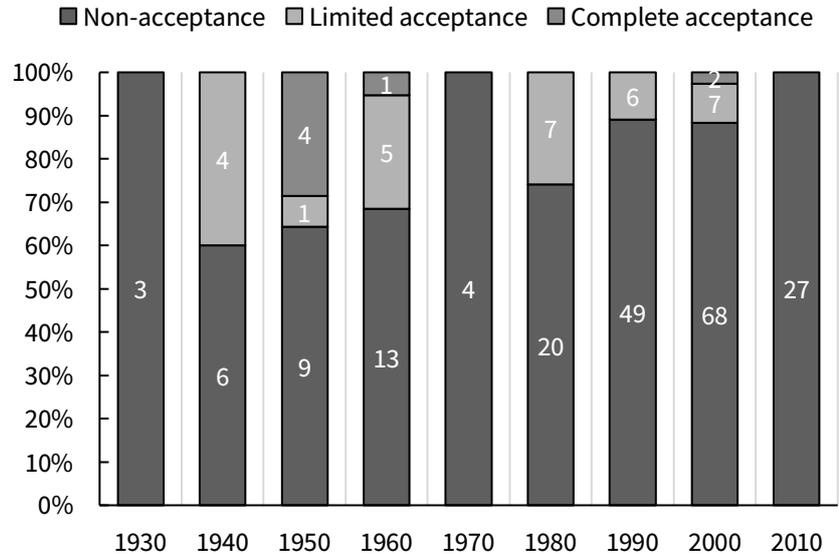


Figure 4.3. Diachronic development of level of acceptance of variation for all precepts combined (n=236)

precept. Additionally, it is noteworthy that complete acceptance of free variation is only found in the 1950s and 1960s, with one exception in the 2000s.¹⁷

4.3.4 The use of argumentation

In the 236 precepts in my sample, I annotated 383 arguments.¹⁸ These arguments were divided over 23 different classes of arguments. As Figure 4.4 shows, the most frequent argument was

¹⁷ However, this one publication in the 2000s, called *Groter als. Nieuwe regels voor het Nederlands van nu* 'Bigger as. New rules for present-day Dutch' (De Taalclub 2008), is suspect for two reasons. First of all, the work accepts variation in every one of the 80 usage items it discusses. This begs the question whether the intention of the work is to give actual language advice or whether this book is more a reflection on the non-acceptance of variation in language advice. Secondly, writer Wim Daniëls (who published this work under the pseudonym De Taalclub 'The Language Club') wrote three more prescriptive works, one of which was written after *Groter als*. In all of these works he categorically condemns variation.

¹⁸ A second annotator, who was not involved in the project, independently annotated a random sample of the data (13%). This resulted in an inter-rater agreement score (Cohen's Kappa) of $\kappa = 0.79$.

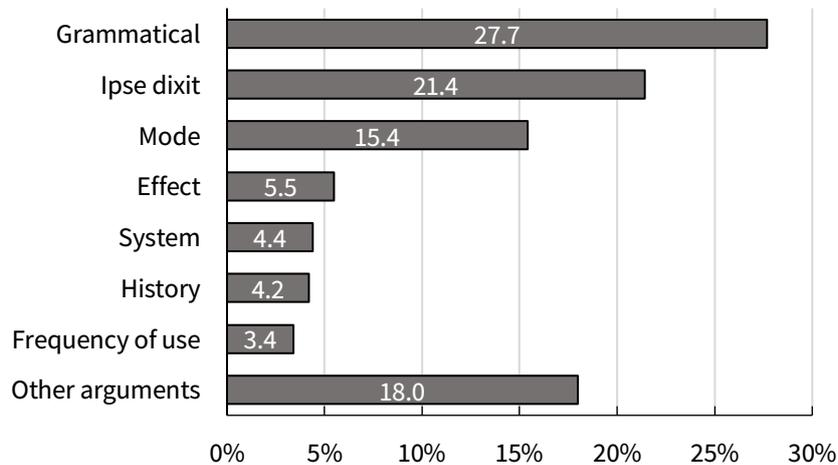


Figure 4.4. Type of arguments used in all precepts combined in %

GRAMMATICALITY (an advice is given because of a grammatical rule), which was found in 27.7% of all precepts. The other frequently encountered arguments were IPSE DIXIT (no explicit argument was given, meaning that a variant is approved because the writer says it is right) and MODE (a variant is approved because it is considered to be right in written or spoken language), with 21.4 and 15.4% respectively. Next, four arguments make up between 3 and 6% of all arguments: EFFECT (a variant is approved because it has a certain effect on language users), SYSTEM (a variant is approved because it fits within the system of a language), HISTORY (a variant is approved because it was right in the past), and FREQUENCY OF USE (a variant is approved because a number of people use it). The remaining sixteen arguments were attested in less than 3% of cases each, meaning that they occurred a maximum of 11 times each.

From a diachronic perspective, the same arguments remain in use over the whole time period. Some decades show slightly increased or decreased use of any particular argument, but very few patterns or trends can be observed. The only major development seems to be an increase in the importance of GRAMMATICALITY as an argument, from 7.4% of all arguments in the 1950s to 36.4% in the 2000s. The present decade has seen a minor fall, as GRAMMATICALITY represents 33.3% of all arguments used in that decade. Whether this trend will continue in the future is at this point uncertain. Two other minor observations can be made. In the 1990s two arguments were

overrepresented: HISTORY and FREQUENCY OF OPINION. For both these arguments 40% of their total number of tags is found in that time period. A similar phenomenon can be observed for the 1980s, when 33% of all annotations of FREQUENCY OF USE can be found.

4.4 Discussion

The first aim of this study was to map out the stance towards optional variation as taken in Dutch language advice concerning the comparative particles *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’. It was shown that for the use advice items studied here, the suppression of optional variability indeed plays a central role. In this way, the language advice about *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ seems comparable to the English prescriptivist tradition. However, there are certain aspects of the Dutch data that are worth delving into. Firstly, the unflinching dismissal of variation does not hold for all categories of *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’: with regard to the standard comparative, which is the most frequent usage item of the group of five, almost half of the language advisors accept variation under certain circumstances. This combination of frequency of occurrence and acceptance of variation is striking, as it seems to contradict the idea of suppression being central to the whole idea of prescriptivism. Surely the central notion of a phenomenon would be found with the most central examples of that same phenomenon. To complicate matters, the relative tolerance towards variation that some language advisors display may not necessarily be indicative of the opinions of the Dutch language user. A recent survey amongst around 3,000 Dutch native speakers showed that 82% only accepted *dan* ‘than’ with the standard comparative, although it is unclear how representative this group of people is (Van Wingerden 2017). This discrepancy could point at an alienation between the prescriptions of language advisors and the wishes of the general public. Perhaps, however, the general language user’s opinion is reflected in the data from the language advisors after all. Van Wingerden’s survey took place in the 2010s, a period when, according to the data from this chapter, language advisors also seem increasingly likely to dismiss variation in the use of the comparative particles. Whether the advice follows public opinion or vice versa is an interesting question, but unfortunately it lies beyond the scope of the present chapter.

Another striking observation is the ubiquitous condemnation of variation with all equative constructions. Even in the two

publications that accept variation for both the standard comparative and the excepting comparative, variation for the equatives is dismissed:

- (12) Maar wie (...) schrijft *even lekker dan* of *zoo lekker dan*, die maakt een echte fout.
'But those who (...) write *as nice than* or *so nice than*, he makes a real error.' (Servaes and Schrijver 1943: 69)
- (13) Dan of als? Jan is (niet) zo oud als Piet. Jan is (niet) even oud als Piet. Jan is evenmin een leugenaar als Piet.
'Than or as? Jan is (not) as old as Piet. Jan is (not) equally old as Piet. Jan is not any more a liar than Piet' (Smeyers 1955: 24)

Variation with the equative is strongly denounced, but variation in use is found nevertheless. Why then are language advisors so much more intransigent with this usage item? At least four explanations seem plausible. First of all, it has been argued that the variation with the equative constructions is the result of *hypercorrection*, i.e., the avoidance of a wrong variant by language users to such an extent that they also avoid it in places where it is in fact correct. This hypercorrection does not fit with the natural cycle of the development of the comparative markers (cf. Reinartz, de Vos, and De Hoop 2016), and perhaps because of this 'unnaturalness', language advisors come out strongly against it. Secondly, and related to the first explanation, hypercorrection is often assumed to be an effect of prescriptivism (Hubers et al. 2019: 1-2). Perhaps language advisors are aware that they may be responsible for this phenomenon in the first place. This could make them feel threatened in their approach to language advice and make them lash out those cases where hypercorrection manifests, which in this case means the equative constructions. Thirdly, it seems that mistakes with the equatives are substantially less frequent than mistakes with the comparative in actual language usage. This could lead language advice writers to be more likely to see equative mistakes as errors, whereas mistakes with the comparative are seen as variants. Finally, it is possible that the use of *als* 'as' with the comparative is tolerated to a higher degree because almost all Dutch dialects only allow for this variant (cf. Paardekooper 1950). Whereas other dialectisms may be seen as errors, it may again be

because of frequency that in this case there is more acceptance of another variant.

The diachronic decline in the acceptance of variation with regard to the comparative particles is also remarkable. This decline contradicts the trend observed in Chapter 2. This study of $\pm 1,600$ precepts since 1900 found a slow but steady shift towards a greater acceptance of variation. It is possible that this disparity, between *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ on the one hand and language advice in general on the other, is the result of a process of *shibbolethisation*. In this scenario, one or more usage items would become the focal point of prescriptivist zeal, with the effect that the opinion about other usage items becomes more tolerant. Another explanation for the reduced tolerance could be an increase in use of the ‘wrong’ variant, which triggered a harshening in language advice. However, there does not seem to be data available as to the diachronic use of *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ in the time period studied here. Again, an explanation for this development lies beyond the scope of the present chapter.

No clear patterns emerge with regard to the use of argumentation. The types of arguments that are used do stay more or less the same over time. This again seems to be similar to the English prescriptive practice. One specific argument is noteworthy however: the overrepresentation of the argument *MODE* (a variant is approved because it is considered to be right in written or spoken language) with *als* and *dan* as opposed to language advice in general. Perhaps this presence is an acknowledgement of the fact that both variants are frequently encountered in spoken language, at least synchronically (Hubers and De Hoop 2013: 98-99). However, there is also great variation in the use of the relative pronoun following neuter nouns in spoken language (Stroop 2011), but *MODE* is not used as an argument to support or condemn this in language advice.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter shows that the suppression of optional variation and an *ipse dixit*-culture are characteristics of Dutch language advice since 1900, at least concerning the comparative particles *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’. Because of this, Dutch language advice seems to be comparable in scope to English prescriptivism. The results of the present research strengthen the claim that this suppression is fundamental to prescriptivism (Milroy and Milroy 1999). However, a

notable exception to this assertion appears in the discussion of the use of a comparative particle accompanying a standard comparative. In that case, variation is acceptable for many language advisors, albeit under certain circumstances (mostly in spoken language). By contrast, variation in equative constructions is invariably condemned, even by writers who otherwise accept at least some degree of variation. Over time, the acceptance of variation seems to diminish. This is remarkable, given that the prescriptive tradition as a whole seems to be more disposed to the acceptance of optional variability. As for argumentation, a wide range of different arguments is used since 1900 to either accept or condemn the use of certain language variants. GRAMMATICALITY seems to gain importance, but aside from that, no patterns can be discerned. Often, however, argumentation is lacking, which indicates that Dutch, like English, has an ipse dixit-culture. However, as this research only looks at one case study and one medium of publication, grand conclusions should not be drawn. More research into Dutch prescriptivism since 1900, for example on the Internet or as presented in schoolbooks, would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Appendix 4.1. Annotation schema

Category	A variant is right/wrong because...
AUTHORITY	a certain authority says it is (not) so
AUTHORITY GRAMMAR	a grammar or grammarian says it is (not) so
BEAUTY	it is (not) beautiful
CARE	it is (not) a sign of careful language use
FREQUENCY OF OPINION	a number of people say it is (not) so
FREQUENCY OF USE	a number of people (does not) use it
GEOGRAPHIC	it is (not) used in a certain geographic area
GERMANISM	it is due to German influence
GRAMMAR	it (does not) conform(s) to a certain grammatical rule in the language
HISTORY	it is (not) historically used
IPSE DIXIT	no argument is given
LOGIC	it is (not) logical
MODE	it is (not) used in spoken or written language
NATURE	it (does not) conform(s) to the nature of the language
OTHER ARGUMENT	of some other reason not mentioned above
PURITY	it is not part of the Dutch language
QUALITY	it (does not) display(s) a certain quality
REGISTER	it is (not) used in a certain register
STANDARD	it is (not) used in the standard language
SUPPOSED EFFECT	it (does not) has (have) a certain effect
SYSTEM	it (does not) fit(s) with the system of the language
USE	it is(not) used
USE BY A SOCIAL GROUP	a certain group of people (does not) use(s) it
VARIETY	it is (not) used in a certain variety

Chapter 5

Prescriptivism on its own terms. Perceptions and realities of usage in Siegenbeek's *Lijst* (1847)¹⁹

Abstract

In 1847, one of the first professors of Dutch, Matthijs Siegenbeek (1774-1854), published a purist word list entitled *Lijst van woorden en uitdrukkingen met het Nederlandsch taaleigen strijdende*, 'List of words and expressions at odds with the nature of Dutch'. In this pamphlet, he condemned a variety of loanwords and loan translations. Siegenbeek refers regularly to the usage of disapproved variants, employing a variety of quantifiers and sociolinguistic references. How well such statements reflect the linguistic reality, however, is a contentious issue in studies of prescriptivism. In this chapter, we study Siegenbeek's pronouncements about usage against the backdrop of Curzan's concept of *restorative prescriptivism*. By studying the use of different types of quantifiers, and matching these to a text collection of historical fiction from the time, we show that Siegenbeek's statements about usage miss the mark for most specific variables. However, when we look at the average usage frequency, we see that as frequency terms increase in strength, so do the number of condemned variants, both for relative frequency and absolute frequency. Based on these results, we argue for a re-evaluation of the relationship between prescriptivism and usage, and a reappraisal of prescriptivists' frequency judgements.

¹⁹ with Gijsbert Rutten (Leiden University Centre for Linguistics)

5.1 Introduction: Prescriptivism and language use

The interaction between prescriptivism and language use has attracted considerable scholarly attention, from a variety of different angles (see, among many others, Beal 2012; Hinrichs, Szmrecsanyi, and Bohmann 2015; Van der Feest Viðarsson 2019). In recent years, fueled by an increase in the compilation of representative corpora of historical language use, much research has focused on the question whether norms and prescriptions developed in metalinguistic discourse subsequently influenced language use (e.g., Anderwald 2019; Krogull 2018; Poplack and Dion 2009). In this chapter, we reverse this approach, asking what basis prescriptivism has in actual language use. In order to study this question, we focus on one purist work, the *Lijst van woorden en uitdrukkingen met het Nederlandsch taaleigen strijdende*, ‘List of words and expressions at odds with the nature of Dutch’ (1847), published by the Dutch prescriptive author Matthijs Siegenbeek (1774-1854). Siegenbeek identifies a number of words and phrases presumably used in his times, and argues that they are to be avoided in view of their supposed non-Dutchness. Our question is to what extent these words and phrases were actually used, and whether Siegenbeek’s evaluation of the variation can be reproduced on the basis of contemporary textual materials.

On a more general level, we aim to show that the relationships between prescriptivism and language use are more complicated than is sometimes assumed. We argue that prescriptivism is not always “in defiance of normal usage”, as Trask (1999: 246) succinctly put it. Even if prescriptive, or more generally normative works are perceived as highly prescriptive by contemporaries and/or by later readers, they may still be embedded in actual usage. This applies, for example, to two well-known ‘icons’ of prescriptivism: Claude Vaugelas (1585-1650) and Robert Lowth (1710-1787). Ayres-Bennett has argued in a number of publications that the work of the French *remarqueur* Vaugelas may “reflect usage and its variation and change well” (2020: 207), and that many of the so-called *remarqueurs* were in fact keen observers of ongoing changes in the language (Ayres-Bennett and Seijido 2011). Similarly, Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011: 224-253) has argued that Lowth’s *A short introduction to English grammar* (1762) was part of a broader tradition of normative grammar, which was not prescriptive in the strict sense. English normative grammars of the time often described usage as much as they prescribed some variants, and proscribed other variants.

Teasing apart the descriptive and the prescriptive segments of historical metalinguistic discourse is also significant for the study of historical standardization, which traditionally has a strong interest in codification ‘from above’ (Rutten and Vosters 2021). In fact, when we look at the normative traditions of many European languages in the Early and Late Modern period, we are often dealing with *codifications* in the plural (Rutten 2016). There is usually no general agreement among grammarians, which suggests that they, as a discourse community, were negotiating their norms. In these negotiations, actual language use may be introduced as an argument. An example comes from the work of the Dutch grammarian Petrus Leupenius (1607-1670; see Van der Wal and van Bree 2008: 193). He held a minority position when he argued that Dutch did not have four, let alone five or six cases, i.e., the number proposed in most grammars of the time, following the Greek and Latin models. Leupenius argued that Dutch had only three case functions, since there were at most three different variants in the nominal paradigms of contemporary written Dutch.

We consider Siegenbeek’s *Lijst* to be an example of what Curzan (2014: 28) calls *restorative prescriptivism*. This kind of language planning aims to restore earlier and often even obsolete forms of language use, or to “turn to older forms to purify usage” (Curzan 2014: 24). This may also include lexical purism (Curzan 2014: 38) which is what Siegenbeek aims at. It seems likely that this particular type of prescriptivism has a strong connection to actual usage, but how and to what extent is unclear. This, then, is what we set out to investigate in the present chapter.

First, we introduce Siegenbeek and his linguistic works, thereby situating his prescriptivist texts theoretically and historically, focusing in particular on the work under scrutiny in this chapter, the *Lijst* (§5.2). In §5.3, we explain our data and method, after which we present our results (§5.4). Here we first explore Siegenbeek’s references to actual language use, zooming in on what we call quantifiers and sociolinguistic considerations (§5.4.1). We then investigate the frequency of 27 lexical variables in actual language use, more specifically a sizeable collection of mostly literary texts from the period 1750-1847, based on the variants that were approved and disapproved by Siegenbeek (§5.4.2). In §5.4.3, we connect Siegenbeek’s use of quantifiers to the relative frequency of the approved and disapproved variants. In §5.4.4, we ask whether the absolute frequencies of the disapproved variants offer a better

reflection of Siegenbeek's intuitions about the frequency of certain variants than their relative frequencies. We then briefly discuss variants that supposedly increase in frequency over time (§5.4.5). The chapter ends with a discussion and conclusion (§5.5).

5.2 Siegenbeek and his *Lijst*

5.2.1 Matthijs Siegenbeek (1774-1854)

Matthijs Siegenbeek may be seen as a Dutch icon of prescriptivism. Born into a Mennonite family in Amsterdam, he attended first the Latin school and then the theological seminary of the Amsterdam Mennonite community (Rutten 2019: 176). In 1796, he was first contacted by the curators of the University of Leiden about a new position they were creating, viz. extraordinary professor of Dutch rhetoric. The creation of this chair, specifically devoted to Dutch, should be seen as an early act of language planning inspired by cultural nationalism (Rutten 2019: 165-169). Siegenbeek delivered his inaugural lecture on 23 September 1797, and in doing so became one of the first professors of Dutch. His extraordinary chair in Dutch rhetoric was changed into a regular chair in Dutch language and literature in 1799. He remained in office until 1844, and he kept teaching until 1847. Siegenbeek also served two terms as Rector Magnificus of Leiden University, and he occupied a central position in the Dutch academic and cultural field in the first half of the nineteenth century (Rutten 2019: 177).

Siegenbeek's name is closely connected to another well-known act of language planning inspired by cultural nationalism, i.e., the so-called *schrijftaalregeling* 'written language regulation' (Rutten 2019). The enormous intensification of Dutch cultural nationalism, which also gave rise to the standard language ideology, resulted in concrete policies around 1800, including the nationalization of the educational domain and of language. At the time, one of the first things the newly introduced Minister of Education did was bring the school system under national control. One important control mechanism was the newly established system of school inspectors (one of whom Siegenbeek would become himself). Additionally, there were calls for the official codification of spelling and grammar. These regulations for the written language were to be adopted in the educational and administrative domains.

The *schrijftaalregeling* resulted in Siegenbeek's spelling in 1804, and an official grammar, authored by Pieter Weiland, in 1805 (see Noordegraaf 2018). These codified versions of the language, which were the first official spelling and grammar of Dutch, were obligatory in the educational domain, and proved to be highly successful. Some primary schools were working with the Siegenbeek rules as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century (Schoemaker and Rutten 2017), schoolbooks from the early nineteenth century switch to the Siegenbeekian spelling prescriptions (Rutten, Krogull, and Schoemaker 2020), and significant changes in the direction of the official rules can be found within one generation, even in diaries and private letters (Krogull 2018). As such, the *schrijftaalregeling* and its implementation in the educational domain mark the official codification of Dutch after two and a half centuries of Dutch metalinguistic discourse. Moreover, it constitutes the end-point of the eighteenth-century development towards a national language, i.e., a prescribed, supralocal and supposedly neutral form of the Dutch language to be used by anyone who is part of the Dutch 'nation' (Rutten 2016). Thus, the *schrijftaalregeling* is also similar to the transition from codification to prescriptivism in the English language area towards the end of the eighteenth century (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010).

Theoretically, Siegenbeek's official spelling, entitled *Verhandeling over de Nederduitsche spelling* 'Treatise about Dutch spelling' (1804), constitutes the type of prescriptivism that Curzan (2014: 24), in her typology of English prescriptivism, calls *standardizing*. Standardizing prescriptivism offers 'rules/judgments that aim to promote and enforce standardization and "standard" usage' (Curzan 2014: 24). Historically, this specific type of prescriptivism 'stems from the role of prescriptivism in the process of language standardization' (Curzan 2014: 28). Some of Siegenbeek's orthographical prescriptions followed common usage and/or previously dominant prescriptions, and some did not, while he also introduced etymological distinctions in the spelling that must have been difficult for contemporary speakers (see below, §2.2). However, it is important to signal that the relationship between his prescriptions and past language use is not of prime importance for the goal of the spelling regulations. Standardizing prescriptivism is forward-looking, in that it provides guidelines for future writers. These can in some cases be based on existing usage, while introducing new distinctions in other cases (Krogull 2018; Krogull

and Rutten 2020). The main concern is that future writers adopt the newly prescribed forms, although the success of standardizing prescriptivism may of course partly depend on the prevalence of the prescribed variants in past usage and/or precepts.

In 1810 and 1814, Siegenbeek published introductions to the syntax and grammar of Dutch, largely based on Weiland's official grammar of 1805 (Noordegraaf 1985: 232-252). Siegenbeek furthermore wrote three extensive essays on linguistic topics, in which he adopted a strong normative perspective, discussing topics such as spelling and pronunciation, the excellence of the Dutch language and the ways in which its decay should be countered, and the interrelatedness of language and national character (Rutten 2019: 181). Recurrent themes in his linguistic works are the Golden Age of the seventeenth century, and the nationalistic focus on the inherent link between language and nation, which also led him to a strong anti-French discourse²⁰ (Rutten 2019: 189). In later years, Siegenbeek wrote less about language than before, although it is unclear why. One exception is his *Lijst van woorden en uitdrukkingen met het Nederlandsch taaleigen strijdende* 'List of words and expressions at odds with the nature of Dutch'. In this ethnolinguistic and prescriptive text, he criticized, not for the first time, the use of loanwords in Dutch, particularly loans from German (Rutten 2019: 185). It is this text that we focus on in the present chapter.

5.2.2 The *Lijst* (1847)

The *Lijst van woorden en uitdrukkingen met het Nederlandsch taaleigen strijdende* 'List of words and expressions at odds with the nature of Dutch' is a short work, consisting of only 56 pages (see Figure 5.1 for the title page). It opens with a four-page introduction, in which Siegenbeek briefly explains the background to the *Lijst*. Members of the Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde 'Society for Dutch Language and Literature', one of the most well-known learned societies of the time, had noticed

eene ongepaste navolging van het Hoogduitsche taalgebruik,
niet slechts in vertalingen en vlugtig geschrevene dagbladen,

²⁰ French was of course widely used across Europe throughout the Early and Late Modern period (e.g. Rjéoutski, Argent, and Offord 2014), which led to anti-French discourses, also in the Netherlands (see Rutten 2019: 184-186 for Siegenbeek in this context).

maar ook in werken van goede Schrijvers meer en meer voorkomende

'an improper imitation of High German usage, not only in translations and quickly written newspapers, but also more and more occurring in works of good writers'. (Siegenbeek 1847: III)

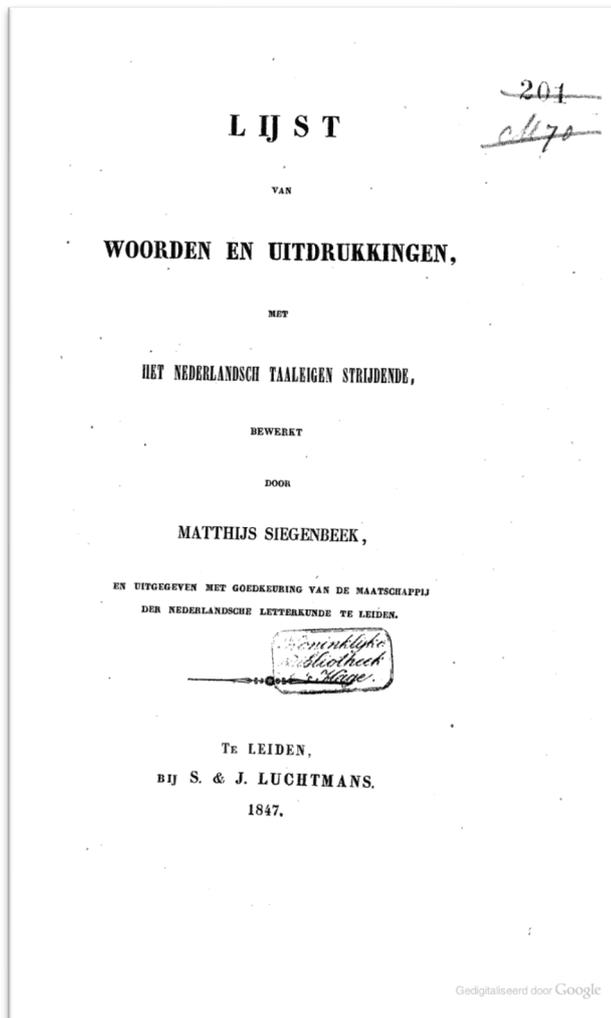


Figure 5.1. Title page for Siegenbeek's *Lijst van woorden en uitdrukkingen met het Nederlandsch taaleigen strijdende* (1847)

Most unwanted variants in Siegenbeek's *Lijst*, then, are supposed loanwords and loan translations from German, whose usage threatens endogenous Dutch variants. As such, the aim of this work can be characterized as puristic, while it is also immediately indicated how the *Lijst* has its base in contemporary usage. At the time when Siegenbeek compiled the *Lijst*, purist attitudes were entirely common in lexicography (Rutten 2019: 163-164). Moreover, they continued a longstanding tradition in Dutch metalinguistic discourse, dating back to the sixteenth century, although older works had largely focused on combatting French and Latin influence. Earlier examples of purist wordlists and dictionaries are the *Tresoor der Duytsscher talen* 'Treasure of the Dutch language' (1553, 2nd edition in 1559) by Jan van den Werve (1522-1576), and the *Nederlandtsche Woordenschat* 'Dutch vocabulary' (1650, 12th ed. in 1805) by Johan Hofman (c. 1605-1666) and Lodewijk Meijer (1629-1681) (for more on purism in the history of Dutch see Van der Sijs 2021: 328-354).

In his introduction, Siegenbeek (1847: IV) states that imitations of German can be found in *slordige vertalingen (...) of met overhaast opgestelde dagbladen* 'sloppy translations (...) or hastily drawn up newspapers', but he proposes to ignore these errors, both because *wie heeft lust of moed, om dien Augias-stal te reinigen* 'who has the inclination or courage to clean out this Augean stable' (Siegenbeek 1847: IV), and because the errors found in these publications are *te sterk in het oog, dan dat zij lichtelijk navolging zullen krijgen* 'are so noticeable that they are unlikely to be imitated' (1847: IV-V). Although he does mention a handful of such unwanted variants found in newspapers in particular (1847: V), he does not discuss these further. Instead, he focuses on words and expressions used by *goede Schrijvers* (1847: VI) 'good authors', as their usage may constitute an example for others. Thus, members of the Maatschappij collaborated in order to

de voornaamste daarvan bijeen te brengen en het onbestaanbare van dezelve met ons taaleigen beknoptelijk aan te toonen'

'bring together the most important examples, and concisely demonstrate their impossible co-existence with the nature of Dutch.' (Siegenbeek 1847, III)

These preliminary matters are followed by 177 entries, each of which contains an 'incorrect' and disapproved lexical item that should be

avoided in Dutch. To illustrate Siegenbeek's approach, we present two typical entries, viz. *benutten* 'use' (Example 1) and *verafschuwen* 'detest' (Example 2):²¹

- (1) *Benutten*, in navolging van het Hoogduitsche *benützen* [sic], voor *zich ten nutte maken*, is met ons taaleigen geheel onbestaanbaar.
'*Benutten* 'use', in imitation of High German *benützen* [sic] 'use', for *zich ten nutte maken* 'make useful for oneself', is entirely inconsistent with the nature of our language.' (Siegenbeek 1847: 11)
- (2) *Verafschuwen*, in navolging van het Hoogduitsche *verabscheuen*, is een woord, tot welks overneming geene genoegzame reden bestaat, daar wij hiervoor het echt Nederlandsche *verfoeijen* bezitten.
'*Verafschuwen* 'detest', in imitation of High German *verabscheuen* 'detest', is a word for which there is no sufficient reason to borrow it, as we have the truly Dutch word *verfoeijen* 'detest'.' (Siegenbeek 1847: 46)

The references made to the nature of Dutch (for *benutten* 'use') and to existing and, moreover, established alternatives (for *verafschuwen* 'detest') show how Siegenbeek discusses forms and meanings found in the present through the lens of linguistic history. As such, his approach is a clear example of what Curzan (2014) calls *restorative* prescriptivism. This stands in contrast to his earlier approach to spelling. For a number of orthographic variables, Krogull (2018) shows that Siegenbeek's prescriptions are sometimes in line with the eighteenth-century normative tradition and/or with eighteenth-century language use, while at other times they are not. There are examples where Siegenbeek (1804) introduces etymological distinctions in the spelling that must have been entirely unknown in actual usage, and perhaps even unclear to most of his readers. Krogull and Rutten (2020) and Rutten et al. (2020) discuss a number of relevant cases in more depth, and demonstrate how nineteenth-century private letters, diaries and newspapers display an increase of the variants prescribed by Siegenbeek, reversing previous

²¹ The verb s.v. *benutten* 'use' is generally considered to indeed be a loan from German, according to the *Etymologiebank*. The *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* s.v. *verafschuwen* 'detest' calls *verafschuwen* a loan from German *verabscheuen*.

developments in the orthographic system of Dutch. The fact that language users adopted Siegenbeek's etymology-based prescriptions so effectively confirms the forward-looking nature of what Curzan (2014) calls *standardizing* prescriptivism: an orthographical choice is made in the interest of texts to be written. Whether this choice follows or diverges from earlier practices in writing and in metalinguistic discourse seems unimportant. What matters is that the prescribed variant is used in future writing.

In the case of the lexical prescriptivism of the *Lijst*, the relationship to actual language use was crucial as a starting point. After all, if the supposed loans and loan translations mentioned in the text did not occur in usage, the whole enterprise would be quixotic, and there would be no practical need to write a booklet against them (cf. Weiner 1988: 174). Still, the nature of the relationship between precept and usage for specific variables, and of Siegenbeek's exact awareness and evaluation of actual occurrences of these variables is not straightforward, hence the need for this research.

5.3 Data and method

We manually checked all 177 entries in Siegenbeek's *Lijst* for explicit references to actual usage. Such references include verbs (e.g., *gebruiken* 'to use' or *voorkomen* 'to appear'), adverbs (e.g., *vaak* 'often'), and noun phrases (e.g., *veel mensen* 'many people'). We excluded negative ontological expressions, such as *dit kan niet in het Nederlands* 'this cannot exist in Dutch', as these do not refer explicitly to actually observed usage. Using these criteria provided us with 113 references in 85 entries.

Next, we classified these 113 references to usage according to two distinct categories (see Figure 5.2 for a schematic overview of this classification). The first category consists of quantifiers, i.e., words or phrases which make some kind of statement about *how often* a variant occurs. For the purpose of this chapter, we classified the quantifiers used by Siegenbeek into two groups: *diachronic quantifiers* refer to a development over time (such as *in zwang gekomen* 'has come into fashion'). All the other quantifiers (such as *dikwerf* 'often' or *wel eens* 'sometimes') we grouped together as *absolute quantifiers*. Next, we classified all quantifiers based on their degree of reported occurrence

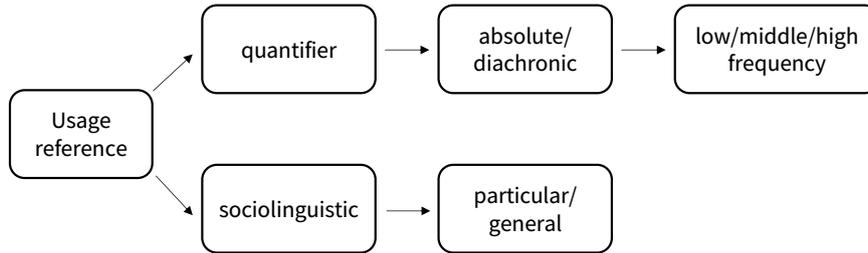


Figure 5.2. Schema for classification of usage references

into *low*, *middle*, or *high frequency terms*. So, for example, *zelden* ‘rarely’ was classified as low frequency, while *algemeen gebruikelijk* ‘generally used’ was classified as high.²²

The second category includes so-called ‘sociolinguistic’ references to a language user or group of language users (cf. Chapter 2; see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2020). These references too were subdivided into two groups: firstly, references to a particular author or work, either anonymous or named (for example, *een geacht schrijver* ‘a respected author’ or *Bilderdijk*), and secondly, references to a general group of language users (e.g., *goede schrijvers* ‘good authors’).

For our usage data, we used the Digital Dutch Library of Literature and Non-fiction (DBNL). This collection contains more than 10,000 titles, written from the Middle Ages to the present day, amounting to a total of 1.07 billion words.²³ We approached this text collection through the Nederlab interface (Brugman et al. 2016). Although this collection has certain issues with metadata quality and is not a representative corpus (see van der Sijs 2019b), it has the benefit of containing texts that are likely to have been available to Siegenbeek, especially with regard to the fiction section.²⁴ Another benefit is its size: as for most languages, historical corpora of this magnitude are non-existent for Dutch, yet research into lexical phenomena typically requires such big data. In this case, then, we feel the advantages of using this dataset far outweigh its disadvantages.

²² For the 31 types found, the authors agreed on the classification of all but one term. Expressed as Cohen’s kappa then, our inter-rater agreement was $\kappa = .951$ ($p < .0005$).

²³ For more details see <https://www.nederlab.nl/onderzoeksportaal/?action=nederlabcollectie&code=DBNL>.

²⁴ As one reviewer pointed out, since the DBNL contains edited texts, it is possible that condemned variants were removed during the editing process. While this is certainly possible, it does not have an effect on Siegenbeek’s evaluations, as there is little reason to assume that he was ever exposed to anything but the edited versions of such works themselves.

In order to match our data as closely as possible to the language Siegenbeek would have been exposed to, we narrowed the data from the DBNL down to fiction from the period 1750-1847. This left us with 3,507 texts, containing 30.3 million words. Of course, this selection cannot be a ‘perfect’ fit: it is unlikely that Siegenbeek read all these texts, or these texts specifically. Still, this data approximates the type of texts he claims to have based himself on as good as possible. An example of this comes from the fact that our corpus contains several specific novels Siegenbeek references.

Of course, Siegenbeek would have been exposed to many more registers and genres, including the newspapers he himself mentioned. Consequently, it is possible that occurrences of the criticized linguistic items in these genres influenced his frequency perceptions. However, as Siegenbeek explicitly states that this is not the case, and moreover mentions a specific set of different variables for newspapers (see 2.2), we assume that Siegenbeek was aware of which variables occurred in which genres and was thus able to focus on the relevant ones and their distribution only. Either way, as there is no way of knowing whether this interference happened, we focus on the data Siegenbeek claimed to have used.

We focused our investigation on those variables for which Siegenbeek gave both a quantifying term and an ‘indigenous’ Dutch alternative. For example, for *bemeesteren* ‘to master’, which according to Siegenbeek *is onder ons in zwang gekomen* ‘has come into fashion among us’ (1847: 10), the alternative *vermeesteren* ‘to master’ is given. For many cases, however, a lexical item was simply condemned without an alternative. An example of this is *gewelddaad* ‘act of violence’, of which Siegenbeek says that it is *eene harde zamenstelling, welke geene navolging verdient* ‘a hard compound, which doesn’t deserve imitation’ (1847, 24). As the relative occurrence of such items could not be checked against a correct alternative, we left them out.²⁵ This selection step left us with 27 lexical variables with both an approved and a disapproved variant. One other variable that met our criteria, *bemerken/opmerken* ‘to notice’, was nevertheless left out, as the semantic difference that Siegenbeek proposes for these two variants was too subtle to be reliably tagged. For each variable, we

²⁵ Presumably, the reason why Siegenbeek did not give an alternative was that none was available in Dutch at that time. The usual purist strategy for such cases is to come up with a neologism which (ostensibly) fits better with the ‘nature’ of Dutch (for example, see the neologism *webstek* for ‘website’). However, this did not fit with the kind of restorative prescriptive approach Siegenbeek propagated.

searched for all variants in our usage data. In most cases, we could employ word-based queries, but for some verbs – for example, compound verbs such as *bezighouden* ‘to occupy’ – we used lemma-based queries. Results were manually cleaned up by the authors: this finally left us with a total of 38,414 tokens for 27 lexical variables.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Siegenbeek’s references to usage

Siegenbeek refers to actual language use 113 times in his *List*, but only in 85 entries out of the 177 (48%). Table 5.1 gives an overview of all of the references to usage and the occurrences per category.

Table 5.1. Token frequency of references to usage (n=113)

Quantifiers (n=47)	Absolute	36
	Diachronic	11
Sociolinguistic terms (n=66)	Particular	47
	General	19

Table 5.1 shows that Siegenbeek employs sociolinguistic references more often than he uses quantifiers. Of the general sociolinguistic references, eighteen refer to unspecified groups of language users, such as *goede schrijvers* ‘good writers’ or *anders nette schrijvers* ‘otherwise proper writers’. The only exception is found for the entry *toeverzigt* ‘trust’, of which Siegenbeek (1847: 41) says that many Reformed theologians use it, but that he cannot remember having seen it used by any non-theologian author. This awareness of language variation in religious circles would continue to play a role in later prescriptive works, both with dedicated studies (cf. Leest 1929) and observations about particular variables (cf. Damsteegt 1948: 41 about *op/in de eerste plaats* ‘on/in the first place’).

The majority of Siegenbeek’s sociolinguistic references refer to particular works and authors, with 47 instances. In twenty of these, Siegenbeek is somewhat discreet, and only mentions *an otherwise careful writer* or *a popular writer who is much read*. Whether he could assume readers would know who he meant is not clear. The other 27 occurrences refer mostly to specific works or sources, such as specific entries in the Dutch Penal Code and a verdict of the

Netherlands Supreme Court, or the *Zeeuwschen Volksalmanak* (an almanac for the province of Zeeland).

Siegenbeek mentions two literary authors by name. The first of these is Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831), whose name occurs four times. This is not unexpected, as Bilderdijk was not only one of the most prominent literary authors of his time, but also an active participant in contemporary debates about language and spelling (Noordegraaf 1985) and an enemy of Siegenbeek (Mathijssen 1988). The second author, who is mentioned eleven times, is Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint (1812-1886). She was a well-known literary author and editor, who published several historical novels. Two of these seem to have been of particular interest to Siegenbeek, as he mentions them several times: *Het huis Lauernesse* ‘The House of Lauernesse’ (1840) and *De graaf van Leycester in Nederland* ‘The count of Leicester in the Netherlands’ (Bosboom-Toussaint 1845). In 1870, Bosboom-Toussaint was to be the first woman to be awarded an honorary membership of the aforementioned Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde. Siegenbeek did not explain why he referred to Bosboom-Toussaint more than to any other author. We assume that her popularity played a role in this (Buitendijk and Welsink 2003).

As for quantifiers, Siegenbeek uses 46 tokens from 31 types, with a preference for absolute terms (22 types, 36 tokens) over diachronic terms (9 types, 11 tokens). *Meermalen* ‘several times’ is the most frequently used term, with five occurrences. With regard to diachronic quantifiers, Siegenbeek uses variants of *in zwang gekomen* ‘has come into fashion’ six times; he comments twice on words that are new. The quantifiers are distributed quite equally over the three different classes we distinguished, as Siegenbeek uses eight high, eight medium and eleven low frequency terms.

5.4.2 Usage frequency

Table 5.2 gives an overview of the usage frequency distributions of both the approved and disapproved variants for all 27 lexical variables. It is clear that there are substantial differences between the raw frequencies of different variables. Some, such as *betrachten/beschouwen*, ‘to consider’, are quite frequent, with 6,245 occurrences for both variants combined. Others, such as *van af dien tijd/van dien tijd af* ‘from that time forward’ occur a lot less frequently,

Table 5.2. Alphabetical overview of all variables with absolute and relative frequency of variants

Disapproved variant	Approved alternative	Token count disapproved variant	Token count approved variant	% Disapproved variant	% Approved variant
<i>aangeven</i>	<i>opgeven</i>	184	1,042	15.0	85.0
<i>aanstrenging</i>	<i>inspanning</i>	0	360	0.0	100.0
<i>aanwandelen</i>	<i>overvallen</i>	0	268	0.0	100.0
<i>abel</i>	<i>bekwaam, geschikt, bevoegd</i>	10	3,666	0.3	99.7
<i>afgeven</i>	<i>bemoeijen, inlaten, bezighouden</i>	12	318	3.6	96.4
<i>bedanken</i>	<i>tevredenheid/ dankbaarheid betuigen</i>	941	82	92.0	8.0
<i>bemeesteren</i>	<i>vermeesteren</i>	13	215	5.7	94.3
<i>betrachten</i>	<i>beschouwen</i>	81	6,164	1.3	98.7
<i>betwijfelen</i>	<i>twijfelen, in twijfel trekken</i>	287	2,619	9.9	90.1
<i>bevinding</i>	<i>ondervinding</i>	38	1,667	2.2	97.8
<i>daadzaak</i>	<i>feit</i>	432	677	39.0	61.0
<i>daarboven</i>	<i>daarenboven</i>	39	5,775	0.7	99.3
<i>doelmatig</i>	<i>doeltreffend</i>	743	145	83.7	16.3
<i>eigendommelijk</i>	<i>eigenaardig</i>	105	843	11.1	88.9
<i>lag</i>	<i>legde, leide</i>	127	816	13.5	86.5
<i>mild</i>	<i>zacht, lieflijk</i>	72	2,050	3.4	96.6
<i>moeizaam</i>	<i>moeielijk, vermoeiend</i>	10	1,311	0.8	99.2
<i>omgeving</i>	<i>omstreken, hovelingen, omringenden</i>	25	208	10.7	89.3
<i>oog</i>	<i>het oog op/ op het oog</i>	100	119	45.7	54.3
<i>overigens</i>	<i>voor het overige</i>	611	696	46.7	53.3
<i>regel</i>	<i>doorgaans, meestal</i>	75	2,651	2.8	97.2
<i>uitledigen</i>	<i>uitbannen, uitdrijven</i>	0	125	0.0	100.0
<i>uitoefenen</i>	<i>oefenen</i>	885	863	50.6	49.4
<i>van af dien tijd</i>	<i>van dien tijd af</i>	1	106	0.9	99.1
<i>vervolledigen</i>	<i>volledig maken</i>	2	4	33.3	66.7
<i>volhouden</i>	<i>volharden</i>	172	556	23.6	76.4
<i>zitte</i>	<i>zitplaats</i>	4	99	3.9	96.1

with only 160 combined occurrences. However, with the exception of *vervolledigen/volledig maken* ‘to complete’, which only occurs six times in total, all variables have a combined token count of more than 100.

Overall, the variables display an obvious preference for the approved variant, with 24 out of 27 showing a higher proportion of the variant Siegenbeek preferred. This preference is quite strong in most cases, as the disapproved variant makes up less than 10% of all variants for fourteen variables. For those three cases in which the disapproved variant does occur more often than the approved, the margin is very small for *uitoefenen/oefenen* ‘to practice’ (50.6% disapproved variants). Only in two cases out of 27, then, i.e., *doelmatig/doeltreffend* ‘effective’ and *bedanken/dankbaarheid betuigen* ‘to thank’, is the disapproved variant by far the most frequently found (with 83.7% and 92% respectively).

5.4.3 Quantifiers vs relative usage frequency

Next, we ordered all variables based on their respective quantifiers, as per our categorization low - medium - high frequency. Figure 5.3a shows the eight low frequency variables, Figure 5.3b shows the eleven medium frequency term variables, and Figure 5.3c shows the eight high frequency term variables. The variables are sorted from left to right based on the proportion of approved and disapproved variants.

If Siegenbeek’s use of frequency terms corresponded to the relative usage frequency of disapproved variants, we would expect increasing proportions of such variants as we go from low to medium to high frequency terms. However, in all frequency term categories, we find variables for which the disapproved variant is infrequent or absent. For example, Siegenbeek says about *aanstrenging* ‘effort’ that it is used *dikwerf* ‘often’, which we classified as high frequency, but our data show no examples of this variant at all (see Figure 5.3c). Conversely, Siegenbeek says about *bedanken* ‘to thank’ that it is *niet ongebruikelijk* ‘not unusual’, which we classified as a medium frequency term. In our data, however, forms of *bedanken* ‘to thank’ make up 92% of all variants for the variable (Figure 5.3b). It is clear, then, that there are individual variables for which Siegenbeek’s use of frequency terms does not correspond well to the relative usage frequency of the disapproved variant.

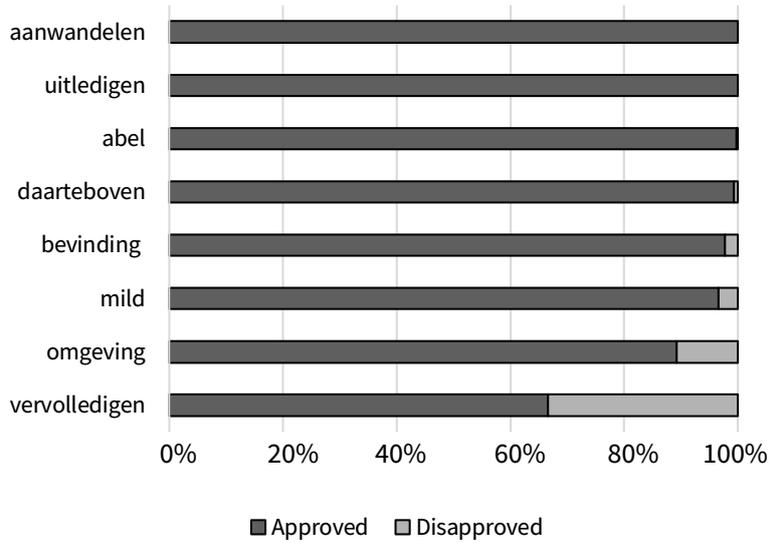


Figure 5.3.a. Usage results per variant for low frequency terms

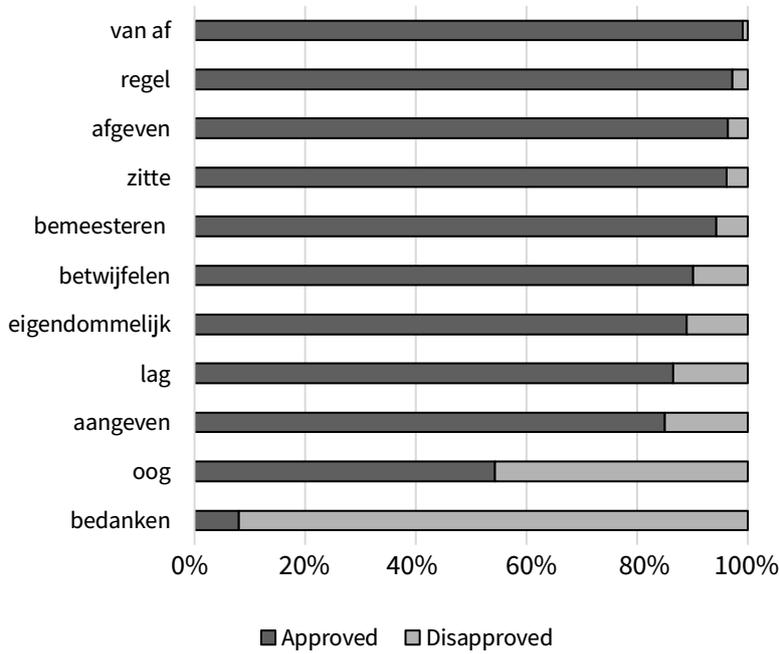


Figure 5.3.b. Usage results per variant for medium frequency terms

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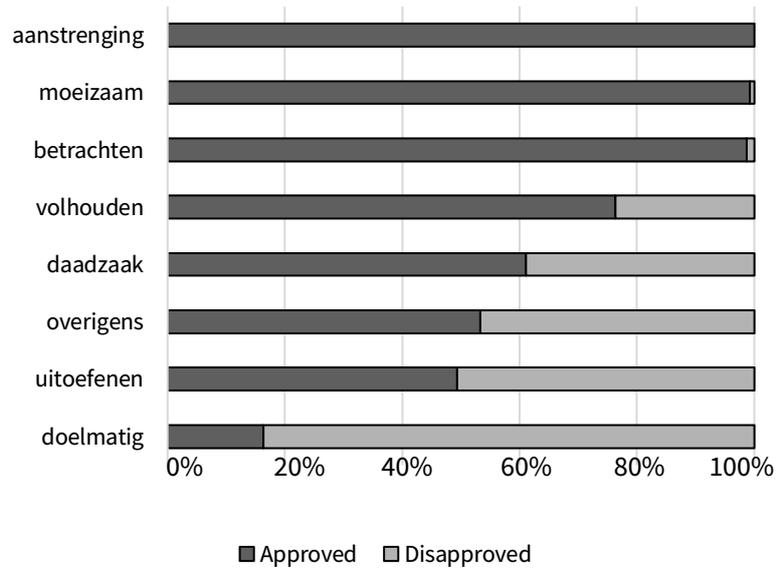


Figure 5.3.c. Usage results per variant for high frequency terms

In spite of these specific discrepancies, we do see that the *average* proportion of disapproved variants increases with higher tiers of frequency terms. As Table 5.3 shows, the average degree of disapproved variants almost triples between the low and middle frequency term class; it almost doubles again for the high frequency terms. This unmistakable increase does point towards him having generally accurate intuitions about the relative frequency with which disapproved variants occur as opposed to their approved counterparts.

Table 5.3. Average % of disapproved variants per category of frequency terms with standard deviation (SD)

Category	Number of variables	Average disapproved variants in %	Standard deviation (SD)
Low	8	6.3	10.7
Middle	11	18.5	26.0
High	8	30.7	28.0

5.4.4 Absolute usage frequency

In corpus linguistics, it is commonplace to use relative frequency as a measure, because of differences in sample sizes. Because of that, it seems straightforward to try and interpret quantifiers in the same way, as referring to relative frequency. However, when language users adopt such quantifiers, they may also refer to absolute frequency. As Zwicky (2006) puts it, because “hardly anyone is in a position to sample the phenomena scientifically (...), we treat our own experiences as fair samples of the phenomena in question”. If language users in general use quantifiers to refer to absolute frequency, the same may be the case for Siegenbeek. To test this, we also looked at the absolute token count per quantifier degree category (see Figure 5.4, which shows the counts for the disapproved variant only).

Initially, this approach yields a similar picture to the relative frequency count: in each category, one or more variables show no or very few disapproved variants. This is at odds with Siegenbeek’s use of frequency terms. For example, *aanwandelen* ‘to overtake’, which he describes as *niet geheel vreemd* ‘not completely strange’, does not occur at all. However, with regard to raw frequency, it seems inevitable that this disparity is at least partly an effect of our data. After all, if a disapproved variant did not occur at all, there would be no reason for Siegenbeek to mention it. Still, even when we take this into account, we do see substantial differences between the actual absolute frequency of usage and Siegenbeek’s pronouncement for many variables. It seems, then, that Siegenbeek was usually wrong in attributing frequency to a variant.

Again, when we look at the average token count per category, this verdict shifts. As Table 5.4 shows, we see an increase in token frequency depending on which category frequency term Siegenbeek uses. Especially the difference between low frequency terms and middle terms is quite pronounced, with an increase of 721%. From middle to high we see the average token count double, similar to what we observed for the average relative frequency for both classes.

Table 5.4. Average token count of disapproved variants per category of frequency terms with standard deviation (SD)

Category	Number of variables	Average token count of disapproved variants	SD
Low	8	23.3	23.9
Middle	11	168.1	258.3
High	8	366.8	327.0

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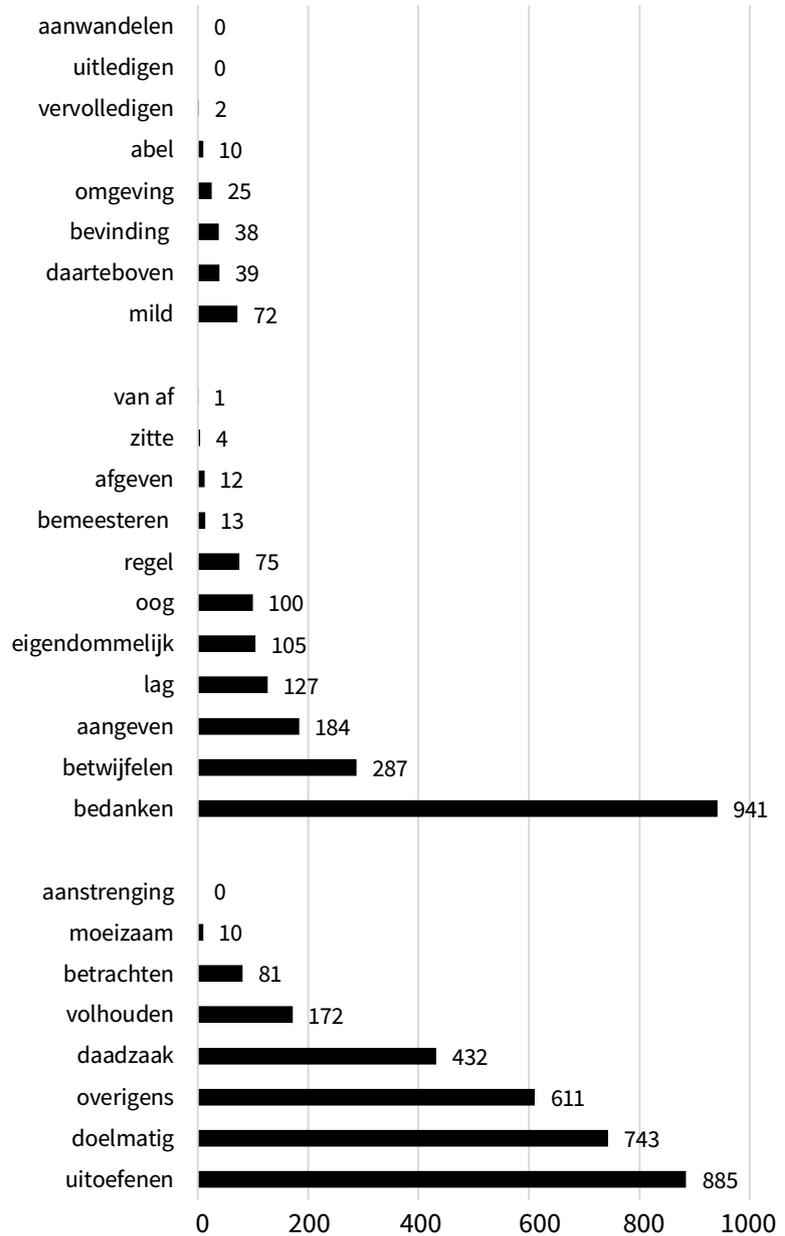


Figure 5.4. Token count per disapproved variant per category frequency term (low - medium - high from top to bottom)

5.4.5 Diachronic frequency terms and diachronic usage

For our last analysis, we zoom in on two specific examples of diachronic frequency terms. The reason for choosing this subclass is that, while it is quite challenging to establish what frequency an absolute frequency term entails (how often exactly is *often?*), for diachronic frequency terms this is somewhat more straightforward. When such a diachronic frequency term is used, for example to say that a variant occurs *more and more often* over time, it does not matter whether the raw frequency of that variant increases from 1 to 3 to 10, or from 1,000 to 3,000 to 7,000. Although such raw frequencies are of course meaningful, for example in terms of the salience of the variant, in both cases the label *more and more often* applies equally well. In order to compare Siegenbeek's use of diachronic frequency terms to actual usage, we divided our data into four time periods of 25 years. Our data was not distributed evenly over time: the first three periods contained comparable amounts of words, but the final period contained a considerably larger number of words (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5. Distribution of words per time period

Time period	Number of words
1750-1774	4.6 million
1775-1799	5.4 million
1800-1824	4.2 million
1825-1847	16.1 million

The first word we look at is *eigendommelijk* 'proprietary, peculiar'. This word is condemned by Siegenbeek (1847: 21), who states that *het gebruik meer en meer algemeen wordt* 'its use is becoming more and more common' at the expense of the proper alternative *eigenaardig* 'proprietary, peculiar'. Figure 5.5 shows the occurrences per variant for this variable per time period. Occurrences for both variants of this variable combined increase quite drastically, from 14 in total between 1750 and 1799 to 393 in 1800-1824, and further to 541 in 1825-1847. Why this is the case is unclear, but Siegenbeek may have been aware of it. More importantly, with the increase of the variable itself also comes an increase of the raw frequency of the disapproved variant, *eigendommelijk* 'proprietary, peculiar', to 41 occurrences in 1800-1824 and to 63 in the final time period. In relative terms, however, the increase of *eigendommelijk* 'proprietary, peculiar' is minimal between 1800-1824 and 1825-1847 (from 10.4% to 11.6%

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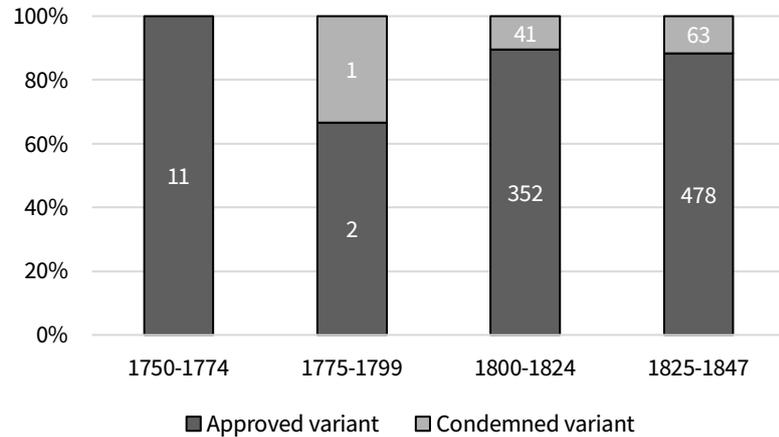


Figure 5.5. Variants per time period for approved variable *eigenaardig* and condemned variable *eigendommelijk* ‘proprietary, peculiar’

disapproved variants). Also, it seems an overstatement to say that the variant becomes ‘more and more common’ when it only accounts for c. 10% of all variants for a variable. Moreover, as previously noted, the final time period contains almost four times as many words as the previous time periods. Indeed, when we calculate the normalized frequency per million words, we see that the use of *eigendommelijk* ‘proprietary, peculiar’ actually decreases from 10 times per million words in 1800-1824 to a mere 3.8 times per million words in 1825-1847.

Finally, we checked the verb *vervolledigen* ‘to complete’, of which Siegenbeek says that it is *nieuwerwetsch* ‘newly come into fashion’ instead of *volledig maken* ‘to make complete’. Based on this diachronic term we would not necessarily expect an increase in frequency over time, but rather we expect the word to be a recent innovation. This hypothesis is somewhat supported by the entry for this word in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (s.v. *vervolledigen*), which gives a first quotation for this verb in 1850, so after Siegenbeek’s *Lijst* was published (although it does acknowledge this work). Both variants for this variable occur only a few times: variants of *volledig maken* ‘to make complete’ occur four times, variants of *vervolledigen* ‘to complete’ only twice. These two occurrences are from 1835 and 1847 respectively, so Siegenbeek’s intuition, again, may be justified.

5.5 Discussion and conclusion

As a prime proponent of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century national language ideology, Matthijs Siegenbeek wrote several works on the Dutch language, including the puristic wordlist that we analyzed in this chapter. As we showed, for many of the variables in this wordlist, Siegenbeek's use of frequency terms does not correspond well to the frequency with which the disapproved variants occurred. This reinforces existing ideas about the significant divergence that exists between prescriptivism and actual language use. However, when we look at the average usage frequency of the disapproved variants per frequency class, we see that as the frequency terms increase in strength, so does the average frequency of disapproved variants. This is already apparent from our results for relative frequency, but the magnitude of this link becomes even more evident when we look at absolute frequency. This outcome indicates that, although Siegenbeek may miss the mark in particular cases, his intuitions and statements about usage frequency may be quite accurate in general.

In line with earlier research on French by Ayres-Bennett (2020), the results of our research support the hypothesis that prescriptivists' statements about usage may have more basis in actual usage than has been assumed. Like the French *remarqueurs*, Siegenbeek may have been a keen observer of ongoing changes. However, this is particularly difficult to establish in the case of lexical variation, where the variants are often infrequent when compared to orthographic/phonetic and morphological variables, and also more strongly depend on the topic and the communicative situation. We believe that our approach, in which we explored a large amount of specific data in an effort to reproduce the textual base available to Siegenbeek, has shown that Siegenbeek was to some extent indeed sensitive to ongoing changes in the language. As such, it seems possible that restorative prescriptive works such as Siegenbeek's have the potential to be used as a valuable source of information about language variation and change (J. van der Horst and Van der Horst 1999: 138).

Based on our results, it seems that Siegenbeek was more likely to report on absolute frequency than relative frequency. Aside from the average usage frequency per class of quantifiers, we saw that the absolute diachronic usage frequencies for *eigendommelijk* 'proprietary, peculiar' were consistent with Siegenbeek's use of 'it

occurs more and more often'. This raises the question to what extent Siegenbeek's sensitivity to ongoing changes, and frequency in general, is indicative of such an awareness in other (Dutch) prescriptivists, or indeed in language users in general. This question ties in with Zwicky's Frequency Illusion, which states that "Once you notice a phenomenon, you believe it happens a whole lot" (2006). Linguists are often quick to dismiss frequency perceptions, because, as Zwicky puts it, "hardly anyone has a panoptic view of language variation" (2006). The current research shows, however, that to understand frequency statements, we should perhaps look more closely at the absolute frequency of linguistic items in language users' immediate linguistic environment. More detailed investigations of the specific linguistic reality of language users with regard to variation are called for.

Simulating this linguistic reality remains a challenge for investigating prescriptive statements about usage. For the study of historical standardization, it is important to be able to distinguish between the prescriptive and descriptive aspects of historical metalanguage. It seems likely that the success of prescriptivism partly depends on its descriptive adequacy, and that prescriptions have a higher chance of being influential if the prescribed variants are already part of the repertoire of language users. In our case, Siegenbeek was very explicit about targeting the language of 'good writers'. Our data is a fitting reflection of this, to such an extent that it actually contained some of the specific literary works that Siegenbeek references, such as *Het huis Lauernesse* 'The House of Lauernesse' and *De graaf van Leycester in Nederland* 'The count of Leicester in the Netherlands' by Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint. Incidentally, references to such specific works in a prescriptive context might be of interest to map out interactions and power dynamics in a historical literary context. Of course, the fact that we did not find some variants does show that our data is not a 'perfect' fit. But the present research does give us a better understanding of prescriptivism and historical standardization in general, and Matthijs Siegenbeek in particular.

Chapter 6

Are we indeed so illuded?

Recency and Frequency Illusions in Dutch prescriptivism

Abstract

In 2005, Arnold Zwicky posited two misapprehensions about language: the Recency Illusion, or the false idea that certain language variation is new, and the Frequency Illusion, the erroneous belief that a particular word or phrase occurs often. Since their conception, these concepts have received widespread attention in popular scientific linguistics, but quantitative research investigating their application is scarce. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an empirical investigation of Zwicky's proposed illusions. It does so by collecting statements about recency ('this word is new') and frequency ('this construction occurs often') from a collection of Dutch prescriptive publications (1900–2018). I assessed their accuracy by comparing them to linguistic sources, including dictionaries, and usage corpora and other data. My research shows that recency statements were rare, but that frequency statements, especially using high frequency terms such as *vaak* 'often', were commonplace. Compared to usage, most prescriptive recency and frequency statements for both lexis and grammar indeed constituted Zwickian illusions. This seems partly due to genuine erroneous or unsupported beliefs by authors, but also partly to prescriptive genre conventions and rhetorical choices. This explorative research highlights the complex usage–prescriptivism interface, and argues for more research into this aspect of language perceptions.

6.1 Introduction

In 2005, American linguist Arnold Zwicky published a post on the well-known blog LanguageLog entitled ‘Just Between Dr. Language and I’ (Zwicky 2005). In what would later be called a “classic post” (Zimmer 2019), he wrote about a language column which claimed that the construction *between you and I* had only started to appear over the last few decades. Zwicky invalidated this claim by showing that its usage dated back at least 150 years, and possibly as much as 400 years. Zwicky also speculated more generally about such recency statements, saying that the claim in this column was not an isolated occurrence, but rather an example of what he called elsewhere a “systematic dogged misapprehensions” (Zwicky 2006) about language that people entertained. Zwicky described two of these closely related misapprehensions as follows:

Recency Illusion: If you’ve noticed something only recently, you believe that it originated recently.

Frequency Illusion: Once you notice a phenomenon, you believe it happens a whole lot. (Zwicky 2005)

These illusions manifest in metalinguistic statements of various sorts. In the case of the aforementioned *between you and I*, the columnist wrote that “about 20 years ago U.S. English-speakers began switching me and X to X and I everywhere the phrase occurs” (quoted in Zwicky 2005). Here, the temporal marking is a form of recency statement. Other statements include the word *recent* or variations thereof, such as *this word has recently come into use*, or statements such as *this has lately come into fashion*. As for the Frequency Illusion, Zwicky reports in his original blog post how members of a certain research group expressed a belief about the common use of quotative *all*, which some even perceived to be used “all the time” (2005). “All the time” is a clear statement about the frequency with which a word occurs; other statements include other high frequency terms such as (*very*) *often* or *repeatedly*, but also frequency terms denoting presumably lower degrees of frequency, such as *sometimes*, *rarely* or *hardly ever*. Even the seemingly neutral description *this word occurs* can implicitly refer to frequency.

The crucial part about these illusions is that the perceived recency and frequency may not actually be based in fact, as Zwicky’s example shows. As such, these illusions are clearly related to the large

and well-researched group of cognitive biases, or the “systematic errors in judgment and decision-making common to all human beings which can be due to cognitive limitations” (Wilke and Mata 2012: 531). The existence of such ‘errors’ does not mean that people are always wrong in assuming recency and frequency: there are well-known cases in which people make decisions based on demonstrably accurate information (cf. Arnold et al. 2000; Brysbaert, Mandera, and Keuleers 2017). However, for some reason, sometimes this impression is wrong. One of the main reasons why people exhibit cognitive errors is selective attention. More specifically for language, Zwicky claims, people are influenced by the fact that “hardly anyone has a panoptic view of language variation” (2005). The illusions, then, are not only an effect of selective attention to language variation, but also of the (almost inevitable) restricted access that language users have to a language or language variety as a whole. Consciously or subconsciously, language users take their personal experience as representative for a larger variety, lect, or language, resulting in inaccurate estimations of the recency or frequency of certain words or phrases.

The above explains why these illusions occur; Zwicky also hypothesizes about who is likely to suffer from them, and what language is prone to being the subject of these illusions. According to him, education plays a key role in determining which language users are susceptible to false claims about recency and frequency (similarly, Cameron notes that knowledge of prescriptive discourse is ‘common’ for educated language-users (Cameron 1995: viii)). Especially those with higher levels of education are vulnerable, as they have more “faith in the engines of correctness” (Zwicky 2008). Language professionals, linguists, and really anyone who is “reflective about language” are also susceptible (Zwicky 2005). As for which language is targeted, Zwicky claims that language users are particularly disposed towards certain types of language, which he states are “non-standard, informal, and spoken variants” (Zwicky 2008). One thing that variants with these parameters have in common is that they are often the subject of normative attention. For example, the whole point of the aforementioned column about *between you and I* was to eradicate mistakes in the use of this phrase. It seems, then, that recency and frequency statements are probably made in relation to usage items, or particular cases of disputed variation (see Chapter 1 of this thesis).

This combination of who (reflective language users) and what (disputed language variation) means that prescriptive publications, such as usage guides and style guides, are particularly likely to contain Recency and Frequency Illusions. After all, when we talk about these so-called ‘engines of correctness’, then surely prescriptive publications, which contain nothing but usage items, and aim at fixing language mistakes and eradicating unwanted variation, are the vehicles that run on these engines. Earlier research has shown that such works do indeed contain statements about usage, particularly relating to frequency (Sundby, Bjørge, and Haugland 1991: 38; Kostadinova 2018a: 154–66; Ayres-Bennett 2020). However, this research is limited in scope, and recency statements do not seem to have been studied at all. Whether there is any systematicity to the use of frequency and recency statements, for example depending on the variable, author, or time period, is as of yet unclear.

Equally unclear is to what extent prescriptive statements about usage are an accurate reflection of actual language use. Recent work has shown that the position of prescriptivism being “often in defiance of normal usage” (Trask 1999: 246) may not be as categorically true as was long assumed to be the case. For example, the research discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis shows that in a work by the Dutch linguist Matthijs Siegenbeek (1774–1854) there is a relation between the degree of frequency term used to describe a disputed variant and the actual frequency with which this variant occurs in usage (i.e., terms indicating higher frequency, such as *vaak* ‘often’, show higher frequencies of usage). Similarly, in their study of the *one of the (few) X who Y*-construction, Hogeweg et al. claim that a frequency statement in a particular style guide is correct in asserting that this construction occurs *vaak* ‘often’ with singular agreement (Hogeweg, Ramachers, and De Hoop 2018: 339).²⁶ By contrast, in one example in which an alleged Recency Illusion is explicitly tested against usage data, Liberman (2010) comes to an uncertain conclusion about whether the claim of recency for the sentence-initial *so* is correct. However, he admits that his analysis is “crude”, as he only looks at frequencies per million words in the Corpus of Historical American, without checking whether instances are

²⁶ There is, however, a problematic gap between the frequency statement, which was made in 1992 (van Gessel et al. 1992: 62), and the usage data, which stem from 2011. As such, the claim that this frequency statement is correct should be approached critically. I return to this particular case later on in the chapter.

relevant or not, without an operational definition of recency, and without taking potential genre differences into account.

In summary, although we have some evidence for recency and frequency statements being used in prescriptive publications, we know little about the extent and manner of their use; whether these statements are accurate is similarly uncertain. The present chapter addresses these two issues, by first mapping recency and frequency statements in Dutch prescriptive publications from 1900 onwards. Second, I assess whether these statements are illusions in the Zwickian sense, or whether they conform to actual usage patterns, by comparing the contents of these statements against actual language usage. To investigate whether certain types of linguistic variable are more likely to be correctly spotted than others, I look at both lexical and grammatical usage items. In the absence of any quantitative work exploring these matters, the purpose of the present chapter is explicitly explorative: I want to see whether this type of methodology works, and what issues we encounter. The methodology and the materials are discussed in §6.2. Next, I look at the results in the prescriptive publications for recency (§6.3.1) and frequency (§6.3.2), after which I turn to an assessment of the accuracy of recency statements (§6.3.3) and frequency statement (§6.3.4). I end the chapter with a discussion of all these findings (§6.4).

6.2 Materials and methods

In this section, I first describe my prescriptive material, how I extracted recency and frequency statements from this material, and the tags I gave to these statements (§6.2.1). Following that, I explain how I tested the veracity of these statements. For recency (§6.2.2) and frequency (§6.2.3), I detail how each concept is operationalized, which statements I used for the evaluation of accuracy, and what usage data I base my evaluation on.

6.2.1 Prescriptive and usage data

To study prescriptivist statements about usage, I searched a collection of Dutch language advice publications. This collection contains 5,678 entries from prescriptivist publications aimed at mother tongue speakers of Dutch in the Netherlands for the period 1910–2016 (see Chapter 2 for more details). The entries focus

primarily on morphosyntactic usage items, but include a substantial number on lexis, especially for the earlier decades, as well as some entries for other linguistic levels, such as spelling or pronunciation. Entries in the data set are quite heterogeneous in terms of length and contents, because their structure follows the varying build-up of the publication they originate from. Consequently, while many entries contain precepts pertaining to a single usage item, some contain more than one. Any precept can attract more than one recency or frequency statement.²⁷ I approached the data using #Lancsbox (Brezina, Weill-Tessier, and McEnery 2020).

To investigate the Recency Illusion, I used a set of queries based on words denoting recency, manually cleaning up the results.²⁸ Over the course of the investigation, it became apparent that there are in fact two types of recency statements. Next to the ‘narrow’ Zwickian type, which is about recent origins (Example 1), there are also statements that comment on a recent development in frequency, often by using the word *tegenwoordig* ‘nowadays’ (see Example 2). Although this latter type of pronouncements is not strictly Zwickian, it does constitute a recency claim, and thus I included them in my initial survey of statements.

- (1) In dit geval gebruikt de jongere taal niet zelden het woord *ontbranden*
‘In this case, recent language not uncommonly uses the word *ignite*’ (Moortgat 1925: 50)
- (2) Per. Tegenwoordig een veel gebruikt voorzetsel: *per 1 januari*
‘Per. Nowadays an often-used preposition: *per January 1st*’ (Meijers 1959: 103)

For frequency statements, I extracted precepts from the language advice publications that referenced any kind of frequency of use.²⁹

²⁷ As the collection is still being processed, the exact distribution between the different linguistic levels cannot be given at the time of writing. Similarly, we do not know how many usage items all the entries contain.

²⁸ The complete list of recency queries was: *tegenwoordig, nieuw**, *sinds, recent**, *laatste tijd, modern**, *hedendaag**, *jong**. After these, a sample check of other frequency terms did not produce new results.

²⁹ The complete list of frequency queries was: **gebruik**, *komt *voor, komt voor, tref**, *vaak, vaker, steeds, soms, af en toe, geregeld, regelmatig, zelden, nooit, veelvoorkomend**, *wel eens, weleens, geijkt, zwang, vroeger, tegenwoordig, spreektaal, schrijftaal, volkstaal,*

Again, I cleaned up the results, including only explicit statements about actual usage (Example 3), rather than opinions about usage, as this latter group of statements does not have to be grounded in the reality of usage (cf. Theissen 1978: 7). This meant that I excluded statements about how usage ought to be (Example 4), as well as statements about attitudes (Example 5).

- (3) *Driedubbel*: vaak gebruikt waar *drievoudig* wordt bedoeld. Driedubbel is zes.
'*Threedouble*: often used where *threefold* is meant. *Threedouble* is six' (De Raat 2012: 29)
- (4) *Waar* kan nooit redengevend zijn.
'*Where* should never indicate a reason' (Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond 1925: 4)
- (5) Ondertussen raakt dit gebruik van *betreffend* echter steeds meer geaccepteerd.
'Meanwhile this usage of *concerning* is becoming more and more accepted' (Tiggeler 2001: 147)

In order to delve deeper into the patterns of recency and frequency statements, I tagged all of them for linguistic level (i.e., grammar, lexis, and spelling, etc.) and usage item (for example, comparative conjunction *als/dan* 'as/than'). In certain cases, I grouped certain usage items together. This applied, for example, to several closely related syntactic usage items about the correct combination of dependent and independent clauses. Next, as I was also interested in how prescriptivists applied recency statements according to whether they targeted recent origins or recent increased frequency, I tagged this dimension as well. I also labelled the frequency statements as absolute when they denoted a fixed frequency (e.g., *vaak* 'often', *soms* 'sometimes'), or diachronic when they referred to a development over time (e.g., *meer en meer* 'more and more', *steeds vaker* 'increasingly often'). Finally, I classified all frequency statements according to their grade. Terms could be either low, such as *soms* 'sometimes'; middle, such as *gebruikt* 'in use'; or high, such as *vaak* 'often'. For both absolute and diachronic, as well as grade, I started from the

taalwerkelijkheid. After these, a sample check of other frequency terms did not produce new results.

classification scheme used for Chapter 5, but as the present research included many more terms, I expanded this framework where necessary.

6.2.2 Establishing recency

To evaluate recency statements, I had to date the origins of the word or construction under scrutiny. Although very common, especially in lexicography, this practice nevertheless comes with a host of issues (for an overview see Van der Sijs 2001: 36–43), some of which complicated the current research. For example, when Moortgat (1925: 33fn2) questioned the recent use of *halfmens* ‘halfman’, he objected not to the wordform as such, which had existed since at least the 16th century (Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal, WNT, s.v. *half*), but to a new meaning. Such a semantic shift was hard to distinguish from the already existing meaning of a word. A second problem was that a word could be established in specialized domains or genres, such as scientific publications or medical jargon, before it percolated to general usage. However, an early occurrence of a word in a specialized context does not prove general usage, nor does it seem feasible to expect prescriptivists to come into contact with, base themselves on, or police such specialized occurrences (unless specifically mentioned).

Because of these issues, I limited my investigation to recency statements denoting new wordforms, rather than new meanings. I dated these wordforms based on general usage only, which we can reasonably expect prescriptivists to be aware of, or have come into contact with. It is very likely that certain authors also encountered more specialized genres, but to take these into account would require both a more fine-grained approach than this chapter aims at, and specialized data that we do not have. I only looked at recency statements concerning recent origins (Example 1 above), rather than statements denoting an increase in frequency (Example 2 above). Although the latter type of statement does concern recency, and is thus included in the first half of this chapter, the survey of statements does not fall within the strict Zwickian interpretation of this concept. Moreover, as I also note below, Dutch lacks the proper data to investigate recent changes in frequency for usage items. From the statements that were left after these selection criteria, I randomly selected a maximum of two usage items per decade, for both lexical items and grammatical ones. In taking this coarse-grained approach,

I avoided basing my conclusions on the perceptive ability of particular authors. Moreover, this approach enabled me to see whether the accuracy of recency statements showed a development over time with regard to prescriptivists' perceptions.

The data I used to pinpoint the origins of my usage items came both from primary and secondary sources. Firstly, I checked whether the earliest known example of a usage item was mentioned in one of four secondary sources: the historical *Woordenboek Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT),³⁰ the *Chronologisch Woordenboek* 'Chronological Dictionary' (Van der Sijs 2001), the *Etymologiebank* 'Etymology bank', (Van der Sijs (compiler) 2010), or the *Geschiedenis van het Nederlands in de twintigste eeuw* 'History of Dutch in the twentieth century' (J. Van der Horst and Van der Horst 1999). Secondly, I used primary usage sources. Recent years have seen a great increase in the availability of Dutch language materials, which makes antedatings possible and even likely as compared to the linguistic sources mentioned above. For that reason, I checked results from my metalinguistic investigation in Delpher, an online repository containing over 120 million pages from newspapers, books, and magazines.³¹

After dating the words, I had to evaluate for each precept whether the date of its origins can indeed be called recent, as compared to the date of the prescriptive recency statement. Clearly, the scope of what can be considered 'recent' depends very much on context. Set against the development of the faculty of language in humans, for example, any change that happened since the standardization of Dutch in the 16th century is extremely recent. However, this is presumably not what language users mean when they say that a variant is 'new' or 'recent'. Zwicky gave the following example of what is not recent for him:

Charles Hockett wrote in 1958 (*A Course in Modern Linguistics*, p. 428) about "the recent colloquial pattern I'm going home and eat" (...). But Hockett's belief that the construction was recent in 1958 is just wrong; David Denison, at Manchester, has collected examples from roughly 30 years before that. (Zwicky 2005)

³⁰ Available at <https://gtb.ivdnt.org/search/?owner=wnt>.

³¹ For more information see <https://www.delpher.nl/over-delpher/wat-zit-er-in-delpher/wat-zit-er-in-delpher#7b8c9>.

For Zwicky, then, recent had to be well within 30 years, although he gives neither an explanation for this judgement nor a more exact timeframe. The fact that he stated Hockett's belief is 'just wrong' implies that it was even substantially less than 30 years. However, in the absence of any operationalizations of recency within linguistics that I was aware of, and in light of the fact that the rest of my research is also built upon Zwicky's definitions, I used this threshold value. Moreover, when we take into account that all prescriptive authors are over 30 years old, this meant that recency implies a word or construction originated within the lifetime of an author. If my data, then, showed the origins of a word or phrase to be more than 30 years before the prescriptive recency statement, I considered this to be a case of the Recency Illusion.

6.2.3 Establishing frequency

The results for the frequency statements presented us with similar issues as the recency statements. These included the aforementioned usage items that discussed new meanings for existing wordforms. Additionally, several syntactic types of ellipsis, such as the omission of the complementizer *om* 'for to' proved hard to study quantitatively. An additional selection criterion resulted from Zwicky's formulation of the Frequency Illusion as the belief that certain linguistic variants occur often. In other words, although low and middle frequency statements, such as *sometimes* or *rarely*, are statements about frequency, they do not qualify as possible Frequency Illusions in the Zwickian sense, and thus were left out of the subsequent analysis.

Within these parameters, for lexis I again randomly extracted two usage items per decade. I matched the variant targeted by the frequency statement with its proposed counterpart or counterparts, mapping out the raw and relative frequency of the two variants in a usage corpus (with relative frequency being the proportion with which a variant occurs as compared to all variants combined for a variable, expressed as a percentage). I used different corpora for different periods, depending on availability and corpus quality. For lexical usage items, I initially searched C-CLAMP, a corpus containing ± 200 million words from various magazines and newspapers published between 1837 and 1999 (Piersoul, De Troij, and Van De Velde, submitted). When this corpus yielded fewer than 100 combined hits for both variants for any usage item, I again used Delpher. It is important to note that this dataset unfortunately has

some serious limitations with regard to quantitative research, as its OCR quality is quite low for certain time periods, and its representativeness is questionable (see Van der Sijs 2019b). Still, as I base my conclusions on relative frequency, this becomes less of an issue, although it has to be taken into account when interpreting the results. As with the recency statements, I again use a time window of 30 years prior to the statement. So, when Moortgat calls *duistering* ‘darkness’ the “usual” variant as opposed to *duisternis* ‘darkness’ in 1925 (Moortgat 1925: 48), I look at occurrences of both variants in the 1896–1925 segment of C-CLAMP.

For grammatical usage items, establishing the frequency of two variants in a certain time period of corpus data presented us with problems. The polysemous nature of many grammatical words, coupled with their high occurrence, would require more cleaning-up effort than I could achieve given the overall scope of the present chapter, even after sampling. To still be able to test some grammatical usage frequency statements, I based my study on data as reported in Chapter 8. For this chapter, spoken and written usage data were collected and cleaned-up for nine morphosyntactic variables, in order to test the distribution of variants against prescriptive evaluations (i.e., whether a variant was acceptable) and attitudinal data. I used either written, spoken, or all data from this dataset, depending on the scope of the statement. The usage data comprise the period 1995–2004, and thus I looked at frequency statements from roughly that period (i.e., 1990–2015).

To evaluate whether any result constituted a Frequency Illusion, I turned to a survey of Dutch probability and frequency terms and phrases, as reported in Willems, Albers, and Smeets (2020). Conveniently, they asked participants to give numerical interpretations of their target phrases in percentages. Thus, for example, *vaak* ‘often’ has a mean numerical interpretation of 73%, although there is considerable variability in the answers (Willems, Albers, and Smeets 2020: 9). However, as very few of the high frequency terms found in my data were included by Willems, Albers, and Smeets, I only used the result for *vaak* ‘often’, arguing that higher frequency terms such as *heel vaak* ‘very often’ can be expected to at least entail this meaning. In other words, taking this relatively low threshold, I am being lenient towards prescriptivists’ judgments. In terms of the Frequency Illusion, this approach meant that if less than 73% of the combined variants for a given usage item constitute the one that the prescriptive author targets, this constitutes a case of the

Frequency Illusion. Taking my example from above, the disapproved variant *duistering* ‘darkness’ occurs 8 times in my data, the approved variant *duisternis* ‘darkness’ 909 times. Relatively speaking, then, *duistering* ‘darkness’ only occurred in 0.9% of all 917 combined variants. This is clearly far below my threshold of 73%, and we can thus conclude that within the current framework of evaluation this constitutes an example of the Frequency Illusion.³²

6.3 Results

First, I discuss the results of my prescriptive survey for recency terms (§6.3.1) and frequency terms (§6.3.2). After that, I zoom in on the comparison with usage, looking at lexis and grammar separately, again first for recency statements (§6.3.3) and then frequency statements (§6.3.4).

6.3.1 Prescriptive statements about recency

My data showed 238 entries that contain at least one recency statement. Most entries (214, 89.9%) were aimed at a single usage item; 24 entries discussed more than one. For example, Charivarius listed eight *bruikbare nieuwe Nederlandse woorden* ‘useable new Dutch words’ (Charivarius 1940: 73). By far the most extreme cases were two series of *modewoorden* ‘fashionable words’, both from the same work by Haje (1932), which contained 40 and 24 words, respectively. In total then, this leads to 341 precepts. The majority of these pertained to lexis (230 or 67.6%). Grammar comprises a much smaller proportion (98 or 28.8%); the final twelve items concerned pronunciation, stylistics, or spelling. This distribution was particularly striking when we take into account that the data set as a whole focused more on morphosyntax. It seems then, that lexical items are more likely to attract recency statements.

³² Of course, quantifiers such as *vaak* ‘often’ are context dependent: when something is perceived to occur always, even a handful of deviations can be perceived as often within a certain context. As such, it is conceivable that this is what prescriptivists mean when they use such terms. However, because this is impossible to verify without qualitative interviews, and as we have the quantified framework by Willems, Albers and Smeets (2020), I use their interpretation of the meaning of quantifiers within this Chapter.

Looking at which particular usage items were mentioned, we saw that the 341 precepts belonged to 307 usage items (TTR = 0.9). A total of 283 usage items were mentioned only once (83.3%); the remaining 58 precepts belonged to 22 usage items (see Table 6.1). The two usage items mentioned most often (five precepts each) were both morphosyntactic: the relative pronouns *N dat/wat* ‘that/which’ and number agreement *een aantal N is/zijn* ‘a number of N is/are’. The usage items that were mentioned more than once usually stemmed from different years. The largest time difference, 64 years, was found with regard to *N dat/wat* ‘N that/which’, for which the first recency statement stemmed from 1932, and the last from 1996. This difference in itself makes Recency Illusions inevitable: if particular

Table 6.1. Usage items which are mentioned more than once with recency statements

Usage Item	Translation	Level	No. of Recency Statements	Year(s) of Recency Statements
<i>aantal N is/zijn</i>	‘a number of N is/are’	grammar	5	1979, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2002
<i>N dat/wat</i>	‘N that/which’	grammar	5	1932, 1963, 1990, 1996, 1996
<i>als/dan</i>	‘as/than’	grammar	4	1984, 1994, 1994, 2006
trappen van vergelijking	comparative/superlative formation	grammar	3	1940, 1946, 1994
<i>omdat/doordat</i>	causal conjunctions	grammar	3	1962, 1994, 1996
<i>nieuwbouw</i>	‘new construction’	lexis	3	1932, 1942, 1964
<i>grootstad</i>	‘big city’	lexis	3	1932, 1942, 1964
<i>belevenis</i>	‘experience’	lexis	3	1932, 1964, 1978
woordgeslacht	noun gender	grammar	3	1993, 1993, 1994
11 usage items	not applicable	lexis	2	not applicable
3 usage items	not applicable	grammar	2	not applicable

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variation already existed in 1932, it cannot be a recent phenomenon in the 1990s.

To see whether there was any development in the use of recency statements, I looked at the distribution of recency judgements over time (see Table 6.2). Looking first at usage items ($n = 341$), the highest number of statements was found in the 1930s, which was largely caused by the two wordlists mentioned before. The 1990s was the second-highest scoring decade, as it had 50 usage items attracting recency statements. However, as the number of prescriptive publications varied greatly over time in my collection, we cannot draw conclusions based on these raw usage items frequencies. Instead, we should look at relative occurrences per decade as compared to the total collection. Unfortunately, as we do not know the exact number of usage items for every entry in the whole collection, I had to base my study here on the number of entries, which we do know. Looking at entries containing recency statements ($n = 238$) gives a somewhat different view. Now, the 1970s show the highest proportion of entries containing at least one recency statement (11.3%). The lowest percentage is in the 2010s (1%). Furthermore, there seems to be a declining tendency to use recency

Table 6.2. Recency statements per decade as raw frequency and percentage of total amount of entries

Decade	No. of precepts with recency statements ($n = 341$)	No. of entries with recency statements ($n = 238$)	Total no. of entries in collection ($n = 5,678$)	% of entries that contain recency statements compared to total no. of entries in collection
1910	0	0	216	0.0
1920	18	16	193	8.3
1930	97	39	563	6.7
1940	42	32	396	8.1
1950	29	26	531	4.9
1960	35	22	544	4.0
1970	44	38	336	11.3
1980	8	6	524	1.1
1990	50	43	1,082	4.0
2000	15	13	887	1.6
2010	4	4	406	1.0

statements, as earlier decades show higher proportions than later. This tendency is not linear, but the largest outlier, the 1970s, is due to the predilection of one particular author to use such statements. The same goes for the 1990s, albeit to a lesser extent. Although the preferences of particular authors influence the presence of statements, we can conclude that the use of recency statements does proportionally decline over time.

Lastly, the division of recency statements into origins and recent development showed that the former, strictly Zwickyian remarks comprise the majority of statements (80.9%, 276). Almost all statements that comment on a development in usage signal an increase of the condemned variant; only in a few isolated cases do writers indicate that a variant is losing ground. This preference points towards the rhetorical nature of such statements: after all, no-one needs to be 'warned' about a disapproved variant disappearing.

6.3.2 Prescriptive statements about frequency

My material showed that 1,249 entries contain at least one mention of frequency. Frequency statements are thus far more prevalent in Dutch prescriptive publications than recency statements. In total, these 1,249 entries contained 1,786 frequency statements. A difference with the recency statements was that the majority of frequency statements pertained to grammar (1,064, 59.5%), while 36.8% of statements was found in relation to lexis. Again, a small number of 67 precepts referred to other levels, such as spelling and pronunciation. This distribution seems to be more in line with the general contents of the collection. Another notable difference between the recency and frequency statements was that the latter were distributed over a proportionally much smaller number of different usage items, namely 601 (TTR = 0.33). Moreover, for the frequency items, just 400 (66.6%) of the usage items were found only once.

Just as with the recency statements, those particular usage items that attract the most frequency statements are grammatical in nature (see Table 6.3). However, for the frequency statements this effect is much stronger. In fact, when we look at all 33 usage items that occur more than ten times, only one type, verbal formation, refers to lexis, and then only partly. Another noteworthy property of the items in Table 6.3 is the fact that the top five most frequently found usage items in the 20th and 21st century (*hen/hun* 'them',

Table 6.3. Usage items mentioned more than once with frequency statements

	Usage item	English translation	Level	No. of times mentioned
1.	woordgeslacht	noun gender	grammar	88
2.	<i>hen/hun</i>	3rd person personal pronoun direct and indirect object 'them'	grammar	77
3.	<i>als/dan</i>	comparative conjunctions 'as/than'	grammar	66
4.	<i>dat/wat</i>	relative pronouns 'that/which'	grammar	61
5.	<i>zinsbouw</i>	sentence structure	grammar	39
6.	<i>tante betje</i>	word order in subordinate clauses	grammar	37
7.	<i>congruentie</i>	agreement	grammar	36
8.	<i>beknopte bijzin</i>	non-finite/infinitival clauses	grammar	30
9.	<i>trappen van vergelijking</i>	degrees of comparison	grammar	27
10.	<i>omdat/doordat</i>	causal conjunctions 'because'	grammar	26

als/dan comparative conjunctions 'as/than', *dat/wat* 'relative pronouns 'that/which', *tante betje* 'word order in subordinate clauses' and agreement, see Van der Meulen 2021: 170) are also among those items that attract the most frequency statements. This may show that frequency statements are at least partially related to the prescriptive canon. By contrast, however, two of the other types in this top-10, namely *zinsbouw* 'sentence structure' and *beknopte bijzin* 'non-finite/infinitival clauses', relate to quite complex syntactic phenomena, which are generally rare in prescriptive publications (cf. Chapman 2021).

The patterning for the development of frequency statements over time, again looking at entries rather than specific items (n = 1,249), is more haphazard than for recency statements (see Table 6.4). There is another cut-off point between the 1970s and 1980s, but the decline in the last decades is less pronounced, and the presence of frequency terms remains higher than for recency terms. Finally, the influence from specific authors is much more marginal as opposed to recency statements. One exception is Damsteegt, who uses frequency statements in 102 entries in his *In de Doolhof van Het*

Table 6.4. Frequency statements per decade as raw frequency and percentage of total amount of entries

Decade	No. of precepts with frequency statements (n = 341)	No. of entries with frequency statements (n = 238)	Total no. of entries in collection (n = 5,678)	% of entries that contain frequency statements compared to total no. of entries in collection
1910	0	0	216	0.0
1920	66	53	193	27.5
1930	74	59	563	10.5
1940	211	132	396	33.3
1950	153	82	531	15.4
1960	283	195	544	35.8
1970	155	108	336	32.1
1980	121	94	524	17.9
1990	340	233	1,082	21.5
2000	277	214	887	24.1
2010	107	79	406	19.5

Nederlands (Damsteegt 1964). These comprise 52.3% of all mentions in this decade, but this percentage is actually in line with Damsteegt's overall presence in that time period: the entries from his detailed guide comprise 51.5% of all the 544 entries for the 1960s.

As I was interested in the way prescriptivists evaluate usage, I next looked at the specific frequency terms, and the distribution among categories of frequency term and degree (Table 6.5). As for type, the top-10 contained seven absolute frequency terms and three diachronic ones. This was an underrepresentation of absolute frequency terms, as they comprise 85.3% (1524 tokens) of all terms. I also found seven high degree frequency terms, which is an overrepresentation as compared to the presence of such terms in total, as high degree frequency terms comprise 59% (1054 tokens), as opposed to middle (331, 18.5%), and low terms (402, 22.5%). Still, it was clear that prescriptive authors favored high frequency terms. This may be another sign of the rhetorical nature of such terms: the sense of urgency is lower for low frequency terms, which defies the purpose of prescriptive publications.

Table 6.5. Top-10 most frequently used frequency terms

	Frequency Term	English Translation	Category	Degree	No. of Times Mentioned
1.	<i>vaak</i>	‘often’	absolute	high	317
2.	<i>soms</i>	‘sometimes’	absolute	middle	107
3.	<i>steeds</i> <i>vaker</i>	‘increasingly more often’	diachronic	high	51
4.	<i>weleens</i>	‘occasionally’	absolute	low	51
5.	<i>veel</i>	‘much/many’	absolute	high	47
6.	<i>gebruikt</i>	‘used’	absolute	middle	36
7.	<i>vooral</i>	‘mostly’	absolute	high	36
8.	<i>steeds</i> <i>meer</i>	‘increasingly’	diachronic	high	35
9.	<i>vaker</i>	‘more often’	diachronic	high	33
10.	<i>dikwijls</i>	‘often’	absolute	high	32

6.3.3 Recency and usage

20 of the 23 recency statements I investigated for 16 usage items are instances of the Recency Illusion, which is by far the majority of statements (87%). Just three recency statements, for three different usage items, are not illusions (see Table 6.6, see Appendix 6.1 for sources used).³³ These exceptions are *mond-aan-mondreclame* ‘mouth-on-mouth marketing’, for which there was only six years between the recency statement and the first observed occurrence in usage; *hoogspanning* ‘high voltage’, for which the time gap was 25 years (a later statement claiming the recency of this word from 1978 is a Recency Illusion according to my definition), and *mentaliteit* ‘mentality’, for which the time gap is exactly 30 years. However, these results highlight the arbitrariness of my definition: *mentaliteit* ‘mentality’ just makes the cut, while *belevenis* ‘experience’, for which the time gap is 34 years, is only an illusion by a small margin. However, such occurrences are actually quite rare: for 17 of the

³³ It is very well possible that earlier examples can be found for many of these cases. However, as finding the earliest occurrence was not the goal of the current research, I stopped searching when I found an example in general usage that invalidated the recency statement. These dates can thus best be interpreted as ‘at least as early as’, as is normal in lexicography (van der Sijs 2001: 41).

Table 6.6. Lexical usage items with year(s) of recency statement, earliest occurrence in usage, and evaluation with regard to Recency Illusion

Usage Item	English Translation	Year(s) of Recency Statement	Source	Illusion?
<i>toonkunstenaar</i>	'musician'	1925	1756	yes
<i>mentaliteit</i>	'mentality'	1932	1902	no
<i>vandaag de dag</i>	'today'	1940	1895	yes
<i>nieuwbouw</i>	'new housing estate'	1932, 1942, 1964	1859	1932: yes; 1942: yes; 1964: yes;
<i>halfbroeder</i>	'half-brother'	1932, 1964	1748	1932: yes; 1964: yes
<i>grootmacht</i>	'superpower'	1932, 1964	1871	1932: yes 1964: yes
<i>hoogspanning</i>	'high-voltage'	1932, 1978	1907	1932: no 1978: yes
<i>belevenis</i>	'experience'	1932, 1964, 1978	1898	1932: yes; 1964: yes; 1978: yes
<i>witlof</i>	'chicory'	1959	1854	yes
<i>festival</i>	'festival'	1959	1872	yes
<i>emballage</i>	'packaging'	1980	1745	yes
<i>uitonderhandelen</i>	'negotiate'	1989	1955	yes
<i>mond-aan- mondreclame</i>	'word-of-mouth advertising'	1995	1989	no
<i>met behulp van + person</i>	'with the help of' + person	2001	1857	yes
<i>in de loop der tijd</i>	'over time'	2008	1946	yes
<i>uitboeën</i>	'booing'	2012	1966	yes

statements, the earliest occurrence of a word or phrase predates the recency statement by more than 50 years.

Within my selection criteria, there were few recency statements that commented on the origins of a particular grammatical variant, and that could be checked. Still, for those 13 that did occur for eight usage items, the picture is much the same as for lexical items: they are almost all Recency Illusions (see Table 6.7, and see Appendix 6.2 for references to the specific sources, as well as, again, the type of source).³⁴ The only possible exception in my data is

³⁴ The same caveat as mentioned in the previous footnote applies to these datings.

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Table 6.7. Grammatical usage items with year(s) of recency statement, earliest occurrence in usage, and evaluation with regard to Recency Illusion.

Usage Item	Recency Statement	Source	Illusion?
relative pronouns <i>dat/wat</i> 'that/which'	1932, 1990	1930s	1932: maybe; 1990: yes
periphrastic comparative/superlative	1940, 1994	1890	1940: yes; 1994: yes
complementizer <i>om</i> 'for to'	1948	1898	yes
article ellipsis before certain nouns (e.g., <i>ondergetekende</i> 'undersigned')	1959	1900	yes
causal conjunctions <i>omdat/doordat</i>	1962, 1994, 1996	1860	1962: yes; 1994: yes; 1996: yes
comparative conjunctions <i>als/dan</i> 'as/than'	1984	17th century	yes
noun gender <i>hun</i> 'them' as subject	1993, 1994 2000	1700 1911	1993: yes; 1994: yes yes

relative pronoun *wat* 'what', which, according to Haje, is *tegenwoordig* 'at present' frequently used in written language following neuter nouns (1932: 118). Although the general development of *d*-forms to *w*-forms is well-established (see, for example, Schoonenboom 2000), relatively little is known about the particular progression of this phenomenon with regard to neuter nouns (cf. Rutten 2020). However, as J. van der Horst and Van der Horst posit that the use of the disapproved variant *wat* 'what' must have been limited to spoken language until approximately 1900 (J. Van der Horst and Van der Horst 1999: 170), I evaluate this case as maybe constituting a Recency Illusion.

A noteworthy difference between the grammatical usage items and the lexical usage items is that the time gaps between the recency statement and the actual first occurrence are much larger for grammatical usage items. Several of the usage items go back to the early days of Dutch normative writing. For example, when Heldring complained in 1993 that many neuter proper nouns for countries and cities were increasingly being referred to by using feminine

possessive pronouns (for example, *Nederland en haar belangen* ‘the Netherlands and her interests’, Heldring 1993: 98), this echoes a very similar comment made by Van Hoogstraten in 1700 (quoted in van der Sijs 2021: 402). On the one hand, it seems unlikely that Heldring, a journalist, would have read a grammar book from 300 years ago. On the other hand, the referential practice of using feminine possessive pronouns is a staple of prescriptive publications, dating back to at least the 1930s.³⁵ With regard to these grammatical cases, then, Zwicky’s complaint that “if only they’d thought to consult some standard sources or look at some facts” seems warranted (2005).

6.3.4 Frequency and usage

Within our parameters, I found two checkable lexical examples in all decades except the 1920s and 1950s, for a total of 18 (see Table 6.8, see Appendix 6.3 for raw frequency data for the proposed alternative, as well as specifications of the particular usage data on which the counts are based). Our data from the lexical variants showed that all but one of our examples constituted Frequency Illusions. The only exception was *meer of mindere mate* ‘a greater or lesser extent’, for which the condemned variant comprised 76.7% of all variants. In seven of the cases, the proportion of targeted variants comprises less than 5% of all variants. Noteworthy is the case of compounds ending in *-toename* ‘increase’, which is targeted by Grauls (1957: 197) in favor of the proposed alternatives ending in *-toeneming* ‘increase’. In our data, the disapproved variants occur in almost half of all cases (47.2%), making this a Frequency Illusion. However, data from the present day showed that the disapproved variant has all but disappeared, as I found 64 hits for *-toeneming* ‘increase’, against 8,767 for *-toename* ‘increase’. So, while the statement was not correct at the time, Grauls was perhaps aware of a change in progress.

Of the nine grammatical usage items under investigation, seven occurred in our data with high frequency statements, sometimes multiple times (see Table 6.9, and see Appendix 6.4 for raw frequency data for the proposed alternative, as well as

³⁵ Ironically, the earliest prescriptive publication in my collection that references this usage item is a style guide published by national newspaper NRC in 1935. Heldring’s prescriptive publication was a collection of columns he wrote for this very newspaper.

Table 6.8. Lexical usage items with year(s) of frequency statement, absolute and relative frequency counts of condemned variant in usage, and evaluation with regard to Frequency Illusion

Condemned Variant	Proposed Alternative(s)	English Translation	Year of frequency statement	Absolute Frequency of Condemned Variant	Relative Frequency in % of Condemned Variant	<73%
duistering	duisternis	'darkness'	1925	8	0.9	yes
(on)toelaatbaar	(on)geoorloofd	'impermissible'	1932	73	17.9	yes
jongeman	jonkman	'young man'	1935	81	38.8	yes
onmeedogenloos	meedogenloos	'merciless'	1940	49	3.5	yes
zodoende	dus, daarom	'thusly'	1941	20	0.1	yes
-toename	-toeneming	'increase'	1957	50	47.2	yes
vanwege	wegens	'because of'	1962	186	34.0	yes
zwempeel	zwembad	'swimming pool'	1964	69	0.1	yes
ons inziens	onzes inziens	'in our opinion'	1975	7,791	65.7	yes
begeesterd	verrukt, geestdriftig	'enraptured'	1978	4	1.2	yes
verplichtend	verplicht	'obliged'	1980	16	2.5	yes
ik mankeer	mij mankeert	'I lack'	1986	205	58.6	yes
middels	door middel van	'by means of'	1991	328	25.5	yes
behartenswaardig	behartigenswaardig	'worthy of consideration'	1997	146	56.6	yes
overnieuw	opnieuw	'all over again'	2000	552	0.1	yes
meer of mindere	meerdere of mindere	'a greater or lesser degree'	2005	1,457	76.7	no
mate	mate					
scherpst van de snede	scherp van de snede	'sharpest part of the knife' (idiom)	2013	297	47.9	yes
snede						
zei af	zegde af	'cancelled'	2013	25	27.5	yes

Table 6.9. Grammatical usage items with year(s) of frequency statement, absolute and relative frequency counts of condemned variant in usage, and evaluation with regard to Frequency Illusion

Condemned Variant	Proposed Alternative(s)	Year of Frequency Statement	Absolute Frequency of Condemned Variant	Relative Frequency in % of Condemned Variant	<73%
person <i>waarvan</i>	person <i>van wie</i>	1999, 2000, 2001, 2001	120	18.6	yes
Neuter noun <i>wat</i>	Neuter noun <i>dat</i>	1996, 1998, 2001, 2007, 2009, 2013	339	7.4	yes
subject- <i>hun</i>	subject- <i>zij</i>	1994, 2000, 2008, 2011	197	2.7	yes
<i>een aantal mensen zijn</i>	<i>een aantal mensen is</i>	1994, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2011	465	60.7	yes
<i>je kan</i>	<i>je kunt</i>	1993	1792	28.6	yes
<i>u heeft</i>	<i>u hebt</i>	2009	827	74.1	no
<i>hele mooie auto</i>	<i>heel mooie auto</i>	1993, 2011	2482	79.7	no

specifications of the particular usage data on which the counts are based). All cases targeted spoken and written language, except for the frequency statement about *hun*-subject. Subsequently, for *zij/hun* subject ‘they/them’ we used only the spoken data. For two of these usage items, *u heeft/u hebt* ou-POL have’ and *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very/very.INFL nice car’, the proportion of condemned variants is above our threshold of 73%.³⁶ Thus, the three frequency statements I find for these usage items are not Frequency Illusions. However,

³⁶ In this chapter I use POL to mean ‘polite form’, INFL to mean ‘inflected form’, and N to mean ‘noun’.

these correct assessments are the minority, as the other 21 statements, distributed over five variants, show relative frequencies below the threshold. Thus, as with the lexical variants, by far the majority of statements can be classified as Frequency Illusions.

Of particular interest was one of the frequency statements made for relative pronoun *wat* ‘what’. Houët (2000: 249) claimed that in spoken language this variant is used *vrijwel uitsluitend* ‘almost exclusively’. When I extracted the spoken part out of the data used, I observed that, although with 35.8% it was much higher than the combined written and spoken data reported above, it was far from used exclusively. In fact, it was not even the dominant variant. This label *uitsluitend* ‘exclusively’ was quite rare in my data, and I found only two other instances. In 1962, Heidbuchel claimed that *omdat* ‘because’ is used *vrijwel uitsluitend* ‘almost exclusively’, to the detriment of alternative *doordat* ‘because’ (Heidbuchel 1962: 144). However, in C-CLAMP (1932–1962) I found 832 examples of *doordat* ‘because’ (8.8% of all variants). Similarly, Weverink stated that *vrijwel iedereen* ‘almost everybody’ used *ze* ‘them’ in spoken language to indicate direct or indirect object, rather than *hen* or *hun* ‘them’ (Weverink 2012: 52).³⁷ In this case, I found over 2,300 occurrences of *hen* and *hun* ‘them’ in these functions in the Corpus Gesproken Nederlands ‘Corpus of Spoken Dutch’ (see Oostdijk 2000). Both statements were thus clearly illusions. Arguably, these examples embodied a ‘worse’ Frequency Illusion than the use of *vaak* ‘often’, as *uitsluitend* ‘exclusively’ is much more categorical. This was also shown in the research by Willems, Albers and Smeets: the interpretation of more categorical words, such as *always*, had a much smaller range of answers than that of high frequency words such as *often* (Willems, Albers, and Smeets 2020: 10). These examples highlight the rhetorical dimension of the use of such extreme frequency statements, but also the risk of their use.

6.4 Discussion

My research shows that recency and frequency statements are part of the modern Dutch prescriptive tradition, but in different ways, and to different degrees. Recency statements occur mostly in relation to

³⁷ It is possible to read this as meaning that everyone uses *ze* ‘them’ but not necessarily exclusively; however, this interpretation seems improbable.

lexis and seem to be falling out of fashion over the course of the twentieth century. Although, as I mentioned, this may partly be due to the design of my collection, it may also be an effect of the solidification of the prescriptive canon. Tieken-Boon van Ostade notes this development for the English usage guide tradition when she says that “many usage problems came to have a remarkably stable presence” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2020: 26); the same has been shown for Dutch (Van der Meulen 2021). This lack of innovation in the genre presumably diminishes the need and even the possibility for variation to be perceived as recent. Thus, when recency statements are used, they are often illusions, but the fact that prescriptivists use fewer of them over time points to some awareness on their part with regard to ‘canonised’ usage items.

Frequency statements differ in three ways from recency statements in our data: they are far more widespread, are mostly used for grammatical usage items, and do not show a decline over time. It is noteworthy that frequency statements regularly occurred with the ‘old chestnuts’ of Dutch prescriptivism, those cases of (grammatical) variation that have been targeted for decades or even centuries (Van der Meulen 2021). This implies that we are seeing a rhetorical dimension of prescriptivism: frequency statements belong to the prescriptive genre, partly because of tradition, partly to keep on creating a sense of urgency. The fact that there is a tendency to use high frequency terms further supports this hypothesis. More in-depth qualitative research should investigate to what extent prescriptive authors genuinely believe their frequency statements, and to what extent they use them, consciously or not, as rhetorical devices.

For the recency statements, the fact that most of them target unique linguistic variants initially pointed towards these statements possibly correctly identifying new variation. However, as our investigation showed, this was not the case: most of them constituted Zwickian illusions. Why the type:token ratio was so high remains unclear. One explanation for the statements that did occur more than once could again be intertextuality. The example of *grootmacht* ‘superpower’, which was first accurately identified as ‘recent’ in 1932, according to our definition of recency, was later inaccurately claimed as such in 1964. Perhaps this later claim was not a genuine observation, but simply copied from the earlier work. As for the scope of our investigation, our results could be skewed by the fact that I did not look at recency statements targeting new meanings. However, it seems unlikely that prescriptivists would be able to detect sometimes

very subtle shifts more accurately than more straightforward wordform occurrences. The same applies to statements observing recent developments in frequency: there is no reason to assume that this arguably more difficult type of observation would yield a higher degree of accuracy. Still, such observations would be worthwhile exploring further, given the availability of adequate usage corpora.

Almost all frequency statements, both for lexis and grammar, were illusions. Although for grammatical usage items, our research was admittedly limited in scope, both for type and temporal coverage, the results were similar across the board. Moreover, while we may have expected earlier prescriptivists to be inaccurate in their assumptions because they lacked available data, this becomes less of an excuse for later periods, when increasing numbers of data sources become available. Nevertheless, the absence of a panoptic view, as Zwicky calls it, or more specifically the lacking ability to extrapolate the personal linguistic experience to a language as a whole, could be the main factor explaining these results. One way of further testing this is by attempting to better match the linguistic reality of specific prescriptivists to the statement. An example of this can be found in Chapter 5, where, in our investigation of frequency terms used in a Dutch normative work from the nineteenth century, we were able to approximate the type of language targeted by a particular prescriptivist, Matthijs Siegenbeek. These results deviate from the present conclusions, in that the prescriptivist work under scrutiny does show broadly correct assumptions about frequency. Whether such an approach would yield different insights for the prescriptivists under investigation here remains the question. The difference in results may also be an effect of the time period: it seems possible that, with linguistic communities being smaller in the nineteenth century, the personal exposure to language of Siegenbeek was more representative of the language as a whole.

The present research provides solid empirical evidence for the existence of the Recency and Frequency Illusions. Of course, this by no means should be taken as evidence that all prescriptivists, let alone all language users, are always 'wrong' in their assessments of recency and frequency. Much more research should and can be conducted to further our understanding of the circumstances in which people make such evaluations. From a methodological standpoint, we consider our approach to be viable, and well worth extending further. Care should be taken with using the present research design however, as the interpretation of seemingly similar

frequency terms may differ between different languages (Willems, Albers, and Smeets 2020: 11). More generally, as much depends on the definitions of recency and frequency, it is important to further delve into what language users actually mean when they use these terms. We saw that sometimes a recency statement explicitly noted a recent increase, rather than a recent origin. Perhaps this is implicitly meant by other recency statements as well. Similarly, both types of statements may accurately observe the emergence or occurrence of a variant in a new genre, even when this is not mentioned explicitly. Perhaps more fine-grained qualitative work would show that prescriptivists do have better antennas for evaluating usage, given different parameters. However, when we take prescriptive statements at face-value, as I did in the present chapter, and as language users perusing the prescriptive publications cannot help but do, we have to conclude that Zwicky was right: we are indeed illuded.

Appendix 6.1. Sources for lexical variants mentioned with recency statements

This appendix contains all lexical usage items with the source used for dating its earliest usage and the type of source (i.e., primary or secondary, dictionary, newspaper etc.). All newspapers were approached through the Delpher interface (delpher.nl). All magazines and books were found using the Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren ‘Digital Library for Dutch Literature’ (www.dbnl.nl).

Usage Item	Recency Statement	Source
toonkunstenaar	WNT, s.v. toonkunstenaar	secondary, dictionary
mentaliteit	Dagblad van Zuidholland en ‘s Gravenhage, 23 June 1902	primary, newspaper
vandaag de dag	Algemeen Handelsblad, 9 October 1895	primary, newspaper
nieuwbouw	Nieuw Amsterdamsch handels-en effectenblad, 23 February 1859	primary, newspaper
halfbroeder	Leydse courant, 3 October 1748	primary, newspaper
grootmacht	Bataviaasch handelsblad, 17 July 1871	primary, newspaper
hoogspanning	WNT, s.v. vereffenen	secondary, dictionary
belevenis	Provinciale Drentsche en Asser courant, 12 January 1898	primary, newspaper
witlof	WNT, s.v. lof	secondary, dictionary
festival	WNT, s.v. festival	secondary, dictionary
emballage	Etymologiebank, s.v. emballage	secondary, etymological dictionary
uitonderhandelen	Algemeen Indisch dagblad: de Preangerbode 22 October 1955	primary, newspaper
mond-aan- mondreclame	Vonk, 1989	primary, magazine
met behulp van + persoon	Dietsche Warande, 1857, p. 121	primary, magazine
in de loop der tijd	Niko Tinbergen (1946) Inleiding tot de diersociologie. p. 139	primary, non-fiction book
uitboeien	Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad 7 October 1966	primary, newspaper

Appendix 6.2 Sources for morphosyntactic variants mentioned with recency statements

This Appendix presents all morphosyntactic usage items with the source used for the evaluation of the recency statement against the Recency Illusion, as well as the type of source. The newspapers were again approached through the Delpher interface (delpher.nl).

Usage Item	Source	Source Type
relative pronouns dat/wat	Van der Horst and van der Horst 1999, p. 170	secondary, linguistic work
periphrastic comparative/superla tive	Bataviaasch Handelsblad, 9 April 1890	primary, newspaper
complementizer om	Dagblad van Zuidholland en's Gravenhage, 14 March 1898	primary, newspaper
article ellipsis before certain nouns (e.g., ondergetekende 'undersigned')	Leeuwarder Courant, 1 January 1900	primary, newspaper
causal conjunctions omdat/doordat	H. Kern (1860), Handleiding bij het onderwijs der Nederlandsche taal, quoted in (Van der Sijs 2021), p. 485	secondary, educational work
als/dan	(van der Sijs 2021, pp. 468–71)	secondary, linguistic work
noun gender	David van Hoogstraten (1700), Aenmerkingen over de geslachten der zelfstandige naamwoorden, quoted in (van der Sijs 2021, p. 402)	secondary, grammar
hun-subject	(vor der Hake 1911, p. 20)	secondary, linguistic work

Appendix 6.3 Sources for lexical variants mentioned with frequency statements

This Appendix presents all lexical usage items with absolute and relative frequency counts of condemned and approved variants in usage, and source of the usage data. Data from C-CLAMP was queried using AntConc (Anthony 2019); Delpher was searched using the online interface (delpher.nl).

Condemned Variant	Proposed Alternative(s)	Absolute Frequency of Condemned Variant	Absolute Frequency of Proposed Alternative	Relative Frequency in % of Condemned Variant	Relative Frequency in % of Proposed Alternative	Source Usage Data
duistering	duisternis	8	909	0.9	99.1	C-CLAMP 1896–1925
(on)toelaatbaar	(on)geoorloofd	73	334	17.9	82.1	C-CLAMP 1903–1932
jongeman	jonkman	81	128	38.8	61.2	C-CLAMP 1906–1935
onmeedogenloos	meedogenloos	49	1346	3.5	96.5	Delpher 1910–1940
zodoende	dus, daarom	20	18,639	0.1	99.9	C-CLAMP 1912–1941
-toename	-toeneming	50	56	47.2	52.8	C-CLAMP 1928–1957
vanwege	wegens	186	361	34.0	66.0	C-CLAMP 1933–1962
zwempoel	zwembad	69	91,854	0.1	99.9	Delpher 1935–1964
ons inziens	onzes inziens	7,791	4,074	65.7	34.3	Delpher 1946–1975
begeesterd	verrukt, geestdriftig	4	330	1.2	98.8	C-CLAMP 1949–1978
verplichtend	verplicht	16	615	2.5	97.5	C-CLAMP 1951–1980
ik mankeer	mij mankeert	205	145	58.6	41.4	Delpher 1957–1986
middels	door middel van	328	957	25.5	74.5	C-CLAMP 1972–1991

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behartens- waardig overnieuw	behartigens- waardig opnieuw	146	112	56.6	43.4	Delpher 1978-1997
		552	554,358	0.1	99.9	Delpher 1981-2000
meer of mindere mate scherpst van de snede zei af	meerdere of mindere mate scherp van de snede zegde af	1,457	443	76.7	23.3	Delpher 1986-2005
		297	323	47.9	52.1	Delpher 1994-2013
		25	66	27.5	72.5	Delpher 1994-2013

Appendix 6.4 Sources for morphosyntactic variants mentioned with frequency statements

This Appendix reports all morphosyntactic usage items with absolute and relative frequency counts of condemned and approved variants in usage. The reported usage data combine results for each variable from the Corpus Gesproken Nederlands ‘Corpus of Spoken Dutch’ (Oostdijk 2000) and the 1995–1999 section of C-CLAMP (see Chapter 8).

Condemned Variant	Proposed Alternative(s)	Absolute Frequency of Condemned Variant	Absolute Frequency of Proposed Alternative	Relative Frequency in % of Condemned Variant	Relative Frequency in % of Proposed Alternative
person + waarvan	person + van wie	120	524	18.6	71.4
Neuter noun wat	Neuter noun dat	339	4,216	7.4	82.6
hun hebben	zij hebben	197	726	2.7	97.3
een aantal mensen zijn	een aantal mensen is	465	301	60.7	39.3
je kan	je kunt	1,792	4,481	28.6	71.4
u heeft	u hebt	827	289	74.1	25.9
hele mooie auto	heel mooie auto	2,482	634	79.7	20.3

Chapter 7

Who makes what rules for whom?

Interactions between prescriptivism and usage in Dutch parliamentary reports

Abstract

Despite increasing research, the interplay between prescriptivism and usage remains underexplored, especially for contemporary Dutch. Proving contact between specific rules and usage is one particular issue. This chapter approaches this problem by mapping changes made to fourteen prescriptively targeted variables between spoken debates in Dutch parliament and their corresponding official reports (2010-2020; 112.167 words), and, uniquely, by comparing these to three Parliamentary Language Guides. Results show that most grammatical rules are strictly obeyed, but both standard and non-standard preferences of registrars show through, especially for rules allowing for variation. This disregard is stronger for lexical and stylistic items, and increases over time. Similarly, while lexical and stylistic rules are closely tailored to actual parliamentary usage, grammatical rules correspond more to general prescriptive patterns. These differences indicate how prescriptivism works differently on different linguistic levels. This article highlights the complex interactions between prescriptive rules, usage and personal preference of language users.

7.1 Introduction

The variation with regard to the use of comparative conjunctions *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ in Dutch is very well-known, and encompasses a variety of related but slightly different grammatical constructions (see Chapter 4). One of these is the excepting comparative, in which a comparative conjunction follows a negative indefinite pronoun, as in for example *niemand anders als/dan...* ‘no-one other than...’. Both *als* and *dan* ‘as/than’ are found in actual language use following the excepting comparative, but this variation is disputed and has led to the formulation of a prescriptive rule:

- (1) Men schrijve niet *niets anders als* maar *niets anders dan*
‘One doesn’t write *nothing other as* but *nothing other than*’
- (2) We gebruiken *dan* ook na *ander* en *anders*: Er zit niets anders op dan te vertrekken.
‘We use *than* also after *other* and *else*: We can do nothing other than leave.’

Although the choice of words in these examples is similar, and the verdict equally dismissive of the possible use of *als*, there is almost a century between the two pronouncements. Example 1 stems from a booklet intended for employees of Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* ‘The Telegraph’ from the early twentieth century (s.n. 1916: 11), whereas Example 2 is found in a book for editors from the early twenty-first century (Daniëls 2005: 69). Of course, neither this particular type of variation nor its explicit evaluation is new, as both go back to the earliest grammatical treatises on Dutch in the sixteenth century (Van der Sijs 2021: 469). What is more, this long-standing rule is far from unique. Many grammatical rules of Dutch found in present-day prescriptive publications can be observed in similar formulations in the early twentieth-century, nineteenth-century or older normative publications (Van der Meulen 2021).

The fact that prescriptive rules are repeated over long periods of time raises the question how they relate to actual language usage. One can assume that the inclusion of any rule implies that the normative intervention is still deemed necessary by those perpetuating it. Does this mean that these prescriptive rules do not influence usage, or not enough? And vice versa: if the usage has changed, why has the rule not been adapted in response? Over the last two decades, these and related questions have gained increased

traction in linguistic research, especially in the study of English, and to a lesser extent in German and Dutch (for an overview of existing research see Rutten and Vosters 2021). Much of this research has focused on the effects of certain rules on actual language use. However, as Curzan puts it, “the interaction of prescriptivism and usage defies straightforward cause-effect relationships” (2014: 87). Understanding effects alone, then, solves only part of the prescriptive puzzle. In recognition of this observation, some attention has been paid recently to the way in which usage shapes prescriptivism (Ayres-Bennett 2020), although this research has mostly limited itself to the nineteenth century and earlier. Especially for disputed Dutch morphosyntactic variation from 1900 onwards, little is known about the interaction between usage and norms.

The present chapter delves into this interplay using an underexplored but promising dataset: the parliamentary proceedings of the Dutch parliament. The promise of these proceedings for investigating norms and usage is threefold. Firstly, from 2010 onwards, both video recordings of the actual spoken parliamentary debates as well as official written reports of these debates are freely available online. Being able to study these two versions of the same text, both before and after editing, enables us to pinpoint exactly which linguistic variants are changed by prescriptive intervention, and what is already present in the original spoken debates. Secondly, the fact that both versions of this text are freely available online makes for a relatively easy and uncomplicated data collection process. Finally, I have access to the specific prescriptive documents used in this situation, namely those language policy documents used by the registrars of the *Dienst Verslag en Redactie* ‘Report and Editing Service’ (henceforth DVR) for preparing the official parliamentary proceedings of the Dutch parliament.³⁸ This allows me not only to map out which particular rules are present in the policy documents and how these are formulated, but also to investigate how the formulation of rules relates to actual usage, to what extent rules are based on actually occurring usage, and whether prescriptive rules change as a result of changing usage. In other words, rather than study the flow between prescriptivism and usage as a unidirectional phenomenon, I can study interactional patterns in both directions,

³⁸ The DVR was kind enough to answer questions and allow me access to their internal work documents, but asked that I not quote from these documents directly. For this reason, I only paraphrase, and do not refer to page numbers. Those who are interested in the original material can contact the DVR at verslagdienst@tweedekamer.nl

and as such, come to a better understanding of the way prescriptivism functions.

The purpose of the present chapter is to investigate the interactions between prescriptive rules and usage in both spoken parliamentary debates and their corresponding official reports. First, I will provide an overview of existing research into prescriptive interactions, and describe the issues of current prescriptivism research (§7.2.1). Then, I will outline the nature of the Dutch parliamentary reports (§7.2.2), and describe the policy documents used to produce these reports (§7.2.3). I will describe the data, sampling method and ways of analysis (§7.3), after which I will present general results for grammatical changes, results according to different stances towards variation, and results with regard to a selection of lexical and stylistic variables (§7.4).

7.2 Background

7.2.1 Contact and change in prescriptivism research

In 2005, Auer and González-Díaz proposed a new, quantitative method for studying the effects of prescriptivism. They used corpora of actual language usage to track the diachronic progression of both variants of contested language variables or ‘usage items’, such as the relative pronouns *which* and *that*, and compared their development to the feature’s treatment in prescriptive publications of the time. This approach, they argue, “has revealed itself to be a very suitable means of tracking social change at a wider level (i.e., at a macro- level)” (2005: 336). Many researchers seem to agree, as this approach, which has become known as the *precept-vs-practice-approach*, has since been applied in an ever-growing number of studies. Some of these studies have found robust influence of prescriptivism on language use. Hinrichs, Szmrecsanyi, and Bohmann (2015), for example, showed that an increase in the use of *that* in the time period 1961-1992 could be linked to prescriptivist condemnation of *which*. Similarly, Curzan shows how the use of *hopefully* declines in the 1970s as a result of “the prescriptive focus on this construction” (2014: 57). For Dutch, Hendrickx (2013) demonstrated how, among other things, the degree of adaptation of loanwords and the origins of a word influenced the success of lexical usage advice. By contrast, other studies have found a general lack of effects for the variables under investigation (see, e.g.,

Anderwald 2016 on several English verbs, or Poplack and Dion 2009 for the French future verb tense). With seemingly contrasting evidence, the main take-away from such research is that prescriptivism can affect language use under certain circumstances (cf. Rutten and Vosters 2021), but that these circumstances remain elusive and under-investigated.

One major methodological concern with the precept-vs-practice-approach is the difficulty in proving that particular language use has been influenced by a particular prescriptive publication or collection of publications. More generally, developments in the rise or fall of particular language variants may be due to any number of language internal or external reasons, and it is exceedingly difficult to conclusively prove that any development can really be causally connected to prescriptivism (cf. Moschonas 2020). This uncertainty has led to some very carefully worded conclusions about the effects of prescriptivism. A good example comes from Auer, who states that “considering that we are not aware of any other intralinguistic and/or extralinguistic factors which are responsible for the development of the subjunctive form in the eighteenth century, it appears that prescriptivists did exert an influence” (2006: 48). Although such circumspect conclusions do not diminish the quality of the research, in trying to understand the workings of prescriptivism it would of course be helpful to be able to make more robust claims.

A possible way to collect stronger evidence of the effects of prescriptivism is by looking at different versions of the same text, both before and after editing has taken place. By doing this, exact changes can be observed, and the influence of particular prescriptive rules can be measured. This approach has been taken up by a handful of researchers over the last years, among them Nordlund and Pallaskallio (2017). They studied two morphological variables in nineteenth century Finnish (2017), by comparing their occurrence in hand-written so-called “rural correspondence letters” (2017: 134) addressed to a Finnish newspaper, and their published form in said newspaper. Similarly, Van der Feest Viðarsson discusses corrections made to high school essays in nineteenth and early twentieth century Icelandic (2019). He argues that such corrections are “the smoking gun of norm implementation and norm evaluation” (2019: 47), but as the focus of his thesis lies elsewhere, he only includes a brief discussion of a select number of variables.

There have been two quantitative approaches to comparing different versions of the same texts to investigate editorial

intervention. The first is Mollin (2007), who investigated the differences between spoken debates in the British House of Commons and the Hansard reports of these debates. She showed that considerable changes were made by the editors on several levels of language use. Various spoken language features were left out of the reports, and the relative distribution of variants for several grammatical variables differed between the spoken text and the final report. However, as Mollin's goal was to assess the suitability of Hansard parliamentary reports for corpus research, she does not focus on prescriptively targeted variants. In the second quantitative example of editorial intervention, Owen (2020) does look specifically at such variants. His research looks at article manuscripts before and after editing by the Faculty Editing Service at Brigham Young University. He argues that, while phenomena show different degrees of editing, no clear patterns emerge, as "the changes are essentially a grab-bag of orthography, usage and grammar" (2020: 301).

These approaches definitely highlight the influence of editorial correcting practices, and as such are a step forward in pinpointing prescriptive intervention. However, none of the articles is able to use the explicit set of prescriptive rules on which the respective correctors base themselves. Nordlund and Pallaskallio (2017:153) talk about "a glimpse into invisible language planning". Mollin alludes several times to "a rather specific house-style convention" (2007: 199), but seems not to have had access to any documents or editors specifying this convention. Similarly, Owen states that the editors "presumably followed a single style guide" (2020: 295), but does not indicate which one this could have been, nor does he provide examples of the specific rules. As such, it remains unclear to what extent editors followed their own linguistic convictions, the rules as codified in a particular prescriptive publication, or a mixture of these two. By studying the two versions of the parliamentary proceedings and the policy documents used in-between the production and processing of these versions, I explicate every step of the editorial process visualized in Figure 7.1.

7.2.2 Parliamentary proceedings in the Netherlands

The Dutch parliament (also known as *Staten-Generaal* 'States General') is a bicameral legislative body, composed of an *Eerste Kamer* 'Senate' and a *Tweede Kamer* 'House of Representatives'. Both Houses are

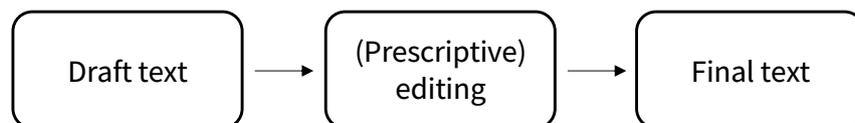


Figure 7.1. Proposed method for studying prescriptive interventions using multiple text versions

presided over by a *voorzitter* 'Speaker of the House' (henceforth Speaker). The House of Representatives regularly interacts with the executive branch of the Dutch government, the *kabinet* 'cabinet', which consists of the Prime Minister, Ministers and State Secretaries. The majority of the proceedings of the House of Representatives are made up of debates between *Kamerleden* 'Members of Parliament' (henceforth MPs) and members of the cabinet, in which they exchange statements, questions and answers. Statements can be interrupted at any time by the Speaker and by MPs raising points of order and questions. While the statements are usually prepared in advance, questions about the statements and answers to those questions are not. This makes the proceedings a mixture of statements which are prepared to a greater or lesser degree and 'improvised' statements. A few other debate variants exist, such as the weekly question hour, but differences with regard to contents, speech order and number of statements are small.

The proceedings of the Dutch parliament are produced by registrars (formerly called stenographers) at the DVR. During debates, a registrar makes a transcription of what is being said, with registrars changed every five minutes to maintain concentration and processing speed. Any five-minute segment is then written out in full by the responsible registrar, and all these segments are combined into a cohesive report by a coordinator. An uncorrected version of this report is usually disclosed the same day as the debate took place. Members of parliament have the right to correct this version within a short time frame (although this rarely happens, see J. De Jong and Van Leeuwen 2011), after which a definitive version is made and published. All proceedings of the States-General, from its inception in 1814 until present day, are available through an official governmental website.³⁹ Since October 2010, video recordings of all plenary debates have also become available from this website.⁴⁰

³⁹ <https://www.officielebekendmakingen.nl/>

⁴⁰ <https://debatgemist.tweedekamer.nl/>

7.2.3 Policy documents in the Dutch parliament

The general principles for producing the official reports are stated in the *Reglement voor de Dienst Verslag en Redactie* ‘Regulations for the Report and Editing Service’.⁴¹ Among these is a ‘golden rule’, which states that the starting point for producing reports should be that the texts are *geredigeerd doch zo veel mogelijk woordelijk* ‘edited, but as verbatim as possible’. This principle is developed and specified in the *Parlementaire Taalgids en Redactieregels van de Dienst Verslag en Redactie* ‘Parliamentary Language Guide and Editing Rules of the Report and Editing Service’ (henceforth Parliamentary Language Guide). It is unclear when exactly the first published version of the Parliamentary Language Guide appeared, but it seems to have been in the early 2000s. Before then, language rules were passed on between registrars in a kind of master-apprentice transmission system. Since the first Parliamentary Language Guide, 22 editions have appeared; most new editions contained only minor changes. In two cases, however, a larger re-working of the contents was undertaken. In 2012, a broader scope of topics was introduced, and in 2018, the point of view with regard to dealing with variation shifted (as I will show in more detail below). This 2018 version is the version that is still in use at the time of writing. For the present research, the two reworkings (2012 and 2018) are used, as well as the earliest Guide available, from 2006.

In some respects, the Parliamentary Language Guide is similar to usage guides written for a general audience. It contains language rules for (presumably) existing variation on several levels of the language, including grammar, lexis, punctuation, spelling, and style. Their purpose is to make the reports uniform, and in doing so, existing variation is suppressed, just as it is in other normative publications (cf. Milroy and Milroy 1999: 6). In two ways, however, the contents of the Guide deviate from general public usage guides. Firstly, the bulk of the rules pertains to the characteristic language use of the parliamentary register, including the use of procedural elements and the spelling of certain terms that are common within the linguistic environment of political discourse. Secondly, the number of entries dedicated to grammar is quite small: whereas usage guides aimed at a general public may contain hundreds or even thousands of usage items (see, for example, Houthuys and

⁴¹ Available from <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0016546/2009-11-10>

Permentier 2016 for Dutch; or Fowler 2015 [1926] for English), the Parliamentary Language Guides contain only about a dozen rules pertaining to grammatical issues. It is made explicitly clear in the Guides that these rules are in no way exhaustive, and that, while the included rules focus on matters of particular importance, these are to be supplemented by a variety of authoritative language resources. Resources that are mentioned include the official spelling guidelines (as found in the so-called *Groene Boekje* ‘green booklet’), a number of renowned dictionaries, and certain widely used prescriptive authorities, most notably the online resources of the association *Onze Taal* ‘Our Language’ and the Dutch language policy institution the *Taalunie* ‘Language Union’.

7.3 Methodology

In this section, I will explain how I extracted the relevant prescriptive rules from the Parliamentary Language Guides. After that, I will describe the way in which I collected the usage data for both the transcriptions and the reports and explain my analysis.

7.3.1 Extracting rules

I mapped out the development of all morphosyntactic rules found in the three Parliamentary Language Guides. Across these documents, I found rules pertaining to eleven different grammatical variables, dealing with a diverse array of linguistic phenomena, including verbal inflection, agreement, and word order. In all cases, the rules relate to well-known usage items in Dutch prescriptivism. For example, agreement with quantifying singular noun *aantal* or the subsequent plural noun (similar to the English usage item *a number of people is/are*) is found in almost two-thirds of publications (63%) of a sample of Dutch twentieth century language advice publications (Van der Meulen 2021). Certain rules, such as the use of 2nd person verb variants for different verbs, are closely related, but as the verdicts for dealing with variation were different in different Parliamentary Language Guides, I treated these rules separately.

Next, I classified the stance towards variation for every rule in each Parliamentary Language Guide. Earlier studies distinguished between variation being acceptable, acceptable in restricted contexts, or unacceptable (cf. Kostadinova 2020; Peters and Young 1997).

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However, as the material in the Parliamentary Language Guides was phrased somewhat differently from prescriptive publications used in other studies, I labelled items as ‘standard’ or ‘non-standard’, and ‘follow the speaker’, which was the formulation used in the Guides themselves. This last stance is comparable to the prescriptive position which completely accepts optional variation. Table 7.1 provides an overview of the stance per rule for each of the three Guides. When rules were absent, the verdict was classified as ‘Not mentioned’.

Table 7.1. Development of morphosyntactic rules across Parliamentary Language Guides (N = noun).⁴² Verdicts: S = Standard; NS = Non-standard; FTS = Follow the speaker; NM = Not mentioned. Table continues on the next page.

Phenomenon	Standard variant	Non-standard variant	English translation	Verdict 2006	Verdict 2012	Verdict 2018
2nd person verb variants of <i>kunnen/zullen</i>	<i>je kunt</i> <i>je zult</i>	<i>je kan</i> <i>je zal</i>	you can you shall	S	S	FTS
2nd person verb variant of <i>willen</i>	<i>je wilt</i>	<i>je wil</i>	you want	S	S	S
2nd person formal verb variant of <i>hebben</i>	<i>u heeft</i>	<i>u hebt</i>	you.POL have	NM	NS	FTS
Verb order in subordinate clauses	<i>is</i> <i>gekomen</i>	<i>gekomen</i> <i>is</i>	has come/ come has	FTS	NM	NM
Indefinite pronoun + relative pronoun	<i>iets wat</i>	<i>iets dat</i>	something which/that	S	S	FTS
Neuter noun + relative pronoun	N <i>dat</i>	N <i>wat</i>	N that/which	NM	S	S
Third person plural object personal pronouns	<i>hen</i>	<i>hun¹</i>	them	S	S	S

⁴² In this chapter I use POL to mean ‘polite form’, INFL to mean ‘inflected form’ and N to mean ‘noun’.

Table 7.1. (cont.) Development of morphosyntactic rules across Parliamentary Language Guides (N = noun). Verdicts: S = Standard; NS = Non-standard; FTS = Follow the speaker; NM = Not mentioned.

Phenomenon	Standard variant	Non-standard variant	English translation	Verdict 2006	Verdict 2012	Verdict 2018
Intensifying adverb	<i>heel</i>	<i>hele</i>	very/ very.INFL	S	S	FTS
Agreement with quantifying noun <i>aantal</i>	<i>een</i> <i>aantal N</i> <i>is</i>	<i>een</i> <i>aantal N</i> <i>zijn</i>	a number of N is/are	S	FTS	FTS
Agreement with other quantifying nouns	<i>een</i> <i>heleboel</i> <i>N is</i>	<i>een</i> <i>heleboel</i> <i>N zijn</i>	a lot of N is/are	S	S	S
Comparative/superlative formation	<i>mooier</i> , <i>mooist</i>	<i>meer</i> , <i>mooi</i> , <i>meest</i> , <i>mooi</i>	nice, nicer/more nice/most nice	NM	S	NM

In order to establish whether the normative approach was unique to grammatical variation, or whether it conformed to practices with regard to other linguistic phenomena as well, I also checked the verdicts for a selection of other linguistic items (see Table 7.2). I made sure to include rules from different linguistic levels: stylistics (sentence initial connective *en* ‘and’), lexico-pragmatic (certain discourse particles), and forms of address (2nd sg personal pronoun formal *u* ‘you.POL’). In these cases, there is no binary opposition between a non-standard and a standard variant, as with the grammatical variables. Rather, registrars are urged to simply remove disapproved variants, either by deleting the word or by rewriting the relevant sentence. With regard to 2nd person pronoun formal *u* ‘you.POL’, the rule stems from the fact that MPs should not address one

Table 7.2. Development of other linguistic rules across Parliamentary Language Guides

Phenomenon	2006	2012	2018
Sentence initial connective <i>en</i>	Not mentioned	Removal preferred	Follow the speaker
Discourse particles (<i>eigenlijk, wel, nog, dus, toch, nu, nou, ja, ook</i>)	Remove	Remove	Remove
2nd personal pronoun formal <i>u</i>	Remove	Remove	Remove

another directly, but are required to refer to other MPs and ministers using a titular form (either *mijnheer* or *mevrouw*, ‘sir/madam’), followed by the last name of the addressee. The informal 2nd person personal pronoun *je* ‘you’ is never used to address others. The rules for this variant listed in Table 7.1 apply to its use as a generic impersonal pronoun, comparable to English ‘you’.

7.3.2 Usage data

To study the language use of the parliamentary proceedings, I sampled the proceedings of the House of Representatives. I took part of a debate per year from different months starting in 2010, the year from which the video debates first became available, until 2020 (see Table 7.3).⁴³ I made sure to include debates about different topics to avoid biases, and chose not to use any of the separate written documents that were also part of the proceedings (such as written answers to parliamentary questions), as in these cases the original version is published without editorial intervention. The total sample contained material from 67 speakers, including the Speaker, stemming from thirteen political parties.⁴⁴ The distribution between the number of words per speakers is not equal, but because of the large number of speakers, any bias because of personal style becomes unlikely.

For each of these debates, I first manually transcribed the corresponding video recording of the debate, until I hit the half-hour mark. Because the official report would not include any kind of non-lexicalized information, I did not transcribe discursive elements such as pauses, intonation, sounds or gestures. Following Mollin’s approach, and to facilitate further research applications beyond the present chapter, I did include filled pauses, repetitions, interruptions and utterances that were unrelated to the content of the debate. For example, the 2017 debate contains a passage in which one of the speakers struggles to turn on the microphone, such as in Example 3.

⁴³ From March 2020 onwards, meetings of the House of Representatives were severely impacted by the corona crisis. Because of this, I decided against including data from 2021.

⁴⁴ In the Dutch multi-party system, the parliament (consisting of both the cabinet and the opposition) has consisted of at least nine different parties of varying size since the 1960s.

Table 7.3. Date and subject of samples from parliamentary proceedings

Year	Date	Subject
2010	November 2	Various (weekly general question hour)
2011	April 28	Urgent debate about extra healthcare personnel
2012	December 6	Debate following resignation of Financial Secretary
2013	May 29	Debate about EU civil servants going on strike
2014	June 26	Debate about excise duties on fuel
2015	January 13	Debate about energy accord
2016	September 27	Various (weekly general question hour)
2017	March 3	Debate following informal European summit
2018	October 16th	Debate about abolition of dividend tax
2019	March 13	Debate about death threats to mayors
2020	February 20	Debate about shortage of social housing

While the first sentence is retained in the official report, the subsequent technical instructions are left out. Next, I cleaned up the corresponding official report for each debate, removing what little mark-up there was.

- (3) u moet in de microfoon praten, anders verstaat niemand het. (...) op dat pedaal te drukken. Ja of op dat knopje. (2017_transcript)
 ‘you have to talk into the microphone, otherwise no-one can understand it (...) press down on that pedal. Yes or on that button’

The total corpus amounts to 112,167 words. The eleven transcriptions of the debates constitute 58,936 words in total (mean = 5,358, SD = 427), the corresponding official reports 53,231 words (mean = 4,939, SD = 440). Each report has a lower word token count than the debate on which it is based, with an average difference of -9.7%. However, as can be seen in Table 7.4, there are substantial differences between the different samples. Whereas the report of 2010 is 16.4% shorter than the corresponding debate, in 2018 this difference is only 3.9%. There does not seem to be a particular

Table 7.4. Absolute number of words per data set and relative difference

Year	No. words transcriptions	No. words report	% Difference transcriptions vs reports
2010	5,339	4,463	- 16.4
2011	4,815	4,174	- 13.3
2012	4,935	4,495	- 8.9
2013	5,120	4,777	- 6.7
2014	5,045	4,621	- 8.4
2015	5,394	4,843	- 10.2
2016	5,400	4,780	- 11.5
2017	6,371	5,694	- 10.6
2018	5,714	5,492	- 3.9
2019	5,273	4,935	- 6.4
2020	5,530	4,957	- 10.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>58,936</i>	<i>53,231</i>	<i>- 9.7</i>

diachronic pattern, although it is noteworthy that the two biggest differences between the number of words in my transcriptions and the official reports (found in 2010 and 2011) both predate the somewhat more lenient 2012 edition of the Guide.

While the present data sets are fairly small, there is reason to assume they are representative with regard to the variables under scrutiny here. The reason is that the distribution of variants in the current chapter is very similar to a limited draft of the current research that used less than half the amount of data (Van der Meulen 2020b). For this reason, as well as reasons of feasibility, it was decided not to increase the corpus further in size.

7.3.3 Data coding

I extracted and counted all instances of the variables under investigation from both texts using AntConc (Anthony 2019). For each instance, I coded whether the variant was the same or different between the two versions of the texts. Changes could occur in three ways: variants could be changed from non-standard to standard, as in Examples 4a and 4b, or vice versa; a variant could disappear through rewriting, as in Examples 5a and 5b, or a variant could be added through rewriting, as Examples 6a and 6b show.

- (4a) GroenLinks stelt voor dat er geen enkel gebouw meer **gebouwd wordt** met een aardgasaansluiting. (2015_transcript)
'The Green Party proposes that no building will be built with a gas connection'
- (4b) GroenLinks stelt voor dat er geen enkel gebouw meer **wordt gebouwd** met een aardgasaansluiting. (2015_report)
'The Green Party proposes that no other building will be built with a gas connection'
- (5a) veel van onze burgemeesters mee te maken hebben. Een deel **van hun** zou zelfs... (2019_transcript)
'a lot of our mayors have to deal with. A number of them would even... '
- (5b) Een deel van de burgemeesters zou zelfs... (2019_report)
'A number of mayors would even... '
- (6a) Het vorige week uitgekomen ambtsbericht concludeert... (2010_transcript)
'The last week published ministerial report concludes...'
- (6b) Het ambtsbericht dat vorige week **is uitgebracht**, concludeert (2010_report)
'The ministerial report that was published last week concludes...'

After counting all instances of both variants together in the debates and the reports, the data were divided into three parts, based on the three different stances towards variation: standard preference, non-standard preference, and follow the speaker. Each occurrence was classified according to the stance towards variation that was mentioned in the Parliamentary Language Guide at the time of production. When rules changed, the results for a particular time period were classified according to the corresponding rule type. For example, the instances of indefinite pronoun with relative pronoun in the time period 2010-2017 fall into the group standard preference, but from 2018 onwards into follow the speaker. Cases which were not mentioned in the Guides were resolved according to the verdicts

given by the *Taalunie* 'Language Union', which resulted in the following:

- i. 2nd person verb variant (*hebben* 'to have') - standard preference
- ii. Verb order in subordinate clauses - no preference (i.e., follow the speaker)
- iii. Neuter noun + relative pronoun - standard preference
- iv. Comparative/superlative formation - standard preference

Filling in these blanks gives us a total of 33 grammatical verdicts (one each for each of the eleven rules in three publications). The vast majority of these rules (23) favour the standard variant; nine rules allow registrars to follow the speaker; there is only one instance where the non-standard variant is explicitly promoted: the 2nd person formal verb variant of *hebben* 'to have' in the 2012 Guide.

7.4 Results

First, I will discuss the general findings with regard to the occurrence of standard and non-standard variants for all eleven grammatical variables. Particular attention will be paid to the changes in the relative frequency with which the variants occur (§7.4.1). Subsequently, I will discuss the variables according to their stance towards variation, i.e., standard preference, non-standard preference, or follow the speaker (§7.4.2). Finally, I will consider the patterns with regard to the lexical and stylistic variables (§7.4.3). In this chapter, I do not report significance measures on changes between transcripts and reports. As all changes are made deliberately, it can be argued that all changes are significant within the context of the present research.

7.4.1 Grammatical changes

A total of 442 total variants pertaining to the eleven grammatical rules was found in the transcripts; the reports contained 417 such variants. As Table 7.5 shows, both the speakers in the debates as the registrars composing the reports share a preference for standard variants, with 64.0% and 77.9% respectively of the total amount of contested variants being standard. The proportion between standard and non-

Table 7.5. Total token frequency of standard and non-standard variants in transcripts and reports (AF=absolute frequency; RF = relative frequency)

	AF in transcript	RF in transcript	AF in report	RF in report
Standard variant	283	64.0	325	77.9
Non-standard variant	159	36.0	92	22.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>442</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>100</i>

standard variant changes between texts: the registrars have a stronger preference for standard variants (+13.9%).

Next, I looked at all variables separately. Table 7.6 provides an overview of the absolute and relative presence of standard and non-standard variants between transcript and report per variable, as well as the relative difference between for non-standard variants in both text types.

Table 7.6. Absolute (AF) and relative (RF) presence of standard and non-standard variants in transcript and report per variable. Table continues on the next page.

Variable	Type of variant	Transcript AF	Transcript RF in %	Report AF	Report RF in %	Change RF non-standard variant in %
<i>je kunt/kan,</i>	Standard	36	87.7	28	96.5	-8.8
<i>je zult/zal</i>	Non-standard	5	12.3	1	3.5	
<i>je wilt/wil</i>	Standard	8	61.5	10	90.1	-28.6
	Non-standard	5	38.5	1	9.9	
<i>u heeft/hebt</i>	Standard	28	96.6	11	55.0	+41.6
	Non-standard	1	3.4	9	45.0	
<i>is gekomen/</i>	Standard	69	43.9	91	55.8	-11.9
<i>gekomen is</i>	Non-standard	88	56.1	72	44.2	
<i>iets wat/dat</i>	Standard	11	100	10	100	0
	Non-standard	0	0	0	0	
<i>ding dat/wat</i>	Standard	30	47.6	58	100	-52.4
	Non-standard	33	52.4	0	0	
<i>hen/hun</i>	Standard	10	76.9	12	100	-23.1
	Non-standard	3	23.1	0	0	

Table 7.6. (cont.) Absolute (AF) and relative (RF) presence of standard and non-standard variants in transcript and report per variable.

Variable	Type of variant	Transcript AF	Transcript RF in %	Report AF	Report RF in %	Change RF non-standard variant in %
<i>heel/hele</i>	Standard	0	0	12	70.6	-70.6
	Non-standard	17	100	5	29.4	
<i>een aantal N</i>	Standard	5	41.7	8	66.7	-25.0
<i>is/zijn</i>	Non-standard	7	58.3	4	33.3	
<i>een heleboel N</i>	Standard	10	100	9	100	0
<i>is/zijn</i>	Non-standard	0	0	0	0	
<i>mooier, mooist/</i>	Standard	76	100	76	100	0
<i>meer mooi,</i>	Non-standard	0	0	0	0	
<i>meest mooi</i>						

As we can see from Table 7.6, the distribution between standard and non-standard variants is scalar. In the spoken data we find *heel/hele* ‘very/very.INFL’ on one end of the spectrum, for which the standard variant does not occur at all in the spoken debates. On the other end we find three variables for which the standard form is used exclusively: *iets wat/dat* ‘something which/that’, *een heleboel N is/zijn* ‘a lot of N is/are’, and *mooier, mooist/ meer mooi, meest mooi* ‘nice, nicer/more nice/most nice’. The rest of the variables display a pattern of distribution between these two poles. There is, however, a general preference for the standard variant, which dominates seven of the linguistic items in the spoken debates.

When we compare the edited reports to the transcripts, we see that there is a different distribution between grammatical variants in all cases, except for those three variables mentioned above, where the speakers already used the standard variants exclusively (i.e., *iets wat/dat* ‘something which/that’, *een heleboel N is/zijn* ‘a lot of N is/are’, and *mooier, mooist/meer mooi, meest mooi* ‘nice, nicer/more nice/most nice’). For all eleven variables there is a preference for the standard variants in the edited reports; in two cases (*hen/hun* ‘them’ and *ding dat/wat* ‘thing that/which’) all non-standard variants are removed. In one case, however, the proportion of non-standard variants increases (*u heeft/hebt* ‘you.POL have’); this case will be discussed below.

7.4.2 Results according to stance towards variation

7.4.2.1 Standard preference

A total of 23 rules explicitly condemns the non-standard variant and only accept the standard variant. Table 7.7 shows all instances for these rules combined for all time periods.

Table 7.7. Absolute and relative presence of standard and non-standard variants in transcript and reports for rules with standard preference

	AF in transcript	RF in transcript	AF in report	RF in report
Standard variant	173	75.2	205	98.6
Non-standard variant	57	24.8	3	1.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>230</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>100</i>

While the transcripts contain non-standard variants in almost a quarter of all cases, these are almost completely removed, with only three exceptions. The first two of these are variants of the 2nd person of *hebben* ‘to have’ from 2010-2011. Strikingly, these two instances are not present in the original transcripts: in both cases the normatively preferred standard variants *heeft* ‘have’ are changed to the non-standard *hebt* ‘have’, thereby increasing the relative proportion of non-standard variants (Example 7). The third retained non-standard variant is an instance of the 2nd person of *willen* ‘to want’ (Example 8). This, too, is against the rule: for all other 2nd person verb variants, registrars are allowed to follow the speaker’s use in this time period, but not so for *willen* ‘to want’.

- (7) Die situatie, zo **hebt u** net verklaard (report_2010)
‘The situation, as you have just stated’
- (8) in Utrecht, waar u zo graag woningen **wil** bouwen
(report_2020)
‘in Utrecht, where you want to build houses so badly’

In all other cases, non-standard variants are removed. In most cases, this means that where the MPs show a general preference for the standard variant, the few non-standard variants that are used are taken out. An example of this is the third person plural object personal pronouns: the preferred standard variant is found ten times,

the non-standard variant three times. In such cases, it can be argued that these changes are justifiable, as the most frequent variant is favored. This is harder to maintain when the rule does not reflect the relative distribution. With regard to relative pronouns following neuter nouns, the non-standard variant *wat* ‘which’ makes up 52.4% of the total of 63 cases. For the intensifying adverb, the non-standard variant *hele* ‘very.INFL’ is used in a 100% of twelve cases. For both variables, however, all non-standard variants are removed.

7.4.2.2 Non-standard preference

Non-standard preference is only found in the Parliamentary Language Guide with regard to *u heeft/hebt* ‘you.POL have’, the use of the 2nd person formal verb variant of verb *hebben* ‘to have’ in the 2012 version. The relevant time period (2012-2017) yields few tokens, but these do make clear that speakers have a clear preference for the standard variant *u heeft* ‘you. POL have’, which is used eight times, as opposed to one non-standard variant. The rule is followed, and all these standard variants are either changed to the non-standard variant *u hebt* ‘you. POL have’ or removed through rewriting. Subsequently, the reports contain five non-standard variants, and no standard ones. This result is striking in itself, as one wonders why the rule favors the non-standard form when speakers clearly do not. Rather, it seems that the preference of the registrars plays a role here, at least initially. When we compare the results from different time periods (see Table 7.8), we see that in the last period, when variation is allowed, two variants were still changed to the non-standard one. Even more striking is the fact that this non-standard tendency is also found in the 2010-2011 period, when the Language Guide prohibited the non-standard variant in favour of the standard one.

Table 7.8. Absolute frequencies for standard and non-standard variants of 2nd person formal verb variant of verb *hebben* ‘to have’ for transcripts and reports per time period

Variable	2010-2011		2012-2017		2018-2020	
	transcript	report	transcript	report	transcript	report
standard (<i>u heeft</i>)	5	1	8	0	15	10
non- standard (<i>u hebt</i>)	0	2	1	5	0	2

7.4.2.3 Follow the speaker

Nine of the rules in all the Parliamentary Language Guides prompt registrars to follow the speaker in their use. In the case of verb order in subordinate clauses (*is gekomen/ gekomen is* ‘has come/come has’), this leniency is found in all three guides; in the case of agreement with quantifying noun *aantal* ‘a number of’ the rule is present in 2012 and 2018. The other four rules were changed only in 2018 (see Table 7.2 above). All instances of variants for these follow-the-speaker-rules are shown in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9. Absolute and relative presence of standard and non-standard variants in transcript and reports for rules with follow the speaker

	AF in transcript	RF in transcript	AF in report	RF in report
Standard variant	102	50.2	120	58.8
Non-standard variant	101	49.8	84	41.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 7.9 shows that although the variation in the transcripts is mostly retained in the reports, there is still an increase of 8.6% in standard variants. Of particular interest here is the verb order in subordinate clauses: not only does it make up the majority of cases in the lenient category, it is also the only rule that allows for variation across all three publications. As Table 7.10 shows, MPs show considerable variation in their use, which does move towards a preference for the standard variant after 2012. This preference seems to be reflected at least in the reports from 2012-2017, when the standard variant increased from 51.7% of all verb variants to 71.3%. The most recent time period, however, shows that the majority of the

Table 7.10. Absolute frequencies for standard and non-standard variants of verb order in subordinate clauses for transcripts and reports per time period

Variable	2010-2011		2012-2017		2018-2020	
	transcript	report	transcript	report	transcript	report
standard (<i>is gekomen</i>)	21	24	91	117	60	63
non- standard (<i>gekomen is</i>)	28	28	85	47	40	37

variation is retained, but that three instances are still changed from non-standard to standard.

Another noteworthy pattern is the use of the intensifying adverb. In the two earliest Guides, the standard form *heel* ‘very’ was prescribed, and indeed, even though MPs only used the non-standard variant *hele* ‘very.INFL’, all instances were changed to conform with the rule (see Table 7.11). However, after the rule was changed in 2018 to allow for variation, all five instances of the non-standard form were retained. After the non-standard rule described in 4.2.2, this is another clear example where the rule is strictly followed by registrars, even when it clearly does not conform to actual usage. It also indicates a rule change that is informed by usage, albeit a late one.

Table 7.11. Absolute frequencies for standard and non-standard variants of the intensifying adverb for transcripts and reports per time period

Variable	2010-2011		2010-2017		2018-2020	
	transcript	report	transcript	report	transcript	report
standard (<i>heel</i>)	0	1	0	11	0	0
non- standard (<i>hele</i>)	1	0	11	0	5	5

7.4.3 Other linguistic changes

Three other variables were checked to establish whether the way in which registrars applied the rules was specific to grammatical variables. In all of these cases, the rules stated that certain words or variants should be removed; only the rule for sentence initial *en* ‘and’ in the 2018 version prompted to follow the speaker. Table 7.12 lists the results per rule per time period.

Table 7.12. Absolute frequencies for presence of other linguistic variables for transcripts and reports per time period

Variable	2010-2011		2012-2017		2018-2020	
	transcript	report	transcript	report	transcript	report
Discourse particles	360	183	1242	681	642	420
sentence initial <i>en</i>	88	0	294	12	165	32
formal <i>u</i>	72	24	188	45	175	151

It is clear that the rules for these linguistic variables are not followed as strictly as most standard grammatical rules. For sentence initial *en* ‘and’, occurrences are removed completely in 2010-2011, but beyond that a small but growing number of cases is preserved. For the other variables a larger portion of the condemned variants is retained in all time periods. The degree to which disapproved variants are retained changes over time and between variables however (see Figure 7.2).

As Figure 7.2 shows, in all but one case (formal *u* ‘you.POL’ in 2012-2017) subsequent time periods show a larger percentage of condemned variants being retained. For the discourse particles, this increase is quite gradual. For sentence initial *en* ‘and’, the rise is more pronounced, but the final 23.9% is still low, considering that the rule for this time period was to follow the speaker. For formal *u* ‘you.POL’, finally, the amount of retained variants is the highest of all in 2018-2020. While some of the variants can be explained, for example, by instances of the construction *dank u wel* ‘thank you.POL’, in which the *u* ‘you.POL’ is part of a fixed expression, the vast majority consists of variants which do go directly against the rules as set out in the Parliamentary Language Guides (Example 9).

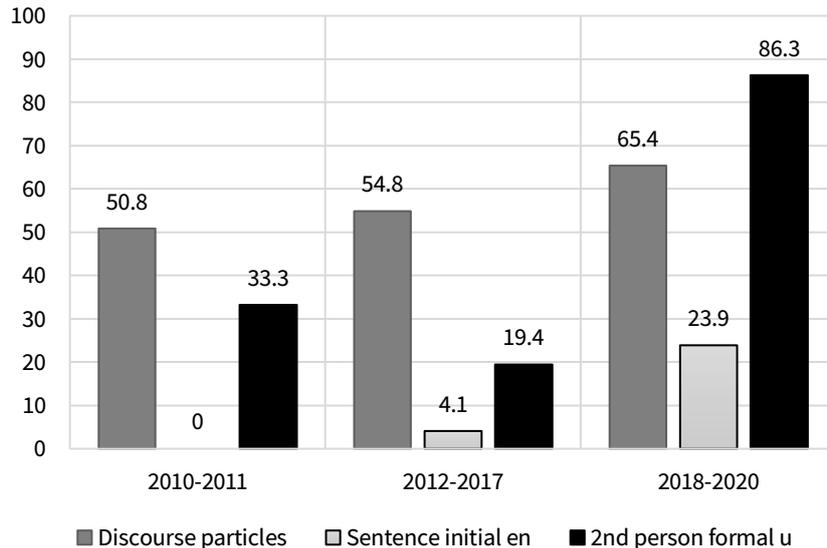


Figure 7.2. Relative frequency of retained forms in parliamentary reports in %

- (9) Mijn vraag aan **u** is heel simpel: wat gaat **u** nu doen?
(report_2020)
'My question to you is very simple: what are you going to do now?'

7.5 Discussion

The present chapter shows that, as far as grammatical rules are concerned, registrars largely display strict obedience to the rules. Standard rules are adhered to almost completely by the registrars, regardless of whether the use by MPs displayed variation between standard and non-standard variants, as with, for example, relative pronouns following neuter nouns (N *dat/wat* 'N that/which'). Even when speakers completely prefer the non-standard variant, as with the intensifying adverb *heel/hele* 'very/very.INFL', registrars choose the standard option. This, to some extent, is to be expected: uniformity and rule-following are an integral part of preparing the official parliamentary reports. Moreover, we would expect a lot of prescriptive influence in parliamentary proceedings, which are a fairly formal register.

The obedience, however, is not complete. For example, for the 2nd person formal verb variant of *hebben* 'to have' (*u heeft/u hebt* 'you.POL have') registrars show an inclination towards the non-standard variant. Strikingly, this inclination is strongest when the Parliamentary Language Guide completely condemns the non-standard variant in the time period 2012-2017, and it continues even when the rule prompts registrars to follow the speaker, albeit less pronounced. In general, the rules that allow for optional variation show interesting patterns. Even though it seems that to follow the speaker would be the most efficient option for the registrars, they go out of their way to change variants. In these changes in particular we can observe their own prescriptive preferences, and these lean towards standard variants. This becomes clear from the most frequently found variable, the verb order in subordinate clauses (*is gekomen/gekomen is* 'has come/come has'), and to a lesser degree also from the agreement with the quantifying noun *aantal* and subsequent nouns. This seeming unwillingness to accept grammatical variation echoes results from Ebner (2017), who found that for the split infinitive and other English usage items, there was a gap between increasingly lenient prescriptivist publications and more reserved

and conservative attitudes of the public. Within the context of the Parliamentary Language Guides, ‘follow the speaker’ is interpreted rather as ‘follow your own convictions’.

The way registrars deal with rules for lexical and stylistic variables shows a different picture. All but one of the rules demand the removal of certain variables, but while this position is followed to some extent, we see a substantial and increasing degree of leniency. This trend is especially strong and noteworthy with regard to formal *u* ‘you.POL’, for which the retention rate increases to 86.3% in 2018–2020, despite the Speaker of the House regularly and explicitly chiding MPs for not adhering to this rule. It is unclear why registrars deal differently with these rules. Lexis has been generally under-researched within a prescriptive context (although see Hendrickx 2013), let alone that the investigation of differences between lexis and other linguistic levels has been taken up. However, one factor that may contribute to the degree in which registrars display obedience is the degree of entrenchment of the rule within a broader prescriptive context. Most of the rules pertaining to grammar are staples of prescriptivism (so-called *old chestnuts*, Weiner 1988: 173); for example, advice about the use of the relative pronoun following neuter nouns is given in 68 prescriptive publications between 1940–2017 (Van der Meulen 2021). By contrast, the rules about non-grammatical variables included in the Parliamentary Language Guide are rarely if ever found in prescriptive publications aimed at a general audience (although the advice website of association *Onze Taal* ‘Our Language’ does mention the criticism against sentence-initial *en* ‘and’, labelling it as a “persistent misunderstanding”).⁴⁵ Hendrickx showed that the frequency with which a particular issue was mentioned had a strong influence on the application of language advice (2013: 402). This may also play a role in the current circumstances.

There is also a discrepancy between the explicit policies and the usage they are supposed to police. Ostensibly, rules are included because they are of particular importance, as the introduction to the Guide explicitly states. But what does ‘particular importance’ mean? One could expect this to be based on usage; after all, why have a rule for variation that does not exist (cf. Weiner 1988: 174)? But this is not the case. Some rules, such as for the formation of the comparative and superlative, are completely adhered to by MPs, rendering its inclusion

⁴⁵ <https://onzetaal.nl/taaladvies/en-aan-het-begin-van-een-zin/>

in the Parliamentary Language Guide moot. Even when certain variables do occur, their frequency counts are very low, which is the case with, among others, the agreement with quantifying noun *aantal* ‘number’ and other quantifying nouns. Rather than usage, then, the ‘importance’ mentioned by the Language Guide seems again to refer to the perceived importance within the context of Dutch prescriptivism: all of the grammatical rules are among the *old chestnuts* of Dutch prescriptivism, and are frequently found in language advice publications for the general public. This points towards a further divide between actual language use and prescriptivist rules. Strikingly, the rules pertaining to linguistic variables other than grammar do seem to be based on the usage context, again pointing to a difference between language policy aimed at grammar and language policy aimed at other parts of language.

A similar dissonance exists with regard to the formulation of the rules, and especially the changes made to allow for more speaker variation. These do not seem to find their basis in the actual usage of the MPs. On the one hand, for several rules which allow variation, there is very little variation in practice, as with the relative pronoun following indefinite pronouns (*iets wat/dat* ‘something that/which’), or the intensifying adverb (*heel/hele* ‘very/very.INFL’). Conversely, certain rules do not allow for variation, even though there is ample variation in the language use of the MPs, as with the relative pronouns following neuter nouns (N *dat/wat* ‘that/which’). It is notable, however, that those variables for which the rules prefer the standard variant show fewer non-standard variants in the MPs’ usage (75.2%, see Table 7.7) than those for which the rules are non-standard (50.2%, see Table 8). It seems that there is at least some connection between the type of rules for which variation is allowed and the actual usage of MPs.

As for why these particular rules are changed at all, more general prescriptive patterns do not explain the changes, as for some of these rules other prescriptive publications have allowed variation for a long time. For example, for the word order in subordinate clauses general prescriptive publications have unequivocally accepted variation for this feature since the 1950s (Van der Meulen 2021). Neither has changing usage been the cause for these changes. It seems then that this is an example of an ideological *performative* aspect of prescriptivism (cf. Agha 2005). Usually this is taken to mean that *showing* that you know the rules is as important as adhering to the rules. Here, it may be the case that while in earlier years it was important not just to comply with prescriptive rules but to *show*

compliance with the rules in formulating the rules, in a climate of (perceived) increased destandardization and democratization of the Dutch language (J. Van der Horst 2013; Grondelaers and Van Hout 2011), it may have become more important to show an acceptance of variation. The performative aspects of prescriptivism have been little researched, although this may prove a fruitful endeavor for future research.

Although the present research highlights certain new elements of the relationships between precept and practice, many questions remain. Of particular interest is the role of the individual. In the current research, contested forms are sometimes retained, and approved variants are removed, indicating that personal preference can trump the rules. But whether this is a result of the voice of particular registrars is unclear. Moreover, it is unclear whether the coordinator, who combines all separate transcripts for any given debate, also exercises influence at the word level. Another question is how and by whom the Parliamentary Language Guide is constructed, and what considerations play a role in choosing which rules to include and how to formulate them. Here, scholars of prescriptivism could perhaps turn to recent ethnographic work in language planning studies. For example, the participatory approach taken by Källkvist and Hult (2016), who sat in at meetings where the language policy of a Swedish university was decided upon, could prove an interesting model to follow. By doing such work we can come to understand how prescriptive rules are shaped and maintained even better.

7.6 Conclusion

The present research set out to investigate the interplay between the language use of members of the Dutch parliament, the reports of their debates, and the prescriptive rules used by the registrars to compose those reports. I showed that registrars largely follow the prescriptive rules for grammar, but that their personal preference for both standard and non-standard variants shines through when the rules allow for optional variation. For rules pertaining to other linguistic variables, registrars were less inclined to follow the rules. This points towards a hitherto unknown difference in the application of grammatical and non-grammatical rules. With regard to the rules, I showed that there was an additional difference between these two types of rules. Grammatical rules were based on the general prescriptive tradition, and had little relation either to the variation or

the frequency found in the Dutch parliament. Conversely, non-grammatical rules did have a relation to the actual usage of the situation for which they were intended. Finally, although usage for lenient rules showed more of an inclination towards variation than usage for standard rules, the increased leniency in allowing for variation seemed to be performative in nature rather than based on either the usage of Members of Parliament or the inclinations of the registrars.

Chapter 8

Patterns of prescriptivism: relations between precept, attitude and usage in Dutch morphosyntax

Abstract

Empirical research into prescriptivism usually focuses on usage data, attitudinal data, or precept data from prescriptive publications. Much research also investigates any combination of two of these three dimensions. However, research combining all three dimensions is rare, even though such an approach could yield valuable insights into the workings of prescriptivism. In the present chapter, I investigate whether we can discern patterns in prescriptivism. For each of nine disputed morphosyntactic variables from Dutch, I map the distribution between standard and non-standard variants in usage, precept and attitudinal data. I also look at both written and spoken data, using data from usage corpora, a collection of prescriptive publications, and a survey of linguistic attitudes. Results show that there are clear relations between the three dimensions for the variables, which can be categorized into four basic patterns. Importantly, many variables displayed very similar distributional patterns for spoken and written language, although spoken language always showed a comparatively greater preference for the non-standard variant. These results reinforce the notion that prescriptivism is not a random or monolithic phenomenon, but that different usages follow different paths. Also, it strongly implies that spoken language is less resistant to prescriptive influence than is often claimed.

8.1 Introduction

In early 2019, the Dutch political party CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal) launched a campaign for the upcoming provincial elections.⁴⁶ As a slogan for their campaign, which emphasized connectivity and kindness, they chose the following greeting:

- (1) Een hele goede morgen.
 a very.INFL good.INFL morning
 ‘a very good morning’

Innocuous as this greeting may seem, the use of the inflected variant of the intensifying adverb, *hele* ‘very.INFL’, rather than the uninflected variant *heel* ‘very’, led to indignant responses on social media and in newspapers (e.g., De Goede 2019). This was not completely unexpected, as this case of disputed variation, or *usage item*, is well-established in the Dutch prescriptive tradition. However, most prescriptive publications have largely accepted the use of both forms in spoken language for several decades (see, for example, De Boer 2011: 204). Moreover, the inflected form is by far the dominant one in current spoken usage (Van der Meulen 2019), and it has probably been this way since at least the early twentieth century (WNT, s.v. *heel*, 1903). But this did not stop a vocal group of language users from expressing a strongly negative attitude towards the use of the inflected variant.

This case study exemplifies three types of data: prescriptive publications, actual usage, and attitude. These three dimensions are of central importance to the empirical study of prescriptivism. Much research has focused on one of them, i.e., *usage*, or the patterns of variation and change of disputed items in actual language use (e.g., Hinrichs, Szmrecsanyi, and Bohmann 2015); *precept*, the explicit judgements about usage items and the prescriptive publications in which these appear (e.g., Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2020); and *attitude*, the beliefs and judgements of language users towards disputed usage (e.g., Ebner 2017). As for the relations *between* these dimensions, the question of how and to what extent precepts affect usage has received ample attention (for an overview of such work see Rutten and Vosters 2021). All other relations have been investigated to a lesser extent,

⁴⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6w0UKpoYMQ&ab_channel=CDA

with the recent exception of the effect of usage on precepts (Ayres-Bennett 2020; see also Chapter 6 and 7 of this thesis).

In spite of the focus on these three dimensions and some of the interplay between them, there is unfortunately little research in which quantitative data from all three dimensions is studied together (although see Nevalainen 2014, which I discuss in detail below). Yet, such research could illuminate how all three of these dimensions relate to one another. As the first paragraph showed, there was a mismatch with regard to the degree of acceptance and occurrence of the inflected variant *hele* ‘very.INFL’ between dimensions. In spoken language, this variant is dominant in usage, largely accepted in prescriptive publications, but the attitudes towards it are not as accepting. It is unclear, however, whether this pattern of distribution, in which attitude most strongly favours the standard variant, is also found for other usage items, and thus whether this is a common pattern or an exception. It is equally unclear if it plays a role that this example pertains to spoken language, of which it is assumed that prescriptive rules have little or no effect (see, for example, Milroy and Milroy 1999: 58).

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to investigate if and how relations exist between precept, usage and attitude with regard to prescriptively targeted cases of variation. I do this by studying quantitative data for each of these three dimensions for nine disputed morphosyntactic variables from Dutch. For every variable I map the distribution between standard and non-standard variants on all three dimensions, taking both written and spoken data into account. Below, I first discuss some similarly tripartite approaches from various linguistic sub-fields (§8.2.1), before looking more closely at two examples in which a tripartite approach is taken regarding cases of disputed variables, namely Nevalainen (2014) and Bennis and Hinskens (2014, §8.2.2). After that, I report on the different types of data I used, and the method by which this data is analyzed (§8.3). I present results, both for the data in general (§8.4.1), for spoken vs written data (§8.4.2), and subsequently for each of the patterns found in the data (§8.4.3 - §8.4.7). The chapter ends with a general discussion (§8.5).

8.2 Background

8.2.1 Tripartite research

Researchers from various sub-disciplines of linguistics who study the same or very similar combinations of components (i.e., usage, attitudes and norms), have attempted to integrate these into a comprehensive framework. The closest in spirit, perhaps, to prescriptivism research is the framework proposed for the study of language policy by Spolsky (2004; 2012). He posits that “language policy may refer to all the language practices, beliefs and management decisions of a community or polity” (2004: 9). Elsewhere, he gives details about what he calls “three inter-related but independent components”: languages practices, or “what actually happens”; the beliefs or values assigned to variants and the “beliefs about the importance of these values”; and finally the “efforts by some members of a speech community who have or believe they have authority over other members to modify their language practice” (Spolsky, 2012: 5).

Coppen (2011) also proposes a combination of three such dimensions, although from a very different angle, namely in an article in which he discusses what types of skills are required to perform grammatical analyses in an educational context. He distinguishes three groups of sources for analyzing language in classroom situations: language norms; language reality, which is again described as language “as it actually happens” (2011: 223); and *taalgevoel* ‘linguistic feeling’ (comparable to the better known German term ‘Sprachgefühl, see Foolen submitted), which is understood to be the “unique and particular sense of language that partly overlaps with that of other language users” (2011: 222-223).

Finally, Curzan urges for the use of a similarly tripartite approach to the study of language history. She refers to an earlier version of this model by Görlach (1999), “who describes three categories of “purely linguistic” criteria (...): (1) structural; (2) societal (language planning, standardization, etc.); and (3) attitudinal (evaluation by speakers of earlier and current forms of their language)” (2014: 47). Curzan emphasizes that in order to describe and understand the history of a language, one needs to consider evidence from all three categories, rather than just structural developments, as is often the case now.

The frameworks referred to above were intended for use in language policy, language education and language history. Nevertheless, they could also be applied to the micro-level analysis of particular language variables which is common to prescriptivism research. The reason for this is that, although these three approaches use varying terms to denote different components, they do try to capture the same thing. All approaches contain a speaker-internal attitudinal aspect (language sense, beliefs, evaluation), a usage aspect (structure, language reality), and an explicitly normative or precept aspect (language planning, management, societal). As such, the models proposed by Spolsky, Copen and Curzan map very well unto those three dimensions that have traditionally been studied individually in prescriptivism research, i.e., usage, precept and attitude (see Figure 8.1).

8.2.2 Tripartite research in prescriptivism

As far as I am aware, the only research in prescriptivism that explicitly takes one of the frameworks mentioned in the previous section as a starting point is Nevalainen (2014). In her exploration of the (normative) development of spelling and lexical variables in seventeenth century English, she shows how grammars of the time were “a mixture of Spolsky’s first two components of language policy, actual usage and usage-related attitudes” (2014: 124). Furthermore, she shows how usage items spread across the three dimensions:

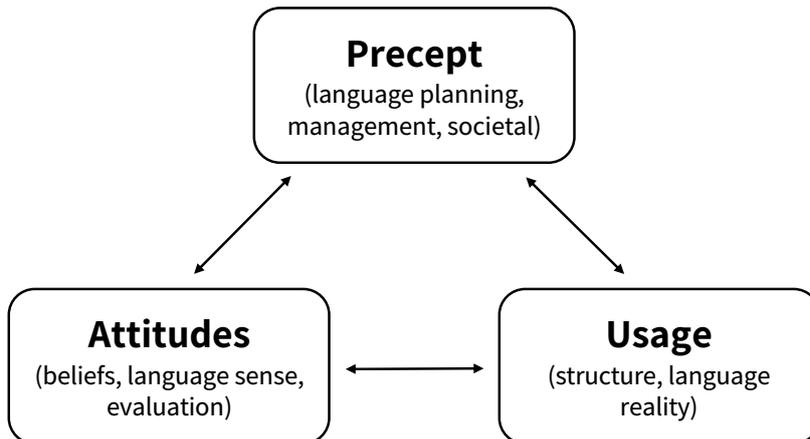


Figure 8.1. Schematic overview of tripartite approach to prescriptivism

“emerging from language practices, value-laden norms can be imposed on language users” (2014: 105). In other words, variation in usage lead to attitudes about the variation, which in turn led to the formulation of explicit precepts. One important caveat to this approach is that especially with regard to attitudinal data, the application of this tripartite model to historical data is limited. There is no quantitative, let alone representative survey data available for the historic period, as no such linguistic surveys were performed at the time. Instead, Nevalainen uses “contemporary commentary on linguistic variability” (2014: 107) from metalinguistic sources, such as dictionaries and works on rhetoric as attitudinal data. However, as she admits, this data is “neither comprehensive nor systematic” (2014: 107; see Havinga and Krogull 2022 for ways to use other historical proxies as attitudinal data).

Another example of a tripartite approach, albeit without explicit reference to any of the aforementioned frameworks, is presented by Bennis and Hinskens (2014). They compare usage data to attitudinal data for ten variables in Dutch (nine morphosyntactic and one lexical). All of these variables are usage items, in the sense that they can be realized in a standard and non-standard variant, and that this variation is problematized by some language users. Bennis and Hinskens conclude that there is a scale in the evaluation of these non-standard variants, going from complete rejection to almost complete acceptance of the non-standard variant. Their approach is mostly based on a large-scale survey, from which they use self-reporting data on attitudes and usage. For the precepts, they use a single source: the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* ‘General Dutch Grammar’, a large reference grammar of Dutch (Haeseryn et al. 1997a, 1997b).

Two valuable aspects of Bennis and Hinskens (2014) are, firstly, the fact that, by looking at ten variables, they avoid the pitfall of drawing too far-reaching conclusions about the workings of prescriptivism based on a limited number of variables, which, as Van der Meulen and van der Sijs (2020: 389) note, is all too common. Secondly, they use both written and spoken data, noting that there is little research into non-standard inflection in spoken Dutch (2014: 134). This inclusion is rare: although some have argued that prescriptivism can influence spoken language (cf. Chafe 1984; Kostadinova 2018a), Lippi-Green’s assumption that “attempts to stop spoken language from changing (...) are universally without success” (1997: 10) seems to hold more sway.

There are also two points on which the approach by Bennis and Hinskens can be improved. Firstly, they use a single normative work as the basis of the norm, even though prescriptivism researchers argue against doing this, propagating the use of collections of prescriptive publications instead (e.g., Poplack et al. 2015: 14). Secondly, they use self-reporting usage data, rather than actual usage data, to draw conclusions about usage. This method has long been questioned (Haeseryn and De Rooij 1985: 217; Milroy and Milroy, 1999: 15). As Haeseryn puts it, “it is well-known that (actual) behavior can deviate from what people think they do” (1986: 217, see also Labov 1972: 214). The fact that Bennis and Hinskens observe an “almost perfect correlation between [reported] own usage and evaluation” (2014: 151) contributes to these doubts. This correlation implies that respondents thought they only used the variant which they considered to be correct, or only reported this variant (perhaps as a result of social-desirability bias, see Latkin et al. 2017). To what extent participants actually use either variant then remains unclear.

8.3 Data and method

In this research, I combine the approaches by Nevalainen (2014) and Bennis and Hinskens (2014), taking into account the limitations as described above. This means that I look at quantitative empirical data for all of the three dimensions, i.e., usage, attitude and precept. In the following section, I first set out the variables (§8.3.1), after which I discuss the data for usage (§8.3.2), attitudes (§8.3.3) and precept (§8.3.4) in turn. I tried to match the time frame of the data as closely as possible, but because I had to use existing datasets for attitudes and usage, I could not control their temporal coverage completely. However, the normative data spans the whole period of the other data (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1. Temporal coverage of data used for all three dimensions

Type of data		Time span
Attitudinal		2010
Usage	spoken	1998-2004
	written	1995-1999
Precept		1995-2015

8.3.1 Variables

The present research starts from the same set of variables as Bennis and Hinskens (2014) use. They state that their selection “probably represents the most widespread examples of non-standard inflection in spoken Standard Dutch” (2014: 143).⁴⁷ The only change to their selection is that I leave out the reflexive pronoun *zich/z'n eigen* ‘his own’, as it pertains to lexical rather than morphosyntactic variation (as Bennis and Hinskens also explain, 2014: 140-141). All of these variables are binary, meaning that they can be realized in one of two variants. Following Bennis and Hinskens, I consistently label these as ‘standard’ and ‘non-standard’. The variables are listed in Table 8.2. For a comprehensive overview of the grammatical background of each variable, I refer to Bennis and Hinskens (2014:134-140).

Of course, with such a range of grammatical phenomena, these variables cover somewhat different areas of morphosyntax, including agreement, verbal and adverbial inflection, and pronoun replacement. There are other differences between them as well. Most variables, and the variation they display, have been little researched; for example, Bennis and Hinskens note that “the characteristics of the ‘illegally’ inflected adverb [i.e., *een hele mooie auto* ‘a very.INFL nice car’] have been barely investigated” (2014: 138). The exception is use of *hun* ‘them’ as a subject, which has been studied extensively (see De Hoop 2020; Van Bree 2012; Van Bergen et al. 2011 and others), because of its extreme social connotations. This variable also exemplifies the final difference, namely the time depth of the variation. The use of *hun* ‘them’ as subject was observed only in the beginning of the 20th century (Von der Hake 1911), whereas the use of different pronouns for humans as opposed to non-humans *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’ was commented upon as early as the 18th century (Van der Sijs 2021: 490-491). Other variables show similar differences in time depth. These differences may play a role in explaining the prescriptive patterns we observe.

⁴⁷ Bennis and Hinskens do not specify what they mean by ‘widespread’. It could be that these variables are the most frequent in usage, have the highest social indices or are the most salient. As it is unclear what ‘widespread’ means, it is also unclear to what extent this selection is representative of ‘all’ morphosyntactic variation in Dutch.

Table 8.2. Overview of variables used in the present research⁴⁸

Standard variant Dutch	Non-standard variant Dutch	Usage item English	Type of morphosyntax
<i>een aantal mensen is</i>	<i>een aantal mensen zijn</i>	a number of people is/are	verbal agreement
<i>een aardig meisje</i>	<i>een aardige meisje</i>	a nice/nice.INFL girl	adjectival inflection
<i>het boek dat</i>	<i>het boek wat</i>	the book that/which	relative pronoun agreement
<i>een heel mooie auto</i>	<i>een hele mooie auto</i>	a very/very.INFL nice car	adverbial inflection
<i>hij heeft</i>	<i>hij heb</i>	he has/he have	3rd person verb form
<i>zij hebben</i>	<i>hun hebben</i>	they/them have	pronoun use
<i>jij kunt</i>	<i>jij kan</i>	you can	2nd person verb form
<i>u heeft</i>	<i>u hebt</i>	you.POL have	verbal form for 2nd person polite pronoun
<i>de vrouw van wie</i>	<i>de vrouw waarvan</i>	the woman whose/ of which	personal pronoun agreement

8.3.2 Usage data

At the moment of writing, there is no single corpus of Dutch that contains data for both written and spoken language.⁴⁹ In order to study both, I used two different corpora. For spoken language, the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* ‘Corpus of Spoken Dutch’ (henceforth CGN, see Oostdijk 2000) was used. This corpus, collected and compiled in the period 1998 - 2004, contains ±900 hours of manually transcribed spoken language data from a variety of registers and sources, and is tagged for part of speech. In order to align the spoken usage data with the other types of data, I used only the part from the Netherlands (6,398,001 words). For the written language data, I used the Literom corpus, an untagged collection of cultural reviews and

⁴⁸ In this chapter I use the following glosses: POL for ‘polite form’, INFL for ‘inflected form’, and N for ‘noun’.

⁴⁹ The OpenSoNaR+ *interface* does contain both a corpus of spoken Dutch (CGN) and a written reference corpus (Sonar), but these corpora were designed and constructed separately, and thus do not form a single coherent corpus.

interviews from a variety of regional and national publications from the Netherlands, spanning the period 1900-1999; from this larger corpus I used the 1995 - 1999 part (6,801,510 words, see Van de Velde 2017). For each of the variables, I extracted both variants for each variable from both corpora, in the case of the CGN through the online OpenSoNaR+ interface,⁵⁰ in the case of the offline Literom Corpus using AntConc (Anthony 2019). Then, I manually cleaned up the results, and tagged all variants as either standard or non-standard.

8.3.3 Attitudinal data

I use the attitudinal data as reported by Bennis and Hinskens (2014), who used data from a survey conducted in 2010 through the online Meertens panel. Of the 2,200 respondents to this survey, they selected those 1,630 for which ‘socio-biographical’ data was available, i.e., age, sex, level of education, level of income and country of origin. However, neither the Meertens panel in general nor the specific set of respondents is representative for any of these parameters, and Bennis and Hinskens caution readers to “take this into account when interpreting the data” (2014:148). For this reason, I do not delve into specific sociolinguistic characteristics.

In the questionnaire, participants were obliged to answer questions on *zij/hun hebben* ‘they/them have’. They furthermore had to choose at least four out of the possible nine other variables, with no upper limit. Because of this research design, different variables show very different response rates (for example, for *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very/very.INFL nice car’ we have 2,600 responses, compared to 4,005 for *hij heeft/heb* ‘he has’). Participants answered a variety of questions for each variable they chose, for example on how beautiful they thought the variant was, and on reported usage. However, I use only the acceptability ratings participants gave for the use of the non-standard variant in a selection of situations. These situations were designed to represent both formal and informal spoken and written language (see Table 8.3). I added all answers per mode (i.e., written or spoken language) for each variable to come to an attitudinal score for each variable.

⁵⁰ Available at <http://opensonar.inl.nl>.

Table 8.3. Spoken and written situations for attitudinal data

In spoken language	In written language
a newsreader presenting the news	in a text message
a teacher in school	in an email
a football player on tv	in a school project
a young person in the streets	in a job application letter

8.3.4 Precept data

I extracted precept data from a large collection of Dutch prescriptivist publications, which consists of written language advice publications aimed at least partly at an adult audience of mother tongue speakers of Dutch in the Netherlands in the 20th and 21st century (see Chapter 2). The 1995-2015 section of this collection, which I used for this research, contained 61 titles. From these titles, I extracted all precepts concerning the nine variables, which resulted in a total of 196 precepts. These precepts were all tagged for their stance towards variation; following existing annotation schemes (see Chapter 2, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4), this meant that a precept could evaluate the non-standard variant as completely acceptable, limitedly acceptable under certain circumstances, or unacceptable.⁵¹ In order to compare the results from the precept data to those from usage and attitude, I had to resolve this three-way split. I did this by counting precepts with limited acceptability as half acceptable – half unacceptable. Finally, when precepts did not specify mode, I took them to pertain to both spoken and written language (Example 2). When explicit mention was made to one or both modes (Example 3), I scored these separately; in this case, the author finds variation completely acceptable in spoken language, but unacceptable in written language.

- (2) “We hadden veel last van het stof *wat* overal lag.” *Wat* is hier onjuist gebruikt; *dat* is in dit geval de correcte vorm.
 “We were bothered by the dust *which* was everywhere.” *Which* is used incorrectly here; in this case, *that* is the correct form.
 (De Rijk 1994: 74)
- (3) Daarom doet men verstandig als men deze verbuiging beperkt tot de spreektaal

⁵¹ It was theoretically possible that only the non-standard variant was accepted, but this did not occur.

“That’s why one would be wise to limit this inflection to spoken language” (Meijers 1959: 37)

8.4 Results

In this section, I firstly discuss the general results for all data together (§8.4.1), paying attention to differences between spoken and written data. After that, I discuss more specific results for particular variables, according to the patterning they show with regard to the proportion of standard and non-standard variants across dimensions. When the spoken data and the written data show the same pattern, for the sake of brevity I only visualize the *written* data, and discuss the spoken data when relevant in the running text. I discuss the different patterns in no particular order. It is important to note that I do not discuss significance scores for the results in this chapter, as the large amount of variables makes the data too vulnerable to data dredging and capitalization of chance (Davey Smith and Ebrahim 2002).

8.4.1 General results

Table 8.4 shows the raw frequency results per variable for both the standard and non-standard variant on all three dimensions (precept, attitude, usage), with results for spoken and written language presented separately. For the precept columns, I report the number of precepts that accept either the standard or the non-standard variant for a particular variable. The total number of precepts is the same for written and spoken language respectively; however, when mode is explicitly mentioned, the distribution may vary (see the explanation in §8.3.4 above). So, for example, for *zij/hun hebben* ‘they/them have’, we find 28 precepts in total: all of them find the non-standard variant *hun hebben* ‘them have’ unacceptable in written language, but three find it acceptable in spoken language. For the attitude columns, each cell contains the number of survey responses that accept either the standard or the non-standard variant. To take the same example, for *zij/hun hebben* ‘they/them have’, we find that 5,546 respondents accept the standard variant *zij hebben*

Table 8.4. Raw frequency results for all variables across precept, attitude and usage in spoken and written language (stand.= standard variant, non = non-standard variant)

Variable	Mode	Precept		Attitude		Usage				
		Total	Stand.	Non.	Total	Stand.	Non.			
<i>een aardig/aardige meisje</i>	written	15	15	0	3,730	3,595	135	22,701	22,701	0
	spoken		15	0	3,578	3,303	275	7,609	7452	157
<i>het boek</i>	written	38	34.5	3.5	3,675	3,347	328	3,633	3624	9
<i>dat/wat</i>	spoken		33	5	3,467	2,853	614	922	592	330
<i>hij heeft/hebt</i>	written	1	1	0	4,005	3,850	155	26,964	26961	3
	spoken		1	0	3,810	3,346	464	16,675	16474	201
<i>zij/hun hebben</i>	written	28	28	0	5,822	5,546	276	3,097	3097	0
	spoken		25	3	5,581	4,727	854	7,423	7226	197
<i>de vrouw van</i>	written	23	22	1	2,595	1,740	855	515	457	58
<i>wie/waaraan</i>	spoken		13	10	2,517	1,457	1,060	129	67	62
<i>een aantal</i>	written	39	18.5	20.5	3,727	2,754	973	316	178	138
<i>mensen is/zijn</i>	spoken		16.5	22.5	3,645	2,301	1,344	450	123	327
<i>jij kunt/kan</i>	written	15	9.5	5.5	2,915	1,853	1,062	2,368	2149	219
	spoken		6.5	8.5	2,805	1,473	1,332	3,905	2332	1,573
<i>u heeft/hebt</i>	written	21	0.5	20.5	3,047	1,551	1,496	354	259	95
	spoken		0.5	20.5	2,993	1,288	1,705	762	568	194
<i>een heel/hele</i>	written	16	14	2	2,624	1,338	1,286	377	191	186
<i>mooie auto</i>	spoken		7	9	2,620	1,042	1,578	2,739	443	2,296

'they have' in written language, whereas only 276 respondents accept the non-standard variant. For the usage columns, each cell contains the number of occurrences of the standard or non-standard variant in each corpus. Here we see that the non-standard variant *hun hebben* 'them have' does not occur at all in written language; we only find 3,097 occurrences of the standard variant.

Table 8.4 shows substantial differences in token frequency across variables. These occur in all dimensions, but they are the most pronounced for usage. On the one hand, we find high frequency variables, such as *hij heeft/heb* 'he has', which shows a combined total of 26,964 tokens for both variants in written language. On the other end of the spectrum is *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* 'the woman whose/of which', which only occurs 129 times for both variants combined in spoken language. The frequency differences between variables for precept are of a different magnitude (as I surveyed only 61 language advice publications), but they are still noticeable. For example, *hij heeft/heb* 'he has' is mentioned in only a single prescriptive publication, as opposed to *een aantal mensen is/zijn* 'a number of people is/are', which occurs 39 times. Noticeably, there does not appear to be a relation between the precept and usage frequencies of variables, as exemplified by *hij heeft/heb* 'he has'. When we compare the total frequency counts for usage, we see that four variables occur more often in written language (*een aardig/ aardige meisje* 'a nice/ nice.INFL girl'; *het boek dat/wat* 'the book that/which'; *hij heeft/heb* 'he has'; and *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* 'the woman whose/ of which'); the other five are found comparatively more often in spoken language (*zij/hun hebben* 'they/them have'; *een aantal mensen is/zijn* 'a number of people is/are'; *jij kunt/kan* 'you can'; *u heeft/hebt* 'you.POL have'; and *een heel/hele mooie auto* 'a very/very.INFL nice car').

Next, Table 8.5 presents the relative frequency with which each variant occur, again split according to the three dimensions and two modes. I express the proportion of the standard or non-standard variant respectively as a percentage of the combined total raw frequency as reported above.

Table 8.5. Relative frequency results for all variables across precept, attitude and usage in spoken and written language (stand.= standard variant, non = non-standard variant)

Variable	Mode	Prescript		Attitude		Usage	
		Stand.	Non.	Stand.	Non.	Stand.	Non.
<i>een aardig/</i>	written	100	0	96.4	3.6	100	0
<i>aardige meisje</i>	spoken	100	0	92.3	7.7	97.9	2.1
<i>het boek</i>	written	90.8	9.2	91.1	8.9	99.8	0.2
<i>dat/wat</i>	spoken	86.8	13.2	82.3	17.7	64.2	35.8
<i>hij heeft/heb</i>	written	100	0	96.1	3.9	100	0.0
	spoken	100	0	87.8	12.2	98.8	1.2
<i>zij/hun hebben</i>	written	100	0	95.3	4.7	100	0
	spoken	89.3	10.7	84.7	15.3	97.3	2.7
<i>de vrouw van</i>	written	95.7	4.3	67.1	32.9	88.7	11.3
<i>wie/waarvan</i>	spoken	56.5	43.5	57.9	42.1	51.9	48.1
<i>een aantal</i>	written	47.4	52.6	73.9	26.1	56.3	43.7
<i>mensen is/zijn</i>	spoken	42.3	57.7	63.1	36.9	27.3	72.7
<i>jij kunt/kan</i>	written	63.3	36.7	63.6	36.4	90.8	9.2
	spoken	43.3	56.7	52.5	47.5	59.7	40.3
<i>u heeft/hebt</i>	written	2.4	97.6	50.9	49.1	73.2	26.8
	spoken	2.4	97.6	43.0	57.0	74.5	25.5
<i>een heel/hele</i>	written	87.5	12.5	51.0	49.0	50.7	49.3
<i>mooie auto</i>	spoken	43.8	56.3	39.8	60.2	16.2	83.8

The relative frequency scores in Table 8.5 show a clear preference for the standard variant across dimensions, although this preference is stronger for written language than for spoken language. For written language, the standard variant is dominant for all variables in attitude and usage. The precept data shows two exceptions in written language, where the non-standard variant is accepted by more than half of the prescriptive authors: *u hebt/heeft* 'you-FORM have' and *een aantal mensen is/zijn* 'a number of people is/are'. For spoken language, the standard variant is similarly preferred, but there are more variables for which the non-standard variant is dominant in at least one dimension. These include *een aantal mensen is/zijn* 'a number of people is/are' which shows 57.7% of precepts accepting the non-standard variant, and usage, in which 72.7% of all tokens are the non-

standard variant *een aantal mensen zijn* ‘a number of people are’. Such exceptions occur for every dimension. One variable, *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very nice car’ even shows a preference for the non-standard variant in all dimensions, most clearly in usage, where the non-standard variant *hele* ‘very.INFL’ makes up 83.8% of all examples for the variable.

It is worth comparing the distributions of standard and non-standard variants across dimensions for different variables. Some of these are quite heterogeneous. For example, looking at *u heeft/hebt* ‘you.POL have’ in written language, we see that only 2.4% favors the standard variant for precept, but that preference increases to 50.9% for attitude and further to 73.2% for usage. By contrast, the evaluation for *zij/hun hebben* ‘they/them have’ is much more homogenous. Although these are the two most extreme cases, these examples show how large the differences between dimensional preferences for the same variable can be (see Appendix 8.1 for all differences between distributions in percentage points (henceforth *pp*)). Such differences can be seen as indications of the variational stability of a variable.

Finally, there are three observations that highlight the importance of the written/spoken-divide. Firstly, looking again at the degree of homogeneity between the distributions across dimensions, we see that for seven out of the nine variables the spoken data show a greater degree of heterogeneity than the written data. Secondly, of the five variables mentioned above that have higher usage frequency in spoken language, four have the highest degrees of heterogeneity of all variables. Finally, and most pronounced, is the fact that out of all variables across all dimensions, in all but one case the spoken language data shows a greater presence of the non-standard variant as opposed to the written data. The only exception is *u hebt/heeft* ‘you-FORM have’, for which the usage data shows a 1.3 pp difference in favor of the standard variant as compared to the written data.

8.4.2 Pattern 1: Near-complete absence of the non-standard variant

Three variables (*een aardig/aardige meisje* ‘a nice/ nice.INFL girl’, *hij heeft/hebt* ‘he has’, and *zij/hun hebben* ‘they/them have’) show a pattern of distribution across the variables in which the non-standard variant

is completely absent⁵² in usage and universally condemned in precept. However, the attitudinal data displays a marginally larger degree of acceptance of non-standard variants than both the precepts and usage (see Figure 8.2). The difference is small though: *zij/hun hebben* ‘they/them have’ shows the largest difference with 4.7 pp. This pattern is the same for spoken and written language, taking into

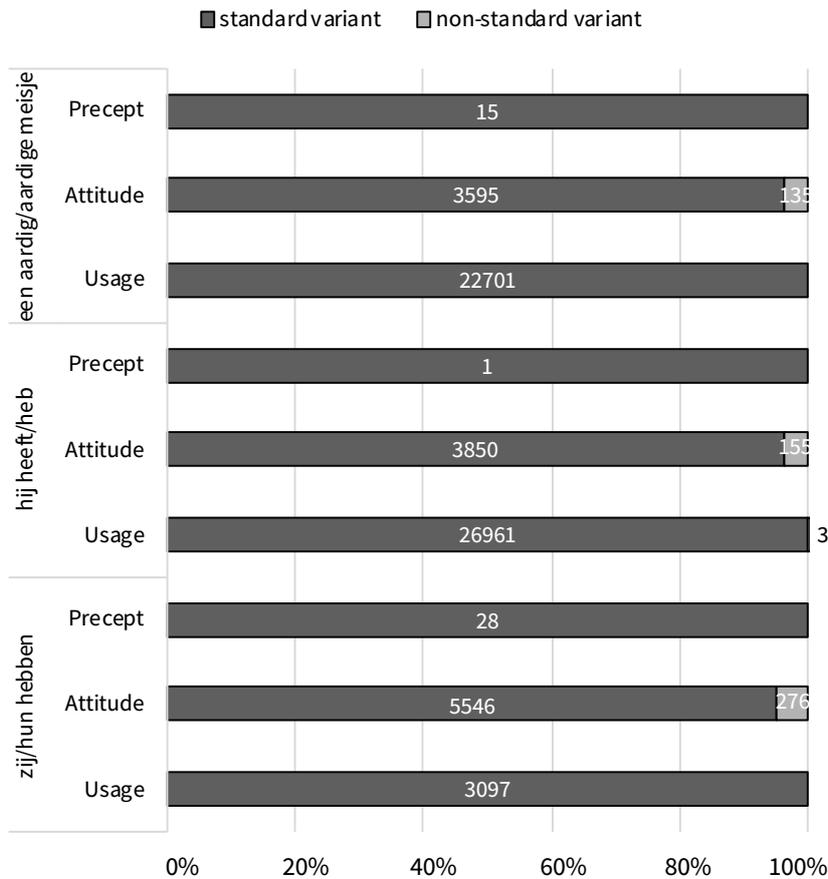


Figure 8.2. Distribution of variants on all three dimensions for *een aardig/aardige meisje* ‘a nice/ nice.INFL girl’, *hij heeft/heb* ‘he has’, and *zij/hun hebben* ‘they/them have’ in written language

⁵² To be fair, the non-standard variant *hij heb* does occur three times, but these are all quotations from spoken language. Also, the relative usage is negligible against the 26,961 standard variants.

account the fact that for all dimensions there is a slightly larger presence of the non-standard variant, as I noted above. One notable difference between these three variables is that three prescriptive publications accept the use of the non-standard variant *hun hebben* ‘them have’ in spoken language; for the other variables, the non-standard variant is always condemned completely, both in written and spoken language. Another similarity, is that these variables have the highest usage frequency counts in both written and spoken language, are the only three to have a token count higher than 10,000 in written language, and are three of the four variables that occur more often in written than in spoken language. The only real difference between these variables is that *hij heeft/heb* ‘he has’ had the lowest token count in the precept category, as it is only mentioned by Van Eijk (1999).

One other variable has the same pattern, albeit with slightly different distributions, and only for written language: *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’ (see Figure 8.3). For this variable, the precept and usage data again show a very strong preference for the standard variant (96.7% and 88.7% respectively), but the attitudinal data is much more inclined towards the non-standard variant, with only 67.1% of respondents preferring the standard variant. A major difference between this variable and the three mentioned above is that *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’ has a much lower combined usage token count of only 515 in written language.

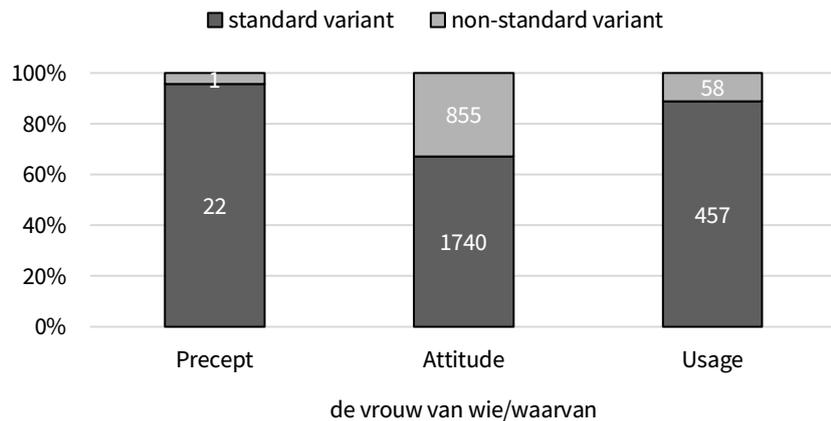


Figure 8.3. Distribution of variants on all three dimensions for *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’ in written language

8.4.3 Pattern 2: Attitude is less accepting of the non-standard variant than both precept and usage

Similar to the first pattern, the second shows comparable distributions between standard and non-standard variants in precept and usage. However, the two variables that display this second pattern, *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’ (in both spoken and written data) and *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’ (in spoken language only) show a comparatively stronger preference for the standard variant in the attitudinal data.

An explanation for the patterning for *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’ could be that this is one of the most well-known cases of morphosyntactic variation in Dutch, with Coppen calling it an “eternal question” (2016). Our data shows some support for this statement: with 39 precepts, this is the most frequently found variable in the language advice publications consulted for the present research. It also has the second highest combined score for attitudinal answers, showing that this variable is well-known and the subject of opinions. Whether this is a result or a cause of the preponderance of this usage item in prescriptive publications is unclear, but the fact is that the variable is an important part of the prescriptive canon. Finally, a remarkable similarity between both variables in this pattern is that they occur relatively rarely in usage. For *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’, we find a combined token count of 316 in written language, and 450 in spoken

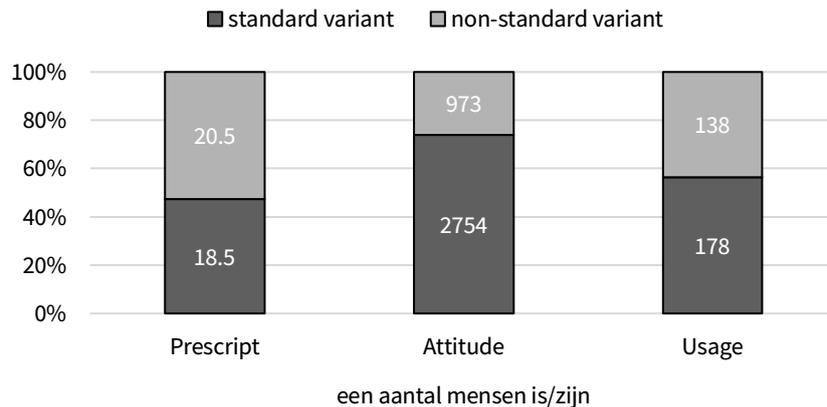


Figure 8.4. Distribution of variants on all three dimensions for *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’ in written language

language; for *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’ there are 129 combined tokens in spoken language. Why *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’ shows this pattern is unclear.

8.4.4 Pattern 3: Usage is more non-standard than precept

In the third pattern, the precept data shows a comparatively high preference for the standard variant, which then decreases for attitude towards the lowest amount for usage. This pattern is found for two variables, *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’ and *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very-INFL nice car’, but in spoken language only (see Figure 8.5). Although the latter variable shows a considerably greater preference for the non-standard variant in all dimensions, the differences between dimensions are rather similar between the two: the difference between precept and attitude is 4.6 pp. for *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’ and 4.0 pp. *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very.INFL nice car’, 22.6 and 27.6 pp. between precept and usage respectively and 18.1 and 23.6 pp. between attitude and usage.

We find a variation of this pattern for *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very.INFL nice car’ in written language (see Figure 8.6). Again, the precept category leans the most towards the standard variant, with only two statements accepting the non-standard variant (12.5%). As opposed to the pattern described above, there is virtually no difference between the distribution of attitudinal acceptance of the

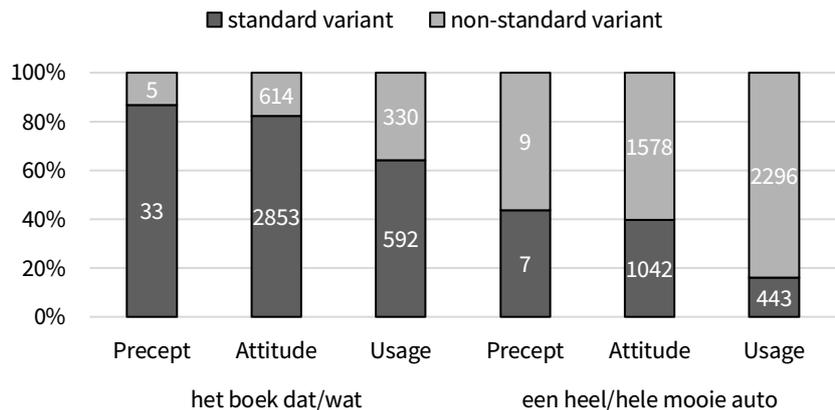


Figure 8.5. Distribution of variants on all three dimensions for *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’ and *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very/very.INFL nice car’ in spoken language

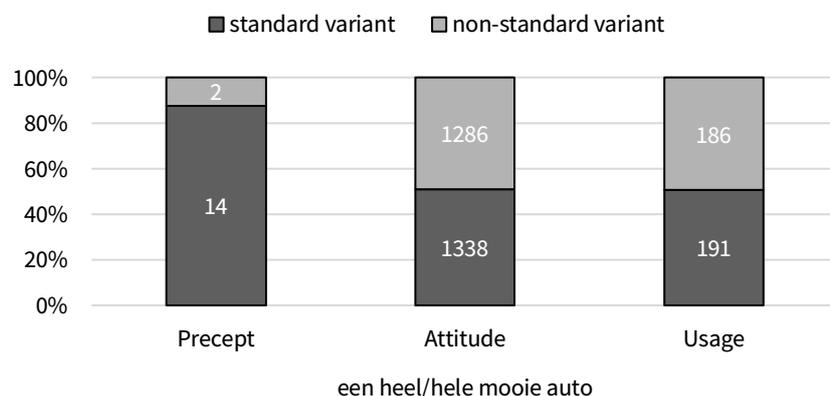


Figure 8.6. Distribution of variants on all three dimensions for *een heel/hele mooie auto* 'a very/very.INFL nice car' in written language

standard variant (51%) and its distribution in usage (50.7%). The difference between these two dimensions and precept, however, is much larger than the two cases above, with 36.5 and 36.8 pp. Interestingly, the attitudes are relatively similar in their acceptance of the non-standard variant as compared to the spoken language data discussed above, but usage and precept differ a great deal between the two modes. This could imply that the distribution of these two latter dimensions is anomalous. In fact, this may be a sign of prescriptive influence on usage. Why this effect is so much stronger for the same variable in spoken language, however, is unclear.

8.4.5 Pattern 4: Precept is more non-standard than usage

Pattern 4 shows a similar stepwise progression between the dimensions as the previous pattern, but in reverse order. Here, usage shows the highest preference for the standard variant, whereas precepts are more inclined towards the non-standard variant. We find this pattern for two variables: *u heeft/hebt* 'you.POL have' in both written and spoken language, and *jij kunt/kan* 'you can' in spoken language only. As Figure 8.7 shows, the differences between the distribution for the dimensions are much larger for *u heeft/hebt* 'you.POL have' than for *jij kunt/kan* 'you can'.

As we have seen, it is common for a non-standard variant to be accepted in at least some prescriptive publications. But the near-ubiquitous acceptance that *u hebt/heeft* 'you.POL have' displays is rare,

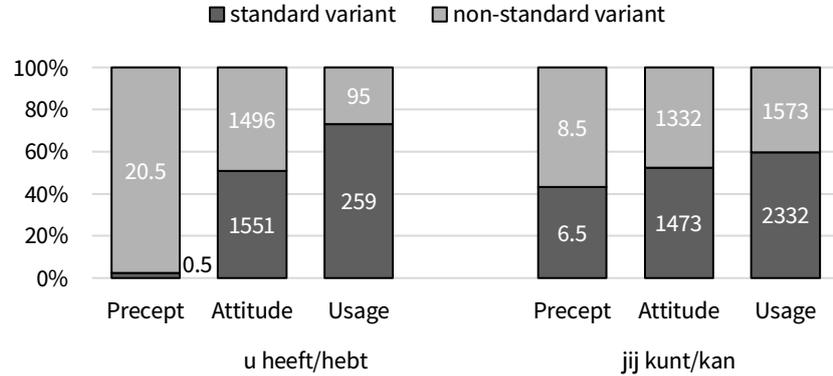


Figure 8.7. Distribution of variants on all three dimensions for *u heeft/hebt* 'you.POL have' in written language and *jij kunt/kan* 'you can' in spoken language

not just in our dataset but also in Dutch prescriptivism as a whole (see Van der Meulen 2021). Clearly, this level of acceptance is not based on attitudinal acceptance (49.1%), nor on the dominance of the non-standard variant in usage (74.5%). Conversely, the institutional acceptance of the non-standard variant has not led to a complete attitudinal acceptance, or to a loss of the standard variant. The same goes for *jij kunt/kan* 'you can', although for this variable, differences between dimensions are much smaller, although in usage the proportion of non-standard variants is comparatively greater (40.3% non-standard variants).

I interpret a final pattern as a variant of Pattern 4. Here again, both the scores for precept and attitude are more in favor of the non-standard as opposed to usage, but these scores show an almost equal distribution. This pattern only occurs in the written language data, for *het boek dat/wat* 'the book that/which' and *jij kunt/kan* 'you can' (see Figure 8.8).

Despite their apparent similarity, there are two differences between the two variables in this pattern. Firstly, the degree to which the usage data show a stronger preference for the standard variant clearly differs. In the case of *het boek dat/wat* 'the book that/which', we find only nine instances of the non-standard variant *wat* 'what' in actual language usage, as opposed to 3,624 instances of *dat* 'that'.⁵³ There does not seem to be any pattern to these cases, as they stem

⁵³ When we compare the results for this variable to Chapter 7, the written data show similar distributions. However, the spoken data from Chapter 7 has a much higher degree of non-standard variants (52.4%). Why this difference is so large is unclear.

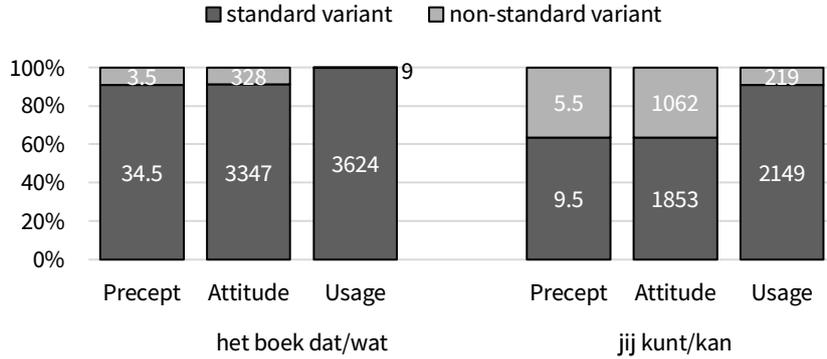


Figure 8.8. Distribution of variants on all three dimensions for *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’ and *jij kunt/kan* ‘you can’ in written language

from different years, publications, and authors, and follow different nouns. Whether they are idiosyncratic or ‘mistakes’ that were missed by editors is unclear. For *jij kunt/kan* ‘you can’, we find the non-standard form *kan* ‘can’ in 9.2% of all cases. The second difference is the distance between the scores for precept and attitude on the one hand and usage on the other. For *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’, this difference is 9%; for *jij kunt/kan* ‘you can’ it is much larger, namely 27.4%.

8.5 Discussion

Through the investigation of nine variables across usage, precept and attitudinal data, I found four distinct patterns of distribution between the standard and non-standard variant, with minor variations. Every pattern occurred for more than one different variable. This proves, firstly, that there are indeed systematic relations between usage, precept and attitude. If there were no relations between precept, attitude and usage, which we could view as a kind of null hypothesis for the present research, our investigations would have resulted in a completely random picture, without any discernable patterns. This is clearly not the case. Secondly, it also shows that prescriptivism is not a monolithic phenomenon that develops along a single path. Instead, we see evidence for the claim by Hinrichs, Szmrecsanyi, and Bohmann, who state that “various prescriptive rules (...) follow trajectories that are quite distinct from one another” (2015: 928). The

choice to study a variety of distinctive variables becomes all the more meaningful: fewer variables would have yielded less robust results. The results also showed that attitude cannot be predicted based on the relation between usage and precept. As such, it may be very worthwhile to incorporate attitudinal data in studies of effects of prescriptivism on usage. As Nevalainen (2014) pointed out, this is complex for older language phases: however, as Havinga and Krogull state, “it is possible to investigate language attitudes based on a range of historical data” (2022: 311).

The conclusions mentioned above are reinforced by results from our comparison of spoken and written data. We saw that the spoken data showed a greater preference for the non-standard variant than the written across dimensions across all variables, with only a single exception (the usage data for *u heeft/hebt* ‘you.POL have’). This comes as no surprise, as it is well-established that “written language lags behind the spoken in terms of language change” (Curzan 2014: 43). However, the fact that the patterns are the same across written and spoken language contradicts the idea that “attempts to prescribe uniformity in speech have not (...) been noticeably successful” (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 58). My results show that in many cases they are equally successful for written and spoken language, albeit with a lag in the former. A second remarkably consistent pattern with regard to spoken versus written language is that the differences between the distributions for dimensions were generally larger in spoken language. This implies that prescriptivism, in all its facets, is less stable in spoken language, and that the relations between dimensions may be either weaker or more haphazard in this mode. This result shows how important it is for our understanding of prescriptivism to include both spoken and written data, rather than ignore spoken data.

I identified several factors that may play a role in explaining why particular variables showed their particular distributions. One factor is frequency of usage. It is well known that language change works differently for high-frequency items as opposed to low-frequency phenomena (see, for example, Bybee 2015: 41). Perhaps this also applies within a prescriptive context. As we saw, all three variables in Pattern 1 were comparatively high-frequent. We also saw that for some of the variables for which the pattern differed between written and spoken language (*het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’; *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very.INFL nice car’) there was also a sizeable difference in usage frequency according to mode. However, as there

is a similar difference between the modal scores for *jij kunt/kan* ‘you can’, this factor alone is not enough to explain the observed patterns.

Another factor that may play a role in explaining the patterns we saw is salience, or how well-known or socially charged particular variables are. In the present research, we can operationalize this as the number of respondents answering questions about a variable, and the number of prescriptive publications that mention it (for a similar approach see Lukač 2018: 162). A high degree of salience could explain, for example, the comparatively high attitude scores for the standard variant for *een aantal is/zijn* ‘a number of people is are’. However, how this supposed salience relates to or interacts with frequency is unclear (cf. Rácz 2013). Also, Bennis and Hinskens (2014) used a closed list to elicit attitudinal responses, which means that this feature may be salient within the given options, but not necessarily for prescriptivism as a whole.

A final factor in explaining the patterns may be the origins of the variation. For example, all non-standard variants in Pattern 1 originate outside of the standard language: *hun hebben* ‘them have’ and *hij heb* ‘he has’ can be found in many dialects (Van Bree 2012), whereas *een aardige meisje* ‘a nice.INFL girl’ is often found with L2 speakers (Bennis 2010). As such, these rules represent a kind of ‘barbarians at the gate’ scenario: there is variation in the language, or only very marginally in the standard language. Also, this explains the fierce condemnation of these variants across the board. For the other variables, however, the variation seems to be the result of language internal developments; *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’ is perhaps the best example of this type of development (e.g., J. van der Horst 1988).

The present research yielded new insights into the workings of prescriptivism, and gave evidence for the existence of systematic correlations between the proportion of standard and non-standard variants across different dimensions. Still, much remains to be investigated. The main follow-up question is how these patterns develop. The fact that we see similar patterns for different variables, but with different distributions between standard and non-standard variants (such as for *het boek dat/wat* ‘the book that/which’ and *jij kunt/kan* ‘you can’) may mean that these are different stages of the same pattern. However, this does not have to be the case: perhaps our synchronic study captures similarly looking snapshots which stem from very different paths. Either way, diachronic studies are important to establish whether or not this is the case. Additionally, we

would need to replicate the present research for other variables, to see whether the four patterns we found are all options, or whether there are more and different patterns.

One caveat with the current research is the fact that the usage and attitudinal data stem from different language users. Ideally, we would collect both types of data from the same users. However, at present the only way this seems to be done is through the self-reporting method used by Bennis and Hinskens (2014). However, as I noted, there are considerable objections to this method. How this is to be solved remains undetermined. Another possible approach would be to take a more qualitative approach to the norm-attitude-usage triangle. By establishing what specific language norms certain language users have come into contact with, how they feel about these norms and how they apply them, we could delve into the actual 'life' of prescriptive norms and the publications they appear in. Such qualitative work, while increasingly common in language policy studies (cf. Källkvist and Hult 2016), seems not to have reached prescriptivism studies yet.

Appendix 8.1 Differences between proportion of standard and non-standard variables for any two dimensions per variable

All scores are calculated by comparing the relative frequencies of the preference for the standard variant between two dimensions. For example: for *u heeft/hebt* 'you.POL have' in written language, we see that only 2.4% favors the standard variant for precept, 50.9% for attitude and 73.2% for usage. This means that the difference between precept and attitude is $50.9 - 2.4 = 48.5$ pp; the difference between precept and usage is $73.2 - 2.4 = 70.8$ pp; the difference between attitude and usage is $73.2 - 50.9 = 22.3$ pp.

	Mode	Difference between precept and attitude in pp.	Difference between attitude and usage in pp.	Difference between precept and usage in pp.	Average difference in pp.
<i>een aardig/</i>	written	3.6	3.6	0	2.4
<i>aardige</i>	spoken	7.7	5.6	2.1	5.1
<i>meisje</i>					
<i>het boek</i>	written	0.3	8.7	9	6.0
<i>dat/wat</i>	spoken	4.6	18.1	22.6	15.1
<i>hij</i>	written	3.9	3.9	0	2.6
<i>heeft/heb</i>	spoken	12.2	11	1.2	8.1
<i>zij/hun</i>	written	4.7	4.7	0	3.1
<i>hebben</i>	spoken	4.6	12.6	8.1	8.4
<i>de vrouw</i>	written	28.6	21.7	6.9	19.1
<i>van wie/</i>	spoken	1.4	5.9	4.6	4.0
<i>waarvan</i>					
<i>een aantal</i>	written	26.5	17.6	8.9	17.7
<i>mensen</i>	spoken	20.8	35.8	15	23.9
<i>is/zijn</i>					
<i>jij kunt/kan</i>	written	0.2	27.2	27.4	18.3
	spoken	9.2	7.2	16.4	10.9
<i>u</i>	written	48.5	22.3	70.8	47.2
<i>heeft/hebt</i>	spoken	40.7	31.5	72.2	48.1
<i>een</i>	written	36.5	0.3	36.8	24.5
<i>heel/hele</i>	spoken	4	23.6	27.6	18.4
<i>mooie auto</i>					
Average difference	written	17.0	17.0	12.2	17.8
	spoken	11.7	16.8	18.9	
across variables					

Chapter 9

General discussion

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis, as formulated in **Chapter 1**, was to investigate several aspects of the mechanics of (Dutch) prescriptivism. To reach this aim, I asked two main research questions, which together were divided into five sub-questions. In this final chapter, I present the answers for every sub-question as following from the results of the research performed in the various chapters. In §9.2, I discuss results concerning the question of how precepts in language advice publications in the Netherlands developed since 1900 with regard to stance towards variation (Q1a). How argumentation developed in Dutch prescriptivism (Q1b) is described in §9.3. The matter of whether actual language usage influences the precepts in Dutch language advice publications (Q2a) is dealt with in §9.4. After that, I move on to the influence of Dutch language advice publications on actual language usage (Q2b, §9.5). The final sub-question, Q2c, which asks whether there are relations between precepts, language usage and speakers' attitudes, is discussed in §9.6. For every sub-question I present empirical and theoretical findings. For sub-questions where it is especially pertinent, I also showcase some practical implications of my research. The chapter ends with some general methodological challenges that I faced in performing the research for this thesis (§9.7), and finally a look at future research (§9.8).

9.2 The acceptance of variation in Dutch language advice publications

The research of this thesis demonstrated the variability of the stance towards variation in Dutch precepts. All three stances, i.e., a complete acceptance of variation, a limited or conditional acceptance, or a

complete dismissal of it, were found in the data studied in **Chapter 2**, **Chapter 3**, **Chapter 4**, **Chapter 7** and **Chapter 8**. Contrasting existing theoretical assumptions (e.g., Milroy and Milroy 1999: 6, 22), I demonstrated that partial and complete acceptance of variation were far from a marginal phenomenon. For example, **Chapter 3** showed that 46.2% of 461 precepts at least partly accepted variation. **Chapter 3** showed furthermore that for most usage items (six out of the eleven investigated here), a partial or complete acceptance of variation was the dominant position. The most extreme case of acceptance was *dat hij is gekomen/gekomen is* ‘that he has come/that he come has’, for which 88.2% of precepts partially or completely accepted variation. Despite this clear presence of precepts (partially) accepting variation, results across different chapters showed that, overall, a complete dismissal of variation was and is the dominant position across language advice publications in the twentieth and twenty-first century, both synchronically at any given point as well as diachronically.

The variability with regard to stance was also found within precepts for particular usage items. Of the thirteen usage items investigated in **Chapter 3** and **Chapter 8** combined, only two usage items (*een aardig/aardige meisje* ‘a nice/nice.INFL girl’ and *hij heeft/heb* ‘he has’) displayed universal condemnation of a variant; in the case of *hij heeft/heb* ‘he has’ only a single precept was found. For all other usage items, different language advice publications displayed varying degrees of acceptance, again, both synchronically and diachronically. Remarkably, results from **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 7** showed that the level of acceptance was not the same for all usage items within a group of closely related usage items (see also results from Van der Meulen 2019). Usage items that were more peripheral (i.e., that were mentioned less often in precepts or were found less frequently in usage), such as *een heleboel N is/zijn* ‘a lot of N is/are’) displayed lower rates of acceptance than more central or frequent ones, such as *een aantal N is/zijn* ‘a number of N is/are’.

I found differing answers to the question of whether Dutch precepts became more accepting of variation over time. Looking at a large collection of grammatical and lexical precepts in **Chapter 2**, I observed a general increased tolerance of variation, from 0% acceptance in the 1910s to 28.6% of precepts (partially) accepting variation in the 2010s. This trend was confirmed on a smaller time-scale (2006-2018) in the parliamentary language guides in studied in **Chapter 7**. When I zoomed in on specific usage items in **Chapter 3**

and **Chapter 4**, I found that usage items developed differently over time, with all three progressions (i.e., more acceptance, less acceptance, or stable) occurring for multiple usage items. These results demonstrate that prescriptivism does not progress as a monolithic phenomenon, nor that there is one linear path from condemnation to acceptance, but that different usage items develop in their own way. Most notably, language advice publications became diachronically less accepting of certain high-frequency precepts, such as *een aantal N is/zijn* ‘a number of N is/are’ and the comparative conjunctions *als/dan* ‘as/than’. I hypothesized that this trend points towards a *shibbolethisation* of prescriptivism. This means that, even though there may be an increased acceptance of variation in prescriptivism in general, particular usage items become so highly socially indexed that for them, variation is deemed increasingly less acceptable. Again, as non-acceptance of variation remains the dominant position across usage items, claims that language users of Dutch are at present allowed by to “make their own choices” (Ooms 2017: 11) are exaggerated.

These results could have important practical implications. As I showed in the very beginning of this thesis, language users are at least partly unaware of the extent of synchronic and diachronic variability of usage items. Such misconceptions are known to contribute to linguistic insecurity among speakers but also to the discrimination of particular non-standard speaking or writing language users (as is explained by, for example, Peterson 2019). A greater awareness of the variability of norms, a more lenient approach to their application, and a deeper understanding of why language users use non-standard variants could thus potentially have positive social effects. However, we should not take the ineffective but still persistent scientific approach of trying to solve this societal problem by ‘simply’ providing more scientific knowledge (which assumes the so-called *deficit model*, see Durant 1999; Simis et al. 2016). Instead, we should engage in meaningful dialogue with language users, teachers and language advisors about what language norms are and are not, how they can be used, and what different groups of people want from language norms. One example of bringing together these groups is by designing a research agenda based on input from all three groups (for the success of similar approaches in medicine, and the underlying *dialogue model*, see Abma and Broerse 2010).

Another way to increase awareness and understanding of the variability of language norms is by paying more attention to these facets of prescriptivism in education. This ties in with a more general call for the development of *bewuste geletterdheid* ‘conscious literacy’ (see Bax et al. 2021) in language education (meaning that students not just learn things, but understand the mechanics underneath what they learn and why they learn something). A practical starting point for this is provided by Van Rijt and Wijnands, who propose that students should answer three questions about disputed variation (what do I think, what does the linguistic community do, what are the rules, 2017: 8), which closely resemble the three dimensions used in the research in **Chapter 8** of this thesis. Using this method, students do not just learn ‘tricks’ about right and wrong variants, but consciously engage with language variation.

9.3 Argumentation in Dutch language advice publications

Dutch language advice publications employ a great variety of different arguments to justify their stances towards variation. In **Chapter 2**, I found 31 different types of arguments (including the absence of any argument) in 1,578 precepts. The 236 precepts studied in **Chapter 4** contained 23 different arguments. Looking at the development of these arguments (Q1b), I concluded in **Chapter 2** that the dominant value underlying statements made in Dutch language advice publications (as manifested in arguments) changed in the 1940s from PURITY (language should be pure) to SYSTEMATICITY (language should be systematic), after which PURITY became less and less important as time progressed. Within the category of SYSTEMATICITY, we saw a gradual increase of the importance of GRAMMATICALITY (language should conform to grammatical rules) between the 1920s and the 2010s (from 42.9% to 91.9% of all arguments in that category). The peak for SYSTEMATICITY as the dominant value lay in the 1980s, with 44.8% of all arguments found in this decade falling in that category. After that, although it remained the most important value in absolute terms, its relative importance decreased to 37.6% in the 2010, and other arguments and values, including QUALITY (language should be of a certain quality) and USE (correct language is determined by what an authority does) become increasingly important. These results throw new light on claims that Dutch prescriptivism became differently motivated from the 1970s

onwards (see, for example, Haeseryn 1999: 243, Geerts and Smedts 1986: 1): rather, this development seems to have started a few decades earlier.

The application of arguments in Dutch language advice publications showed little systematicity with regard to the evaluation of specific usage items. From the ad hoc use of arguments, I concluded that Dutch prescriptivism has a strong *ipse dixit* tradition (like English, see Peters 2006), and that authors make judgements based primarily on their own preferences. This tradition is further exemplified by the fact that despite the great variety of arguments, for many precepts no argument at all was given to support a verdict. For example, 10.6% of precepts in **Chapter 2** contained no arguments, making this the third most often found position. A final piece of evidence for the existence of this tradition comes from the low number of authors who refer to other languages advice publications (although it is likely that commercial considerations also play a role here). There were, however, a few exceptions, in which I did find links between particular usage items and specific arguments. In **Chapter 2**, I found that to condemn *tot de beste behoren* ‘belong to the best’, the argument LOGIC (a variant is disapproved because its use is not logical) was used frequently. Also, **Chapter 4** showed that prescriptive authors showed a strong preference for using the argument MODE (a variant is approved because it is considered to be right in written or spoken language) in relation to the comparative conjunctions *als/dan* ‘as/than’.

My thesis presented some evidence for the hypothesis that there are relations between different stances towards variation and particular arguments. For example, **Chapter 4** showed that limited acceptability was often related to arguments that propagate differences between spoken and written language. Furthermore, we saw in **Chapter 2** that there was some indication that variation in language was more acceptable when an authority said it was. These results tie in with results for English from Van der Meulen (2020a). For this article, which falls outside of the scope of this thesis because it pertains to an English usage item, I studied online statements about the correct pronunciation of the acronym GIF. I showed that those favoring [gɪf] often used arguments related to usage and analogy, while those advocating [dʒɪf] based themselves on authority and the intention of the creator.

The answers to Q1b can also have some practical applications, most notably for language advice publications and their

writers. Recent years have seen the emergence of Dutch online resources, most notably by association *Onze Taal* ‘Our Language’ and the *Taalunie* ‘Language Union’, that present some information on the usage and history of usage items. Still, as this thesis amply shows, there are many language advice writers who do not provide such an informed point of view, and even leave out arguments altogether. For such cases, this thesis can provide some perspective on how and why authors evaluate usage items. For example, the overview of different arguments given in this thesis may lead to language advisors making more consistent decisions about argumentation. Also, knowing that other authors in earlier time periods made similar or different choices regarding argumentation could lead them to also make different choices in future works.

9.4 The influence of usage on Dutch prescriptivism

The question of whether actual language usage influences Dutch language advice publications (Q2a) was approached in a few different ways in this thesis. Firstly, I studied this question by investigating recency and frequency statements (such as ‘this variant is new’ or ‘this error is found often’). In **Chapter 5** and **Chapter 6**, I showed that there were substantial differences between the way the two types of statements occurred in prescriptive publications. Recency statements were quite rare in twentieth and twenty-first century Dutch prescriptivism, were mostly used in relation to lexical usage items rather than grammatical ones, and their use decreased over time. The decline in use may be a sign of the fossilization of the formulation of language advice: as fewer new usage items are introduced, there is less of a need to mention recency. This points towards the *canonization* of prescriptivism, in which usage items are repeated regardless of usage but only because they are part of the prescriptive canon (see Van der Meulen 2021). If this is the case, then the answer to the sub-question is negative: over time, precepts are based on usage to a decreasing extent. Frequency terms on the other hand were used much more regularly, did not decrease in use over time, and were mostly used with regard to grammatical usage items. Conspicuously, high frequency terms, such as *vaak* ‘often’ and *heel vaak* ‘very often’, made up 59% of all, pointing towards a rhetorical motive in their employment. Despite the fact that we find many

frequency terms, the fact that we find high frequency ones indicates again that such statements are not based on actual language usage.

The second way in which I investigated the influence of usage on precepts was by comparing a selection of recency and frequency statements to actual usage. Results showed that the influence of usage on prescriptivism is more complicated than was hitherto assumed (cf. Ayres-Bennett 2020; Trask 1999). In **Chapter 5**, I showed that in most cases Siegenbeek's use of frequency terms did not correspond to the actual usage of a variant. Results from **Chapter 7** gave even stronger evidence for the mismatch between actual and reported frequency. There, we saw that out of a total of 61 recency and frequency statements regarding lexis and grammar in the period between 1900 and 2017, only seven (11.5%) could be classified as accurate within the framework I used. However, we observed that for Siegenbeek's frequency terms the average usage token count was significantly higher for medium frequency terms as compared to low ones, and for high frequency terms compared to medium ones. This trend occurred both for relative frequency (i.e., how often did the disapproved variable occur relative to the approved variable) and absolute frequency (i.e., how often did the disapproved variant occur in absolute terms), although the tendency was much more pronounced for absolute frequency. This result shows that although Siegenbeek may have been inaccurate in his specific verdicts, he did have a general feel for the frequency with which variants occurred. The fact that this trend was even more obvious for absolute frequency counts indicates that prescriptivists (and language users in general) may perceive and report linguistic variants based on this type of frequency. This could have ramifications for the way linguists evaluate frequency judgments by language users.

Another divide between precept and usage becomes apparent when we compare the frequency of certain precepts, and the frequency with which the targeted usage items occur in actual usage. Data from various chapters showed that while certain usage items occur very frequently in language advice publications, either the usage item or the condemned variant they target hardly ever occurs in actual usage. For example, **Chapter 3** showed that the usage item *een aantal N is/zijn* 'a number of N is/are' was found in 65 language advice publications; in **Chapter 8** it became apparent that this variable occurred quite rarely in language use. Similarly, the Parliamentary Language Guides in **Chapter 7** policed three variables for which the condemned variant never occurred in actual

parliamentary language usage. These results raise the question of why these precepts are included at all (anymore) in language advice publications, and give further evidence for the hypothesis that, in many cases, the inclusion of precepts in language advice publications is not based on usage, but rather on a perception of usage or on canonization (as mentioned above, see Van der Meulen 2021). It may even be the case that the inclusion of such rules is performative in nature: based on the aforementioned *shibbolethisation*, certain rules may be included because writers want to show that they are aware of them.

Despite the critical points made above, there are indications of at least some influence of usage on precepts. In **Chapter 7**, we saw that for certain usage items, the stance towards variation did in fact change when it did not conform to usage anymore. The prime example of this is *een heel/hele mooie auto* ‘a very/very.INFL nice car’. Since the beginning of the data studied for this chapter, only the non-standard variant *hele* ‘very.INFL’ was used in debates: in the last Parliamentary Language Guide, the precept was changed to reflect this preference. In **Chapter 8**, we saw that there were similar patterns with regard to usage and precepts across different usage items. This implies that there is at least some relation between the two dimensions, although based on the synchronic data used in this chapter it is unclear what that relation is and in what direction it moves. It may be that looking at effects at all is too simplistic: as Curzan puts it, “the interaction of prescript and usage defies straightforward cause-effect relationships” (2014: 87). Instead, these dimensions may form a kind of *feedback loop*, in which usage and precept (and attitude) continuously influence one another (cf. Momma and Matto 2008: 8). I will come back to this point in §9.7.

9.5 The influence of Dutch prescriptivism on usage

I dealt with sub-question 2b most extensively in **Chapter 7**. By studying different versions of the parliamentary debates and reports, I showed clearly how precepts can influence usage. For several variants, which were explicitly disapproved of in the language advice publications used, usage by Members of Parliament was changed by registrars to conform to the rules. Such influence is to be expected to some extent under these circumstances. Parliamentary reports represent a ‘formal’ situation (Trudgill 1999: 119), and it is widely

(and somewhat obviously) believed that prescriptivism has more effects on formal registers (cf. Yáñez-Bouza 2015, although see Kostadinova 2018a: 240 for contradicting findings). Still, even though the prescriptive influence was to be expected, my detailed case study showed that there is more to this matter.

Importantly, the obedience to the rules was far from uniform, even in such formal circumstances. Registrars followed some rules more strictly than others. The formulation of the precept played a role in the degree of obedience, as registrars were more likely to flaunt rules that instructed them to ‘follow the speaker’ than those that explicitly prescribed a certain variant. In cases where lenience was recommended, the registrars’ own prescriptive preferences often prevailed. More importantly, I showed that rules were followed to different degrees depending on the linguistic level. Grammatical rules, especially when formulated strongly, were followed closely. By contrast, rules for stylistic and lexical usage items were often and increasingly disregarded. These results show that there are considerable and meaningful differences between the way in which lexical and grammatical precepts operate. Unfortunately, there is comparatively little research into the relation between precepts and usage with regards to lexis, with most research focusing on or even only acknowledging orthographical and morphosyntactic usage items (cf. Rutten and Vosters 2021: 80, although see Hendrickx 2013 and research into Flemish lexical prescriptivism referenced there). Why these differences exist then remains tantalizingly unclear.

The results discussed in this section show that even when we assume prescriptivism affects formal language, studying the circumstances and factors of the influence can yield valuable insights. Moreover, such results, as well as those brought forward in §9.3 and §9.4 emphasize the fact that categorical statements about the effects, motives and contents of prescriptivism should be avoided. Malleability of language does not seem impossible (contra Weerman 2003: 348). Prescriptivism is not always in defiance of normal usage (contra Trask 1999: 246). The avowed goal of prescriptivism is not to render it invariant (contra Poplack et al. 2015: 31). Such statements are equally imprecise and incomplete as saying that language change works in one particular and immutable way, which it clearly does not (cf. Bybee 2015; Labov 1994a, 1994b, 1994c). Instead of making such sweeping but ultimately unfounded claims, we should approach prescriptivism empirically as the complex sociolinguistic phenomenon that it is, and acknowledge that we cannot grasp its

complete workings in one statement (for similar viewpoints see Anderwald 2019: 102; Hinrichs, Szmrecsanyi, and Bohmann 2015: 928; Rutten and Vosters 2021: 78).

The perceived lack of effects of prescriptivism on spoken language is another aspect that we should approach delicately. Here, we also find categorical statements, such as by Lippi-Green, who states that “attempts to stop spoken language from changing (...) are universally without success” (1997: 10). The present research shows that such statements are all too emphatic. Results from my thesis show that precepts do affect spoken language. Most notably, **Chapter 7** showed that for several variables, the precepts are adhered to in spoken language as well as in written language. For some usage items, such as *iets wat/dat* ‘something which/that’ and *heleboel N is/zijn* ‘a lot of N is/are’, spoken language even displayed zero disapproved variants. Whether this is evidence of ‘stopping’ a language change, as Lippi-Green claims cannot happen, is unclear, but the precepts seem to cause substantial delays at the very least.

Chapter 7 provided a valuable methodological innovation. By looking at two versions of the same text, before and after editing, together with the actual prescriptive publications used in this context, there can be no doubt as to the nature of prescriptive interference. Using this method, researchers can overcome criticism about the *post hoc propter hoc* fallacy, while also avoiding the explanation that usage patterns can always be an effect of other factors than prescriptivism (cf. Moschonas 2021). More generally, this approach (and in a slightly different way, the approach used in **Chapter 5**) shows the value of studying well-defined case studies before tackling the way prescriptivism works in relation to language usage in general. A challenge going forward is that hardly any existing corpora are suitable for this type of comparative research. More and differently designed data sets, then, are essential. Political data is an excellent source for such data sets, as it is often relatively easy to obtain, and has the potential extra dimension of allowing for a comparison between spoken and written data. Other data sources that undergo editing, such as newspapers or student essays, also lend themselves well to this approach.

9.6 Relations between precepts, language usage and speakers' attitudes

With my final sub-question, Q2c, I asked whether there were relations between the three prescriptive dimensions of usage, precept and attitude. To be able to give an answer to this question, we need to consider the results from my synchronic investigation as reported in **Chapter 8**. There, I discovered four distinct tripartite patterns of distributions between standard and non-standard variants across various usage items. For example, I observed a pattern for *het boek dat/wat* 'the book that/which' and *een heel/hele mooie auto* 'a very-INFL nice car' in which precepts have a comparatively high preference for the standard variant, attitudes show more of an inclination for the non-standard variant, and usage shows the comparably highest preference for the non-standard. Although both variables showed the same pattern, for *een heel/hele mooie auto* 'a very-INFL nice car' all three dimensions showed a stronger preference for the non-standard variant than those for *het boek dat/wat* 'the book that/which'. But the important conclusion vis-à-vis sub-question Q2c is not the shape of these particular patterns. It is the fact that I found patterns in the first place, that I found only four patterns, and that each pattern occurred for more than one variable.

The fact that I found patterns of distribution between usage, precept and attitude proves that there are, in fact, relations between these three dimensions. Had I found no patterns at all (or, in other words, a different pattern for each variable), the development of usage items would have been random, and no relations would exist. If I had observed only a single pattern, this would have pointed towards a unilateral development of prescriptivism (for example, a complete lack of influence of precepts), which would contradict existing findings (see Rutten and Vosters 2021 for an overview). But I found a small number of patterns, and, importantly, each pattern was found for more than one variable. This shows that, although there are different patterns and thus potentially different trajectories for the development of different prescriptive rules (cf. Hinrichs, Szmrecsanyi and Bohmann 2015: 928), not every variable develops in a unique way.

The comparison between spoken and written data gives helpful extra information as to the importance of variables as a factor in explaining prescriptive patterns. Results from **Chapter 8** show that the spoken language data displays a higher preference for the non-

standard variant as opposed to the written data for all dimensions across all nine variables with only a single exception (the usage data for *u heeft/hebt* ‘you.POL have’). The fact that written language, then, is slower to adopt the non-standard variant is in itself not surprising. It is well-established that “written language lags behind the spoken in terms of language change” (Curzan 2014: 43). What is noteworthy, however, is that for many of the variables, written and spoken language distributions show the same patterns. This implies, again, that prescriptivism does influence spoken language (albeit to a lesser extent than it does written language). Moreover, seeing the same patterns for variables in both modes reinforces the notion that particular variables or groups of variables develop along certain paths, regardless of mode.

The data used for **Chapter 8** revealed potential insight into the question of how these patterns emerge. Nevalainen (2014) hypothesized that “emerging from language practices, value-laden norms can be imposed on language users” (2014: 105). In other words: variation in usage leads to awareness of that variation, which leads to attitudes, which at some point become codified in normative publications. These in turn may then influence usage and attitudes, which in turn can influence precepts, et cetera et cetera. What we saw in the data dovetails this hypothesis. For three variables, namely *een aardig/aardige meisje* ‘a nice/ nice.INFL girl’, *hij heeft/heb* ‘he has’, and *zij/hun hebben* ‘they/them have’, we saw a very low token count in usage for the non-standard variant, a comparatively high number of strongly dismissive precepts, and overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards the non-standard variant. It seems likely that this pattern represents an early complete phase of the aforementioned feedback loop (as opposed to earlier, incomplete phases, for example when usage shows variation, but this variation has not yet been codified in precepts). In the case of this pattern, usage of the non-standard variant is (perceived to be) frequent enough in standard language, and/ or has gained enough social connotations to have become noticeable for attitudes to form and for precepts to arise. However, whereas we see degrees of acceptance for other non-standard variants, for these variables that perhaps have only recently reached the standard language, acceptance has not arisen.

As for how these patterns develop over time, and thus how a potential prescriptive feedback loop develops, the synchronic data from **Chapter 8** is not equipped to provide answers. As such, it is unclear why particular usage items show the patterns that they do. I

did, however, find several possible factors that may influence the distributions between precept, attitude, and usage. One of these factors is salience. When we operationalize this as the frequency with which a precept occurs, or the number of attitudinal answers it receives, salience could explain why, for example, for *een aantal mensen is/zijn* ‘a number of people is/are’ the attitudinal responses are more inclined towards the standard variant as opposed to the usage and precept data. In this case, then, this usage item is so salient that it influences the way people perceive it: they know that they should condemn the non-standard variant, even though it is used frequently. Another possible factor is frequency of usage. Variables that occurred more frequently (such as *hij heeft/heb* ‘he has’) showed a comparatively lower degree of acceptance of the non-standard variant than variables that displayed lower usage token counts (such as *u heeft/hebt* ‘you.POL have’). A final factor is the origins of the variation. We saw that for certain variables for which the variation has likely arisen as a language internal development (such as *de vrouw van wie/waarvan* ‘the woman whose/of which’), the degree of acceptance for the non-standard variant is higher than for variants that originated in the language of dialect or non-native speakers, such as *een aardig/aardige meisje* ‘a nice/ nice.INFL girl’.

These results too could have practical implications. Including explicit usage and attitudinal data in the actual precept would make language norms and language advice publications more transparent. It would also allow for greater awareness among language users about the actual state of variation for certain usage items. One example of such an approach is presented by Van Wingerden (2017), who gives absolute and relative attitudinal data for each usage item in his language advice publication, based on survey responses from a convenience sample of almost 3,000 speakers of Dutch. Another recent example stems from a blog post by the *Instituut voor de Nederlandse Taal* ‘Institute for Dutch Language’, who weigh in on a recent debate about the supposed spread of non-standard variant *groter als* ‘bigger as’ by presenting corpus data (s.n. 2021b). However, care should be taken in also presenting the limitations of such data. In both these examples, the data are presented as being representative for the Dutch language community, but it is very unclear to what extent this is the case (cf. Bennis and Hinskens 2014: 148 for a reflection on the representativeness of their respondents). Still, such a quantitatively supported approach is to be applauded.

9.7 Methodological challenges

The empirical and theoretical results in this thesis challenge many previously held assumptions about various aspects of prescriptivism. These include the supposed centrality of the suppression of optional variability; the hypothesized increased acceptance of the evaluation of usage items; the manner in which usage does or does not inform the formulation of precepts; the way prescriptivism may influence both language use in general and spoken language in particular; and, not in the least, the fact that Dutch does indeed have a tradition of language advice publications. Notwithstanding these contributions, there are some limitations to the studies performed for this thesis, which I discuss in this section.

In **Chapter 2**, I called for and employed a relatively inclusive approach to language advice publications, foregoing the stricter classification that is used in the English approach to prescriptivism. Still, in spite of casting a wider net than is common (although for an even wider selection of types of normative publications see Vosters, Belsack, Puttaert, and Vandebussche 2014), I did erect my own boundaries: I just put them down in different places. Moving these boundaries to be either more inclusive or exclusive could lead to different results for several of my research questions, such as the degree of acceptance of a usage item across the whole population of prescriptive publications.

A related issue is the potential ‘weight’ of specific language advice publications. It seems obvious that there are substantial differences between both the perceived authority and the reach of various publications. As I mentioned in **Chapter 1**, the different editions of the *Schrijfwijzer* ‘Writing Guide’ (Renkema 1979, 1989, 1995, 2005, 2020) have supposedly sold almost half a million copies. It seems reasonable to assume that the impact on usage that this book has had, at the very least on the idiolectal level, has been far larger than that of a book such as Kooijman (1997), of which, as far as I can tell, only one edition has appeared. And yet, I did not take this into account when considering the relations with usage, nor has anyone else done this (as far as I am aware), although recent years have seen the issue of ‘weight’ being acknowledged by the research community (see, for example, Lismont 2021). As of yet, however, there is no solution as to how to take ‘weight’ into account in quantitative analyses of prescriptive publications. One possible solution lies in the direction of proposals by Hendrickx (2013: 116-120), who uses what

she calls a ‘construction norm’. In this approach, different stances towards variations are aggregated. Such a norm can still manifest as either approving or disapproving of a particular variant, but it is explicitly based on multiple language advice publications from a particular period. Perhaps something similar can be devised for the matter of weight.

A final limitation of the present thesis is that certain chapters compared data stemming from different sources. This is quite common for precept vs practice studies, and it should not be a problem when corpora are representative. However, for the data used in some chapters, it is unclear whether this is the case. For example, in **Chapter 5**, although there was clear evidence that we approximated Siegenbeek’s linguistic environment quite well, some of the results (e.g., his commenting on variation that we did not find in our data) showed that this can yet be improved. Similarly, the usage and attitudinal data I used for **Chapter 8** came from different sources and language users. Although I still judged my use of data to be an improvement upon the use of self-reporting measures, this mismatch remains a problem. If and how this could be solved is not self-evident: collecting both actual usage (rather than self-reported) and attitudinal data from the same language users runs the risk of contamination (i.e., participants adjusting usage or attitude based on social expectations). Still, it seems feasible that ways can be devised, matched-guise or not, to circumvent this issue; however, they were beyond the scope of this thesis, and thus, we have to take our methodological and data shortcomings as they are.

9.8 Future research

The present thesis provides new insights into existing conceptions of a variety of aspects of (Dutch) prescriptivism. But much more can still be investigated. Below, I present some potential future research. First of all, it is self-evident that the present research can be expanded upon with regard to the various types of language advice publications that exist. Ways to do this include mapping out Belgian Dutch language advice publications (building on the work by Vandebussche et al. 2005; Schrijvers 1912; Hendrickx 2013); investigating language advice publications aimed at former colonies of the Netherlands (such as Van Wely 1906; De Geus 1922; see Grisel 2018 for a first exploration of one particular work); and studying

language advice publications aimed at specific settings, target audiences or companies (the works I investigated in **Chapter 7** are an example of this approach). Comparing prescriptive internet resources to language advice books may also be a fruitful endeavor, as would a more detailed comparison of how modern language advice publications relate to earlier prescriptive works for Dutch.

Another self-evident path to expand the current research is by looking at more and different usage items. One way in which this can be done is to focus on rare usage items. The current research, like much prescriptivism research, focuses largely on high frequency usage items, i.e., those items that are part of the canon of Dutch prescriptivism (see Van der Meulen 2021). But, just as in general linguistics and typology both universals and *rara* are studied, the study of rare usage items may present new insights. This class is massive, as Chapman (2021) shows for English, and Geerts and Smedts (1986) do for Dutch. Investigating these items in particular can answer questions about canonization, but also about salience and the observational awareness of prescriptivists and language users.

Comparing Dutch usage items and precepts to those found in other languages will be an interesting implementation of what Joseph has famously called “comparative standardology” (1987: 13). While his idea has been taken up with regard to the comparison of the standardization processes of different languages, and to some extent on the level of language advice publications (see, for example, Ayres-Bennett and Tiekens-Boon van Ostade 2016; Rutten 2012), it has been rarely done on the level of particular usage items (although see Kostadinova, van der Meulen, and Karsdorp 2016). Yet, when we compare lists of Dutch and English usage items, a surprising number of very similar ones are found in both languages. These include *elk/ieder* ‘each/any’, the modification of absolute adjectives (e.g., ‘most unique’), the use of *letterlijk* and *hopelijk* vs ‘literally’ and ‘hopefully’, and many others. Certain usage items are found even more widely, such as the Dutch shibboleth comparative markers *als* and *dan* ‘as’/‘than’, which are not only a usage item in English, but also in German and even Polish.⁵⁴ Why this is the case remains to be seen. Another aspect worth comparing between languages is the prescriptive attention that is paid to spoken language. For English usage guides, Peters concludes that they “usually pay little attention to spoken/written variability” (2018: 33). However, as I explained in

⁵⁴ My thanks go to Paul Hulsenboom for drawing my attention to this.

§9.3 above, Dutch prescriptive publications do mention mode regularly.

It would be worthwhile expanding the research of this thesis diachronically. Of course, in order to be able to carry out diachronic research, we need more and better diachronic usage corpora for Dutch, especially for the twentieth century (see also Van der Sijs 2019b). Recent years have seen a very substantial output of interfaces (most notably OpenSoNaR⁵⁵ and Nederlab⁵⁶) and datasets of Dutch (such as Delpher⁵⁷). While these also contain valuable diachronic data for the twentieth century (for example the minutes of the *Staten-Generaal* ‘States General’ and newspapers) which have many research applications, these are not corpora in a strict sense (they are not, for example, “sampled to be representative of a particular language or language variety”, McEnery, Xiao and Tono 2005: 5). As such, diachronic corpus-based research is tricky (see also **Chapter 7**). There are some hopeful signs of improvement on this front, such as a ±200 million word single-genre corpus of cultural or literary periodicals ranging between 1837 and 1999 (Piersoul, De Troij, and Van De Velde, submitted).

Finally, I would argue for a more varied application of different methods to study prescriptivism. Of course, much of prescriptivism research focuses on historical data, which imposes limits as to what can be investigated, although assumptions about doing attitudinal research have been challenged (see Grossman and Noveck 2015; Havinga and Krogull 2022). But modern research is far less limited, and, given the assumption of substantive uniformitarianism (in the sense that the way language works in the present can be assumed to have been the same in the past, see Walkden 2019), synchronic research on modern prescriptivism can teach us things that also apply to earlier language phases. Examples of promising methodological avenues include the participative research method used by Källkvist and Hult (2016), who observed and contributed to the formulation of a new language policy at a Swedish university; the statistical methods Malory (2021) used for studying prescriptivism at an idiolectic level; and the psycholinguistic approach applied by Hubers et al. (2020). These approaches are very promising, and show how much there is left to explore with regard to the tantalizingly complex research subject that is prescriptivism.

⁵⁵ See <https://portal.clarin.nl/node/4195>

⁵⁶ See https://www.nederlab.nl/cms/?page_id=206

⁵⁷ See <https://www.delpher.nl/over-delpher/wat-is-delpher/delpher-voor-iedereen>

Appendix A. Language advice publications studied for this thesis

This appendix contains a list of all primary works that I used for this thesis. After each title, I have added in superscript the chapters for which data from that particular language advice publication served as primary data.

- Aalbrecht, Heidi. 2008. *Schrijfstijl. De basis van een goede tekst*. Amsterdam: Augustus.²³⁴⁶⁸
- Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. 1917. *Lijst van Nederlandsche woorden ter vervanging van op bureaux gebruikelijke vreemde termen, voorgesteld en aanbevolen door het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond*. 2nd ed. Dordrecht: Geuze.²
- Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. 1925. *Lijst van Nederlandsche woorden ter vervanging van op bureaux gebruikelijke vreemde termen, voorgesteld en aanbevolen door het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond*. 4th ed. Dordrecht: Geuze.²
- Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. 1926. *Lijst van Nederlandsche woorden ter vervanging van op bureaux gebruikelijke vreemde termen, voorgesteld en aanbevolen door het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond*. 5th ed. Dordrecht: Geuze.²
- Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. 1927. *Lijst van Nederlandsche woorden ter vervanging van op bureaux gebruikelijke vreemde termen, voorgesteld en aanbevolen door het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond*. 6th ed. Dordrecht: Geuze.²
- Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. 1928. *Lijst van Nederlandsche woorden ter vervanging van op bureaux gebruikelijke vreemde termen, voorgesteld en aanbevolen door het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond*. 7th ed. Dordrecht: Geuze.²
- Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. 1932. *Lijst van Nederlandsche woorden ter vervanging van op bureaux gebruikelijke vreemde termen, voorgesteld en aanbevolen door het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond*. 9th ed. Dordrecht: Geuze.²
- Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. 1938. *Lijst van Nederlandsche woorden ter vervanging van op bureaux gebruikelijke vreemde termen, voorgesteld en aanbevolen door het Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond*. 11th ed. Dordrecht: Geuze.²

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- Ansems, Joost. 1988. *Van woord tot tekst. Een basiscursus praktische taalvaardigheid voor onderwijs en zelfstudie*. Culemborg: Phaedon.²³⁴⁶
- Apeldoorn, C. G. L., and S. Pot. 1983. *Twijfelgevallen Nederlands*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.²³⁴⁶
- Bakels, Floris B. 1956. *Goed taalgebruik*. Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema.²³⁴⁶
- Blom, M. C., Van de Laar, J. A. J. M., and M. E. Verburg. 1999. *Stijlgids: Leidraad voor financieel-economische teksten*. Amsterdam: Het Financiële Dagblad.²³⁴⁶⁸
- Bouman, Jolanda. 2006. *Hoe schrijf je dat? Schrijftips en taalregels*. Zaltbommel: Thema, uitgeverij van Schouten en Nelissen.²³⁴⁶⁸
- Braas, Cees and Job Krijgsman. 2001. *Taaltopics. Formuleren*. Groningen: Noordhoff Uitgevers.²³⁴⁶⁸
- Buesink, Gert. 2010. *Taalfouten in de praktijk*. Alphen aan de Rijn: Kluwer.²³⁸
- Burgers, Wibo. 1991. *Correct Nederlands* 3rd ed. 's-Gravenhage: Elmar.²⁶
- Charivarius, [G. Nolst Trenité]. 1940. *Is dat goed Nederlands?* Amsterdam: De Spieghel.²³⁴⁶
- Damsteegt, B. Cees. 1948. *In de doolhof van het Nederlands / Aanwijzingen voor een zuiver taalgebruik*. Vol. 1. Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink.³⁶
- Damsteegt, B. Cees. 1964[1948]. *In de doolhof van het Nederlands / Aanwijzingen voor een zuiver taalgebruik*. Vol. 1. 7th ed. Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink.²³⁴⁶
- Daniëls, Wim. 1995. *Verbeter uw tekst*. Den Haag: Sdu.²³⁴⁶⁸
- Daniëls, Wim. 2005. *Gids voor de eindredacteur*. Amsterdam: Veen.²³⁴⁶⁸
- Daniëls, Wim. 2011. *Teksten redigeren. Wat elke redacteur moet weten maar nooit ergens kan vinden*. Houten: Unieboek.²³⁴⁶⁸
- Dauids, Petra, Fransien Roovers. 2007. *Redigeren van teksten*. Alphen aan de Rijn: Kluwer.²³⁶⁸
- De Berg, Jaap. 1999. *Trouw schrijfboek* 4th ed. Amsterdam: Muntinga.²³⁴⁶⁸
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Appendix B. Research data management

For this thesis, I primarily used a collection of language advice publications (see §1.3.3 of this thesis and Appendix A above for an overview). As the works I studied stemmed from 1900 or later, I was informed by the copyright specialists of the Radboud University Library that making them available was not possible due to copyright reasons. Obtaining permission from copyright holders was considered to be too time-consuming (see Straaijer 2015: 1 for a similar case for English). Instead of making the raw data available, I have chosen to publish my annotation layers. For additional data, such as usage corpora and attitudinal surveys, I also do not hold copyright. For these, I have made the queries and software I used available.

All data is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 NL license. No personal information was used in this thesis. The description below is concerned primarily with availability: for details regarding specific data collection see the appropriate chapter.

Chapter 2: All manually annotated stances towards variation and argumentation are available per decade at <https://osf.io/954sf/>.

Chapter 3: All manually annotated stances towards variation per usage item are available at <https://osf.io/ypr4n/>.

Chapter 4: All manually annotated stances towards variation and argumentation, as well as the interrater check, are available at <https://osf.io/rzsv3/>.

Chapter 5: The prescriptive data used for this chapter stems from Siegenbeek (1847), which can be found online at <https://books.google.nl/books?id=RBhRAAAAcAAJ>. For usage data we used the DBNL, as accessed through Nederlab (<http://www.nederlab.nl/onderzoeksportaal/>). All queries to obtain the usage data are available at <https://osf.io/fmctb/>.

Chapter 6: All manually annotated tags are available at <https://osf.io/t9wzr/>. Details with regard to search terms and usage data are provided in the Chapter.

Chapter 7: The prescriptive data was obtained from internal working documents of the *Dienst Verslag en Redactie* of the Dutch parliament (verslagdienst@tweedekamer.nl). I was asked not to quote from them directly, nor to make these documents available to third parties. All usage data was collected by me; details about the collection process are given in Chapter 7. All usage data is available at https://osf.io/w8zh6/?view_only=9ab7e8153f544bd89ab9b20d3fed33d5.

Chapter 8: All manually annotated stances towards variation per usage item are available at https://osf.io/rxsdu/?view_only=7058f07a62db4c37805e6d61e5c72671. Data from the Corpus Gesproken Nederlands is available through the OpenSoNaR+ interface for everyone with a CLARIN-account (<https://opensonar.ivdnt.org>); the queries I used for my research are available at the same link above. Data from the Literom corpus was kindly provided by prof. dr. Freek van de Velde (Universiteit Leuven, Belgium). The attitudinal data can be found in Appendix 1 of Bennis and Hinskens (2014: 178-184).

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Samenvatting

De ideologie van het prescriptivisme, of het idee dat er in taal goede en foute elementen kunnen zijn, manifesteert zich onder andere in taaladviesboeken. Deze publicaties bestaan volledig uit evaluaties van specifieke gevallen van taalvariatie, waarbij één van de varianten door een deel van de taalgebruikers wordt afgekeurd. Voorbeelden van zulke kwesties zijn het gebruik van de voegwoorden *als* en *dan*, werkwoordscongruentie met *aantal* (*een aantal mensen is/zijn*), en het verbogen bijwoord in *een heel/hele mooie auto*. Sinds het begin van de twintigste eeuw zijn er tientallen taaladviesboeken verschenen die dit soort kwesties in het Nederlands aankaarten. Deze werken, en de adviezen die ze bevatten, zijn echter tot op heden nauwelijks systematisch bestudeerd. Dat is zonde, omdat onderzoek in andere talen heeft laten zien dat de studie van taaladvies nieuwe inzichten kan geven in allerlei aspecten van taal. Daarom vormen deze werken het uitgangspunt voor mijn proefschrift. Aan de hand van een aantal deelvragen bestudeer ik de ontwikkeling van taaladviezen na 1900, en hoe ze zich verhouden tot de taalwerkelijkheid.

Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat prescriptivisme in Nederland zich kenmerkt door variabiliteit. Voor vrijwel iedere kwestie vond ik alledrie de standpunten ten opzichte van variatie (volledige en gedeeltelijke acceptatie en totale veroordeling), gecombineerd met een veelvoud aan argumenten. Ook de ontwikkeling van de houding ten opzichte van variatie wisselt per kwestie, van coulanter via stabiel tot strenger. Deze resultaten laten zien dat we prescriptivisme niet als eenvormig fenomeen moeten beschouwen, maar dat het in plaats daarvan op detailniveau moeten worden bestudeerd.

De invloed van taalgebruik op taaladviesboeken is beperkt. Prescriptieve uitspraken over de frequentie waarmee fouten voorkomen (bijvoorbeeld 'je hoort dit vaak') en het recent ontstaan van bepaalde varianten (zoals 'deze vorm is recent ontstaan') vinden zelden hun weerslag in daadwerkelijk gebruik. Wel bleek Matthijs Siegenbeek (1774-1854) in algemene zin correcte intuïties te hebben over de relatieve en vooral absolute frequentie waarmee bepaalde varianten voorkwamen.

Daarentegen lijkt taaladvies gebruik wel degelijk te kunnen beïnvloeden. Gebruikmakend van parlementaire gebruiksdata toonde ik dat sommige regels nauw werden gevolgd. De mate van gehoorzaamheid wisselde echter opnieuw, nu afhankelijk van de kwestie, de modaliteit (gesproken of geschreven) en het type kwestie

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(grammaticaal of lexiciaal/stylistisch). Door ten slotte naast taalgebruik en -adviezen ook attitudes te bestuderen toonde ik aan dat er patronen zijn te ontwaren tussen deze drie dimensies, wat suggereert dat ze elkaar beïnvloeden. Zo heeft dit proefschrift enige draden van de Gordiaanse knoop die prescriptivisme heet iets verder ontrafeld.

Curriculum Vitae

Marten van der Meulen (1985) finished a bachelor's degree in classical clarinet at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague in 2008. After working as a musician and music teacher for two years, one of which at the Amman Symphony Orchestra (Jordan), he decided to go back to university. Marten did his Bachelor's in English Language and Culture at Leiden University, spending a semester abroad at the University of Sydney. He continued to do a Research Master Linguistics at Leiden University, from which he graduated *cum laude* in 2015.

Marten started working in academia during his BA. After brief spells as student assistant for Barend Beekhuizen and Ingrid Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, he worked for two years as research assistant for Folgert Karsdorp at the Meertens Institute. As a teaching assistant to Marc van Oostendorp, Marten made a sizeable contribution to the successful MOOC *Miracles of Human Language*. After finishing his MA, he first worked for the *Taalunie* 'Dutch Language Union' as a researcher, developing the survey and reports for *Staat van het Nederlands* 'State of the Dutch Language'. At Radboud University, Marten has taught several courses and given guest lectures at the Bachelor programmes of Dutch Language and Culture, Communication and Information Sciences and Linguistics. He has supervised six research interns, three individual BA theses and one BA thesis group consisting of 10 students. He is currently employed at Radboud University as knowledge coordinator at the department of Dutch Language and Culture, and as policy advisor at the *Taalunie*.

Marten has a long pedigree in popular scientific writing and speaking. In December 2012, he started *De Taalpassie van Milfje* 'The Language Passion of Milfje', a blog about language and linguistics, with longtime friend and collaborator Sterre Leufkens. The blog, which has featured over 600 posts by them, has over a million views, and almost 3,000 reactions. Since then, Marten has written several popular scientific books about language, has had a bi-weekly column on classical music station Radio 4, and is a regular guest for interviews for newspapers, radio and other media. He currently writes a column for magazine *de lage landen* 'the low countries'.

In his spare time, Marten continues to make music. He performed for years with street orchestra Ricciotti Ensemble, and is the co-founder of Ensemble PEP, with whom he plays up until this day. Marten enjoys reading, karaoke and hiking, and lives in Utrecht with his wife, son, and cat.

List of publications

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Over the course of my PhD, I have published about 70 blog posts about my research on my research blog.⁵⁸ Since April 2021 I have written a monthly column about language for *de lage landen* ‘the low countries’.⁵⁹ In 2022, I wrote eight episodes in a series called *Vergeten taalfouten* ‘forgotten language errors’ for popular scientific magazine *Onze Taal* ‘Our Language’.

⁵⁸ <https://martenvandermeulen.com/onderzoeksblog/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.de-lage-landen.com/series/taaltoestanden>