

Norms and Usage in Language History, 1600–1900

A sociolinguistic and
comparative perspective

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Norms and usage in nineteenth-century Southern Dutch

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This chapter discusses norms and usage in 19th-century Southern Dutch. After a brief sociohistorical sketch, we provide an overview of the Southern normative tradition, discussing its roots in the 18th century and its further development in the early 19th century. Next, we introduce three case studies: the spelling of /a:/ in closed syllables, the spelling of *t*-suffixed present indicative endings in *d*-stem verbs, and the representation of lengthened Wgm. *ē* before a consonant cluster with *-r*. For each of these features, we investigate the way they are dealt with in normative publications, as well as exploring their frequency in a manuscript corpus. Finally, we discuss two possible scenarios concerning a link between norms and usage, applying both scenarios to the features under discussion.

1. Introduction¹

The history of standardization and the development of language norms in Dutch often focuses exclusively on ‘Hollandic’ varieties of the language, which form the basis of the modern standard.² This chapter, however, will shift the center of attention from the north to the south of the language area, and present an overview of language norms and usage in the Dutch-speaking territories of the Southern Netherlands, roughly corresponding to present-day Flanders.

The Southern and Northern Netherlands were separated politically at the end of the sixteenth century as a result of the Dutch revolt against the Spanish regime (Willemyns 2013: 78–79). Whereas the North entered its ‘Golden Age’ as the Republic of the United Provinces, the South remained under foreign rule, initially under the Spanish crown, and from the early eighteenth century onwards as part of the Austrian empire. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Southern

1. This research was made possible thanks to the support of the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO).

2. See the previous chapters on seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch.

Netherlands were conquered and subsequently integrated into the French First Republic, and after different client state regimes of France, the Northern provinces also became part of the Empire, in the early years of the nineteenth century. In 1814, the London protocol settled the fate of the Low Countries after the initial defeat of the Napoleonic troops, and less than one year later, the Northern and Southern Netherlands were joined under the sovereign rule of the Dutch monarch William I. The goal was to create a stable and enlarged buffer state to the North of France, and the European superpowers counted on the Dutch king to bring his new territories together into a 'close and complete reunion'. This decision unified the Dutch language area in a single political entity, and language was seen as one of the key elements in the nation building enterprise. Although the United Kingdom of the Netherlands only lasted from 1815 until 1830, when the Belgian revolution made a sudden end to it, its unique political configuration and its specific linguistic composition make for an interesting case in historical sociolinguistics.

The period of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815–1830) will be the main point of departure for our study, as the tension between Northern and Southern language norms became particularly salient at this time. However, as many older normative publications were still circulating and being reprinted in the early nineteenth century, our overview of the Southern normative tradition will go back as far as the beginning of the eighteenth century. As many of these works have never been used for systematic linguistic investigations before, we will first give an overview of which publications and authors can be considered to be part of this Southern normative tradition (Section 2). Next, we will define three case studies in the domains of spelling and pronunciation (Section 3): the spelling of the (semi)long /a:/ in closed syllables, the present indicative endings of *d*-stem verbs, and the orthographic representation of the lengthened Wgm. *ě* before a cluster of *-r-* plus a dental or alveolar consonant. Based on these three cases, we will explore which concrete language norms were being prescribed and used by the authors of the normative publications under discussion, and how these codifiers dealt with the tension between prototypical Southern and prototypical Northern variants for these features (Section 4). This panorama of language norms will subsequently be tested against a sample of actual use in a corpus of early nineteenth-century manuscripts (Section 5). A comparison of our findings from the normative tradition with observations of ongoing language change for each of the three variables in the period of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, will lead us to explore the precise relationship between norms and usage for each of the features under discussion (Section 6). We will discuss the possibility of direct influence of explicit norms on the development of usage (and vice versa), concluding with a plea to take into account the broad sociolinguistic and sociohistorical context within which both explicit language norms and actual language use emerge (Section 7).

2. Prescriptivism and explicit language norms

2.1 North

The issue of norms in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Dutch is a complicated one. First and foremost, there was a distinct difference between the Northern and the Southern varieties of the language. The North had brought forth a blossoming normative tradition in the eighteenth century (cf. the previous chapter by Simons & Rutten), with influential figures such as Moonen (1706), Verwer (1707), Ten Kate (1723) and Kluit (1763). Corpus planning measures with regard to official language norms came very early. In 1797, the Batavian government appointed Matthijs Siegenbeek to the newly founded Chair of Dutch Eloquence in Leiden. Shortly after, the government ordered Siegenbeek to codify an official orthography, published as the *Verhandeling over de Nederduitsche spelling ter bevordering van de eenparigheid in dezelve* in 1804. This guidebook with spelling rules and examples was soon after adopted as the official national norm for orthography, insistently recommended for use in education and the public administration. One year later, the grammar written by the Rotterdam-based minister Petrus Weiland was similarly adopted as the official national grammar norm (Noordegraaf 1985). Most schoolbooks and basic orthographies published in later years closely followed the Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805) norms. Nonetheless, this does not mean that these norms were uncontested, let alone followed by all language users in the Netherlands (cf. Vosters, Rutten & Van der Wal 2010).

2.2 South

In the South, meanwhile, there were no official language norms, and even at the time of the reunion under William I, it is not clear whether the Northern Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805) norms would have also enjoyed some sort of official status in the Flemish provinces. Nonetheless, a fair number of different grammars, spelling guides and other sorts of normative and explicitly prescriptivist publications appeared over the course of the eighteenth century, many of which were still in circulation in the early nineteenth century. To reconstruct a normative framework for the nineteenth century, we thus need to go back in time and explore normative publications which appeared over the course of the eighteenth century.

Only a handful of the normative works discussed below has previously been the object of linguistic investigation:³ many of them are hardly known at all, and

3. See the excellent but more limited overview in Smeyers (1959), and further references in Vosters (2011: 106–107).

some have been uncovered after presumably passing from sight for all time (e.g. the so-called *Snoeijmes der Vlaemsche Tale*, which only recently became available as a text edition by Vosters & Rutten 2013). Collecting and compiling a reference corpus of normative works (cf. Rutten 2011) must be seen as an essential first step in gaining a better understanding of eighteenth and nineteenth-century language norms in Flanders. Before moving on to our three case studies, we will therefore give an overview of the normative tradition in the Southern Netherlands, highlighting the works which form the basis of the normative corpus used later on.

2.2.1 *Early eighteenth century*

In the early eighteenth century, the number of normative publications is still limited. The guidebooks appear spread over different regions of the South, and it is not clear to what extent different authors were aware of each other's publications. In 1699 or 1700, the West-Flemish schoolmaster Van Geesdalle publishes his contrastive grammar of Dutch and French, *Le parallèle de la grammaire des deux langues Française & Flamende [...] De vergelyking van de spraek-konste der twee talen de Fransche ende de Vlaemsche*, in Ghent (Boone 2000). Over a decade later, his Ghent-born but Utrecht-based colleague Gilles De Witte publishes a *Ontwerp van eene Nederduytsche Spraek-konst* (1713) under the pseudonym E.C.P. (Dibbets 2003). Around the same time, the French-Flemish schoolteacher Andries Stéven publishes his fairly influential *Nieuwen Néderlandschen Voorschrift-boek* (1714) in Ypres, combining a set of firm moral guidelines with concrete spelling injunctions for the benefit of educating the young (Rutten 2011: 19–32). This work is later picked up by the anonymous author of the *Snoeijmes der Vlaemsche Tale* (ca. 1750–1760), also operating in pedagogical circles in the region of French Flanders (Vosters & Rutten 2013). Lesser known, but not less interesting, is the work of the Antwerp-native priest and poet Bouvaert, who published a number of shorter treatises in the early 1800s, mainly on orthography and linguistic aspects of meter and rhyme (Bouvaert 1712; Bouvaert s.a.; cf. the edition in Rutten 2011: 193–201).

2.2.2 *Later eighteenth century*

After this initial period of somewhat heterogeneous normative production, the middle of the century sees a first surge of related language guidebooks written by mostly Antwerp-based schoolmasters (Rutten 2011: 33–81). Verpoorten (1752) introduces several spelling innovations and purist loan word alternatives in his *Woorden-schat oft letter-konst*. An anonymous colleague, P.B. (Petrus Bincken?), reacts to Verpoorten's work by publishing his own guidebook, *Fondamenten ofte Grond-Regels der Neder-Duytsche Spel-Konst* (1757). Verpoorten, in turn, revises his initial publication based on P.B.'s indirect criticism, and comes up with a new

edition in 1759. Both works seem to stem directly from the everyday practice of basic language and literacy instruction at the time.

In the same realm appears the vastly influential *Nieuwe Nederduytsche Spraek-konst* ([1761]) by Jan Des Roches, also published in Antwerp. This work, written by a schoolmaster from The Hague who had made his fortune in the South, not only dealt with spelling and pronunciation, but also added sections on morphology, syntax, and the different parts of speech. It was innovative in combining a didactic approach with all elements of a traditional school grammar, and was reprinted abundantly, with known editions dating back to 1776, 1782, 1810, 1812, 1818, 1820 and 1827 (De Clercq 2000: 136).

All three of these authors have strongly influenced later publications. Some later works can be categorized as (partial) pirate editions of P.B. and Verpoorten, such as the anonymous *Woorden-schat ofte Letterkonste* published in Ghent around 1770 (based on Verpoorten), a 1774 *Nieuwe spel-konst* along with a 1792 *Grondregels der Nederduytsche spel-konst* published in Lier (based on P.B. 1757), and even a 1817 edition printed in Mechelen (also based on P.B. 1757). Other works are more loosely inspired by one or more of the three Antwerp schoolteachers. Van Boterdael's ([1774]) spelling guide, which appeared under the title *Gemakkelyke wyze om op korten tyd grooten voordgang te doen in de Nederduytsche spelkonst*, clearly draws a lot of inspiration from Des Roches ([1761]), but also innovates on various points. The *Néderduytsche spel- en spraek-konst*, published by another Antwerp-based schoolteacher J. Ballieu (1771), combines elements from the works of his colleagues P.B. and Des Roches, and itself forms a basis for the later *Nieuwe Nederduytsche spraek- en spel-konst* by Turnhout-based schoolteacher M. Van Aerschot (1807). Similarly, the anonymous *Inleyding tot de grondregels der Vlaemsche spraek- en spelkonste* (1785) from Dendermonde brings together portions of all three predecessors, harmonizing an emerging and still developing Southern normative tradition.

The far-reaching influence of Des Roches can also be attested in the *Verbeterde Vlaemsche spraek- en spel-konste* by B. Janssens ([1775]), albeit in a negative sense: this Bruges-based language teacher sets out to attack the work of Des Roches and other colleagues, thereby claiming to defend local Flemish elements in the language. In this 'particularist' aim (as opposed to 'integrationists' who embraced Northern norms), Janssens also draws on the earlier work of his fellow countryman A. Stéven (1714). Earlier, two other West-Flemish grammarians, P.G. Van Belleghem and D. Waterschoot, also drew on this predecessor for their *Deure oft Ingang tot de Nederduytsche Taele* ([1773]), which was heavily criticized by Janssens ([1775]) as well.

All of these works in the wake of Verpoorten, P.B. and Des Roches share an interest in issues of language pedagogy, along with a fairly dominant (though often

not exclusive) attention to orthography. The degree to which all of these authors were aware of each other's work, debated similar issues, and reacted to each other's proposals, attests to a growing normative convergence and a lively normative tradition in the Southern Netherlands in the second half of the eighteenth century, which can certainly be interpreted as a sign of ongoing standardization processes (cf. Rutten & Vosters 2010).

However, not all works published in the Southern Netherlands subscribed to this emerging Brabant-based tradition. We have already mentioned Van Belleghem & Waterschoot ([1773]), who fall back on the earlier Flemish model of Andries Stéven's *Voorschrift-boek* (1714). The Brabantic dominance is even more strongly contested by the later work of the West-Flemish physician F.D. Van Daele, who published elaborate discussions of linguistic issues in his periodical *Tyd-verdryf* (1805–1806). From about the same time, we also have a manuscript grammar by L. De Bast and J.F. De Laval from Ghent, produced in 1805 as the *Algemeyne grond-regels der Neder-duydsche letter-konst*, with an abbreviated version entitled *Verkorte nederduytsche letter-konst* (1806). This work is essentially a translated adaptation of Pierre Restaut's grammar in the Port Royal tradition (*Principes généraux et raisonnés de la grammaire françoise*, 1730).

2.2.3 United Kingdom of the Netherlands

A second surge of normative publications in the Southern Netherlands came to light between 1815 and 1830, when the reunion of the Northern and the Southern halves of the language area had greatly sparked up linguistic debates in Flanders. The tension between Northern and Southern language norms and practices had always been an important topic especially in the Southern normative tradition (cf. Vosters & Rutten 2013), but it became particularly salient from 1815 onwards.

On the one hand, a group of grammarians often labeled 'particularists' continued building on the Southern normative tradition which had emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century, with Des Roches as the leading example to be followed. Works such as Ter Bruggen's *Nederduytsche spraek-konst* (1815, with an abbreviated version in 1819) and C.L. Gyselynck's *Nieuwe grond-beginselen der Vlaemsche tael* can clearly be situated in the tradition of Des Roches ([1761]). Other works, such as De Neckere (1815), praise the Northern norms of Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805) on the discursive level, but in practice mainly advocate orthographic choices very much in line with Des Roches and the older Southern tradition. More extreme particularist viewpoints can be found in works such as Henckel (1815), D[e] R[é] ([1820]) and De Foere's (1823) essay against Cannaert (1823). All of these authors actively oppose the use of the Northern spelling and grammar norms in the Flemish South.

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At the other end of the spectrum, we can situate a group of grammarians often labeled ‘integrationists’. Given the official norms for Northern Dutch at the time, these figures advocated adopting the Northern standards for use in the South as well, thereby emphasizing the importance of a strong linguistic unity between North and South. Although the new government did not undertake any explicit action to impose the Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805) norms on the Southern provinces, it is clear that these norms enjoyed support there. The Flemish headmaster J.J. Moke, for instance, published a *Nederduitsche spraak-kunst, naar het Hollandsch, ten bijzonderen gebruike der Vlaamsch-sprekenden* (1823), meant as an introduction to the Northern language norms for Southern language users. With a similar goal in mind, the *Taalkundige tweespraak* ([1827]) by D. De Simpel argues in the form of dialogues why the Northern norms should be preferred by Flemish language users. At the same time, a great many introductory grammars, guidebooks and spelling guides explicitly modeled on Siegenbeek (1804), Weiland (1805) or other Northern normative works started to be published in the South, often providing nothing more than basic summaries of their Northern models (Laukens 1818; Van Genabeth 1820; De Mol 1820; Vander Maas [1827]).

Many grammarians, however, took an intermediate position between both extremes. J.F. Willems is often categorized as one of the leaders of the integrationist movement in the later nineteenth century, but at the time of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (e.g. Willems 1824), he too defended specific elements from the Southern writing tradition (Vosters 2009). Likewise, also later particularists such as P. Behaegel still allowed for the possibility of finding a compromise between Northern and Southern language norms, as is witnessed, for instance, in the three volumes of his *Nederduytsche Spraek-kunst* published between 1817 and 1829.

Many publications also explicitly set out to compare the differences between Northern and Southern usage. Interesting examples include the aforementioned *Nederduytsche spraek-kunst* by Ter Bruggen (1815), the *Néderduytsche déclinatien en conjugatien, volgens de vlaemsche en hollandsche spelling* (1818) by an unknown author from Roeselare, or the highly schematic overview in the bilingual *Zamenzigtige en vergelijkende tafereelen der Vlaamsche en Hollandsche uitspraken/Tableaux synoptiques et comparatifs des dialectes flamand et hollandais* (W.D.T. 1823). Such overviews were sometimes provided with the simple aim of making the reader aware of where the distinctions lie, but more often than not, they also served a distinct language political agenda, propagating one of the two varieties as the preferred one – as is, for instance, the case in the integrationist work of Cannaert (1823; cf. the discussion in Vosters & Rutten 2011).

3. Three case studies

After the overview of normative publications in the previous section, we will now turn to the actual language norms which these grammarians and schoolmasters prescribed. To do so, we will focus on three linguistic features, all of which were very much at the center of the linguistic debates in the early nineteenth century.

1. Long A:

The spelling of the (semi)long /a:/ (or its local variants) in closed syllables. In this case, grammarians and orthographers mostly debated the principle of vowel lengthening by adding an *-e* to a single-grapheme short vowel to form ⟨ae⟩ (*rad* ‘wheel’ v. *raed* ‘council’) or by doubling the original vowel grapheme as ⟨aa⟩ (*rad* ‘wheel’ v. *raad* ‘council’).⁴

2. Verbal endings:

The spelling of 2nd and 3rd person singular and 2nd person plural present indicative endings of *d*-stem verbs, i.e. verbs with a stem which is orthographically represented as ending in ⟨d⟩, but which is pronounced as /t/ as a result of final devoicing (*leiden* ‘to lead’, with stem *leid-* /leit/). In these cases, the 2nd and 3rd person singular and 2nd person plural present indicative ending *-t* is superfluous in pronunciation (stem *leid-* /leit/ + ending /t/ remains /leit/), but can be represented orthographically (stem ⟨leid⟩ + ending ⟨t⟩ results in *hij leidt* ‘he leads’). For this feature, some grammarians and orthographers defended a (semi-)phonological system with ⟨d⟩ spellings to show that both stem (*leid*) and inflected forms (*leidt*) are identical in pronunciation (/leit/ and /leit/), whereas others proposed a morphological system with ⟨dt⟩ spellings for the 2nd and 3rd person forms under discussion, representing their compositional structure (stem *leid-* plus ending *-t* = *leidt*).

3. E + R clusters

The orthographic representation of the lengthened Wgm. *ě* before a cluster of *-r-* plus a dental or alveolar consonant. Broadly speaking, this short *ě* evolved into variants of (semi)long /a./ in the Hollandic dialects, where it merged with the lengthened vowel out of Wgm. *ā* (e.g. present-day Standard Dutch *waard* ‘worth’ (< *ě*) v. *baard* ‘beard’ (< *ā*), cf. Daan & Francken 1972: Map 10

4. Note that the same discussion also applied to the spelling of long /y:/ in closed syllables (*vuer* v. *vuur* ‘fire’). However, because /y:/ in closed syllables is much less frequent than /a:/ in closed syllables, and because most of the metalinguistic debate also concentrated on ⟨ae⟩ v. ⟨aa⟩ spellings, we will discuss only long /a:/. For a discussion of both features, including differences and similarities in prescribed norms as well as in actual usage, see Vosters (2011: Chapter VI).

and Van Loon 1986:90–93).⁵ In the Southern dialects, this merger did not happen, and Wgm. *ě* was often lengthened to a different, more palatal sound, ranging from /æ:/ to /ɛ:/ and /e:/, or even diphthongized to /iə/ (Goossens, Taeldeman & Verleyen 1998: Maps 59 and 60).⁶ In spelling, we mainly see an opposition between proposals representing the Southern palatal forms (<ee>, <ei>, etc.), versus proposals representing the Hollandic and later Standard Dutch /a:/ variants (<aa> but also <ae>), corresponding to the graphemes representing the historical *a* forms, cf. feature 1).

The first two features are essentially orthographic in nature, as they center around different orthographic principles (vowel doubling v. vowel insertion, phonological v. morphological spellings) to represent the same sounds, regardless of their actual pronunciations in the South. For instance, the opposition between regional realizations of long *a* as a more palatal /æ:/ vowel versus the open /a:/ form did not factor into the discussion about the spelling <ae> versus <aa>.⁷ Similarly, whether grammarians chose to write *hij leidt* or *hij leid*, the pronunciation of the final <d> or <dt> simply remained /t/. For the last feature, however, the link with pronunciation is more evident: the lengthened reflexes of Wgm. *ě* are (still today) pronounced differently in various parts of the language area.

4. Prescriptions and typical usage in normative works

From all of the normative publications referred to above, including spelling guides, grammars, schoolbooks and treatises on language, we distilled a set of concrete language norms. Specifically, we investigated which variants of the selected features they discussed, and which forms (if any) they prescribed – where possible also briefly comparing them to the accepted forms in the Northern normative tradition. However, apart from knowing what grammarians, schoolteachers and other

5. Note that *ě* often also stayed unlengthened in Standard Dutch (e.g. *hart* ‘heart’), although lengthened dialect forms are still possible in such cases (cf. Goossens, Taeldeman & Verleyen 1998: Map 57). We will focus on the lengthened vowels in words like *staart* ‘tail’, *paard* ‘horse’ and *waard* ‘worth’ as prototypical examples of the phenomenon under discussion.

6. Do note, however, that some words (e.g. *staart* ‘tail’) also appear with a short /a/ variants, among other places, in the southeast (cf. Goossens, Taeldeman & Verleyen 1998: Map 60).

7. It is reasonable to assume, however, with Hellenga (1938:310–35), that the gradual shift from <ae> to <aa> in the Northern normative tradition is related to the palatal Holland pronunciation of /ɛ:/, which became increasingly stigmatized over the course of the seventeenth century.

linguistic authorities wrote *about* these features, we are also interested in uncovering which forms they used themselves. Especially for those authors who do not explicitly argue for or against specific variants, this helps us get an idea of their position on the subject. In any case, it goes without saying that such a summarizing overview of normative injunctions and codifiers' own usage is reductionist by nature. However, it is exactly the aim of this overview to move beyond the specifics of each individual case. For more details and a more comprehensive perspective on each grammarian's prescriptions and writing practices, we refer the reader to the normative publications in question (cf. also Vosters 2011; Rutten 2011).

4.1 Long A

For the spelling of the (semi)long /a:/ in closed syllables, the two main variants are ⟨ae⟩ (*raed* 'council') and ⟨aa⟩ (*raad* 'council'). In the Northern normative tradition, ⟨aa⟩ started to become the preferred variant from the seventeenth century onwards (see, for instance, Leupenius 1653: 13). While some influential eighteenth-century grammarians or 'language observers' such as Van Hoogstraten (1700), Moonen (1706), Verwer (1707) and Van der Palm (1769) still prescribed ⟨ae⟩ spellings, the official norms of Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805) strictly adhere to ⟨aa⟩.⁸ Looking at this feature in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Southern works, as shown in Table 1, the opposition between what is perceived to be the typically Northern ⟨aa⟩ form and the older Southern ⟨ae⟩ form is clearly present. Nearly all Southern grammarians up until 1815 exclusively use the traditional Southern ⟨ae⟩ forms. In their discussion of this feature, however, we see some alternative proposals early on in the eighteenth century, but the Antwerp-based schoolteachers succeed in establishing ⟨ae⟩ as the fixed norm from around the middle of the century. However, later works do often also mention ⟨aa⟩ as an acceptable variant, mentioning it as the Northern counterpart for Southern ⟨ae⟩. By 1815, then, two systems of spelling conventions collide. Because of the renewed link to the North during this period of political reunion, the then official Northern ⟨aa⟩ norm starts to actually be used by Southern grammarians as well. Some early works and a small number of more tenacious Flemish authors keep on prescribing ⟨ae⟩ forms, but ⟨aa⟩ quickly gains dominance. Even the so-called particularist grammarian Pieter Behaegel, who initially strongly advocated ⟨ae⟩ spellings in the first volume of his *Nederduytsche Spraekkunst* (1817), later shifts to ⟨aa⟩ forms, even changing

8. For a more thorough overview of Northern spelling norms concerning the (semi)long /a:/ in closed syllables, see Hellinga (1938), Van de Bilt (2009) and Vosters, Rutten & Van der Wal (2010).

Table 1. Prescriptions and typical usage in normative works 1700–1830)

AUTHOR	YEAR	PRESCRIPTIONS			TYPICAL USAGE		
		1.	2.	3.	1.	2.	3.
Van Geesdalle	1700	â/ae/aa	-d	ee/è	ae	-d	ee/e
E.C.P.	1713	ae	-dt	–	ae	-dt	ee
Stéven	1714 [1784]	aa	-d	ei	ae	-d	ei (ee, èè)
Bouvaert	1712	á	–	–	á	-dt	é
Bouvaert	s.a. (I + II)	–	–	èe	ae	-d	èe
[Snoeijmes - Anon.]	[±1750]	aa	-d	ei	ae	-d	ei
Verpoorten	1752	ae	-d	--	ae	-d	eè
P.B.	1757	ae	-d	eê/ei	ae	-d	eê
Verpoorten	1759	ae	-d	eê	ae	-d	eê
Des Roches	[1761]	ae	-d	eê/ei	ae	-d	eê
[Gent – Anon.]	1770	ae	–	–	ae	-d	eê
Ballieu	1771 [1792]	ae	-d	eê	ae	-d	eê
Van Belleghem & W.	[1773]	ae	-d	èe/ee/ei/ae	ae	-d	èe (ee)
[Lier – Anon.]	[1774]	ae/aa	-d	eê/ei	ae	-d	eè
Van Boterdael	±1774 [1776]	ae/aa	-d	eê	ae	-d	eê
Janssens	[1775]	ae/aa	-d	eê	ae	-d	eê
[Dendermonde – Anon.]	1785	ae/aa	-d	ei/ae	ae	-d	ei
[Lier – Anon.]	[1792]	ae	-d	eê/ei	ae	-d	eê
Van Daele	1805–1806	ae/aa	-d	ei	ae	-d	ei
De Bast & De Laval	1805	ae/aa	-d	eê/ei	ae	-d	eê
Van Aerschot	1807	ae/aa	-dt	eê	ae	-dt	eê
Henckel	1815	ae/aa	-d	–	ae	-d	ee/èe
De Neckere	1815	ae/aa	-d/-dt	èe/ei	ae	-dt/-d	èe
Ter Bruggen	1815 [1818]	ae/aa	-d/-dt	eê/ei/ae	ae	-d	eê
Behaegel	1817	ae/aa	-d	ei	ae	-d	ei
[Mechelen – Anon.]	1817	ae	-d	eê/ei	ae	-d	eê
[Rousselaere – Anon.]	1818	ae/aa	-d/-dt	eê/ei/aa	ae/aa	-d	eê/aa
Laukens	1818 [1819]	ae	-dt	–	aa	-dt	aa
Gyselynck	1819	ae	-d	eê	ae	-d	eê
Ter Bruggen	1819	ae/aa	-d	eê	ae	-d	eè

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

AUTHOR	YEAR	PRESCRIPTIONS			TYPICAL USAGE		
		1.	2.	3.	1.	2.	3.
De Ré	[1820]	ae/aa	-d	ê	ae	-d	ê
Van Genabeth	1820	aa	-dt	–	aa	-dt	aa
De Mol	1820 [1827]	aa	-dt	–	aa	-dt	aa
Cannaert	1823	ae/aa	-dt	ee/ei/aa	ae	-dt	ee
De Foere	1823	ae	-dt	eê	ae	-dt	eê
Moke	1823	aa	-dt	–	aa	-dt	aa
W.D.T.	1823	aa/ae	-dt	–	aa	-dt	–
Willems	1824	ae	-dt	ae/e	ae	-dt	ae
Behaegel	[±1825]	aa	-d	ei	aa	-d	ei
De Simpel	[1827]	aa	-dt	aa/eê/ee	aa	-dt	aa
Vander Maas	[1827]	aa	-dt	–	aa	-dt	aa
Behaegel	[±1829]	aa	-d	ei	aa	-d	ei

the title of his work in the second and third volume to *Nederduytsche Spraakkunst* (around 1825 and 1829).

4.2 Verbal endings

For the spelling of 2nd and 3rd person singular and 2nd person plural present indicative endings of *d*-stem verbs, we observe two main variants ⟨d⟩ (*hij leid* ‘he leads’) and ⟨dt⟩ (*hij leidt* ‘he leads’).⁹ In the Northern normative tradition, the morphological ⟨dt⟩ spellings became dominant over the course of the eighteenth century, although some authors such as Ten Kate (1723) still advocated ⟨d⟩.¹⁰ Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland’s (1805) choice for ⟨dt⟩ firmly established this variant as the dominant one in Northern normative publications by the early nineteenth century. In the South, however, this preference for ⟨dt⟩ was not at all present in the eighteenth century, as Table 1 illustrates. Looking at both

9. Historically, however, ⟨t⟩ spellings, based on the principle of a complete grapheme-phoneme correspondence, were also possible (see, for instance, the *Twe-spraack*, presumably by H.L. Spiegel 1584).

10. The history of ⟨d⟩ and ⟨dt⟩ spellings is well-documented. For an overview of Northern norms regarding this feature, see Van der Velde (1956), Gledhill (1973), Daems (2002) and Vosters, Rutten & Van der Wal (2010).

grammarians' own use and their prescriptions before 1815, we see a strong consensus around ⟨d⟩ as the preferred Southern variant. Moreover, Southern codifiers seem much less aware of alternative forms than for the previous feature, and references to ⟨dt⟩ forms as a Northern pendant for Southern ⟨d⟩ are far and few between. From 1815 onwards, however, the ⟨dt⟩ variants do become more visible in Southern works as well, and a handful of grammarians such as De Neckere (1815) and Ter Bruggen (1815) are quick to allow both early on. In spite of the fairly strong Southern consensus around the ⟨d⟩ form, the shift to ⟨dt⟩, both in prescriptions and in their own usage, is almost complete among Southern grammarians around 1820, with only Behaegel holding on to the traditional ⟨d⟩ endings.

4.3 E + R clusters

The prescriptions concerning the orthographic representation of the lengthened Wgm. *ě* before a cluster of *-r-* and a dental or alveolar consonant are less straightforward, although also here, we distinguish two main groups of variants. Palatal pronunciations are generally represented using an *e*-grapheme as a first element, followed by either an ⟨i⟩ (*weird*) or by using a second ⟨e⟩ (*weerd*), possibly supplemented by various types of accent marks (*weêrd*, *wèerd*) to distinguish these E clusters from the regular ⟨ee⟩ spellings. The open, depalatalized /a:/ pronunciations are generally rendered as ⟨aa⟩ or ⟨ae⟩ spellings, in correspondence with the prescribed spelling variants for the (semi)long /a:/ sound in general. Of course, the mixed ⟨ae⟩ spelling could in theory also be used to designate a more palatal /æ:/ or /ɛ:/ sound, as opposed to the more open and thus double grapheme ⟨aa⟩, but it is exactly to rule out this possibility that Siegenbeek (1804) proposes only ⟨aa⟩ for the Wgm. *ě* in the cluster under discussion.¹¹ He thereby supports what had by that time become the only acceptable form in the Northern normative tradition, and officially codifies the Hollandic ⟨aa⟩ spelling. In the Southern Netherlands, however, the palatal pronunciation is dominant before 1815, as can be seen in Table 1, albeit represented in spelling in different ways (most commonly ⟨ee⟩, ⟨ei⟩, ⟨eê⟩). Some codifiers accept non-palatal ⟨ae⟩ forms alongside the more traditional ⟨ee/ei⟩, occasionally construing these ⟨ae⟩ spellings as typically 'Hollandic' (e.g. [Dendermonde – Anon.] 1785). Although not all authors deal with this somewhat less salient feature, the consensus among Southern codifiers clearly centers around palatal *e*-based forms rather than the Siegenbeekian ⟨aa⟩ spelling. After

11. This implies that the palatal pronunciation also occurred in the North; forms like *weerd* can easily be found in texts by almost any seventeenth-century Dutch literary author (e.g. Vondel).

1815, again, the situation changes, mainly where grammarians' own typical usage is concerned: while the traditional Southern forms still remain in use here and there, many authors suddenly adhere to the Northern ⟨aa⟩ norm. Remarkable in this respect is that most grammarians using ⟨aa⟩ themselves do *not* discuss this feature explicitly, whereas all of the authors who themselves persevere in using more traditional forms such as ⟨ee⟩ or ⟨ei⟩ topicalize and discuss the issue at length, often still allowing for a double prescription in which both *a* and *e*-based spellings are deemed acceptable.

4.4 Overview

In the metalinguistic discussions surrounding the three features under scrutiny, we observed a clear dichotomy between what were perceived to be prototypically Southern forms, and what were understood to be prototypical Northern forms, as codified in the official norms of Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805).¹² Based on this division in metalinguistic discourse, we proceeded to categorize individual authors' prescriptions for each feature as (1) exclusively codifying the prototypical Northern variant, (2) explicitly allowing for both variants, possibly with a further geographical specification (e.g. 'form X is used by the Hollanders, while we use form Y in Brabant'), or (3) exclusively codifying the prototypical Southern variant. The result of this digest is represented graphically in Figure 1, split up per approximate year of publication of the respective normative work.¹³ The same process was then repeated for which forms individual grammarians generally used themselves in their own reference work. Each dot in Figure 2 thus represents the typical usage choice per normative publication, for each of the three features individually. Both figures also include a LOWESS line (locally weighted scatterplot smoothing) to illustrate trends in prescription and usage in our corpus of normative publications.¹⁴

12. This does not, however, mean that all forms labeled 'Northern' would be the only possible variants in Northern varieties of Dutch. In fact, there is ample evidence that usage in the North was much more variable than has often been assumed, but our binary grouping of variants into a 'Northern' and a 'Southern' category is based on how these forms were *perceived* by codifiers in early nineteenth-century Flanders. The discrepancy between the discursive North-South divide and possible convergence in actual usage is explored in Vosters, Rutten & Van der Wal (2010).

13. Grammarians codifying an alternative form, often of their own creation, that cannot easily be categorized as prototypically Northern or Southern, are not included in this overview – cf. for instance Bouvaert's (1712) suggestion to spell long A in closed syllables as ⟨á⟩. Data points in both figures were jittered to avoid overlap.

14. To calculate the LOWESS scores (with the default span value of 0.75), the three dependent-variable categories were recoded on a numeric scale. Evidently, this assumes intermediate stages between the three levels of the dependent variable which are not observable as such

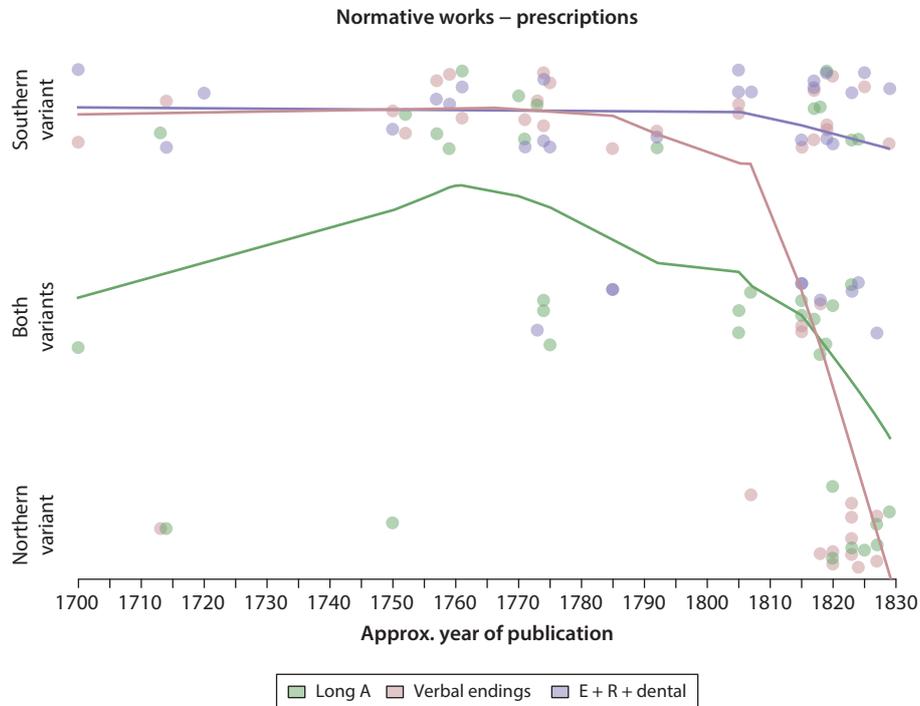


Figure 1. Graphical overview of prescriptions in normative works (1700–1830)

In Figure 1, we can see how codifiers' prescriptions gradually shifted from mainly preferring the prototypical Southern variants to also allowing for the prototypical Northern variants. More precisely, we can discern four steps in this evolution.

1. First, in the early eighteenth century (ca. 1700–1750), the few normative works available show a slightly diffuse image: in most cases, the later prototypical Southern variants are preferred, but some authors still go in different directions for specific features.
2. Around the middle of the century (1750s–1760s), we can then detect a clear convergence towards the prototypical Southern forms: the aforementioned Antwerp schoolmasters strictly codify what are in their view the only acceptable Southern variants, which become the clear cornerstones for Southern language norms from then onwards.

in the coded material. The LOWESS smoothers are therefore presented with this explicit disclaimer in mind, serving only to visualize rough patterns of prescription and usage shifting from Southern forms over both variants to only Northern forms.

3. In the following decades (approx. 1770–1815), these variants remain at the center of Southern prescriptivism, but at the same time, there is a growing awareness of the Northern pendants for some features. These Northern forms are often allowed as viable alternatives, yet this growing North-South dichotomy nonetheless confirms the distinct ‘Southernness’ of the ⟨ae⟩, ⟨d⟩ and ⟨ee⟩ or ⟨ei⟩ spellings. Comparing this stage to the corresponding period in grammarians’ own usage in Figure 2 confirms this interpretation: while many codifiers allow Northern forms as alternatives to the Southern prescriptions in theory, their own usage remains distinctly Southern until the early nineteenth century.
4. Finally, the period of linguistic North-South reunion between 1815 and 1830 introduces the most radical change: normative authors then become sharply divided between prototypical Northern and prototypical Southern norms, and also Northern forms start to appear as the only prescribed variants in a number of normative publications.

These four steps do not apply to equal degrees for all three features: especially the awareness of Northern pendants is much larger for the long A spellings than for the other features, and the later shift to (also) prescribing Northern forms is much less pronounced for the E + R clusters (cf. our earlier observation that many grammarians using ⟨aa⟩ forms do not explicitly prescribe this variant).

Figure 2, based on which forms the codifiers actually used themselves, shows a very similar pattern, although in the second half of the eighteenth century the overall usage for all three features is distinctly more uniformly Southern than the more lenient prescription practices would lead us to believe. The relative tolerance for variation in terms of which forms are prescribed, is in other words (not surprisingly) not reflected in the codifiers’ own typical usage. Also here, 1815 serves as a clear turning point, however, when a large number of grammars and guidebooks appear exclusively following the spelling norms official in the North at the time. Just as for the prescriptions in Figure 1, the shift from exclusively Southern forms to more Northern variants is more pronounced for the long A spellings and the verbal endings than for the E + R clusters.

Codifiers’ own usage, in the investigated cases, never violates the norms they explicitly prescribe. There is, however, a marked difference between the results in Figure 1 and Figure 2 in the sense that most grammarians are more lenient in their prescriptions than they show in their own usage. This is not surprising, given that, in their prescriptive practice, codifiers could describe in detail which forms they considered acceptable in which situations and for which language users, while their own usage choice must have been perceived as allowing for less such flexibility. In fact, there are only three instances where both variants of one

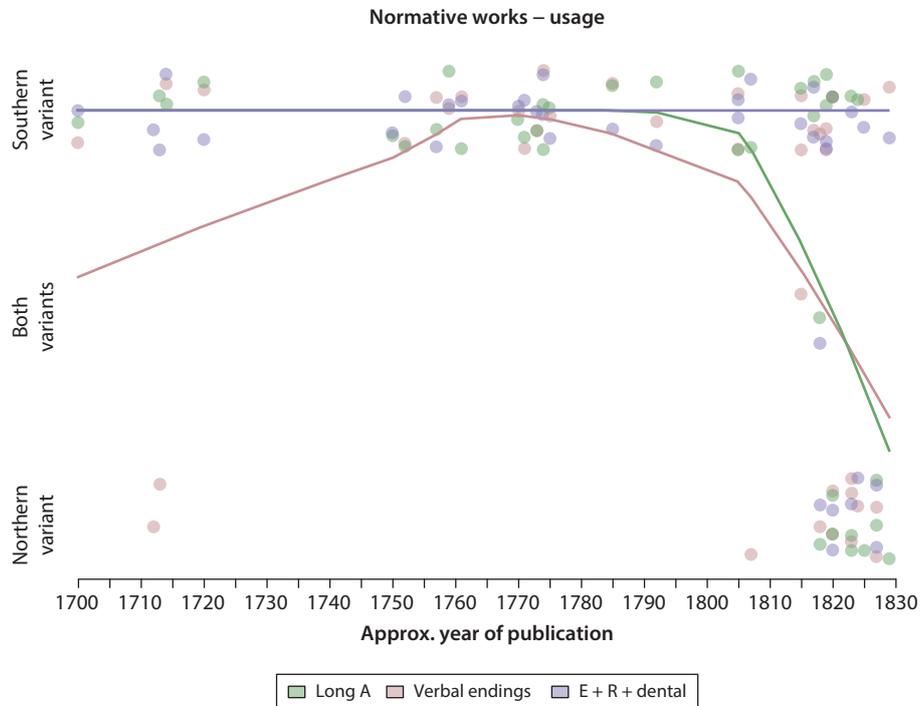


Figure 2. Graphical overview of typical usage in normative works (1700–1830)

variable are used side to side in a single publication – and two of those examples stem from the *Néderduytsche déclinatien en conjugatien*, which explicitly sets out to compare the differences between Northern and Southern usage. This increased tolerance to allow for variation in prescriptive practices is mostly related to an increased awareness of geographical North-South variation. Already in the later eighteenth century, grammarians become more explicitly aware of their own Southern forms being different from what they perceive to be the kindred yet distinct ‘Hollandic’ forms. This dichotomous North-South divide is even more clear in the works from the period of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, where geographical North-South variability is foregrounded in almost all metalinguistic publications.

If there is already a certain dissonance between codifiers’ prescriptions and their own usage, we can certainly question the wider impact of language norms on usage in different domains. In the next section, we will briefly explore usage of the three features under discussion in a corpus of early nineteenth-century manuscripts, concluding with some reflections on the relationship between prescriptive language norms and usage more broadly.

5. Usage in a corpus of early nineteenth-century manuscripts

To investigate the frequency of our three features in actual language use, we will draw on a corpus of judicial and administrative texts.¹⁵ This digitized collection of handwritten documents was newly compiled and transcribed and contains texts originating from high legal court files (the so-called *Court of Assize*):

1. police reports, drawn up by local police constables, rangers, or other members of the municipal authorities,
2. interrogation reports, written down by district-level scribes,
3. indictments, issued by the professional scribes of one of the high courts,

as well as a smaller amount of:

4. letters, usually between different parties of the prosecution, and
5. third-party declarations, by witnesses, bailiffs, former employers, etc.¹⁶

All Southern provinces are represented, with an equal amount of material per region coming from a central city and different peripheral towns or villages. The corpus contains 225 unique documents, written by a total of 132 scribes and amounting to 101,454 words, excluding editorial and linguistic markup. The material also has a built-in diachronic dimension, with texts from approximately 1823 and 1829. These two years have been chosen because of their sociohistorical importance. In January 1823, language laws came into practice that made the use of Dutch compulsory in most of the government administration and judiciary in the Dutch-speaking provinces of the Southern Netherlands. For most localities, this means that the documents under investigation are among the first of their kind to be written in Dutch since before the French rule of 1794–1814. These manuscripts give us insight into the form of the language during the early years of the Dutch government. This allows us to compare them with 1829, at the end of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, and to see if any changes occurred after those years of political union between the North and the South of the language area.

15. The corpus is based on a collection of digital images of court files compiled by Rotthier (2007), with the support of the Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde. The linguistic corpus itself was compiled and transcribed at the Center for Linguistics of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, as part of the Ph.D. research of the first author (Vosters 2011), sponsored by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). The corpus material was normalized and tagged for word class by the Instituut voor Nederlandse Lexicologie (INL) in Leiden, the Netherlands.

16. For more details on the configuration of the corpus and the exact number of words per text type, see Vosters (2011: 187–222).

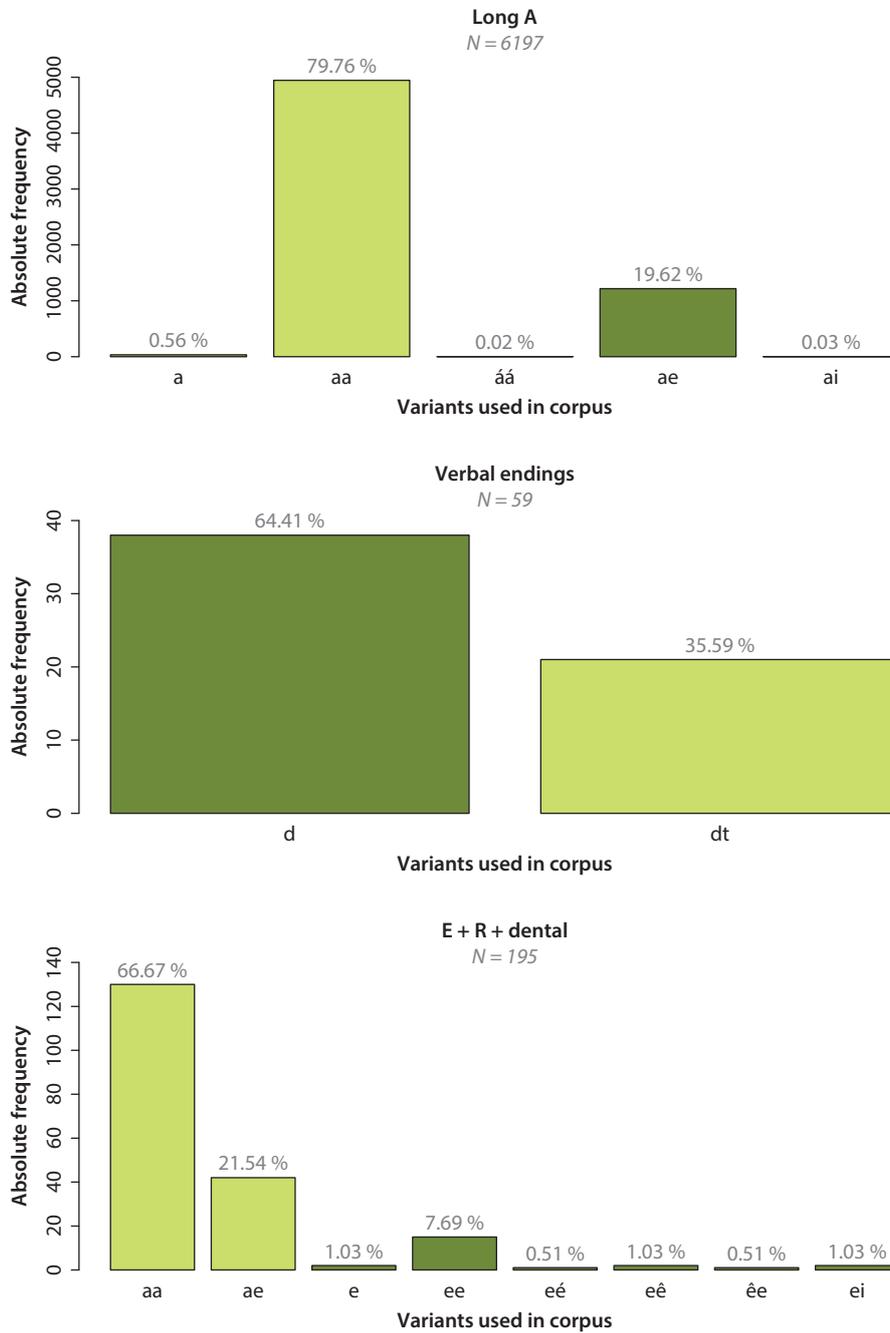


Figure 3. Absolute frequency of all variants in a corpus of early nineteenth-century Southern Dutch

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Searching for all possible variants in our corpus and manually filtering out false positives, gave us 6197 valid tokens for the long A variable, 59 for the verbal endings of *d*-stem verbs, and 195 instances of E + R cluster representations. As Figure 3 shows, the discussed prototypical Southern and Northern variants for each feature make up the large majority of tokens (<ae> v. <aa>, <d> v. <dt>, and <aa/ae> v. *e*-based spellings).¹⁷ However, we can already observe that the prototypical Southern forms are not always the majority forms: <aa> spellings account for 80% of all long A tokens, and the <aa> and <ae> variants both make up about 88% of all E + R clusters. Only for the verbal endings, the prototypical Southern <d> forms actually account for more than half of all tokens (64%).

Splitting up the data per estimated year of writing allows us to gain a better insight into the possible spread of all variants, contrasting the situation in 1823 with that of 1829 (Figure 4). These results show a sharp decrease in the usage of the traditional Southern forms for each of the three features: use of <ae> spellings decreases from 31% to 5%, <d> endings drop from 88% to 35%, and *a*-based forms in E + R clusters fall from 17% to 7%. However, the initial situation in 1823 is different for each feature: whereas the prototypical Northern forms were already used in a majority of cases for the features 1 and 3, this was not yet the case for the verbal endings: the Siegenbeekian <dt> suffixes still accounted for no more than 12% in 1823. In other words: the decreased use of traditional Southern forms between 1823 and 1829 indicate that we are witnessing a fairly rapid change in progress, but this ongoing change has not affected all features to the same extent.

6. Discussion: Norms and usage

Linking up the findings from our early nineteenth-century corpus with our exploration of different normative works from the period, we can see that the period of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, when the Northern and Southern part of the language area were reunited, was crucial in introducing a shift in Southern language norms. From 1815 onwards, Northern forms became more prevalent in the South and we observed a gradual shift from traditional Southern variants to the Northern variants codified by Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805), both in

17. The prototypical Southern forms are shown in dark green, whereas the prototypical Northern forms are shown in a lighter shade of green. Some forms could not be classified as either – specifically, this concerns the rare instances of <a>, <áá> and <ai> as alternatives for <aa> or <ae> spellings in closed syllables.

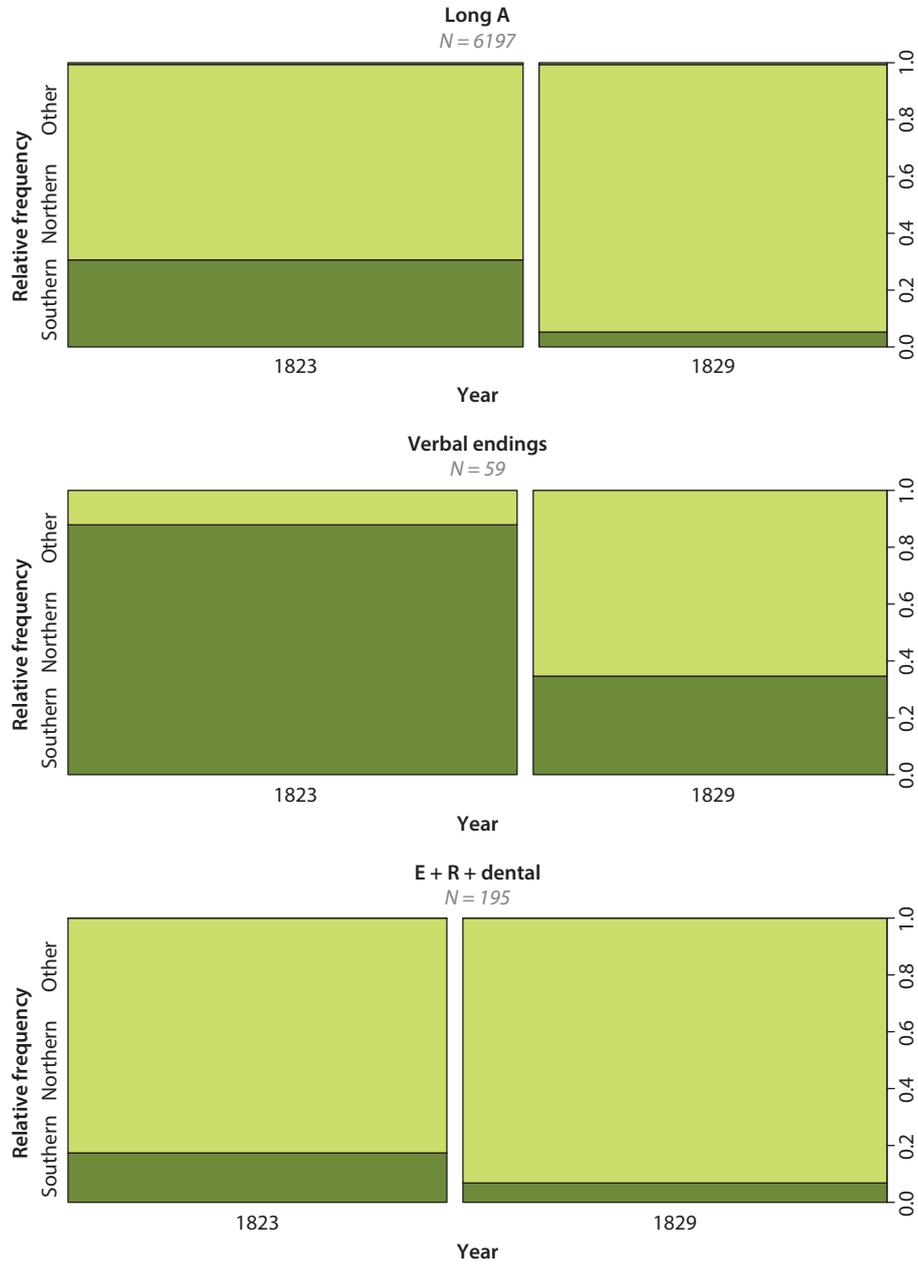


Figure 4. Relative frequency of all variants in a corpus of early nineteenth-century Southern Dutch (1823 v. 1829)

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prescriptive practices and in actual usage in the investigated domains. This broad parallel between norms and usage shows the interrelatedness of both phenomena in our study: authors of normative publications do not work in a vacuum, but rather operate in the same specific sociolinguistic context in which the investigated language users also function. In this case, it is reasonable to assume that the specific sociohistorical circumstances influenced both authors of normative publications and the individual language users in our corpus to gradually steer away from traditional Southern features and move in the direction of the Northern norms of Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805). Our corpus study, nonetheless, limits itself to a very specific group of scribes in the administrative and judicial domain, and the impact of the sociohistorical context may be more limited (or completely absent) for other groups of scribes (cf. the important distinction between *handarbeit* and *schriftarbeit*-oriented professions discussed in Vandenbussche 2006).

To explore the precise relationship between norms and usage further, however, we need to take a closer look at the chronology of the various prescribed and used variants. Here, two different scenarios are possible: if prescriptions in normative works outdate the initial breakthrough of new variants in usage, normative influence on usage is possible – though not necessary. If new usage patterns precede normative prescriptions, normative influence on actual language use is impossible, making it most likely that normative authors simply codify existing practices.

The first scenario applies to two of the features under investigation: in the case of the different spellings for long A and in the case of the verbal endings, influence from normative works on actual usage cannot be ruled out. Specifically for the long A spellings in closed syllables, prescriptions in normative works may have anticipated what happened at the usage level. Although individual codifiers almost exclusively use ⟨ae⟩ spellings before 1815, we already see a growing tolerance for the Northern ⟨aa⟩ in the last decennia of the eighteenth century, and some prescriptions codifying ⟨aa⟩ go back even further than that. Although our corpus only goes back until 1823, the usage differences between 1823 and 1829 suggest an ongoing change that had most likely started sometime before 1823. While further corpus studies on earlier Southern material are called for, it is reasonable to assume that ⟨aa⟩ spellings were relatively rare in eighteenth-century Southern Dutch (cf. Rutten 2011: 168–173), and probably only experienced a real breakthrough in the Southern Low Countries in the early nineteenth century. If that is indeed the case, normative prescriptions precede more widespread usage of the incoming forms, theoretically allowing for (but by no means requiring) an influence of norms on usage. For the second feature, the verbal endings of *d*-stem verbs, the breakthrough of the Siegenbeekian ⟨dt⟩ forms is situated more clearly within the time frame of our material: between 1823 and 1829, we

witnessed a radical shift from a strong predominance of traditional Southern ⟨d⟩ spellings to a majority prevalence of Northern ⟨dt⟩ spellings. This change is paralleled by a shift in the orientation of normative prescriptions: ⟨dt⟩ is only rarely used or codified by our normative authors before 1815, but became by far the most dominant form in prescriptions in the 1820s. In this case too, then, it seems that usage in our corpus is lagging slightly behind the orientation of the codifiers, and thus an influence of norms on usage cannot be ruled out. In these cases, further research on different sources and text types than the ones used in the present study would be called for to further evaluate the link between norms and usage.

Another scenario, however, applies to the third feature under investigation. For the orthographic representations of E + R clusters, usage clearly leads the way of normative prescriptions, thus ruling out a direct influence of norms on actual language use. Our normative overview showed that prescriptions for traditional Southern *e*-based spellings remained dominant all throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with ⟨aa⟩ forms only starting to be used (although not explicitly prescribed) by individual grammarians around 1820. In our corpus, however, such *a*-based forms were already dominant in 1823, with traditional Southern *e*-spellings only accounting for 17% of all tokens. This number still decreases further by 1829, but the high prevalence of ⟨aa⟩ and ⟨ae⟩ in 1823 suggests that these prototypical Northern forms had actually already established firm roots in Southern usage. Accordingly, normative publications only seemed to start codifying what must have been common practice in ordinary language use at the time, ruling out the possibility of normative influence.

7. Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview of normative publications from the Southern Netherlands in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Many of these works were influential in metalinguistic debates at the time, but also impacted discussions about language norms in Flanders throughout the nineteenth century, when the tension between Northern and Southern writing traditions developed into a fierce debate between integrationists favoring a closer tie to Northern norms and particularists advocating the importance of independent Southern norms. By focusing on three linguistic features which were relatively prevalent in the metalinguistic debates in the early nineteenth century, we explored both prescriptions and typical usage in these normative works. In all three cases, we could witness a uniform Southern writing tradition taking shape over the course of the eighteenth century, only to be overturned by a fairly radical shift towards the Northern norms

of Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805) at the time of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. This illustrates the importance of this short historical reunion between the Northern and Southern Low Countries for the introduction of a Northern-oriented normative tradition in Flanders.

Comparing these normative prescriptions to actual usage in a small corpus from the administrative and judicial domain confirmed the importance of the period of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands for the introduction and spread of the norms by Siegenbeek (1804) and Weiland (1805) in the South. Evidence of direct influence of language norms on regular language use, however, is intrinsically restricted. In one case, such a link could explicitly be disproven by identifying the fairly wide gap between norms and usage, with normative prescriptions lagging behind a change in usage patterns. In two other cases, normative influence could not be ruled out, as we observed norms and usage moving in similar directions, with norms possibly preceding changes in usage more broadly. At the minimum, this suggests a link between the two. However, rather than speculating about a direct impact of explicit norms on ordinary language use, we propose to substantiate this link by inquiring into the broader sociohistorical and sociolinguistic context. Both normal language users and authors of normative publications operate against the same sociolinguistic background, and this shared context can shape both norms and usage, independently from each other, but in a similar fashion. Norms and usage thus need to be studied as part of an exploration of the ‘total linguistic fact’ (Silverstein 1985; cf. Woolard 2008), of which both specific linguistic forms and sociolinguistic representations of such forms – as present in, among other things, normative publications – make up an inherent part (cf. Narvaja de Arnoux & Del Valle 2010). In the present case study, then, the context of the reunion of the language area with a renewed and intensified contact between Northern and Southern varieties of Dutch can be held responsible for similar patterns of change in both prescriptivism and actual language use. Therefore, while it is useful to explore the link between norms and usage, we need to move beyond a simple dichotomy of norms on the one hand and usage on the other hand, fully recognizing their shared basis in the broader sociolinguistic context in which they arose.

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