



# Language Use, Usage Guides and Linguistic Norms

*Edited by*

*Luisella Caon, Marion Elenbaas and Janet Grijzenhout*

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## PREFACE

The volume *Language Use, Usage Guides and Linguistic Norms* explores the gap between actual language use and usage guides that aim to present norms of correctness. In presenting innovative ideas and recent research in the domains that have characterized her scholarly work, the volume is a tribute to Prof. Dr Ingrid Tiekens-Boon van Ostade's academic work from her earliest publications on double negation in the eighteenth century in 1978 to her most recent books on *Describing Prescriptivism: Usage Guides and Usage Problems in British and American English* and *Languages of The Hague* more than four decades later in 2019. The themes addressed in the present volume cover prescriptive attitudes to spoken language use and language use in letters, codification, grammars and other language usage guides, cultural guides, and the emergence of new language norms in present-day urban contexts.

The volume has three parts. The first part contains four original contributions on the general themes of language use and attitudes towards language use in the past and present. In the first paper, "Student Evaluations in Late Modern Times: Testimonials in Favour of James Young Simpson, M.D.," **Marina Dossena** offers a preview of a larger study on evaluative discourse by examining a number of testimonials written by scholars and former students to support James Young Simpson's application for the Chair of Midwifery at the University of Edinburgh in 1839. These documents include students' assessments of Simpson's teaching skills, which equally praise his professional and his human qualities. As such, they allow the study of evaluative discourse in contexts in which the participants are in asymmetrical relationships. Dossena focuses on the coexistence of semantic and pragmatic strategies in the testimonials and notices that the texts share a similar degree of formality and politeness while at the same time expressing the students' admiration for the candidate, and thus "conveying a certain degree of affection, in spite of the relative social distance." By relying on positive face-enhancing moves in the testimonials, the students in question are able to express their subjective – and favourable – opinions about James Simpson while maintaining the objectivity required in such text types.

In his article "In Sheridan's Shadow: Elocution and its Legacy in Modern Ireland," **Raymond Hickey** focuses on the perception of accents



and the demand for authoritative guidance in language matters from the eighteenth century to the present day. The paper presents an insightful survey of past and present views on elocution in the United Kingdom and Ireland. It first discusses the interest of young people in the art of public speaking and correct pronunciation during the late eighteenth century in Britain and then goes on to show in how far the situation in Ireland has been different from the one in England. Hickey uses modern English examples to demonstrate how Sheridan's legacy still resonates today, especially with regard to the perception of rural and urban Irish accents in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The author points out that the loss of Irish English accent features may not always be due to increasing urbanization, but also to natural processes of language change.

In "An Old Friend Revisited: The Case of *But...Neither*," **Wim van der Wurff** re-examines the above-mentioned construction already discussed by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999), and compares it with the competing variant *but...too*. On the basis of a wealth of data and examples from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts, the author demonstrates that the structure consisting of the exclusive focus particle *but* 'only, merely' followed by the negative element *neither* is well attested in Early Modern English. Moreover, after 1580 *but...neither* is found alongside the variant *but...too*, in which *but* occurs without an overt negative. The coexistence of the two constructions, one containing the negative element and the other missing it, raises a number of questions, such as: what was the relation between *neither* and *too*? What caused the emergence of *but...too*? What effect had this on the *but...neither* construction? Van der Wurff answers these questions by making a compelling argument for a diachronic development of the different parts of *but...(n)either* between 1500 and 1700; a development in which each of these parts lost its negative association, thus explaining the variation between *but...too* and *but...neither* and, possibly, the disappearance of the latter by 1800.

Taking a big leap from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the twenty-first century, the paper by **Dick Smakman** calls the attention to the role of modern Dutch cities in the formation of language norms. In his contribution "Language-Norm Formation in Dutch Urban Contexts: From Haarlem Exclusive to Post-Modern Inclusive," Smakman discusses three types of language norms in the Netherlands. The first one is the "folklore norm," which associates the city of Haarlem with proper and unmarked Dutch, despite the fact that Haarlem is fairly anonymous and relatively unknown when compared to other Dutch cities. The second one is the "proclaimed norm," i.e. the idea shared by most speakers that "good" Dutch, often associated with Standard Dutch, is the "correct" language spoken

across the country. This language norm can either be “exclusive” or “inclusive,” the former being highly codified and spoken by few people, while the latter is the language used by ordinary speakers in day-to-day communication and is more likely to contribute to linguistic changes. The third one is the “street norm,” which pertains to “street-level discourse by ordinary speakers” and is no longer exclusive of lower strata of society but is also imitated by educated younger speakers who can initiate and lead language changes. Smakman observes that such ordinary speakers in urban contexts are likely to promote future linguistic changes which might narrow the gap between street norms and broader norms.

The second part of the volume concentrates on actual language use in personal and public letters from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. In “Between English and Dutch: The Case of a 16th-Century Shipmaster,” **Terttu Nevalainen** explores the extent to which the language in letters by a sixteenth-century shipmaster reflects his bilingual experience. In her analysis of Francis Johnson’s correspondence with Sir Nathaniel Bacon, Nevalainen discusses a number of linguistic features that are fairly consistent with a bilingual speaker in the Anglo-Dutch context of late sixteenth-century East Anglia. Though the letters show Francis Johnson’s command of formal letter writing, the spelling is interspersed with variants such as *goede* (“good(s)”), *meester* (“master”) and *mijn* (“my”), which suggest an exposure to Dutch writing. In addition, the frequent occurrence of the auxiliary *do* in affirmative statements, as well as the preference for zero variants for the third-person singular verb forms and for zero or WH-relative pronouns with human referents, point toward linguistic strategies commonly adopted by multilingual speakers to facilitate communication in language contact situations. Nevalainen concludes by arguing that while spelling specifically points towards a Dutch-East Anglian linguistic context, all other features are more generally typical of speakers who switch language codes, and they still occur today “in high-contact varieties of English around the world.”

In “The Fall and Rise of Lord Chesterfield? Aristocratic Prescriptivism in the ‘Age of Johnson’,” **Carol Percy** explores the changing cultural influence of aristocrats in the eighteenth century by opposing the views and ideas of the aristocrat Chesterfield and the author and lexicographer Samuel Johnson. As Raymond Hickey in his contribution to this volume, Carol Percy also emphasises the importance of correct written English and eloquent language use for eighteenth-century elite young men. Both Chesterfield and Johnson were in favour of a multilingual education. According to them, young men and women should strive for correct use of English and knowledge of other languages. Percy illustrates Lord Chesterfield’s

attitudes towards the use of both English and other languages, in particular French, Greek, and Latin, with examples from his letters. These are especially interesting because of the fact that standards for the correct usage of the English language were “changing and confusing” throughout his lifetime. Along with the changing tide of social mobility, Johnson allowed for more linguistic variation.

In her paper “James Boswell Practising French and Learning Dutch in the Netherlands,” **Marijke van der Wal** discusses the multilingual experience of James Boswell, who was learning Dutch and speaking French while in the Netherlands. In the year he spent at Utrecht to study Roman Law at the local university, Boswell took the opportunity to practise and improve his French as well as to learn some Dutch, in order to be able to communicate with the locals. Twenty texts – brief essays or compositions – written in Dutch open a window on the way Boswell approached the learning of this language. According to van der Wal, he was determined to learn Dutch by imitating the speech of native speakers, and though there is evidence that he also consulted Sewel’s *A Large Dictionary of English and Dutch* and possibly grammar books, his language shows many oral features that can be only be attributed to the above-mentioned practice. Van der Wal argues that Boswell’s learning process is therefore “caught in the act” in these texts, as they show both imperfect learning of the language and interference of English, as well as near native-like language acquisition.

As **Thijs Porck** points out, the correspondence between James Murray and the Dutch scholar and lexicographer Pieter Jacob Cosijn provides a unique “behind-the-scenes” perspective on how Murray contacted foreign correspondents for advice on etymological matters. In “‘I Can Read Hollandsch Very Fairly’: The Correspondence Between James Murray (1837–1915) and Pieter Jacob Cosijn (1840–1899),” he shows how the scholarly correspondence between these two lexicographers contributes to shed light on nineteenth-century lexicography and two of its practitioners. As the primary editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Murray sought the help of various scholars; for English words of Dutch origin he corresponded with Cosijn, who was on the editorial board of a similarly remarkable project, the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (Dictionary of the Dutch language). On the basis of two letters and five postcards, Porck is able to reconstruct how some of the information provided by Cosijn found its way into the *Oxford English Dictionary*. He also proposes that though the relationship between the two scholars was never too personal and involved some disagreement, Murray must have held Cosijn in very high esteem, as suggested by the note written by the former on the margin of a postcard sent

to him by the latter: “Prof. Cosijn of Leiden - Greatest Eng. scholar of Holland.”

The third part of the volume is mainly concerned with the possible impact of usage guides. In their paper “‘Lowthian’ Linguistics Revisited: Codification, Prescription and Style in a Comparative Perspective,” **Andreas Krogull and Gijsbert Rutten** report on recent findings on the effects of grammatical prescriptions as found in a grammar of Dutch from the early nineteenth century. Their paper has a focus on two variables: relative pronouns and genitive case. The grammar in question distinguishes between “polite” *wh*-relatives and the more familiar *d*-relatives *die* (common gender) and *dat* (neuter gender). The authors found prevalent use of *wh*-relatives in newspapers and use of *d*-relatives in private letters and diaries before the nineteenth century and an increased use of *wh*-relatives in letters and diaries after the introduction of the grammar book. With respect to genitives, the authors observed a rise in the use of the analytic genitive *van de*, which seems to temporarily come to a halt after the publication of the grammar book, which favours the synthetic genitive. This article thus shows the impact of a grammar book on language use. In contrast, **Wim Tigges** demonstrates that some structures that grammar books and usage guides dismiss as “bad language” seem to be resilient and may survive. In his paper “*Have Went* and Flat Adverbs Once Again: ‘Irish Style’?,” Tigges first illustrates the use of perfective constructions like *have went* and *has fell* in eighteenth-century English. This usage seems to have gradually died out in Britain itself. The author subsequently provides examples of *have* followed by a preterit verb form taken from a booklet written by a schoolteacher of English based in Ireland in 1995, showing that these constructions still exist in Irish English. He also discusses the use of an adjective form as an adverb in the eighteenth century. This usage also survives in varieties of English today, even though “both the ‘have/is’-plus-preterit construction and the flat adverb have been under scrutiny by authors of prescriptive grammars and usage guides for at least three centuries.”

Perhaps the strongest feelings about language use concern accents. Not only in scholarly articles, grammar books and usage guides, but also in poems, novels and plays, do we find comments that suggest a relationship between accent or dialect use and social status. In “Write Back in Anger: Storming the Accent Bar in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century British Writing,” **Joan C. Beal** first addresses the privileged status of RP among British English accents until the early 1960s, even though authors at that time were beginning to “write back,” claiming the right to use their variety of the language and thus questioning the “superior” status of RP at the time. The paper concludes that the “accent bar” has been breached and attitudes towards dialects of English

have changed since the 1960s, but the privileged status of RP and its association with intelligence still exists in the minds of some people and continue to obstruct social mobility.

In the final contribution to this volume, **David Crystal** draws attention to the problem of language and cultural misunderstanding and the need for usage guides to cultural allusions. In “The Next Step: Cultural Usage Guides,” he makes some suggestions about how a cultural usage guide could be organised in the manner of a thesaurus. In the appendix, he illustrates a possible entry for British “MOT,” which for a Canadian linguist would refer to the Montréal-Ottawa-Toronto phonology/phonetics workshop, for a speaker of Dutch to an unpleasant insect that you do not want to find in your wardrobe, and for a British English speaker to the “ministry of transport” and, metaphorically, to any check-up test.

We believe that the variety of papers presented in this volume reflects the broad range of subjects that have caught Prof. Dr Ingrid Tiekens-Boon van Ostade’s interest during her remarkable academic career; as such they are sources of inspiration for future avenues of research on language use and language norms, past and present language usage guides, and cultural guides.

Last but not least, we would like to thank all the contributors who enthusiastically reacted to our call for papers as well as Alison Edwards and Mo Gordon for their precious help in reviewing some papers.

**PART I**

**LANGUAGE USE PAST AND PRESENT**



# STUDENT EVALUATIONS IN LATE MODERN TIMES: TESTIMONIALS IN FAVOUR OF JAMES YOUNG SIMPSON, M.D.\*

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## 1. Introduction

In this essay I discuss documents in which both scholars and former students express their support for James Y. Simpson's application for the Chair of Midwifery at the University of Edinburgh in 1839. Although today James Y. Simpson is well-known for his use of chloroform as an anaesthetic, the outcome of his experiments would not be published until 1847, so the testimonials presented here concern a time when Simpson was still building his professional image. Through an analysis of the documents available in the Wellcome Collection, it will be shown how participants enhance the recipient's positive face, so as to stress his suitability for the post. This enhancement concerns both professional and human qualities. At the same time, all the subjects appear to convey their attitude in such a way that their own respective social and professional status can be maintained and indeed enhanced *per se*. As the focus of the investigation is on pragmatic moves, the study is preeminently qualitative, not least because this is in fact a preliminary and very small-scale stage in a larger project on academic stance, where the discussion of quantitative findings is expected to be more relevant.

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\* I have chosen this topic as a hopefully fitting tribute to Prof. Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, an important scholar whose academic work and personal qualities I have always held in great esteem and for whom it is my privilege to contribute a short essay to this collection, with heartfelt thanks for her continued friendship over the years.



## 2. Background

In Edinburgh, a white marble plaque in the High Kirk of St Giles invites visitors to “Thank God for James Young Simpson’s discovery of chloroform anaesthesia in 1847,” and indeed Sir James Young Simpson, 1st Baronet, FRCPE (Bathgate, 7 June 1811 – Edinburgh, 6 May 1870), is one of the most important figures in Late Modern medicine.<sup>1</sup> The son of village bakers,<sup>2</sup> his earliest work as a doctor was in Edinburgh’s Royal Dispensary for the Poor, from which he went on to specialize in obstetrics and became so well-known that even the upper class and royalty were interested in his practice – most famously, on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1853, Queen Victoria gave birth to Prince Leopold, her eighth child, with the successful administration of chloroform. Before then, however, Simpson had already made significant contributions to science, and in 1840 he became Professor of Midwifery at the University of Edinburgh – see Dunn (2002).

This essay aims to discuss the testimonials offered to the University of Edinburgh in favour of Simpson’s application for that post, i.e. the Chair of Midwifery, in 1839 (Chair of Midwifery 1839, henceforth CM 1839). As it would not be until 1847 that Simpson would announce his pioneering work in the use of chloroform as an anesthetic in childbirth, the testimonials collected in this source refer to his earlier studies and they also include students’ assessments of his teaching skills. The materials at hand can thus be employed to analyze evaluative discourse in contexts where the participants are typically in an asymmetrical relationship with the subject either because their status is inferior (students vs. lecturer) or because it is superior (senior scholars vs. candidate), although status can also be more or less equivalent, in which case it would be appropriate to talk about ‘peer’ reviewing.

This study is part of a larger project on evaluative discourse in Late Modern times, in which other similar texts are taken into consideration. The materials that underpin the main project include texts currently being made available in the various sections of the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific*

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<sup>1</sup> A memorial bust was also raised in Westminster Abbey: see [www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/sir-james-young-simpson](http://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/sir-james-young-simpson). All the websites to which reference is made in this essay were available at the time of writing (December 2020).

<sup>2</sup> In addition to biographical information found in encyclopaedic sources, and indeed in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, more details are in the website of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, as Simpson became its President in 1850 (see [www.rcpe.ac.uk/heritage/college-history/james-young-simpson](http://www.rcpe.ac.uk/heritage/college-history/james-young-simpson)).

*Writing*, and studies of which have appeared in Dossena (2016a, 2017).<sup>3</sup> In addition, a corpus of nineteenth-century student evaluations is being compiled on the basis of the documents being digitized by the library of the Wellcome Collection in London, where nearly 140 files are currently available. Most documents in the latter collection pertain to evaluations expressed in support of applications for teaching posts in Scottish universities, and while many only include references authored by other academics, several documents also include (former) students' assessments. As this kind of evaluation is meant to support the candidate's application, favourable views are typically conveyed; however, they do not appear to be formulaic in the sense that they do not follow a typical (externally-imposed) pattern. At the same time, they are useful sources for the investigation of positive politeness moves, as all authors, regardless of their status, convey respect for the candidates and appreciation of their teaching skills, their academic competence and their overall image in the professional world.

For the purposes of this study, I have selected the testimonials presented in favour of James Young Simpson, an emblematic figure of Late Modern science. As the project unfolds, other figures will be taken into consideration and more general observations will be offered, not least from the quantitative point of view; at this stage, however, it would be beyond the scope of this contribution to discuss the frequency and distribution of individual lexical items or indeed to offer an analysis of corpus-based findings. Instead, this pilot study intends to present the testimonials as valuable sources of data for the discussion of pragmatic moves and to exemplify what kind of research questions may be addressed as far as stance is concerned.

After an overview of the testimonials and some observations on how they are distributed among the contexts outlined above, given the current space constraints I will focus on the documents in which the students' views are conveyed, so as to outline what pragmatic strategies are employed. My analysis will combine a corpus-driven discussion of the vocabulary and phraseology occurring in the different texts with a qualitative approach to how the testimonials contribute to the presentation

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<sup>3</sup> The corpus currently comprises texts on astronomy, philosophy and history; both the corpus and its accompanying software are available as open-access resources at <https://ruc.udc.es/dspace/handle/2183/21846>. The studies based on the *Coruña Corpus* are part of the international research projects no. FFI2016-75599-P and PID2019-105226GB-I00, *Etiquetado electrónico de textos científico-técnicos en lengua inglesa entre los siglos XVII y XX: Coruña Corpus*, coordinated by Prof. Isabel Moskowich, Universidade da Coruña, which have received the financial support of the Spanish *Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad*.

of the candidate's suitability for the post. The main research question will address the coexistence of semantic and pragmatic strategies, in which politeness moves can be seen to play a significant part in how the assessment is expressed, while striking an important balance between personalization and objectivity.

From the methodological point of view, this study mostly relies on the tenets of Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005; White 2007, 2015), whereas the connection between politeness and evaluation is explored also on the basis of the findings presented by Dossena (2010, 2019) and Paternoster (2019). More specifically, Appraisal Theory enables the investigation of style and stance starting from the presupposition that all texts interact with one another, no matter how implicitly or explicitly, and respond to one another with the expression of Attitude (e.g. emotional or affectual responses), Engagement (i.e. acknowledging, ignoring or rejecting different view-points, for instance employing evidentiality, concessive forms and presumptions), or Graduation (i.e. strengthening or downtoning statements or their semantic focus). Expressions of Attitude comprise three sub-systems: Affect (relating to emotion), Judgement (relating to the implicit or explicit evaluation of behaviour with respect to social norms), and Appreciation (relating to the evaluation of objects). As we will see, all these elements have a part to play in the documents under discussion. In addition to that, and indeed consistently with that, Paternoster (2019) presents a taxonomy of positive evaluative adjectives found in nineteenth-century etiquette books comprising the following categories: Normality, Capacity, Tenacity, Veracity and Politeness; Politeness, in turn, comprises the subsets Conformity, Affection, Goodness and Pleasure.

The occurrence of (at least some of) these features in the evaluations expressed in support of Simpson's application will show the coherence of such texts with models of socially-accepted behaviour in the professional context of (Late Modern) academic life.

### 3. The testimonials

The testimonials collected in CM 1839 are published in a 90-page octavo booklet comprising Simpson's application and are organized in two parts: one presenting two Certificates of Approbation signed by students – one accompanied by a letter, the other by the text of the address with which the Certificate was presented to Simpson himself; and a second part presenting both reviews and endorsements issued by other scholars both in the UK and on the Continent. The latter part presents five comments on Simpson's

publications, twenty-five letters, and twenty-two testimonies. In what follows such materials will be discussed in greater detail.

### *3.1 Simpson's application*

The letter by means of which Simpson offered himself as a candidate for the Chair of Midwifery on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1839 is addressed “To the Right Honourable the Lord Provost, the Magistrates and Town-Council, Patrons of the University of Edinburgh.” Given the text type, the vocative form employed as a salutation is “My Lord and Gentlemen,” whereas the signature is preceded by the formula that in Late Modern times expressed the highest degree of formality and social distance – see Dossena (2008):<sup>4</sup>

I have the honour to be,  
My Lord and Gentlemen,  
Your most obedient humble Servant,

After one sentence in which the application is announced with an equal degree of formality (“I beg leave very respectfully to offer myself as a Candidate for the vacant Chair of Midwifery”), Simpson goes on to present the testimonials that accompany his application; first of all, he mentions his teaching tasks (“I have delivered three Courses of Lectures on Midwifery, and one, in the University, on General Pathology”), also indicating what groups have provided “Addresses” that “will attest [his] past success as a Medical and as an Obstetric Teacher.”

In the next paragraph Simpson introduces “some extracts from various British and Continental Medical Works” which “will give [recipients] an opportunity of judging in what estimation [he is] held as an Obstetric Author.” The focus here is on research, whereas in the following paragraph attention is paid to his practice and outreach activities, both (previously) as “Annual Pupil or House-Surgeon to the Lying-in Hospital of Edinburgh” and (currently) “as Physician-Accoucheur to two Dispensaries,” in addition to private and consulting practice. Such observations “may serve to show that [the author is] not without experience as an Obstetric Practitioner” – an understatement meant to convey appropriate modesty on the part of the applicant.

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<sup>4</sup> As the study of correspondence has grown considerably over the last two decades, it is not necessary to discuss this point at any greater length here; it may however be pointed out that Fitzmaurice (2002) and Nevalainen and Tanskanen (2004) are very early and fundamental studies; an international perspective on letter-writing in Late Modern times is offered in Dossena and Del Lungo Camiciotti (2012).

Simpson concludes his application showing awareness of “the important duties of the Midwifery Chair” and announces “a number of Testimonials, from some of the most distinguished Accoucheurs and Professional Men of the present day,” which he will “have the honour of submitting” to the consideration of the recipients; again the formula employed here signals suitable distance and conveys the respect required by the occasion.

### ***3.2 Part I. Addresses presented to Dr Simpson by his classes of midwifery and general pathology***

As this will be the object of analysis in a specific section below, only an overview of the contents is provided here. The first text is the Testimonial presented by the students of the class of General Pathology at the end of the session 1837–1838, when Simpson “acted as Interim Lecturer for Professor Thomson”; this text, said to have 53 signatures, which however are not given, is followed by the letter which was sent together with the testimonial by Dr Charles Maitland, “Chairman of the Committee appointed by the Class for drawing up a Testimonial of Approbation”; the letter is dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 1838 (CM 1839, 5–6).

The next testimonial, carrying 27 signatures, not given either, is presented “by the Students who attended the First Session of [Simpson’s] Lectures on Midwifery” in 1838–1839 and is followed by the “Address read by William Coke, Esq. A.M.M.D., &c. on presenting Dr Simpson (April 19, 1839) with the above Certificate of Approbation, [...]” (CM 1839, 7–9).

### ***3.3 Part II. Critical notices of various essays on midwifery subjects published by Dr. Simpson***

In this part Simpson presents comments on his published research; he begins with his monograph *Observations on the Diseases of the Placenta*, published first in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* in January 1836, and then in the *London Medical and Surgical Journal* in June and July of the same year. Translations of the same text appeared in 1837: one in German in *Neue Zeitschrift für Geburtskunde* and the other in Italian in *Annali di Medicina*, and it is from the preface to the latter text that Simpson extracts paragraphs in English, followed by the Italian original, testifying to the innovativeness of his approach to the subject – the kind of innovativeness that justifies translation. See the quotations below:

Conversant with all that former authors have written upon them, and relying on the results of many researches which he had himself opportunely made, [...], he has, in a praiseworthy manner, filled up the void which Medical Science presented on this point. His work is learned and well executed, and we cannot better make known our favourable judgment of it than by giving its complete translation, which we do in order that Physicians and Accoucheurs may profit by the useful information and sage precepts which the Author, for the same purpose, has now made a public property. (CM 1839: 11)

Istruito di quanto su di esse lasciarono scritto gli autori, ed appoggiato ai risultamenti di molte indagini a bella posta da lui fatte, [...], empì lodevolmente il vôto, che a proposito di ciò offrivano tuttora le Mediche Istituzioni. Erudito e ben condotto ne è il lavoro; e noi non sapremmo far noto meglio il favorevole nostro giudizio, quanto con darne una compiuta traduzione, onde i medici e gli ostetricanti si approfittino delle utili cognizioni e de' saggi precetti, che per esso l'Autore fece di pubblico diritto. (CM 1839: 12)

Positive comments on the same study are also extracted from the *Transactions* of the Manchester Medical and Surgical Association and the *London Medical and Surgical Journal* (both published in 1836), from the *British and Foreign Medical Review* for January and July 1838, and from *Johnson's Medico-Chirurgical Review* for July 1836.

Simpson then presents comments on his “Cases Illustrative of the Spontaneous Amputation of the Limbs of the Foetus in Utero,” published in the *Dublin Journal of Medical Science* in November 1836. Finally, he presents evaluations of “Contributions to Intra-Uterine Pathology, Part 1,” published in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* in October 1838 and translated into French and Italian in the same year and in 1839. Such comments are extracted from the *British and Foreign Medical Review* for January 1839 and the *London Medical Gazette* for February 1839; the next comment, pertaining to Part 2 of the same essay, published in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* in July 1839 and translated and published in an abridged form in the French journal *Archives Générales de Médecine* in September 1839, are extracted from the *British and Foreign Medical Review* for October 1839. In addition, reference is made to an article in Todd's *Cyclopaedia of Anatomy*, published in London in 1839. Finally, the international interest in Simpson's work is also reflected in references found in Johann F. Dieffenbach's *Zeitschrift für die Gesamte Medizin* for January 1837 (CM 1839, 14).

### 3.4 *Scholarly testimonials*

In this section endorsements sent by scholars based both in the UK and abroad are collected. Twenty-five texts are letters addressed to Simpson directly, and they typically start with “My Dear Sir”: this formula, which adds the possessive adjective to the qualifier of the standard vocative form, signals the proximity that a favourable testimonial conveys and functions as a powerful positive face-enhancing move. Another group of twenty-two texts, instead, presents testimonies in which Simpson is mentioned in the third person singular. Eight of these scholarly testimonials are printed together with their French original texts, and in such cases the vocative form reflects what is found in the source language – e.g. “Sir” for “Monsieur” or “Sir and Honoured Colleague” for “Monsieur et Très-Honoré Confrère.” Examples of both kinds of letters are given below.

My Dear Sir,

Although but a short time personally known to you, your writings have been long familiar to me. I fully appreciate in them your laborious investigation and extended research; and I doubt not but that these qualities will ere long yield a rich harvest of reputation to yourself, and of information to the profession. [...] (CM 1839, 44)

I have the pleasure of knowing Dr James Y. Simpson, and can bear testimony in favour of his great merits as a Teacher and as an Author. [...]. Judging from Dr Simpson's talents—his industrious habits—his courteous demeanour and easy address—and the highly creditable mention already made of his name in the professional world, I am certain that he must be a most efficient and popular Lecturer. (CM 1839, 43)

The limited scope of this contribution prevents further analysis here, but it is worth noting that such testimonies could also shed valuable light on Simpson's professional network, which certainly comprised very important scholars:<sup>5</sup> one name above all is that of Thomas Hodgkin, whose description of the lymphoma currently bearing his name dates from 1832; Hodgkin sent his message from London on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1839, when he was Conservator of Guy's Hospital Museum and Lecturer on Morbid Anatomy in the same school (see CM 1839, 46–47), and addressed “The Patrons of

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<sup>5</sup> The role of social networks in language variation and change is another aspect of historical sociolinguistics that has elicited considerable interest – see for instance Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1996, 2008), Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Nevalainen and Caon (2000), Pahta et al. (2010), Kopaczyk and Jucker (2013), Dossena (2016b) and Hickey (2019).

the University of Edinburgh” stressing his interest in the success of the institution from which he had graduated and with which he still had close connections. In this case, like in the other instances when testimonials addressed the evaluators, the face-enhancing moves did not only concern the subject of the testimonial itself, i.e. James Young Simpson, but (more in general) the University for which the application was offered.

#### **4. The students’ certificates of approbation and their accompanying texts**

In this section I intend to discuss in greater detail the texts provided by two distinct groups of students, paying attention to the features they have in common and how they are introduced in the accompanying messages. As I mentioned above, the certificates pertain to two different subjects and two different academic years; even so, their contents are remarkably similar both in terms of the evaluations they express and in how they are organized. In both testimonials favourable comments are given on how Simpson carried out his duties as a lecturer and on his scholarly competence; in addition, both texts remark on his manner and availability.

The first text, however, also states that the students wish “to avoid expressing any opinion as to the propriety of the continuance or suppression of the Chair” of Midwifery (CM 1839, 5), which had become vacant following the death of Dr. Hamilton and which Simpson had filled during the 1837–1838 Session. This move reflects the fact that these students belong to a different class, that of General Pathology, and as a result they do not want to overstep their disciplinary boundaries – a negative face-enhancing move in relation to the institution, the choices of which the students acknowledge it is not for them to influence, although they do wish to express their support of Dr Simpson’s application.

Both student testimonials express their positive views in highly favourable terms, while always maintaining respectful distance through the formality of their lexical choices. A few examples are given below, in relation to the different aspects taken into consideration. First of all, both texts start by drawing the readers’ attention to Dr Simpson’s teaching qualities:

- (1) We, the undersigned Students [...] are anxious to express the high sense we entertain of the zeal, fidelity, and success with which Dr J.Y. Simpson has discharged the duties of the Professorial Chair (CM 1839, 5)



- (2) We, the undersigned Students [...] desire to express our highest approbation of the unwearied diligence and assiduity with which he discharged the important duties of a Teacher (CM 1839, 6–7)

Tones become warmer when admiration is expressed of Dr Simpson's competence, not least in relation to research:

- (3) We, the undersigned Students [...] express our admiration of his high talents, – of the varied and extensive research which he has displayed (CM 1839, 5)
- (4) The ready and fluent manner in which these Lectures were delivered, [...] have shown at once a facility of expression, and a degree of talent and information, which reflect the greatest credit on Dr Simpson, both as a Lecturer and as a man of unlimited professional acquirements. (CM 1839, 7)

Finally, both texts conclude with their strongest positive face-enhancing move: the one in which the students signal that Dr Simpson also proved a friend, in the sense that he showed both affability and awareness of his classes' needs, thus acknowledging his human qualities beyond the professional ones:

- (5) We, the undersigned Students [...] express our admiration [...] of his uniform and kind affability, which, while it exalted him in the eyes of all as a Teacher, endeared him to each as a Friend (CM 1839, 5)
- (6) His mildness and suavity of manner, and his unceasing attention to the interests of his Students, in affording them every means of instruction in his power, [...] were such as to command our esteem for him as a friend, and our respect as a Teacher. (CM 1839, 7)

As for the texts that accompany such Certificates of Approbation, they obviously diverge from the point of view of rhetorical organization, because they pertain to different text types: one is a letter, the other is the transcription of an address; however, they also share discursive features in which positive politeness is conveyed through face-enhancing moves (both texts consistently praise the recipient, recapping the points made in the certificates in relation to scientific competence, teaching skills and human qualities), expressions of modesty on the part of the encoders, and the expression of good wishes for the success of the application.

Concerning the subjects of the two texts, there is an interesting coexistence of first person singular and plural pronouns, as the presenters

do convey their views, but they also convey the opinions of the other students who signed the certificates; as a result, they speak on behalf of a collective subject and in various cases they draw attention to this fact by means of modalization strategies through which they convey their certainty of agreement among them – see the following instances:

- (7) Dear Sir, It gives me sincere pleasure to present you with the enclosed Testimonial, in the name of my Fellow-Students [...] Being the only means in our power of expressing our gratitude, [...] we trust that you will accept it at our hands and that you may find it serviceable at some period of your future career. (CM 1839, 6)
- (8) Sir, I am deputed by the Gentlemen of this Class, my fellow Pupils, to present to you a Certificate, expressing our sentiments of you as a Public Teacher, and a Lecturer [...]. Each of us, I am sure, was both delighted and proud to subscribe it, because we knew it was well and amply deserved. (CM 1839, 7–8)

## 5. Concluding remarks

Although this essay did not intend to offer any quantitative findings on the microlinguistic strategies observed in the texts under discussion, it has nonetheless attempted to show the homogeneity with which evaluative comments are offered by means of positive face-enhancing moves which reinforce the approbation conveyed by the individual lexical choices expressing Appraisal.

The different text types included in the collection attached to Simpson's application reflect the social distance existing between the participants both in their textual organization and in their rhetorical choices; at the same time, they prove consistent in the ways in which their pragmatic aims are illustrated. While scholarly opinions typically express appreciation for the candidate's academic competence and express favourable judgements on his publications, especially when they are not addressed to the candidate directly, the students' testimonials are closer to the letters addressed to the candidate in the emphasis they place on the candidate's personal qualities, expressing admiration and therefore conveying a certain degree of affection, in spite of the relative social distance. The participants' mutual face is therefore enhanced in all the texts discussed here, as the linguistic choices of individual subjects reinforce their roles and status; this, in turn, guarantees the propriety, the appropriateness and the validity of the predications.

In future, it may prove of even greater interest to study peer-reviewing strategies in other academic contexts; however, at this stage it is certainly useful to see how in Scotland students' opinions were expressed and indeed valued already in Late Modern times.

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# IN SHERIDAN'S SHADOW: ELOCUTION AND ITS LEGACY IN MODERN IRELAND

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## 1. Introduction

Since at least the eighteenth century, the “art of elocution” has been a concern of writers on language and projected by them as a desirable accomplishment for people striving for acceptance in higher social circles. A plethora of works on elocution, appeared in print from about the middle of the eighteenth century onwards. Sheridan (1762) and Walker (1799 [1781]) are leading works (Spoel 2001) with similar publications continuing into the nineteenth century, e.g. Bell (1849), both in Britain and America (McIlvaine 1871). The initial concern of Thomas Sheridan (1719–1788)<sup>1</sup> was with the state of education expressed in his *British Education* (1756) which in its long subtitle indicates quite clearly his negative opinion of education in the Britain of his time. In this and later works Sheridan can be accused of opportunism as he tried consciously to engender a sense of linguistic insecurity in his readers and profited in no small way from the demand for authoritative guidance in matters of education and language through the highly paid public lectures which he delivered on these topics throughout his career.

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<sup>1</sup> Despite being Irish, Sheridan had a considerable influence on public attitudes to education and specifically to elocution in his time (Benzie 1972; Sheldon 1967). His Irish background was often held against him by English writers, such as Samuel Johnson, and some of his pronunciation preferences, which were criticised by John Walker in his dictionary of 1791, were seen as due to his Irish background. There is no doubt that during the nineteenth century it was Walker who had the greater influence on English pronunciation, given the likelihood of him being preferred over the Irishman Sheridan as an arbitrator on matters of standard English pronunciation (Sheldon 1947).

Elocution for Sheridan and his contemporaries was understood as the art of public speaking and demanded not just general features like clarity of argument and delivery but, in very concrete terms, specific pronunciations which these eighteenth-century writers laid down in no uncertain terms. Sheridan, and his slightly younger contemporary lexicographer, John Walker, both went to some pains to point out the elements of Irish, Scottish, Welsh and London pronunciation which they regarded as particularly egregious. Given that Sheridan was Irish, his comments on the English pronunciation of his fellow countrymen are especially relevant.

As a desirable accomplishment for young people concerned with upward mobility (Mugglestone 2003), elocution is praised by various authors to a varying extent. Some authors are censorious toward local accents, for instance, Graham (1837, 21) notes that several regions of England have phonetic realisations which he, referring back to Walker, criticises as “defects.” Others offer specific advice to speakers from the regions of Britain, e.g. Scott (1808, 5–19) has neutral observations on pronunciation typical of speakers of English from Scotland.

The unquestioned preference for standard pronunciation for the entire population of the country led of necessity to the demotion of all vernacular and regional forms of English. Prescriptivist authors like Sheridan, and above all his main competitor John Walker (1732–1807), were vociferous in their condemnation of all pronunciations which they regarded as non-standard (Hickey 2009), though just what constituted a standard pronunciation in each case was a subject of much debate among these and similarly minded authors (Pouillon 2018).

The denigration of regional forms of English by prescriptivist authors had the effect, intended or not, of provoking linguistic insecurity in those people exposed to the works of these writers. This insecurity was furthered on a wider level by more general negative attitudes to regional accents in Britain and Ireland. For the current paper the question is whether the attitudes towards elocution in the regions was coloured by the view that this could mitigate the socially undesirable effects of a strongly regional accent. In the case of Ireland<sup>2</sup> this question was heightened due to the country's less integrated status in the United Kingdom during the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. It is also worth considering how independence for (the south of) Ireland in 1922 affected attitudes to elocution and which

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<sup>2</sup> See Sheridan's damning description of Irish education the late eighteenth century (Sheridan 1787).

models of English pronunciation<sup>3</sup> served as norms during the twentieth and which now serve in the progressing twenty-first century.

### *1.1 Models of English in Ireland in the past two centuries*

The earliest audio records of Irish English speakers stem from individuals born at the end of the nineteenth century. A comparison of two prominent politicians, one born before Irish independence in 1922 and his son, born after this date, shows clearly that there was a reorientation by the third decade of the twentieth century towards endonormative forms of English pronunciation in Ireland (Hickey 2020). The upshot of this development is that Irish accents of English, including supraregional ones, are further removed from southern standard British English than they were in the nineteenth century. While distinctly Irish varieties of English serve the important function of uniquely identifying the Irish linguistically, they have also increased awareness of the distance of local accents from more standard forms of English from Britain. Comments from internet forums document the self-denigration of vernacular Irish English, e.g. “[t]hen there is the Irish habit of speaking too quickly, eating one’s speech and mumbling” or even “[w]e have some terrible dialects of the English language spoken here” (www.politics.ie; 8 Sept 2011). While such views are probably minority, they nonetheless go some way to explaining why Irish people have often been too ready to agree that their varieties of English may not be acceptable to speakers from outside Ireland. This attitude may well combine with a certain defiance and linguistic pride as in the following statement:

I remember once being told by an English teacher from Cork that I would be great in the debating team if only I’d lose my Limerick accent. I politely declined her offer and proudly speak with a Limerick accent. We follow the UK and USA like sheep and soon we will be one homogenous lump. I applaud the French, their linguistic stance and their struggle not to become yet another piece of the SKY/CNN, UK/USA package.  
(blogger ‘No 8’, <http://bocktherobber.com/2010/03/elocution-lessons-irish-accent/>; March 2, 2010; last accessed: 5 February 2020).

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<sup>3</sup> The concern of the eighteenth-century prescriptivists and others who followed them was primarily with pronunciation. Grammar was dealt with, e.g. by Lowth (1760), but not by either Sheridan or Walker in their works.



## 2. Elocution, education and formal instruction

Universal education, i.e. for the entire population of a country, was only introduced in Ireland in the 1830s (after the National Education Act of 1831, following on Catholic Emancipation in 1829). A system of so-called National Schools (McElligott 1966; Akenson 1970; Dowling 1971; Coolahan 1981) was established in which instruction was solely through English.<sup>4</sup> In these primary schools, the Irish language was banned and pupils who spoke the language were punished and their transgressions were recorded on the infamous tally-sticks (Irish *bata scóir*). Initially, the Catholic Church and its chief educational arm, the Christian Brothers, favoured English over Irish.<sup>5</sup> This attitude began to change at the end of the nineteenth century when cultural nationalism in Ireland was on the rise again and it was obvious that the Irish language was seriously endangered due to massive language shift to English.

The educational system of newly independent Ireland (from the early 1920s onwards, Akenson 1975; Farren 1995) did not promote English but rather the Irish language. Nonetheless, the notion of polishing pupils' accents was widespread and elocution classes were offered as additional instruction in schools in the afternoons. There existed a stereotype of the elocution teacher as a class-conscious unmarried lady whose purpose in life was to rid her pupils of their local accents. Naturally, such figures were not taken seriously, although there was institutional support for them.<sup>6</sup> Clearly the Irish orders of nuns, such as the Ursulines (McDermid 2012, 75–76), favoured elocution as an aspect of proper social behaviour befitting young Irish women.<sup>7</sup> The corresponding religious orders of brothers, in Ireland chiefly the Christian Brothers and the De La Salle brothers, did not put the same degree of emphasis on elocution. Several reasons can be put forward for this. For one thing, local accents were more acceptable among males

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<sup>4</sup> This replaced the irregular and much mythologised system of private education for Catholics who could afford to pay for education, known as the hedge school system (Dowling 1998; McManus 2002).

<sup>5</sup> The type of English favoured in Ireland was supraregional Irish English of the late mid-to-late nineteenth century. See Hickey (2008, 2013) for a discussion of its features and the process of supraregionalisation.

<sup>6</sup> This support was particularly forthcoming from Catholic orders, a fact which may well have to do with the understanding that the Catholics (O'Donoghue 1990) had more vernacular accents than their religious counterparts, the Protestants.

<sup>7</sup> There existed a tradition of some vintage, which grouped elocution, i.e. good voice delivery, with music and song, especially for young women, see Wilson Kimber (2017). On female education in Ireland in general, see Raftery and Parkes (2007).

than females and for another many of the teachers themselves came from rural areas of Ireland and had local accents.<sup>8</sup> Any “top-up” classes in elocution in Irish schools gradually faded out in the 1970s and 1980s, but the ghost of such classes lingers in the memory of many Irish people who grew up in the latter half of the twentieth century.

### *2.1 The accent reduction industry*

It is against the background of such collective attitudes that “new prescriptivism” (Beal 2018) can flourish. A slogan in this area is “accent reduction,” reached by professional training, which leads to individuals losing intrusive or noticeable aspects of their speech. Accent reduction is primarily directed at foreigners wishing to partake in the economic prosperity of a country, including Ireland. But the service is also offered to natives.

Just what is intended to be improved is uncertain. Some service providers like The Elocution Room (<http://elocutionroom.com/>) offer help in the “Correction of Speech Faults,” though just how these are ascertained and classified is not specified; help is also offered in “Producing the ‘R’ Sound” (<http://elocutionroom.com/about/about.htm>).

Often the nomenclature availed of in the discussion of elocution and accent reduction is seemingly vague and certainly not objectively linguistic. Promises are made to improve the tone, style and pitch of someone’s voice. Work is offered on the issues of presentation, delivery, diction, modulation, vocal clarity. Appeals are made to euphonious cadence and lilt which can be attained through professional training. Doubtlessly there is a market for such services and they are actively sought by individuals who are concerned about their public performances and have a keen desire to appear sophisticated and urbane. Here is an example of a journalist offering a testimonial to her voice coach at The Elocution Room.

My favourite part of the day was elocution lessons. This is mainly because the teacher, Esther Doorly, has a voice like treacle. She could read the telephone directory and make it sound interesting. Esther told me all about the strengths and weaknesses of the Irish accent; we have lazy tongues and roll our words.

(Kirsty Blake Knox – Independent.ie)

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<sup>8</sup> Elocution played and plays no role in third level education in Ireland, see Loxley, Seery and Walsh (2014) for an overview of the latter.

While such firms offer assistance to individuals whose profession involves speaking before an audience, e.g. film and drama actors or individuals who regularly do presentations in firms, there is an implicitly judgemental aspect to the whole enterprise. What are the “lazy tongues” the Irish are supposed to have and how do they “roll their words”? There is no recognizable model of supraregional Irish English which is specified as worthy of imitation and no linguistic description of possible features which are deemed undesirable.

## 2.2 *The resurgence of interest in elocution*

A report on the website EveryMum (<https://www.everymum.ie>) in mid-2019 bore the heading “This Is How Elocution Can Help Your Children Build Their Confidence.” The author Ken Phelan maintains that “[i]t’s never too late to learn to speak clearly and confidently” and describes “how elocution lessons can help your child to grow in confidence.” He continues “Once considered the preserve of the middle to upper-middle classes, children’s elocution lessons are now seeing something of a resurgence.”<sup>9</sup>

But there are differences of opinion on how young people in Ireland should speak. Specifically, fostering the new accent of south Dublin which is regarded as a mixture of features imported from American and British English, is often seen negatively; as one comment has it:

I’m sickened by the D4/ mid-Atlantic/ makey-up English accent that is blighting Ireland I don’t want us to wake up in 20 years all sounding like we’re living in some middle-class suburb of Dublin  
(Michael Fortune writing for the online news website [www.thejournal.ie](http://www.thejournal.ie), 18 March, 2018; last accessed: 6 February 2020).

Modern South Dublin accents are especially common on Irish national radio and television as the headquarters of the service (Radió Telefís Éireann, RTE for short) is located in the south of Dublin and recruits staff, especially females, who either have the accent of this part of the capital city or who can emulate it successfully. This leads to comments from those outside this area to complain of such accents, e.g. to refer to a television announcer as having “[a] dreadful artificial/elocution trained voice” (blogger “fiflawe”

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<sup>9</sup> According to one speech and language therapist in the UK, the resurgence in popularity of elocution lessons is down to the 2010 Oscar-winning movie *The King’s Speech*, in which Colin Firth plays King George VI, who himself struggles with speech difficulties. In the movie, King George overcomes a debilitating stammer with the aid of a speech and language therapist. ([www.confidentsspeak.com](http://www.confidentsspeak.com); last accessed: 6 February 2020).

www.politics.ie, 21 January 2018; last accessed 4 February 2020).

But there are many in favour of elocution lessons so that young people should learn to pronounce and speak well (what is meant by that is never specified). Here is a comment on the above piece, contradicting the stance of the original, saying:

And elocution lessons should be given at school to teach people how to pronounce words and speak well. Drop Shakespeare and do this instead. (comment on item by Michael Fortune, 18 March 2018; last accessed: 5 February 2020).

Elocution goes hand in hand with persistently prescriptivist notions; the language used is vague and frequently contradictory, without those commenting realising this, as in the following instance.

As for elocution. I think it was a good idea. I remember it fondly. It wasn't directed at accents, per se, but more at correct pronunciation. When I listen to many of the young people in my locale, I say bring back elocution classes. (blogger "Veritas," October 26, 2012; <http://bocktherobber.com/2010/03/elocution-lessons-irish-accent/>; last accessed: 6 February 2020)

More pragmatic arguments are also put forward, especially those concerning Ireland's economic status as a service provider.

If we are to keep call center jobs we must offer a higher standard of spoken English than our cheaper competitors. (comment on item by Michael Fortune, 18 March 2018; last accessed: 6 February 2020).

There is a recognition and acceptance of prevalent views in Irish society. Hence elocution is advocated to improve the job opportunities of those with vernacular accents.

In fairness, it might be hard to get a job with a Moyross [deprived area in Limerick, RH] address, though it's the accent that really turns people off. Schools should bring in elocution lessons. It's very hard to get a job if you can't speak proper. (blog; last accessed: 5 February 2020)

Among those who support elocution are people who have contact with the field through their profession. They often seek to clarify what they think its purpose in contemporary Irish society should be.

Elocution used to be more of a class thing; it would've been for example to make sure that someone didn't have a strong Dublin or thick country accent, but it's not about that nowadays. Elocution isn't about having a posh voice or a received pronunciation accent, it's about making sure a child can speak confidently in class when they're asked a question and that they can be easily understood.

(Jill Anderson, The Dublin School of Drama & Communications, <http://speechdramadublin.com/>, last accessed: 5 February 2020)

### ***2.3 Internalised views of local accents***

In a similar vein to the piece discussed at the beginning of the previous section, the website [www.politics.ie](http://www.politics.ie) posed the question “Do Irish kids need elocution lessons to speak English properly?” and engendered negative comments by those defining nationalism and regionalism via accent:

How do you persuade an entire country to be ashamed of their accent? I think you do it the same way that you persuade them to associate their language with poverty, lack of opportunity and outmoded ways. We ditched our language and with it went our independence of thought. now we suck in every form of imported shite imaginable from the brits and the U.S.

(from *The Daily Trumplet*, March 2010,

<http://bocktherobber.com/2010/03/elocution-lessons-irish-accent/>, last accessed 8 Feb 2020)

Here the denigration of vernacular accents of English is compared to the language shift from Irish in the nineteenth century. Views on correctness of pronunciation are frequently unconscious, having been internalised through early socialisation in Ireland.

I have a strong accent and often the first impression people have of me when they hear me talk is that I'm thick. I want to improve my elocution and tone down my accent as I think it may hold me back in my career.

(<https://www.confidentspeak.com/elocution-lessons-foradults-back-in-vogue-it-seems-yes-they-are/>; last accessed: 5 February 2020).

For many individuals the view that heavily accented speakers are intellectually inferior is part of this internalised view. Coupled with this is the “desire to be taken seriously.” The website Confident Speak (see <https://www.confidentspeak.com/elocution-lessons-for-adults-back-in-vogue-it-seems-yes-they-are/>) listed this as the first of three main reasons for the rise in interest in elocution lessons (the other two being (i) worries about employment and promotion prospects and (ii) fear of public speaking

and giving presentations). The following comment refers to the son of a former Irish politician.

What about McSharry? Suppose he is “to the manor born” [has a posh English accent, RH] and Daddy Ray could afford all the elocution lessons so that Sonny did not sound appallingly rustic to the Irish media and Sky [television]. I think we should all try to sound American if we want to be taken seriously.

(<http://accentism.org/tag/irish/>, last accessed: 5 February 2020)

This attitude to Irish accents is reflected in further comments, this time with reference to the perception of Irish accents in the United Kingdom.

I’m Irish and have experienced a lot of negative feedback and discrimination in the UK due to my accent, ranging from someone refusing to be seated next to me on a plane to students telling me they can’t take me seriously because I “sound like Father Ted”! [a satire series about Irish priests, RH] (<https://accentism.org/stories/page/8/>, last accessed: 5 February 2020)

## *2.4 Deregionalisation of accent*

In Ireland, as in so many other countries, there is a sociolinguistic tension between status and solidarity, the former being afforded by emulating non-regional speech and the latter by adhering to the locality of one’s upbringing in customs and in language.

I thought about Kathleen Lynch [a former Irish politician] but I have been unable to understand her since she jettisoned her lovely local Cork accent. Somehow she came across as sincere in the old days when she was close to her roots but after the elocution classes her sincerity ... evaporated (Internet forum: [www.politics.ie](http://www.politics.ie), comments by blogger “The Sentinel,” 9 January 2019, last accessed: 5 February 2020)

There are comments on elocution which put their finger on the wider significance of attitudes to accent. Seen as a symptom of cultural hesitancy and insecurity, the way regional accents were viewed betrayed a wider malaise in Irish self-perception.

Why was our accent bad? This was never explained. ... There’s nothing wrong with my accent, and I’m proud of it, and I can speak as well — in public or private — as anyone else. Better than some. Certainly better than self-conscious old snobs or robotic convent girls.

In a broader sense, I think the miserable old snob [the elocution teacher, RH] was Ireland in microcosm, imposing outdated rules from Victorian reprints

of etiquette books on the working-class youth of a working-class town. And I think the dreadful old snob was incapable of understanding that our working-class parents were well-read, cultured people in their own right. (from *The Daily Trumpet*, March 2010, <http://bocktherobber.com/2010/03/elocution-lessons-irish-accent/>, last accessed 8 Feb 2020)

The following comment, quoting an Irish poet, seeks to link the language shift from Irish to negative attitudes to regional dialects of English. But the view of new accents of Dublin English in the past twenty years or so (Hickey 2003) is only partially true. The main reason for the Dublin Vowel Shift (Hickey 2005, 49–72, a movement in vowel space away from the values of local Dublin English), which the comment is unknowingly referring to, was dissociation from local varieties of English. Whether the reason for that was cultural insecurity or a wish for greater sophistication and international recognition or a combination of both is open to interpretation.

The late John O'Donoghue often cited the Irish penchant for denying anything that would identify us culturally. First we abandoned our language [Irish, RH], and then, systematically over the last fifty or so years, we have actively dismantled our regional accents.

Probably the most ear-grinding example of this, to my mind, is the Roadwatch [a travel news program – RH] accent, a clear example of cultural insecurity. This accent, which is only about twenty years old, has its origins in Dublin, and more particularly in the children of skilled working class Dubliners. I was present in Dublin during the transition when this accent emerged and it represents an entire generation's attempt to disguise the nice accent they got from their parents, by turning it into a gruesome melange of English and American vowels, but without success. (from *The Daily Trumpet*, March 2010, <http://bocktherobber.com/2010/03/elocution-lessons-irish-accent/>, last accessed 8 Feb 2020)

### 3. Conclusion

Sheridan's notion of elocution, brought into the public domain over two centuries ago, has left a complex and multifaceted legacy in Ireland. On the one hand there is still the view that standard language (left undefined) is a gateway to public acceptance and success and hence to be advocated. However, this seemingly neutral wish often goes hand in hand with the internalisation of judgemental, prescriptive notions of correctness in language. These notions also combine with a post-colonial attitude to supraregional varieties of English from southern Britain. There are other

voices in present-day Ireland which regret what is regarded as the slavish aping of American and British manners and customs. While some of the statements in this regard genuinely highlight the demise of rural and local urban accents<sup>10</sup> due to an increasing urbanisation of the population, many of the comments found in internet forums confuse the wholesale adoption of features from major varieties of English with natural processes of language change which speakers of Irish English, like those in speech communities world-wide, are continuously subject to.

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<sup>10</sup> An example of this with regard to local Dublin English can be found in <https://www.thesun.ie/news/5820879/local-dub-ah-lin-drawl-squeezed-out-invasive-generic-new-accent/> as recently as 25 August 2020.



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# AN OLD FRIEND REVISITED: THE CASE OF *BUT...NEITHER*<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

It is well known that negation, though expressible in the language of logic as the deceptively simple  $\neg p$  counterpart to affirmative  $p$ , causes all kinds of complexities in natural language. Here I will focus on a particular case in the history of English where a negative form is present but it is hard to see what its function is. An example of the construction is given in (1), with bold type used to highlight the relevant phrase (similarly in later examples).

- (1) Jacke Leiden theyr magistrate had the image or likenesse of a péece of a rustie sword like a lusty lad by his side, now I remember me, it was **but a foile neither**, and he wore it, to shew that he should haue the foile of his enemies (1594; Thomas Nashe, *The unfortunate traveller*; text as in EEBO)

The passage here describes how magistrate Leiden led a band of Anabaptists into battle. In compliance with their religiously based pacifist beliefs, he and his followers only bore token arms. In his case, that meant just a painting or picture (*image or likeness*) of a rusty sword, which was also merely a foil:

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<sup>1</sup> I am very grateful to two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments and to the editors of this volume for providing me with the opportunity to revisit Ticken-Boon van Ostade (1999). I offer my attempt at further exploration of a small part of that study as a big thank-you to Ingrid for her outstanding scholarly work and enduring friendship. I remember with pleasure the various projects that we have worked on together, in which I witnessed at close quarters the operation of Ingrid's remarkable talents for organising and driving forward talks, meetings, conferences, collaborations and publications, while all the time showing great collegiality to everybody involved.

*but a foile neither*, with the exclusive focus particle *but* ‘only, merely’ and the negative element *n(either)*.<sup>2</sup>

I have taken the example in (1) from Tiekens-Boon van Oostade (1999, 215), who discusses the construction *but...neither* in a study of the wider pattern *neg...neither*. In this contribution, I will compare the construction with a variant, illustrated in (2), in which *but* occurs without an overt negative.

- (2) Boniface the 9. [...] was the first who did assay to challenge the regiment of Rome to himselfe, which was in the yeare of Christ 1400. And this was **but a forged challenge too**, as is euident, because Emperour Charles the fift (about the yeare 1550.) was the first that bestowed the city of Rome and the Territories adjoining vpon the Pope (1606; Thomas Morton, *A full satisfaction concerning a double Romish iniquitie*; text as in EEBO)

Here Pope Boniface IX is represented as having been the first to demand worldly authority over the city of Rome (*to challenge the regiment of Rome*), thus belying standard papal claims that this had been granted already by the Roman emperor Constantine. Like these earlier claims, Boniface’s demand is said to have been only a spurious demand too (*but a forged challenge too*), since it was not until the time of Charles V that Rome came under papal authority, some 150 years after Boniface’s papacy.

The examples in (1)–(2) both seem to express the meaning ‘also/only/merely’ (“it was also – in addition to being just a drawing – merely a foil” and “it was also – like earlier claims – merely a spurious demand”) with *but* conveying ‘only/merely’ and (*n*)*either/too* ‘also’. The variation between *neither* and *too* in these examples raises the question whether the two words are being used interchangeably here or whether there is some semantic/pragmatic difference between them and what possible role the negation that is present in (1) but not (2) could play in this. In the earliest systematic work on grammatical variation and change, an effort was made to determine the status of grammatical change with respect to the idea, prevalent in the study of sound change, that variants being compared should be equivalent ways of saying the same thing (e.g. Lavandera 1978; Romaine

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<sup>2</sup> The historical figure underlying the description in (1) was John of Leiden, an Anabaptist leader of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. In *The unfortunate traveller*, his name appears as *Iohn Leiden* three times, *I. Leiden* twice and – somewhat puzzlingly – *Iacke Leiden* once, in the example in (1). The use of *Iacke* here may be due to an error made at some stage in the production of the book, involving confusion – perhaps stemming from use of the abbreviation *I.* instead of full *Iohn* – with the first name of its main protagonist, Iacke Wilton.

1981). Although this idea subsequently went on the back burner in the study of grammatical change, its importance has been reasserted in more recent work on the envelope of variation (see e.g. Aaron 2010; Richard 2018) and, for any specific case of grammatical loss and gain, differences and similarities between the variants involved are always recognised as being of potential significance. In what follows, I explore some of them for the two constructions in (1) and (2).

The exploration is structured as follows: in section 2, I review the discussion of *but...neither* in Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999) and outline some of the wider grammatical context of the construction, involving the use of *but* ‘only’ with and without an apparent negative marker; section 3 then compares the properties of the *but...neither* and *but...too* constructions and provides an interpretation of the diachronic development they have undergone. Section 4, finally, provides a summary of the argument.

## 2. The grammatical envelope of *but...neither*

On the basis of a collection of 177 examples spanning the 13<sup>th</sup> till 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999) provides a description and analysis of the use of *neither* preceded by a negative element occurring earlier in the sentence. Unsurprisingly, nearly all the cases that she found are like (3) in featuring double negatives.

- (3) It is not for your health [...] **Nor for yours neither** (= TBvO 1999, 208, (3))  
(1599; William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* II.i.327)

Here, the negative element in *neither* is redundant from a logical perspective, since there is already the negator *nor* and the meaning of the sentence has single, not double, negation.

Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999, 215–216) also reports on two cases that she found in her data searches which contain the word *but* ‘only’. One of these is the example given in (1).<sup>3</sup> The other one can be seen in (4),

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<sup>3</sup> I should point out that Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999, 215–216) interprets (1) somewhat differently than I do above, since she takes *neither* in (1) to be not a marker of addition (‘also’) but a bleached expression meaning ‘nevertheless’, following Ukaji’s (1979, 113–115) suggestion for the meaning of the general neg...*neither* pattern. Additive meaning for *neither* in the example in (1) does seem to be at least possible, with the mention of an unthreatening painting/drawing of a rusty sword being added to by the mention of an unthreatening foil. I would like to thank Jenny Richards for discussing the interpretation of this example with me.

where Benedick is rebuking Claudio and Don Pedro, comparing their facetious talk to a garment trimmed with small irregular pieces of cloth (*guarded with fragments*) which are also only loosely stitched on (*but slightly basted on neither*).

- (4) Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is sometime guarded with fragments, and the guardes are **but slightly basted on neither**.  
(1599; Shakespeare *Much Ado about Nothing*, li.289; text as in EEBO)

Tieken-Boon van Ostade interprets these cases as having an implied negative associated with *but*, which means they are somewhat special examples of the general neg...*neither pattern*.

Adopting the semantic analysis of König (1991) and much related work, examples like (1) and (4) can be characterized as having two focus particles, i.e. two words that evoke alternatives for the elements they are associated with. For *but* in (4), the associated (focussed) element is *slightly basted on*. The exclusive particle *but* evokes an alternative to this, such as *firmly basted on*, and excludes it (“the guards are not firmly basted on – they are only slightly basted on”). The focus of *neither* in (4) can be taken to be the entire clause containing it (“the trimmings are loosely stitched on”); the evoked alternative is the content of the preceding clause (“the trimmings are small pieces”), to which the focussed element is presented as an addition (“in addition to being small, they are loosely stitched on”).

Turning now to the grammar of (1) and (4), a first point to make is that two examples may not look like much and, given the ungrammaticality of the construction today, the sparsity of the evidence may even inspire doubt about the reality of the pattern. However, such doubts about the work in Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999) would be misplaced. Using the search possibilities now available through the existence of Early English Books Online (EEBO), it is not difficult to find further tokens of the construction. Instances are given in (5), which describes those looking for Biblical support for the idea of remarriage after divorce and finding only two relevant passages, which – when examined closely – will also help them only little; (6), where Palamede tells us that, just like valour has only one object, love too has only one object; and (7), from which we learn that cattle and sheep on the Isle of Man as well as in Ireland are only small.

- (5) of those places that are for marying again that they also will help them litte: such as are for marrying againe [...] they also are only two both of them in the new testament, and the words of christ himselfe: &

neverthesse such, as when they are wel examined, i belecue wil helpe them **but little neither** (1610; Edmund Bunny, *Of diuorce for adulterie, and marrying againe*; text as in EEBO)

- (6) but this valour, said melintus, hath but one object, which is honour: and this love, replide palamede, hath **but one object neither**, which is pleasure (1636; Jean Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, *Ariana, in two parts*; text as in EEBO)
- (7) The Isle of MAN. Hath cold and sharp air: It yeilds much Hemp and Flax. The Cattel and Sheepe are smaller then ours in England, being much like those in Ireland, which are **but small neither** (1662; Joshua Childrey, *Britannia Baconica: or, The natural rarities of England, Scotland, & Wales*; text as in EEBO)

The relevant parts of all three sentences have exactly the same grammatical make-up as (1)/(4) and express the same meaning of ‘also only’. Thus, *but...neither* definitely looks like a real pattern in the grammar of Early Modern English, as will be further confirmed by the full quantitative data presented in section 3.

A second point to make concerns the categorisation of the data. The idea that sentences like (1) and (4)–(7) involve an implicit negation marker before *but*, as suggested by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999, 215), finds support in the existence of sentences with *but* ‘only’ preceded by the overt negator *not*, as in (8)–(10).

- (8) the fighting of these birds (as the fighting of other beasts) is **not but for meat, or for dwelling places** (1582; Stephen Batman, *Batman vpon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum, newly corrected, enlarged and amended*; text as in EEBO)
- (9) from hence it is easie to be seen, that long life is **not but for choise or chosen men**, nor indeed for all of them (1664; John Chandler, *Van Helmont's works containing his most excellent philosophy, physick, chirurgery, anatomy*; text as in EEBO)
- (10) narbone is **not but: xj: leagues distant** from mountpellier (1577; Raphael Holinshed, *The firste volume of the chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*; text as in EEBO)

This usage is noted in the OED (s.v. *but*, prep., adv., conj., and n.<sup>2</sup>, C. conj. I. 1c), where it is pointed out that the meaning expressed is ‘only’, rather than ‘not only’ or ‘only not’, i.e. the word *not* in (8)–(10) does not appear to signal the presence of logical negation.



Given that the Early Modern period sees the coexistence of the pattern in (1)/(4)–(7), with *but...neither*, and that of (8)–(10), with *not but*, it makes sense to view them as manifestations of one and the same construction, which has *but* ‘only’ together with a negative marker. That can be simple *not*, as in (8)–(10), but in clauses with additive meaning (‘too/also’) the negative is *neither*, as in (1)/(4)–(7). Note that no examples like (11) or (12) are found in EEBO; instead, (13) is used.<sup>4</sup>

(11) #The sheep are **not but small too**.

(12) #The sheep are **not but small either**.

(13) The sheep are **but small neither/too**.

The lack of attestation of (11) is probably due to the polarity-sensitive nature of *too*, which generally resists negative polarity environments (see Rullmann 2003 and Ahn 2015 for the descriptive facts and possible analyses). The absence of (12) is a manifestation of the overall absence of the pattern *neg...either*, which does not seem to be attested before the Late Modern period (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1999, 220 and Rullmann 2002).

In spite of the association between *but* ‘only’ and negation in the Early Modern data given above, the word is also found in this period in clauses without a negative marker. Corresponding to (8)–(10), with *not but* ‘only,’ there are examples like (14)–(15), with *but* ‘only,’ and corresponding to (1) and (4)–(7), with *but...neither* ‘also only’ there are cases like (2) and (16)–(17), with *but...too* ‘also only’.

(14) the dose of it to preserue, is **but one halfe peny weight, or lesse** (1550; Thomas Phayer *The regiment of life*; text as in EEBO)

(15) the difference is **but small** (1610; Thomas Bell, *The Catholique triumph*; text as in EEBO)

(16) it is **but a supposition too** (1651; Hamon L’Estrange, *An answer to the Marques of Worcester’s last paper*; text as in EEBO)

(17) but yet it was still weak [...] and given out by weak fleshly instruments, earthen vessels, and in a weak fleshly manner [...] and it was received

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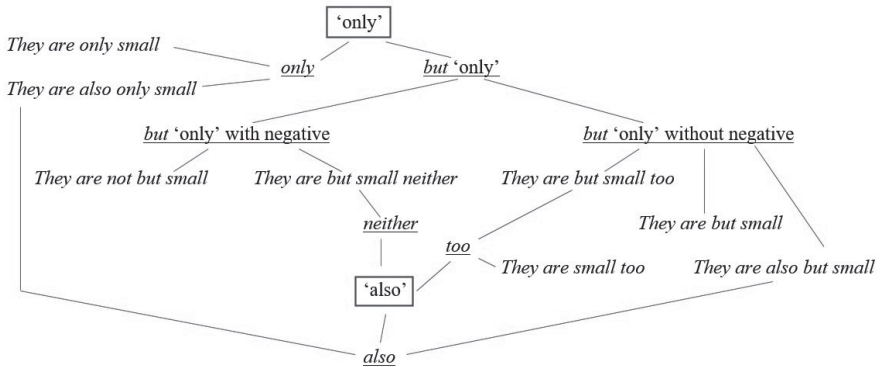
<sup>4</sup> An anonymous reviewer asks if any Early Modern instances with *not but...neither* occur. The answer is negative. It appears that *but* ‘only’ could co-occur with only one overt negative marker, which had to be either *not* or *neither*.

in **but weakly too** (1650; Isaac Penington, *A voyce out of the thick darkness*; text as in EEBO)

Thus, at the micro-level, the relevant envelope of variation for the *but...neither* construction contains the close variant *but...too*. At a higher level, *but...neither* is part of a family of constructions containing *but* ‘only’ plus a negative marker, while *but...too* is one of the constructions that have *but* ‘only’ without a negative. At a further remove, there is also the set of constructions containing *only*, competing with the various *but* constructions in quite intricate patterns, as shown in detail by Nevalainen (1991). There is further competition due to the existence of the additive particle *also*. The latter item, illustrated in (18), is found in co-occurrence with the exclusive particle *but* ‘only’ throughout the Early Modern period.

- (18) the small-pox does usually happen but once in a mans life, just as Muste does ferment **also but once** (1686; Nicolas Lemery, *A course of chemistry*; text as in EEBO)

The various options are partially visualised as a network of constructions in Figure 1.



**Fig.1** Partial envelope of variation for *but...neither* ‘also only’ in Early Modern English

The two boxed items in the diagram represent constructions with additive and exclusive meaning respectively, which can be thought of as supersets. They contain subsets (underlined in the diagram) with constructions in which those meanings are expressed by the particles *also/too/ neither* and

*but/only* respectively. For the exclusive particle *but*, as we have seen, a further distinction needs to be made depending on the presence or absence of a negative marker. The sentences in the diagram, all based on *They are small* but with additive and/or exclusive focus added, exemplify the various categories. Crucially, some of them are in the intersection of the two supersets, i.e. they express both additive and exclusive meaning (shown in the diagram by the fact that they link up with two particles).

Altogether, therefore, there is a large grammatical envelope of variation in the expression of the meaning ‘also only’ in Early Modern English. This contribution, however, will be restricted to exploration and comparison of the two constructions *but...neither* and *but...too*, since it is both of these options that have the two focus particles embracing the constituent that has exclusive focus. As we shall see, it is also arguable that the interaction of these options can tell us more about the status of the negative markers that *but* ‘only’ seems to be associated with in this period.

### 3. *But...neither* and *but...too*: Grammar, frequency and the role of negation

To compare the properties and development of *but...neither* and *but...too*, data for the two constructions were collected from the version of the EEBO corpus available on the website created by Mark Davies. This is a subset of the complete EEBO corpus but, at 755 million words, it makes available a generous amount of Early Modern text that was felt at the time to be suitable for wide dissemination. The corpus searches carried out targeted cases in which the exclusively-focused element, i.e. the word/phrase sandwiched between *but* and *neither/too*, has a length of one, two or three words. Manual sorting was carried out to eliminate the (numerous) false positives.<sup>5</sup> The total number of true positives identified in EEBO in this way was 209 for *but...neither* and 76 for *but...too*. The frequency figures given for the two constructions in what follows are all based on this data set drawn from EEBO.

In analysing the grammatical properties of *but...neither* and *but...too*, an obvious starting point is a comparison of the grammatical

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<sup>5</sup> These included many cases where *but* was a conjunction and *neither* had the meaning “not the one nor the other,” as in the example *but because neither is forbidden, therefore is neither unlawfull* (1643; John Wallis, *Truth tried*; text as in EEBO). Initial exploration of examples with four or more words separating *but* and *neither/too* revealed that the number of false positives among this set was prohibitively large and no attempt was therefore made to collect such data.

functions of the exclusively-focused element. The following categories were attested in the data: subject complement (as in (1), (2) and several other earlier examples), adverbial (as in (5) and (17)), direct object (as in (6)), subject (as in (19)), verb (as in (20)), prepositional complement (as in (21)) and complement to a noun (as in (22)).

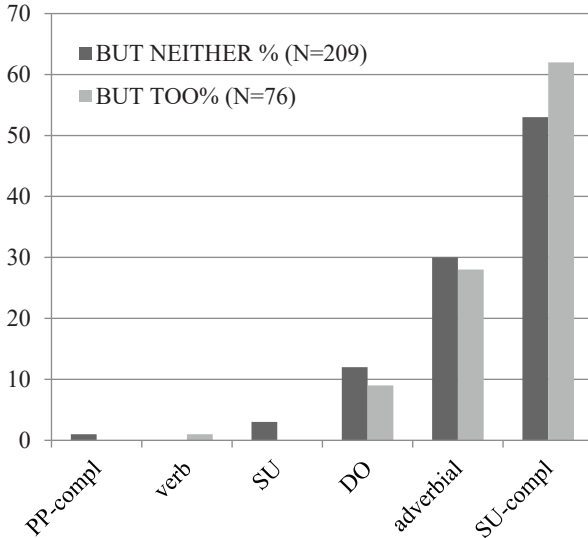
- (19) the like they also did with all the ancient weekly and set-times of fasting, which [...] they devoured at once, as contrary to that christian liberty, or licentiousness rather, to which they inured the people [...]: no fast observed, but when some publick great occasion doth require it of them; and then **but half-fast neither** (1670; Peter Heylyn, *Aerius redivivus*; text as in EEBO)<sup>6</sup>
- (20) by all this it appeareth, that this first accusation of ialshood [sic] was rather an adventure as the def: himselfe calleth it, then a grounded assertion: [...] he did **but adventure neither** to call the same plea presumptuous (1633; William Ames, *A fresh suit against human ceremonies*; text as in EEBO)
- (21) [...] a great secret among the jewish nation, and known **but to few neither** (1684; John Lightfoot, *The works of the Reverend and learned John Lightfoot D. D.*; text as in EEBO)
- (22) it is no more possible for our weak understandings to comprehend that, then it is for the eyes of bats or owls to look steadfastly upon the body of the sun, when he shines forth in his greatest strength [...] the very angels, those holy and heavenly spirits, have a desire, saith St. Peter, (it is but a desire, not any perfect ability; and that **but παρακύψαι neither**) to peep a little into those incomprehensible mysteries, and then cover their faces with their wings, and peep again, and cover again: as being not able to endure the fullness of that glorious lustre that shines therein (1656; Robert Sanderson, *Twenty sermons formerly preached*; text as in EEBO)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The relevant part of this example (as well as the few further examples with subject focus) is elliptical, making interpretation somewhat less than straightforward. But it seems reasonable to say that *but half-fast neither* is interpreted as bearing the subject role to the passive participle *observed* whose presence here is inferred on the basis of the preceding *no fast observed*.

<sup>7</sup> This example too has ellipsis. The exclusively-focused infinitive *παρακύψαι* ‘to inspect, look at’ needs to be construed as complement to the noun *desire* (or perhaps the sequence *desire, not perfect ability*) that is inferrable from the immediately preceding context.

Frequency figures for the various categories can be seen in Figure 2, which gives the percentage of cases found in the two constructions for each syntactic function (except that of complement to N, which does not reach 1%).



**Fig. 2** Grammatical function of focused phrase in *but...neither* and *but...too* (as percentage of total for each construction)

Similar to the findings in Nevalainen (1991, 212), who examined Early Modern data for *but* ‘only’ in general, the data for the specific patterns *but...neither* and *but...too* in Figure 2 show that direct objects, adverbials and especially subject complements make up the bulk of the examples. For present purposes, what is particularly striking is the very close similarity between *but...neither* and *but...too*: in terms of grammatical function of the element with exclusive focus, the two constructions have virtually identical profiles.

This similarity extends to a further aspect of the data: in nearly half of all cases for both constructions, the focused expression occurs not as part of a complete clause but as part of an elliptical expression of one kind or another. We have already seen examples in (19) and (22). A further case is given in (23), where the interpretation of *and but lightly too* is clearly ‘and I touch it but lightly too’, with *I touch it* present at the semantic level but ellipted in the surface form.

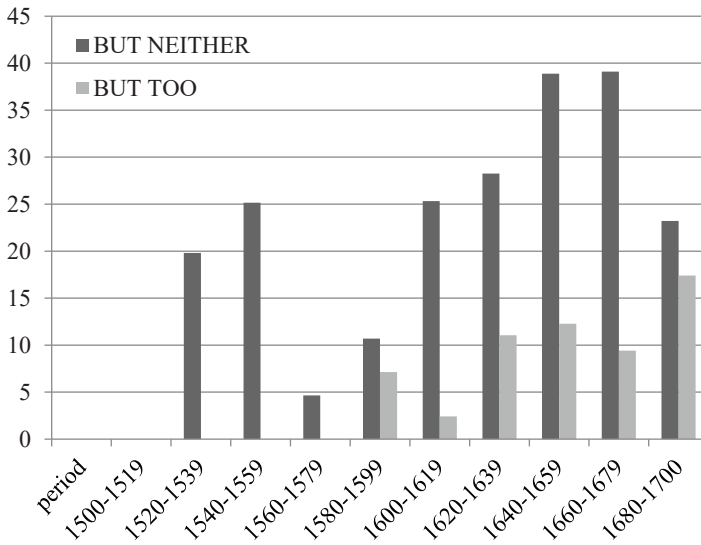
- (23) i onely touch it, and **but lightly too**, as a motive to quicken us up  
(1644; Henry Hall, *Heaven ravished*; text as in EEBO)

The prevalence of such cases means that nearly half of the data represented in Figure 2 involve an elliptical context. With regard to grammatical function, there is no notable difference between the full and elliptical examples: both have high numbers of adverbial and subject complement focus cases and only few others.<sup>8</sup>

From a grammatical point of view, the *but...neither* and *but...too* constructions are therefore remarkably similar, supporting the common intuition that there is a close relation between (*n*)*either* and *too* in present-day and also earlier English. However, data for the frequency of the two constructions over time, given in Figure 3, show that, although *but...neither* and *but...too* can be regarded as competitors, this applies only to the period after 1580. Before that, the *but...too* construction is not attested in the data examined.

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<sup>8</sup> The data here make sense from the perspective of the standard semantic account of exclusive focus particles like *but* and *only*. Under the analysis of König (1991, 52–53) and much other work (including Geurts and van der Sandt 2004a,b, who review and reject criticisms of this standard account), a sentence like *Only Fred made a generous contribution* contains the presupposition “Fred made a generous contribution” and the assertion “Nobody other than Fred made a generous contribution,” in which all the alternatives to Fred as subject of the predicate *made a generous contribution* are excluded. In the elliptical data for Early Modern *but...neither/too*, the immediately preceding context often contains a proposition P that expresses the presupposition minus the focused element. The subsequent clause that contains the focus particle then spells out the assertion but with ellipsis of all elements shared with P, i.e. it spells out only the focus and the focusing particle.



**Fig. 3** Frequency per 100 million words of *but...neither* and *but...too*, 1500–1700

Though the diachronic development visible in Figure 3 is not exactly continuous or uniform, it can be seen that after its emergence in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century the *but...too* construction was by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century approaching frequency levels comparable to those of *but...neither*. Two questions therefore arise: 1. what caused or enabled the emergence of *but...too*?; 2. what effect could its existence have had on the *but...neither* construction?

To explain the rise of *but...too*, it is necessary to consider more closely the association of the word *but* ‘only’ with negation. The origins of this association no doubt lie in the etymology of *but* ‘only’. The word had developed from a sequence of the preposition *be* and the locative *utan* ‘(from) outside’ (Nevalainen 1991, 124–125), a combination that already in Old English had unverbated and acquired the meaning ‘except, save’ (OED s.v. *but*, prep., adv., conj., and n.<sup>2</sup>, A3 and C. *conj.* I.). Addition of a negative would result in the meaning ‘not/nothing/nobody except’, which is equivalent to ‘only’. The presence of a negative marker with *but* ‘only’ in Early Modern English can therefore be viewed as a straightforward reflection of its origins.

Nor is Early Modern English unique in this respect. The association of negation with an exclusive focus particle meaning ‘only’ is attested in

other languages as well. Thus, there is an extensive literature on the syntax and semantics of French (*ne...*) *que* ‘only’ as in (24).

- (24) Ce (n’)est que un enfant  
 this (not-)is than a child  
 ‘He is but a child’

In this construction as others, the marker *ne/n’*, though glossed here as ‘not’, does not in itself convey negation and it is frequently omitted in casual speech. The generally adopted analysis for examples like (24) (see the review in Authier 2020) posits the existence of hidden further structure in such sentences. Specifically, the idea is that there is an unpronounced negative word expressing ‘nothing/nobody’, resulting in the meaning ‘he is nothing except a child’ for (24). As König (1991, 159–161) points out, it is indeed the case that words meaning ‘only’ often derive historically from a phrase with a meaning like ‘nothing except’, with English *but* + neg in fact being a prime example of such a development.

Just like French (*ne...*) *que*, the word *but* ‘only’ also occurred without an overt negative marker, as in examples (14)–(15). It is therefore interesting to consider the frequencies of these uses in the Early Modern period. Focusing on occurrences of *but* in its favoured environment of subject complement, a search was carried out in EEBO for a sequence with any form of *be* followed by *but*, with and without intervening negative. The negatives found in that position are *not*, discussed and illustrated above, and *nothing*, as in (25), where *nothing but* would of course still be possible today.

- (25) lyfe of man in this worlde is **nothing but continuall battell & conflict**  
 (1561; John Gough, *A godly boke wherein is containned certayne*  
*fruitefull, godlye, and necessarye rules*; text as in EEBO)

Table 1 shows the frequency of the three constructions, expressed in numbers per million words for each 20-year period in EEBO.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Some spot-checking of the more than 200K individual hits underlying Table 1 suggests that – not surprisingly – there are false positives among these data, but their number appears to be very small for all three constructions. It therefore appears to be legitimate to take the figures in Table 1 as a true-enough reflection of the general patterns of use of the constructions.



| period    | <i>be but</i> | <i>be nothing but</i> | <i>be not but</i> |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1500–1519 | 175           | 0                     | 7.3               |
| 1520–1539 | 197           | 1                     | 1.1               |
| 1540–1559 | 173           | 3                     | 1.3               |
| 1560–1579 | 187           | 14                    | 0.7               |
| 1580–1599 | 214           | 14                    | 0.8               |
| 1600–1619 | 242           | 15                    | 0.7               |
| 1620–1639 | 263           | 16                    | 0.7               |
| 1640–1659 | 283           | 20                    | 0.5               |
| 1660–1679 | 285           | 23                    | 0.6               |
| 1680–1700 | 244           | 21                    | 0.4               |

**Table 1** Frequency per million words of *be (nothing/not) but*, 1500–1700

The data show that, in the grammatical environment of subject complement, *but* occurs without a negative around 180 times per million words in each 20-year period in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with a further increase from the latter part of that century onwards. The combination of *but* with a negative marker accounts for only around 10% of the total number of cases. Most of the negative examples have the combination *nothing but*, which is attested robustly at this lower level and in fact shows an increase in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The option *not but* is only a very minor pattern, which after 1560 declines further. It thus appears that, except in the combination *nothing but*, the association of the particle *but* with negation becomes increasingly tenuous in surface data over the course of the Early Modern period.

We now have all the ingredients we need to construct an explanatory account for the emergence of *but...too* and its possible repercussions for the status of *but...neither*. To begin with, by the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, surface evidence for the presence of negation with *but* ‘only’ was found in a mere 6 to 7% of all occurrences of *but* ‘only’. The bulk of these occurrences featured the combination *nothing but*, which seems to have retained its status as a fully compositional construct with the meaning ‘nothing except’ until the present day (on possible reasons why, see Nevalainen 1999). Beyond that combination, the evidence for *but* plus negator was very sparse. There is of course the possibility that *but* had an unpronounced negative associated with it, as in the analysis of French (*ne...que*) discussed above. However, another possibility is that increasingly *but* was no longer viewed as an exceptive (which required the presence of a negative to yield the meaning ‘not/nothing/nobody except’) but as a true exclusive just like *only* (which did not need – or even allow – an overt associated negative). The appearance of *but...too*, with positive polarity *too*, towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century shows that in at least some cases *but*

indeed acquired exclusive status. The development therefore has the familiar data pattern that suggests the operation of a causal link: just as evidence for a particular structure declines in frequency (in this case, the overt evidence for *but* plus negation), a new construction arises (here, the previously unattested combination of *but* with the positive polarity item *too*), with both changes being due to the same factor (namely, the loss of *but* plus negative marker, whether overt or implicit).<sup>10</sup>

The continued use of the *but...neither* construction throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century could be taken as a sign that there was variation between *but* with and without negation, i.e. between *but* behaving like *except* and *but* behaving like *only*. The former – older – variant would license the use of *but...neither* while the latter – newer – variant would lead to use of *but...too*. By the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the shift towards negationless *but* seems to have progressed further. This is the time when the frequency of *but...too* starts approaching that of *but...neither* and when simple *but* is becoming up to 500 times more frequent than *not but*, making it look as if *but* is shedding its association with a negative altogether (except in the combination *nothing but*). It could be hypothesised that these general developments in the use of *but* also affected the pattern *but...neither*. If this was indeed the case, it would mean that *neither* in this construction still expressed the meaning ‘also’ but may no longer have represented logical negation, an interpretation of *neither* for which, as we have seen, there was precedent in Early Modern sentences like (3) and others reported on in Ticken-Boon van Ostade (1999) and Rullmann (2002).

Separately from the idea that around 1650 *neither* in *but...neither* stopped being semantically negative, some of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century data for the construction suggest that a functional difference may have developed between *but...neither* and *but...too*. Specifically, there are signs that the *but...neither* option was coming to carry some kind of emphatic meaning. To illustrate, we can consider example (26).

- (26) why then this is the something he would say: that the vast increase of trade does vsually reflect some inconveniences upon ecclesiastical affairs: the most favourable indictment surely that ever was drawn up against an evil of so pernicious consequence in all the world: 1: they

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<sup>10</sup> The facts described here and the interpretation proposed thus seem to require a distinction between exceptive and exclusive constructions, with the former having an association with negation that is absent in the latter. As will be clear from footnote 8, this difference is not reflected in the usual approach to exclusive particles like *only*, which are standardly assumed to involve negation at least at the level of semantics. I leave this wider issue for further work.

are but inconveniences; and what commodity is there but is attended by some small inconveniences? 2: they are **but some inconveniences neither**, as perhaps, that one of the wealthy un governable Fanaticks can not be called to account in the ecclesiastical courts, because he is extra quatuor maria, or so (1678; Vincent Alsop, Vincent, *Melius inquirendum*; text as in EEBO)

Here, in commenting on the idea that trade and commerce may cause problems for church affairs, the author first states that they are *but inconveniences* – merely inconveniences, not major disruptions – and then makes the second point that in addition they are *but some inconveniences neither* – merely some, not many, inconveniences – and ends by giving a possible example of one such inconvenience. Given the rhetorical build-up, it could be surmised that, in the second point, there is some intended emphasis on the exclusive particle *but*, producing a meaning somewhat similar to that of a present-day expression like *really only* or *only and solely*.

For any sentence expressing the meaning ‘also only’, there is of necessity always a prior proposition (whether presupposed, asserted or implicated) conveying some kind of exclusive meaning and it can be difficult to judge whether the later sentence is meant to have emphatic exclusivity. The most revealing cases are those having earlier and later sentences that show overlap in the lexical items and grammatical constructions used, since this can create an expectation that, in spite of the two sentences being partly identical, the second sentence must convey some new information, which might come from the presence of emphasis. In example (26), the difference between *inconveniences* in the earlier sentence and *some inconveniences* in the second sentence is slight enough that assuming the presence of emphasis – signalled by the use of *neither* – in the second sentence would indeed be entirely natural.

Another, perhaps slightly clearer, case can be seen in (27), again a necessarily somewhat lengthy example since prior context is crucial in assessing the likelihood of emphatic meaning being intended.

- (27) but in what aire is it, that lucifer is a prince? is it any where but in aery and inconstant minds, caried about with every winde, and in whom there is no stability of grace? and to bee a prince in such ayre what is it but to be an aery prince? without any solidnesse or substance in him; all in phantasmes and shewes; as he shewed christ, all the Kingdomes of the world: but it was but a shew; and he shewed samuel to saul; but that but a shew too; and his enchanters turned their rods into serpents: and that **but a shew neither**; for indeed all the power he hath: and all hee can doe as prince of the Aire, is but to make a shew; great

promises; and great threatings, but all vanish into Aire (1641; Richard Baker, *An apologie for lay-mens writing in divinity*; text as in EEBO)

Here we have a sequence of three statements with exclusive focus, shown in (28).

- (28) a. it was but a shew  
 b. that [was] but a shew too  
 c. that [was] but a shew neither

The three statements are virtually identical in phrasing, except that the second and third statements contain an additive particle, which is *too* in the second and *neither* in the third statement. Of course the words *it*, *that* and *that* in (28a–c) respectively have distinct reference and that mere fact might be considered enough to satisfy the requirement that there must be some new informational point in a new statement. However, we could then still wonder why the additive particle chosen in (28b) is *too* while (28c) has *neither*. Again, given the rhetorical patterning of the three statements, it could be assumed that the final one has a certain degree of emphasis, creating a progression from ‘it was only a show’ in (28a) to ‘that too was only a show’ in (28b) to ‘that too was only and solely a show’ in (28c).

If this is correct, it would imply a reanalysis of *neither* in the construction *but...neither*. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century *neither* conveyed additive focus in conjunction with the negation associated with the exclusive particle *but*. The additive meaning remained but, as we have seen, in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it became less and less clear that *neither* in this construction had negative meaning, since *but* was losing its association with negation across the board. Instead, examples like (26) and (27) suggest that *but...neither* may have started acquiring emphatic meaning (thus distinguishing it from its close comparator *but...too*). This would account for the fact that (27)–(28) has *but...too* followed by *but...neither* rather than the other way round. In authentic texts, sequences of two or three sentences with exclusive as well as additive meaning and also with lexicogrammatical overlap, as in (26) and (27), are rare, since they require a very specific constellation of properties. However, the account suggested above would predict that any further 17<sup>th</sup>-century cases found – perhaps among the examples with an exclusive focus longer than three words – might resemble (27) in having the order *but...too* [...] *but...neither* but not the order *but...neither* [...] *but...too*.

A more formal approach to the account suggested here could be based on the observation that focusing expressions like *only* or *but* can be less than fully stringent in the restriction that they impose. An utterance like

*it is only/but a show*, for example, might still be considered to be truthful if the action referred to is, say, 90% show and 10% for real. Lasersohn (1999) refers to this general phenomenon as “pragmatic slack” and points out that certain expressions, which he terms “slack regulators,” target the possible existence of such looseness by explicitly reducing it. A simple example given by Lasersohn to illustrate is the sentence in (29).

(29) Mary arrived at 3 o'clock.

Here – depending on the pragmatics of the situation – *at 3 o'clock* could denote not a point but an interval of time potentially stretching over 10 or 15 minutes. This kind of pragmatic slack can be reduced by adding a slack regulator, as in *exactly at 3 o'clock*, which would serve to contract the possible time span for which Mary's arrival is being asserted.

In a discussion of the proper characterisation of reflexives with exclusive focus meaning, Tellings (2019) applies Lasersohn's ideas to the analysis of expressions like *by myself/yourself/himself/herself*, as in (30).

- (30) a. Mary wrote the article by herself  
 b. Mary wrote the article all by herself

The meaning expressed by (30a) is that Mary wrote the article alone, without assistance. But as Tellings (2019, 184) points out, there is some pragmatic slack in the exclusive focus expression *by herself*, so that (30a) could still be an acceptable utterance if Mary in fact received a small amount of assistance. This area of allowed looseness can be reduced by adding the slack regulator *all*, as in (30b), resulting in a meaning ‘all alone, without even the slightest bit of assistance’.

I suggest that the same analysis can be applied to at least some 17<sup>th</sup>-century occurrences of the form *neither* in *but...neither* (more specifically, to the *n*- part of *neither*). While *-either* in this construction has its usual meaning of ‘also, too’, the initial *n*- has the function of reducing the potential looseness of the exclusive focus particle *but*, i.e. it is a slack regulator. Concretely, if *it is but a show* allows 10% slack, *it is but a show n(either)* might have only 1 or 2% slack. This would mean that an assertion containing *but...neither*, with slack regulator *n*-, makes a stronger claim than one with *but...too*, which has unregulated slack in its focus expression. This accounts for the impression that *but...neither* in (26), (27) and possibly other examples as well conveys emphasis and also for the fact that (27) has *but...too* followed by *but...neither*, with the stronger statement naturally coming last.

## 4. Conclusion

The account presented above of the diachronic development of the different parts of *but...neither* can be summarised as in (31).

| (31)           | <i>but</i>    | <i>n-</i>                                    | <i>-either</i>  |
|----------------|---------------|--|---|
| <i>Stage 1</i> | ‘except’      | negative<br>(associated with<br><i>but</i> ) | ‘too’<br>(under negative polarity<br>created by <i>n-</i> )   |
| <i>Stage 2</i> | ‘except/only’ | negative/<br>uncertain status                | ‘too’<br>(partly under vestigial<br>negative polarity; partly<br>construction-specific<br>allomorph of <i>too</i> ) |
| <i>Stage 3</i> | ‘only’        | slack regulator<br>of <i>but</i>             | ‘too’<br>(construction-specific<br>allomorph of <i>too</i> )  |

Needless to say, there must have been temporal overlap and perhaps even co-existence in the grammars of individual speakers of the different stages distinguished in (31). If we wanted to link them to specific periods, stage 1 would cover the 16<sup>th</sup> century, stage 2 the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and stage 3 the remainder of the Early Modern period. But such an interpretation may be too coarse-grained. It is possible, for example, that certain speakers/communities remained at stage 2 while others reached stage 3 or that stage 3 should be thought of as an option that was only occasionally used even by speakers for whom it was part of their linguistic competence.

In terms of causation, I have suggested that the change in status of *n-* from stage 1 to stage 2 can be attributed to the ongoing loss of the negative associations of *but* throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This loss was also responsible for the introduction of positive polarity *but...too* towards the end of that century. The existence of that variant may then, at stage 3, have triggered functional differentiation between it and *but...neither*, with the latter acquiring emphatic meaning through the reinterpretation of *n-* as a slack regulator. Subsequently to all this, at some point in the Late Modern period, the construction with *but...neither* was of course entirely lost. Since we would normally expect stronger expressions to oust weaker ones, this is slightly surprising. It suggests that slack regulator use of *n(either)* may indeed not have been shared by all speakers. In addition, the increasing idiosyncrasy of having *but* ‘only’ with an overt negative may have acted against the continuance of the construction, especially since the use of *but* ‘only’ was declining in general in Late Modern English. A brief examination of

some corpora for that period (the TCP version of *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO), the COHA corpus on the Mark Davies website) suggests that *but...neither* continues to be used after 1700 but has disappeared by 1800. Further work on 18<sup>th</sup>-century materials will be needed to trace the further development and demise of the construction.

All in all, on the basis of the findings presented above, the case of *but...neither* can definitely be said to confirm again that linguistic negation is more complex than logical negation. The main reason for this may be that, unlike logic, language can change, with logically related components of a specific change not always being implemented simultaneously but only after a time lag, or with their relatedness apparently being ignored altogether, due to a reanalysis of their status. While we may not want to go as far as Lightfoot (2018) and assert that “nothing in syntax makes sense except in the light of change,” it is certainly true that close consideration of what may have happened in the diachronic dimension can often shed light on data, such as the *but...neither/too* data presented here, that might otherwise remain entirely puzzling.

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# LANGUAGE-NORM FORMATION IN DUTCH URBAN CONTEXTS: FROM HAARLEM EXCLUSIVE TO POST-MODERN INCLUSIVE

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## 1. The sociolinguistic study of cities

Mainstream sociolinguistics has its origins in cities (Smakman and Heinrich 2018). The difference between rural and urban pertains to a fundamental distinction, namely that between two worlds (Maher 2005). For several reasons, cities seem to act independently of all kinds of continua and are relevant sociolinguistic entities that seem to influence each other while rural areas follow suit (Trudgill 1986). Sociolinguistically, cities have always constituted extraordinary settings. “City folk” come into daily contact with speakers, often strangers, with a different belief system from their own (Blommaert and Rampton 2011). These interactants commonly have different behavioural norms, day-to-day rituals and, resultantly, linguistic practices. All strangers in such settings must somehow learn to get along for city communication to function. Urban settings are where norms are formed because efforts to get along are most pertinent there.

City research in the Netherlands has been underexposed, especially when bearing in mind the special role cities play in broader – even national – norm formation. This chapter will demonstrate the forces and mechanisms that led to language norms in the past and compares them with contemporary ones. These studies will demonstrate the move from a top-down norm development to the first signs of a bottom-up trend. To make this development clear, three suggested types of language norms are presented, each of which represents a school of thought and/or a stage in time: (1) the folklore norm, (2) the proclaimed norm, and (3) the street norm.

## 2. The folklore norm

The Dutch city of Haarlem had 161,260 inhabitants (<https://www.haarlem.nl/feiten-en-cijfers/>) on 1 January 2019 and lies very close to Amsterdam. Haarlem is popularly associated with “good” Dutch (Jansen et al. 2015, Smakman 2006). Various specific circumstances and events may have been at the heart of the famous idea that Haarlem is the home or cradle of Standard Dutch, only some of which seem related to actual spoken language use or day-to-day language contact.

Haarlem’s leading role in printing during the Dutch Golden Age (roughly the 17<sup>th</sup> Century) may have contributed to the linguistically authoritative status of the city of Haarlem. Furthermore, the first train connection in the Netherlands (1839) was between Haarlem and Amsterdam and established more regular language contact between speakers from these two cities. For the first time, people could regularly hear the language from a neighbouring city. This may have been a factor in the linguistic status of Haarlem as well, as it would have been the onset of a broadening norm in the Netherlands.

It is sometimes claimed that a comment by the lay linguist Johan Winkler (1874) sparked the Haarlem folklore norm: “undoubtedly of all Holland and Dutch vernaculars it is closest to the codified Dutch language. The spoken language in Haarlem is closest to the Dutch written language” (77). It is likely that Winkler was talking about a levelling process that was taking place in Haarlem in particular, which led to some kind of unmarked way of speaking Dutch, possibly through the avoidance of regional or local phrases or sounds.

What may keep the Haarlem legend intact today is the fact that Haarlem is a stereotypically beautiful and wealthy city that is at the same time relatively unknown to most Dutchmen (because of its closeness to the more famous Amsterdam). Although Haarlem has all the inner-city issues that other large Dutch cities suffer from, the anonymity of this city seems firm. This status is supported by the fact that Haarlem is not associated with all kinds of centralised functions of cities in the Dutch Western urban area. For instance, Haarlem is not the capital city of the Netherlands (Amsterdam is), it is not a well-known residence of the Dutch royals (The Hague and Amsterdam are strongly associated with the Dutch royal family), it is not a political centre on any national level (The Hague is), it is not located geographically centrally (Utrecht is), it is not amongst the largest cities in the Netherlands (even several cities outside the western Dutch urban conurbation are larger than Haarlem), it is not a cultural hub (like Amsterdam), no academic centre (like Leiden, Delft, Utrecht, Rotterdam,

and Amsterdam), no economic centre (like Amsterdam and Rotterdam), and, finally, it is not a centre of broadcasting (like Amsterdam and the town of Hilversum). Somehow, the anonymity of this relatively affluent and lesser known city close to Amsterdam seems to evoke associations of proper and unmarked Dutch. This shows that ordinary language users need language norms and benchmarks and are willing to ignore (rather obvious) counter-evidence and pass on legends.

### 3. The proclaimed norm

In daily life, the Haarlem norm is not likely to be an active mechanism in the formation of a language norm in writing and speech. Few people know what Haarlem speech sounds like. Research has been done into living language norms in the Netherlands (Smakman 2006). Ordinary Dutchmen were asked what “good” or “standard” Dutch is, and they were given the opportunity to write down their own definition of this phenomenon. The outcome was that the language norm in the Netherlands is associated with correctness and with communication amongst speakers with various backgrounds. The participants often mentioned the well-known name for Standard Dutch; *Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands*, “General Civilised Dutch.” Although this investigation yielded several references to the folklore Haarlem norm, “standard” was not associated with a specific city but with the country as a whole.

Strikingly, two types of living language norms appeared from this investigation. On the one hand, there is the “exclusive” language norm; few people speak “good” Dutch, and many people make mistakes when trying to speak Dutch well. This exclusive norm is codified to a high degree. This stringent and narrow approach runs parallel to another, and perhaps more vital norm, namely the “inclusive” norm. This norm is based on the opposite principle, namely that of a norm shared by many people that creates a bond – an understanding – amongst ordinary language users. This “inclusive” norm refers to actual written and unwritten and largely practical rules that ordinary speakers apply as well as they can in order to be understood and not be offensive or socially marked. Besides being a proclaimed norm, this inclusive norm seems to be a living norm in the literal sense of the word; this negotiation ideology affects day-to-day communication. While the exclusive language norm will be in the backs of speakers’ minds, the inclusive norm is more likely to change language use, because language and norm change can be assumed to start during actual “shopfloor” discourse (Thomason and Kaufman 1988).

An important tool in the development of the inclusive norm are the media. Presenters in the media are commonly associated with standard language (Bell 1991). Indeed, media are accessible to people from all layers of society. Importantly, a change has been taking place in media in the past decades. Online access to language spoken by people different from oneself and actual communication with these people is becoming more common. Whereas in the past media were one-directional producers of language that could affect the norm through imitation by listeners and viewers, nowadays online media enable ordinary Dutch speakers to enter into discourse with speakers who speak Dutch but in a way that is different from how they themselves speak. In this respect, online communication has started to resemble urban communication and could be treated as such.

#### 4. The street norm

Parallel to the changes in the media norm, geographical and social mobility and fluidity have boomed relatively recently. A new age has arrived in this sense. Due to globalisation, immigration, and ethnolinguistic diversification, language contact at the individual level in urban contexts is currently sparking a whole new norm development dynamic (Blommaert 2010). Changes are nowadays more likely to be influenced by street-level discourse by ordinary speakers. This is due not only to a wave of democratisation that is currently taking place in the Netherlands but also because street-level discourse is heard more and more often through social media. It is therefore more “normal” nowadays, and it carries considerable covert prestige (Labov 1972).

Norm-sensitive speech is sometimes heard to be subject to a degree of informalisation and is being influenced by the social layers that are not typically associated with the norm language (Stroop 1998). Because of the growing role of identity in the formation of language use (Cornips et al. 2018; Satyanath 2016), which includes a rising status of language use that contradicts the norm, street language is increasingly becoming more likely as an influencer of more general language norms. Street language is no longer exclusively associated with the lower social strata of society but is being imitated by educated younger speakers, i.e. stereotypical speakers of the standard language (Stroop 1998).

An added effect is the increased diversification of the Dutch population. In busy urban circles, exposure to languages other than Dutch is increasingly common for ordinary speakers. These languages are visible in the public space and a safe assumption is that this exposure changes the way people view language and form language norms. A few research

examples will show how language norms change differently nowadays due to the presence of different social and situational forces and that this tends to take place in cities.

Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2019) vividly demonstrated how in a highly multicultural city like The Hague many non-Dutch languages are spoken by speakers who nevertheless feel part of Dutch society. This commitment to their native tongue but also to Dutch society and the Dutch language and culture leads to language contact in which a role is played by their native tongue in daily discourse. It affects the normality of foreign-sounding language choices (words, expressions, phonemes, prosodic patterns). This likely effect of exposure to multilingualism and to languages other than Dutch is also demonstrated by Voges et al. (2018), who studied the language use in the linguistic landscape (Edelman 2010; Kasanga 2014) in several large cities in the western urban conurbation of the Netherlands. In particular, they observed the languages used in window displays of eateries in the Dutch cities of Rotterdam, The Hague, and Amsterdam. In total, they observed 111 shop windows. Their results showed that Dutch and English were used similarly often and that Arabic, Turkish, Italian and Spanish were commonly occurring languages as well. The assumption by the makers of signs may be that ordinary Dutchmen will somehow understand the language and be lured into the eatery. This use of a non-Dutch language may be symbolical but it also presumes knowledge and acceptance of non-Dutch languages by ordinary passers-by. These eateries are popular amongst autochthonous Dutchmen.

A demonstration at the discourse level of how societal multilingualism may likely lead to changes in how Dutch is perceived and used is the investigation by Ridderikhoff (2009). This investigation shows how young speakers could be at the forefront of language change; how groups of speakers know how other groups speak (and dress and behave) and how their own language (and other) customs are adjusted to that. The examples demonstrate how language use changes in and amongst groups and how linguistic norms may form as a response. The speaker, Mick, was 21 years old at the time of the interviews (2004), he had a Dutch nationality and was of Surinamese Creole descent. The example shows you how in two neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, the same expression can have a different meaning and pragmatic load.

*In de Bijlmer als iemand tegen je zei moest je gewoon bang zijn ik ga je djoeken dan wist je gewoon dat niet die persoon die het zei zou je steken misschien iemand anders iemand komt gewoon naar je toe en die steekt je gewoon neer. In Westerpark (laughs) is het gewoon heel anders, iemand komt daar, mensen zeggen het niet en als iemand het zeft, bang zijn want*

*alleen die persoon, alleen die persoon komt neerge... (imitates someone) "ja ik heb hem alleen maar geprikt." Alleen maar geprikt, vast wel. Er is een verschil woorden zijn anders. Sommige woorden verschillen met wie je 't zegt sommige woorden verschillen waar je het zegt.*

In de Bijlmer when someone tells you you just have to be scared I will stab (djoeken) you then just knew that the person who told you would not stab you but maybe someone else someone else just comes to you and he will just stab you. In Westerpark (laughs) it is just completely different, someone comes there, people don't say it and if someone says it to you, be afraid for that person only, only that person comes down... (imitate someone) "yes but I only pricked him." Just pricked for sure. There is a difference words are different. Some words differ with whom you say them, some words differ where you pronounce them.

*De waarden zijn hetzelfde, maar de woorden zijn een beetje afgezwakt. Als iemand in de Bijlmer tegen je zegt zullen we tori zetten dan hebben we het over van okay we hebben een manier hoe we geld kunnen komen die niet eerlijk is, maar we hebben het wel gewoon over geld, we hebben het over een paar honderd maar ja in de huidige tijd zullen we het hebben over weet ik veel het bedrag is niet belangrijk. In Westerpark als iemand zegt we gaan een tori zetten dan is het heel anders, dan is het van we gaan eh, we gaan even naar die en die toe want die heeft want die heeft dat en dat gedaan, gewoon eh, even lastig vallen of zo. Dat is heel iets anders. Het is iets onschuldigers. Het heeft iets onschuldigs over zich. Het is gewoon heel anders.*

The values are the same but the words have been weakened a bit. If someone in the Bijlmer tells you shall we commit tori then we talk about okay we have a way how to get money which is illegal but we just talk about money we talk about a few hundred but yes nowadays we will talk about I don't know the amount is not important. If someone in Westerpark says we commit tori then it is completely different, then it means something like err we go to that one and that one for a minute for he has for he has done this and this just err bothers him or so. That is completely different. It is more innocent. There is some innocence about it. It is just something else.

These specific illustrations of urban language contact situations demonstrate the effects of identity expression through language, and the coming to existence of language variation in neighbourhoods where speakers with different social orientations meet, interact, and assert themselves. From these examples, it becomes clear how urban contexts are particularly vital in the shaping of norms. Identity and locality production through language use are visible as well as adjustment of the norm on the basis of interlocutor or social or geographical space. The outcome of these discursive practices

is change in language use, and it is not unlikely that these practices will at some point in time affect the higher social strata of language use because of the covert prestige (Labov 1972) they carry, as expressed through popular culture (especially music), which is blurring distinctions between formal/non-regional and informal/local. Sociolects may develop into broadly carried norms. The language norm may become fluid in the sense that it is adjusted strongly to interlocutor and space.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter has tried to demonstrate the workings of language norms in urban contexts. Besides the legendary language norm that is associated with a specific city, there are norms that ordinary users claim to have and which often seem relatively realistic and vital and not so explicitly associated with the urban. Parallel to that, postmodern times have brought new trends, which are likely to be active in the day-to-day discourse-based rise of language norms.

The postmodern speaker typically abides by scepticism and the rejection of language ideologies that stem overtly from authorities. Language norms are in this revised view defined on the basis of some sort of objective reality, and should be socially conditioned, not dictated from above and certainly not hierarchically motivated. The embracement of pluralism is another characteristic of postmodern speakers. A language norm that stems from monolingual ideologies and is expressed by linguistically and ethnically undiverse and elitist authorities is typically naturally rejected. The idea is that all ordinary language users play a part in the formation of language norms, and in cities in particular languages other than Dutch cannot automatically be rejected. Cities in particular are spaces where postmodern methods of norm formation are most active.

Online as well as urban communication spaces have acted as the vehicles of spreading the new mechanisms of norm formation. Ordinary users have equal access to these spaces and inter-group communication is booming and is leading to proliferated ways of language-norm formation. Some of these ways are new, while others repeat formation methods that are common, especially outside the western world, especially norm formation in linguistically highly diverse societies. Today's street-norm formation is a good example of this. The examples in this chapter showed not only that non-Dutch languages are becoming part of the unmarked public space, but also that they are likely to potentially be influencers of language norms that transcend the local, as at local levels language norms that are set from above are being challenged, while the status of these lower strata is increasing.



Norms are becoming flexible and situationally conditioned rather than one-size-fits-all. Future language-norm development is likely to be based increasingly on this new style of norm construction in an urban setting, while the role of online norm formation is an interesting development that sociolinguistics will probably focus on in years to come. The future will show whether the gap between street norms and broader norms will be bridged and whether street norms will gradually filter into national norms the way this chapter predicts.

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## **PART II**

# **LANGUAGE USE IN PERSONAL LETTERS**



# BETWEEN ENGLISH AND DUTCH: THE CASE OF A 16<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY MERCHANT SHIPMASTER

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## 1. Introduction

In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Anglo-Dutch relations were marked by peaceful cooperation as well as by political and military tensions. These included warfare and religious turmoil in both England and the Low Countries and resulted in waves of migration on both sides of the North Sea littoral. In the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the major areas of Dutch settlement in England concentrated in the capital, and south-eastern and eastern counties, notably East Anglia (Yungblut 1996; Trudgill 2010). At the same time, trade relations on the shores of the North Sea continued, promoting the movement of goods and labour. Both kinds of relation intensified language contacts, and most English merchants trading in the Low Countries had at least some Dutch and French at the time (Nurmi and Pahta 2004; Chamson 2014).

This paper sets out to explore, in the spirit of Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2012), the extent to which the language of an individual could be shown to reflect their bi- or multilingual experience in the Anglo-Dutch context. I will focus on the correspondence of Francis Johnson, a merchant and shipmaster who was active in East Anglia and the Low Countries in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and assess the extent to which his usage compared to his East Anglian contemporaries. Johnson's letters are drawn from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC, 1400–1800), as is the comparative material.

The linguistic features to be discussed are frequent enough to occur even in relatively small datasets and include spelling (section 2.2), the auxiliary *do* (section 3), third-person singular verb forms (section 4), and relativization strategies with human referents (section 5). Section 6 concludes the paper with some observations on how Johnson's preferences

might be interpreted in terms of language contact and non-standard English more generally.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Francis Johnson as a letter writer

### 2.1 *Letters and identity*

Next to nothing is known about the life of Francis Johnson except what can be gleaned from his correspondence and other dealings with Sir Nathaniel Bacon, from Stiffkey, Norfolk, between 1575 and 1578. A shipmaster and merchant, Johnson was nicknamed “Francis the Dutchman,” and the editors of the Bacon letters assume that he was a Dutch-English bilingual (Hassel Smith, Baker, and Kenny 1978–1979). His business operations extended from East Anglia and the Low Countries to the north of England and Norway, and he traded in coal, wool, hops, flax, drinking pots, wine, feather beds, and, as was customary at the time, news.

Four letters by Johnson have been included in the CEEC, amounting to 1,638 words altogether. The first two are classified by the editors of these manuscript letters as holographs and, the latter two, as copies.<sup>2</sup> Johnson signed his name variably as *Francis Jhonsoone* and *Francis Janzon* in his two holograph letters; in the copies the name appeared as *Frances Johnsonn* and *Fraunces Johnson*. The letters are illustrative of the letter-writing practices of the time. In Johnson’s first letter to Bacon, dated to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1575, the signature was accompanied by the phrase, *your servant* (1), and the letter was addressed to *my loving friend* (2), in the case of both Nathaniel Bacon and Francis Wyndham, Bacon’s brother-in-law, who was asked to forward the letter to Bacon. Both men were given the title of *master*, often abbreviated as *Mr.* at the time, which was used with reference to men who came from, or aspired to, the ranks of the lower gentry. Like *servant*, the humility phrase in the signature in (1), the term *friend* could be used in the letter superscription as a solidarity marker or to assure the recipient of the writer’s loyalty (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1999; Nevala 2004, 288). *Cousin* in (2) refers to the family ties between Wyndham and Bacon, who were in-laws.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this paper and dedicate it to Ingrid with many happy memories of our efforts from the early 1990s on to encourage sociohistorical approaches to the study of English by organizing conference workshops, seminars, student exchanges, and publishing activities.

<sup>2</sup> The terms *holograph* and *autograph* are used interchangeably in the rest of this paper.

- (1) By mii, Francis Jhonsoone, **your servaunte** by daey and by nicht. (Francis Johnson, 1575; BACON I,157; letter signature)
- (2) This bill shall be deliverede unto my loving **frende Meester** Winddom at Noorwith, and I praei to be so good and sende yt forth to **my loving frende Meesteer** Bakene dwelling up the see syte, your **cossyne**. (Francis Johnson, 1575; BACON I,157; letter superscription)

## 2.2 Spelling and formulas

As suggested by examples (1) and (2), Johnson's autograph letters contain a good deal of spelling variation. A modern spell checker flags 40% of the running words in the first letter as non-standard.<sup>3</sup> However, some of the forms such as *Meester* strike one as Dutch rather than English: it is not used by any other writer in the CEEC nor is it recorded as an alternative historical spelling for "Master" by the OED.

Besides *Meester*, example (3), cited from the same letter, contains other Dutch-looking forms such as *miin* (< *mijn*) and *goede* ("good(s)"). *Mijn* and *goed* are given by the OED as the Middle Dutch and West Frisian forms for "mine" and "good(s)," respectively. The example also shows Johnson's use of the forms *good* and *good(e)*. He similarly varies his spelling of "hundred" (*hounderth*, *houndert*) with forms suggesting the Dutch devoicing of the final voiced stop consonant.

- (3) Recommendation unto you **miin** loving frende **Meester** Baken and Mistrise Backen and **Meester** Monfoort. I laet you understande that I I am in a **goode** haelte as I trust in Gode that you are so toe, whith your wyf and with **Meester** Monfoort and alle oeder **good** freends. I doe laet you understande that wee are come at Rotterdam unto a verye ill meerkite with the **goede** that I hade whithe me. We have solde everrie **hounderth** for 51 shilling and 8 pens, and have delivered no moore but 8 **houndert** lacke 6 pound weicht your woll and my to getere. (Francis Johnson, 1575; BACON I,156; holograph)

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<sup>3</sup> The original spelling has been retained by the editors, who specify that they have only modernized capitalization and some of the punctuation as well as the regular u/v and i/j alternation, the latter also in numerals and occasional words (*mijn* would be a case in point here). Moreover, they have expanded abbreviations with superscript letters and added comments in square brackets to help the reader identify non-standard words and forms (Hassel Smith, Baker and Kenny 1978–1979, xlix-1). Brackets are also used to indicate illegible or missing words in the letters; these are quite frequent in the first non-holograph letter from 1578.



Example (4) further demonstrates Johnson's bilingual code as he employs *met* for "with." The Old and Middle English form *mid* (*mit*) is cognate with Middle Dutch *met*. The rest of the time he uses *with*, *whith* or *whithe*, as in (3) (see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2012, 314). In (4), he varies his spelling of "good" and "goods" by reversing his usage in (3) and spelling them *goed* and *goodts*. In example (5), below, we also find the form *het* for "it," which is cognate with Middle Dutch *het* and Old Frisian *hit/het*.

- (4) I doe let you knowe that I have bocht for this monnye **goed** hops of the best that I coude get, everii [hondert] for 22 schelling and 6 pens **met** [with] licens, and yet have I boughte more flax, whit drinkinge potts, whit Hollants tyes, that I trust to God that we shall have better profyts of the **goodts** that I have bought. (Francis Johnson, 1575; BACON I,156; holograph)

We may assume that to have picked up these forms and spellings Johnson must have been exposed to Dutch writing. However, some of forms may have been further supported by his own pronunciation. That could have been the case with *miin* and forms such as *mii* ("my") and *liis* ("lies") shown by example (5) in section 3, which suggest that Johnson's language had not undergone the diphthongization of high vowels associated with the Great Vowel Shift; these spellings are also attested in Middle English (e.g. Nevalainen 2006, 120–122). Johnson retained spellings such as *mii* and *liinge* ("lying") in his two autograph letters but none of them could be found in the two copies from 1578, nor could the other, apparently Dutch-influenced forms discussed in this section. It is however noteworthy that, overall, the spelling in the copy letters was no less variable than in the autograph letters.

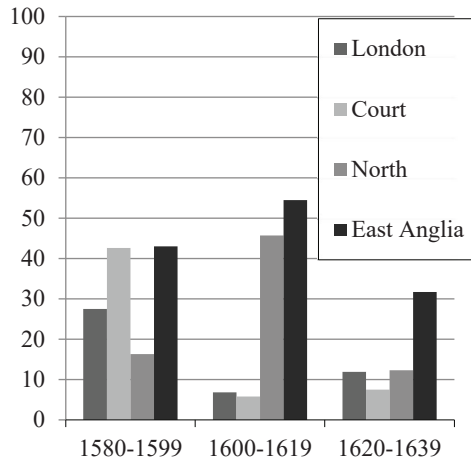
Francis Johnson may have been a highly irregular speller, but he was in full command of the formal side of letter writing. Even the short passages in (3) and (4) contain common letter-writing formulas such as notification (*I let you understand, I do let you know*). The first notification is followed by the health formula, typical of both English and Dutch letters at the time (Nevalainen 2001; Rutten and van der Wal, 2014, Ch.4).

### 3. Auxiliary *do*

One of the notable grammatical features especially in Johnson's autograph letters is his frequent use of the auxiliary *do* in affirmative statements, a feature that was in rapid decline in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2016[1987]; Nurmi 1999). Example (5) continues the text of the letter excerpted in (3) and (4), showing the instances of *do* in boldface. Johnson uses the auxiliary to introduce a new item in the list of notifications (*I do let you understand*) but also elsewhere with first-person subjects altogether 11 times in his autograph letters, which amount to 946 running words.

- (5) I **doe** laet you understande that wee are come at Rotterdam unto a verve ill meerkite with the goede that I hade whithe me [...] More, I **doe** let you understand that I have binne redye to come over more then this 3 weickes; my ship theree [*where*] mii good is in liis as nu [*lies as now*] at Dort [*Dordrecht*] and I **doe** lye at the Brille and tarry for for hime, for the hard forst [*frost*] came heder thadt he coude not come [ʔ] calve, for **het** was frossin so hard that I hade spoke with him owne and the other daey he coudt not come. [...] More, I **doe** let you understande the goods that we **doe** leve behind is wort in this contrii 26 pounde. (Francis Johnson, 1575; BACON I, 156–157; holograph)

To be able to assess how typical Johnson's usage was in East Anglia at the time, we may turn to the figures provided by Nurmi (1999, 177), which show the distribution of the auxiliary in the four regions systematically sampled for the CEEC (i.e. the City of London, the Royal Court, East Anglia, and the North). Figure 1 plots the frequency of *do* based on Nurmi's figures in 20-year intervals from 1580 to 1640 and shows that, throughout the period, East Anglia has higher average text frequencies of *do* in affirmative statements than the other areas. However, were we to place Francis Johnson in the diagram, he would stand out as an outlier with almost three times as many instances of affirmative *do* in his autograph letters normalized to 10,000 words as the East Anglian average in the period 1580–1599.



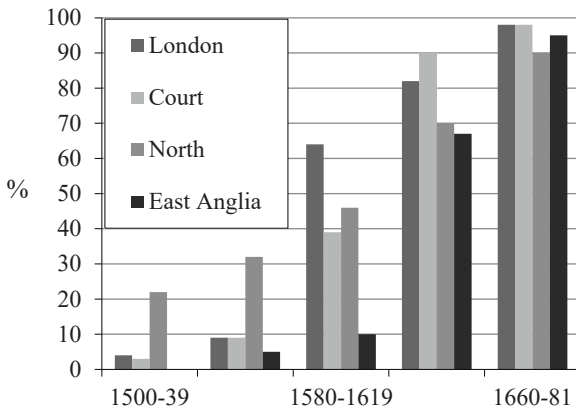
**Fig. 1.** Regional distribution of *do* in affirmative statements normalized to 10,000 words.

Johnson's autograph corpus is of course small, which complicates its direct comparison with much larger corpora. Even including the copy letters, which are expected to reproduce his grammar although not his spelling, the dataset remains small. Furthermore, comparing his autograph letters with the copies is often frustrated by the uneven distribution of the relevant variable contexts in the letters. The first autograph letter repeats letter-writing formulas such as *I do let you understand* in (5) which include *do*, but the rest do not make much use of these formulas, no doubt due to their different functions and contents: the letters range from itemized accounts of Johnson's business activities as in (5) to passing on news as in (6). We therefore need to think of any comparisons, not in strict variationist terms, but rather as indicative of Johnson's linguistic practices that vary in frequency according to the main functions and subject matter of the letters, and hence according to the relevant variable contexts they happened to contain.

#### 4. Third-person singular verb forms

Another feature that characterizes East Anglian English in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century is variation in the third-person singular present indicative verbal inflections. The modern standard suffix *-s*, or verbal *-s* for short, took much longer to find its way into average use in East Anglia than in the other

regions studied using the CEEC. Figure 2, based on Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2017, 178), shows the relative frequency of *-s* as opposed to the outgoing *-th* form. In East Anglia these two forms were also in competition with the suffixless or zero form. The decline of *-th* and the spread of *-s* coincided with large numbers of Flemish and French refugees from the Low Countries settling particularly in Norfolk in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This language contact, Trudgill (2010, 36–60) argues, intensified the use of the zero variant in this region, which remains an option in East Anglian English today.



**Fig. 2.** Regional distribution of *-s* (vs. *-th*) in verbs other than *have* and *do*.

All three variants appear in Johnson’s letters, where we can find, for example, *-s* in *liis* “lies” in (5) and *-th* in *lyeth* “lieth” in (6). The zero form also appears once in his first autograph letter alongside the single instance of *-s* in *liis*. Besides the one instance of *-th* in *lyeth*, the zero form is found in the rest of the variable contexts in his first non-autograph letter, eight times altogether, illustrated in (6) with the verb phrases shown in bold (*he looke*, *Donn John do eexcecute*, *he take*, *he leav*, etc.). The first non-autograph letter is the only one of the four to have as many verbs in the third-person singular present-tense indicative, whereas the rest are characterized by first-person narrative or past-tense forms in general. This evidence suggests that Johnson’s preferred variant was the zero form.

- (6) ...that the Prynce of Oringe ys in Annwarpp withe power and **he looke** eeverye daye for Casamerys, a lorde of Jarmanye [...] so we trust by the provedence of God that the Prynce and he withe States [*of*] this countye to overcome Donn John. And **Donn John do eexcecute** his

tyranny in this sorte that what towne soever **he take he leav** neather man, woman, nor chyld a lyve but **slea** [*an*]d **burne** and **spoyll** allthogether [...] And **he lyeth** aboute Mastreyt as we understand. (Francis Johnson, 1578; BACON II,15, non-holograph)

## 5. Subject relatives with human reference

The third set of constructions to be discussed is relativization strategies with human subject referents: gapping (zero), TH- and WH-. As indicated by Figure 3 (based on Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2002, 118), *who* and *which* were used with human antecedents alongside *that* in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Of these three alternative forms *who* is the most recent: it is found in this function from the late Middle English period on, and gradually replaces *which* in the subsequent centuries. Zero subject relatives also occur in 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century correspondence, but only as a minority strategy (Nevalainen 2012, 164–166).

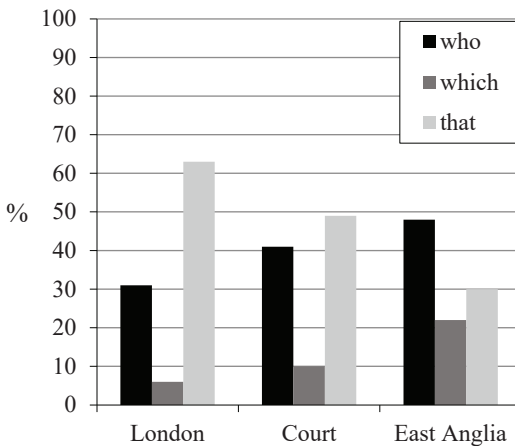


Fig. 3. Regional distribution of subject relatives with human reference in 1560–1599.

Comparing the TH- and WH-strategies in Figure 3, East Anglian usage is found to differ from the capital region, the City of London and the Royal Court, in that WH-forms dominate in East Anglia, while *that* prevails in London and roughly equals the number of WH-forms at Court. On average, East Anglia exhibits more *who* use than the other regions do. Poussa (1999, 93) observes that the East Anglian preference for the WH-strategy – subject *who* was first attested in the Norfolk Paston letters – may be another

reflection of the long-term Low Dutch influence in the area, and adds that the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Flemish refugees in East Anglia may have been a factor in its diffusion.

Subject relatives with human reference are on the whole rare in Johnson's letters, and he favours gapping – marked with [0] in example (7) – in this function. He also uses the WH-strategy but prefers *which* to *who* (*many others of the Prince's capteins, which lye with their companis*). No instances of *who* are found in his small corpus although his possessive form is *whose* rather than *of which* (*one great captein of the Prinse, whose name is Rookehaver*). Both WH-instances come from his second autograph letter, where he uses these forms to mark non-restrictive relative clauses, as was usual at the time.

- (7) Allsoe I do understand that Amserdam will not as yet yelld unto the Prinse, nevertheles ther is **sevin hundrethe of the rychest of the town [0] hath the subskribid** to the Prince [...]. Ther is **one great captein of the Prinse, whose name is Rookehaver, & many others of the Prince's capteins, which lye with their companis, liinge neere Amserdam, [0] ar permittid** to com in to Amserdam dailye, (Francis Johnson, 1577; BACON I, 262; holograph)

The two restrictive relative clauses with human subject antecedents in (7) have zero relatives, and occur in existential *there*-clauses, as is commonly the case with gapping (*ther is sevin hundrethe of the rychest of the town [0] hath the subskribid to the Prince; Ther is one great captein of the Prinse ... & many others of the Prince's capteins ... [0] ar permittid to com in to Amserdam*). Johnson also made use of the TH-strategy, but only with non-human subjects.

In sum, the evidence we have for Johnson's use of subject relatives with human referents in his letters is divided between the zero and WH-strategies, depending on whether the relative clause is restrictive or not. While the WH-strategy is common in East Anglia at the time, the zero strategy, delimited to *there*-existentials, is less so.

## 6. Concluding remarks

The Johnson corpus is small compared to the CEEC as a whole but, taken together, his preferences and the contemporary usage in the region pattern in interesting ways. Spelling variation in Johnson's autograph letters suggests that he was strongly influenced by Dutch, maybe because of his background and as a result of his trade contacts with his fellow merchants and customers. However, although common in East Anglia, none of the

grammatical features discussed and found in Johnson's correspondence was unique to the area at the time. On the other hand, none of the East Anglian preferences in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was later generalized in the modern mainstream varieties of English.

It is therefore interesting to observe that, as *The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English* (eWAVE, Kortmann and Lunkenheimer 2013) indicates, these features occur widely in World Englishes today: the invariant present tense indicative is frequent and zero-relativization in subject position is of common occurrence; even *do* as an unstressed tense marker is found, although very rare, as is the use of *which* for "who" as a subject relative. Table 1 provides a summary of these features in those varieties for which the relevant data is available.

| <b>Feature/<br/>Frequency per<br/>number of<br/>varieties</b> | <b>Zero for the<br/>3<sup>rd</sup> person<br/>singular</b> | <b>Zero-<br/>relative in<br/>subject<br/>position</b> | <b><i>Do</i> as<br/>unstressed<br/>tense marker</b> | <b><i>Which</i> for<br/>"who"</b>            |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Typical<br/>examples</b>                                   | <i>So she show<br/>up and say<br/>[...]</i>                | <i>The man Ø<br/>lives there is<br/>a nice chap</i>   | <i>That girl what<br/>did smile at<br/>me</i>       | <i>"my<br/>brother,<br/>which<br/>[...]"</i> |
| <b>Pervasive or<br/>obligatory</b>                            | 25 (36%)   | 9 (13%)   | 2 (3%)  | 0 (0%)                                       |
| <b>Neither<br/>pervasive nor<br/>very rare</b>                | 14 (20%)   | 18 (26%)  | 4 (6%)  | 4 (6%)                                       |
| <b>Extremely<br/>rare or absent</b>                           | 31 (44%)   | 41 (60%)  | 59 (91%)  | 60 (94%)                                     |
| <b>Total of<br/>varieties<br/>studied</b>                     | 70   | 68  | 65  | 64   |

**Table 1.** Frequency of features used by Francis Johnson in World Englishes today (eWave 2013)

Where they occur, these features are particularly common in high-contact varieties of English around the world. These include pidgins and creoles but also indigenized L2 varieties and in some cases also traditional L1 varieties as, for example, East Anglian English in the case of the invariant present tense indicative. However, it is noteworthy that in present-day East Anglian English only the invariant present tense indicative is commonly attested, and zero-relativization in subject position exists but is rare, while *do* is no

longer used as an unstressed tense marker nor is the subject relative *which* found with human referents. Based on the data that could be gathered from the letters of Francis Johnson, we may draw the conclusion that, although writing to his fellow East Anglians, he made frequent use of strategies that could facilitate communication in language contact situations.

It goes without saying that particular historical circumstances have a key role to play in accounting for individual usage patterns. Although rare today, both affirmative *do* and the subject relative *which* with human reference were in current use in Johnson's time. Moreover, a high incidence of *do* in affirmative statements may be "a performance feature in the speech of adult bilinguals who habitually mix and switch language codes" (Poussa 1990, 411). Its usefulness also emerges in the context of letter writing, where Johnson takes recourse to a formulaic strategy involving *do* in the notification sections of his letters. Ultimately, his linguistic practices, both spoken and written, appear to have been moulded by his bilingual experience on the North Sea littoral in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

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# THE FALL AND RISE OF LORD CHESTERFIELD? ARISTOCRATIC PRESCRIPTIVISM IN THE “AGE OF JOHNSON”

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## 1. Introduction: Johnson’s Dictionary (1755) and the repudiation of aristocratic authority

In 1754, two essays promoting Samuel Johnson’s (1707–1784) forthcoming *Dictionary* (1755) appeared anonymously in *The World*, a fashionable periodical published by the dictionary’s publisher Robert Dodsley (1704–1764). These essays were written by Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773), a retired politician and diplomat though a still-influential orator and author – in 1751 he had come out of retirement in successful support of British calendar reform (Cannon 2012). This well-connected aristocrat was also the dedicatee of two Dodsley-published projects for language standardization, Thomas Sheridan’s *British Education* (1756) and Johnson’s earlier *Plan* (1747), of which he was the patron. John Brewer opines that the most important aspects of eighteenth-century patronage were praise and publicity rather than money (2002, 249). And according to Horace Walpole, Chesterfield’s essays “contributed [...] much” to the dictionary’s “reputation” (Walpole 58, reported by Shellabarger 1951, 287). But the rest of Walpole’s comment reminds us of why the dictionary needed promotion: Walpole (the fourth earl of Orford) referred to Johnson’s “pedantic” terms and implicitly classified him as not among our “Standard authors,” signalling this aristocrat’s opinion of Johnson’s low social status. In his two essays, Chesterfield indeed featured themes of authority and influence, playfully and condescendingly considering the influence of women and of “Mr Johnson” over language variation (Stanhope 1754b). Johnson’s reaction to the essays and his repudiation of Chesterfield’s patronage are well known, and have great symbolic weight in the history of English prescriptivism. In the somewhat hyperbolic words of Elizabeth

Hedrick, this incident explodes the idea “that aristocratic authority could ever have the power over language – or lexicography – that it seemed to have over ordinary mortals” (437).

The repudiation of the patron of his dictionary’s *Plan* by Johnson, “the son of a failed Lichfield bookseller who came to London in 1737 with very little money and without any connections with the nobility or with the wealthy” (Hudson 2012, 360), has often been interpreted as marking “the effective end of the patronage system.” Johnson’s rejection letter to Chesterfield has even been called “the Magna Carta of the modern author” (reported by Lynch 2009, 84–85). Johnson’s letter has also been associated with the shift away from the prescriptivism of his *Plan* (influenced by Chesterfield) to a more descriptive approach to usage (Mugglestone 2015, 40–52). Through Johnson’s experience, the lexicographer is no longer the “conquer[or]” of the *Plan*, but the “harmless drudge” of the *Dictionary* that drew its authority from the usage of the best authors (Lynch 2009, 84–85). The fact that Edward Ward’s painting of Johnson waiting humiliatingly in the earl’s anteroom was made in 1845 (and is freely available on Wikipedia) confirms the long-term prominence of this conflict (made popular by Boswell’s *Life* of Johnson) and of Johnson’s perspective on it (Boswell 1791, I, 141–142).

And after his death in 1773, Lord Chesterfield was exposed in additional ways – as an ungenerous employer, and (by shifting social standards) as an immoral man. After his will was posthumously published in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Elizabeth Montagu pronounced in a letter to a friend that Chesterfield’s “Will has disgraced him. [...] He says, he looks on a Faithfull servant as an unfortunate friend, then leaves 40 pounds to the unfortunate friend that had lived with him 40 years. [...] His [...] behaviour to his Lady in this Will convinces one he wanted principle” (Montagu 1923, I, 273; 19 July, 1773). Chesterfield left little to other ladies – little to the mother of his illegitimate son, and nothing to that son’s widow, Eugenia (Shellabarger 1951, 377). As a result, Eugenia sold the copyright of the many letters Chesterfield had written to Philip (Gulick 1979, 2), and these were published in 1774. Several decades after he wrote it, some of his advice seemed both immoral and old-fashioned to his new public readers who included many women of the middling sort. An acclaimed literary hostess and scholar, Elizabeth Montagu was among those who criticized him for crafting “pleasing manners to grace Vice” (1923, II, 218; 31 December 1787) – by courting (and conquering) aristocratic women with the ultimate aim of impressing men. The negative reception of Chesterfield’s morality again entrenches the sense that the cultural influence of aristocrats might be waning over time. And Montagu was not alone in her disappointment with

the lord's language – his letters lacked the expected “correctness or elegance” (1923, 1, 285; 18 July, 1774).

Lord Chesterfield was also exposed as writing incorrect English. Revisions and criticisms of Chesterfield's letters – some written as early as the 1730s – reflect developing standards of the language: some of the variants in his private letters were not acceptable in print in the 1770s. Even before their publication, Philip's widow Eugenia seems to have revised some of his grammar: Price's comparison of one of the few surviving manuscripts with the printed edition shows her correction of a strong verb form (past participle *drank* to *drunk*) and her expansion of contractions (Price 372). And after their publication, contemporaries such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* (Anon. 1774, 321; reported by Bailey 10) pounced on errors of pronoun case: Horace Walpole was amused that “a man who thought of nothing so much as the purity of his language” would write “you and *me* shall not be well together” (17 April 1774, reported by Bailey 8). According to Chesterfield's bibliographer Gulick, Dodsley corrected some of the perceptible “grammatical offenses” in the second edition: once changing *you was* to *you were* and *whom* to *who*; eleven times changing “*who* and its compounds” to *whom*; and five times changing *you and me* to *you and I*, “once when *you and me* is correct” (Gulick 1979, 37; quoted by Bailey 10–11). There were many subsequent editions.

For despite the famous anecdote implying Johnson's lexicographical liberty from aristocrats, Lord Chesterfield appears among the authorities in the sixth edition of Baugh and Cable's *History of the English Language* textbook (2013). In the chapter on “The Appeal to Authority, 1650–1800,” two of the references to Chesterfield come from the two essays he wrote anonymously in 1754, promoting Johnson's dictionary and provoking Johnson's indignation at such belated patronage (267, 302n). A third reference (277) is from one of Chesterfield's letters to his illegitimate son, written in the same year. Considering the words *namely* and *to wit*, which though “very good words in themselves” are no longer used by “people of fashion,” Chesterfield proclaims that “Every language has its peculiarities; they are established by usage, and whether right or wrong, they must be complied with” (Stanhope 1774, II, 363; XC, 5 April 1754). Indeed, by 1774, grammatical standards had changed: by the 1780s stranded prepositions might well have been looked down upon (Yáñez-Bouza 59). Nevertheless, instructing his illegitimate son in social and linguistic appropriateness, Lord Chesterfield's posthumous letters also instructed other readers. The collection ran into five editions before the end of 1774 (and a pirated eleventh one by the end of the century) (Gulick 1979, 40, 61).

In this paper I do not attempt to track Lord Chesterfield's linguistic influence on others, though I survey the surveys of others and am especially indebted to the unpublished PhD thesis of Richard Bailey (1965). Nor can I track variation and change in now-marked variants through Chesterfield's lifetime, since (in part reflecting the influence of prescriptivism) the contemporary editions of his letters changed his spelling and sometimes grammar, and the manuscripts seem to have disappeared (Gulick 1979, 6). I have thus restricted my focus to the *idea* of aristocratic influence in eighteenth-century prescriptivism, and especially what to me were unfamiliar overlaps with so-called "middle-class values" and explicit comparisons with Johnson. It was in the eighteenth century that "birth" was (slowly) yielding to "worth": we might epitomize this with the popularity of a novel written by the printer Samuel Richardson about the reformation (and courtship) of an aristocrat by his servant, *Pamela* (1740). Lord Chesterfield promoted diligent application and self-cultivation not just to his illegitimate son but also for himself. Chesterfield hid his labour, or tried to: he explicitly characterized himself in contrast to Johnson's pedantry and what Johnson prominently stylized as harmless drudgery in the entry for *lexicographer*. Chesterfield's natural son died prematurely. But to his aspirational readers, Chesterfield exhorted and perhaps himself exemplified the belief that what seemed natural was the result of labour, and his letters combined the qualities of hard work and aristocratic status.

## 2. Lord Chesterfield and the sources of English linguistic norms

Like Johnson's dictionary, and many other mid-century publications, Chesterfield's letters to his illegitimate son Philip certainly and frequently confirmed the importance of correct English. Chesterfield also emphasized the importance of modern languages and ancient languages for young gentlemen: the earliest letters were written in French (e.g. Stanhope 1774, I, 7; letter IV, 19 Jun 1738), and one of the letters written entirely in Latin was to mark Philip's maturity – his ninth birthday (I, 138–140; LVI, Kalends of May, 1741). But Chesterfield explicitly and repeatedly emphasized that Philip needed to master English because an elite young man's ideal career was that of politics: written English for diplomacy and spoken English for oratory in the House of Commons. Chesterfield links the importance of oratory with the English constitution (I, 508; CLXXIII, 5 December 1749; this indirect reference to liberty is entertaining because Chesterfield also assumed – correctly – that his son would have no trouble getting elected to parliament. Where Chesterfield failed was in training his

son to speak: young Philip's first speech in the Commons was not only unimpressive but a disaster (Cannon). Philip's failure as an orator must have been doubly disappointing for his father, an advocate of education who was himself a celebrated speaker.

Lord Chesterfield's letters show both the importance of correct English and the humiliation of bad English – for high as well as low speakers. By the mid eighteenth century, English orthography was certainly subject to standards of correctness, though “[s]ome [few] words [were] indeed doubtful, being spelled differently, by different authors of equal authority.” A diplomat or politician's spelling errors would thus subject him to ridicule: Chesterfield claimed to know “a man of quality, who never recovered the ridicule of having spelled *wholesome* without the *w*.” A spelling error could make “even a woman of a tolerable education [...] despise and laugh at” one (II, 66: XVI, 19 November 1750). And this humiliation would be particularly humiliating, because only women were forgiven errors in spelling or style: “l'on ne pardonne qu'aux Dames, des fautes d'orthographe et de style” (I, 26; X, 4 October 1738). Chesterfield's lecture on spelling was provoked by Philip's spellings of *grandure* “grandeur” and *enduece* “induce” – “two faults, which few of my housemaids would have been guilty of” (II, 66).

Lord Chesterfield did itemize infelicities, but (of course because he is writing letters rather than a dictionary) they are both selective and random. As we have seen above, in 1754 he stigmatized Philip's *namely* and *to wit* as “true and correct” but “from long disuse” no longer fashionable and now fit only for “a sermon, or some very grave and formal compositions” (II, 363; XC, 5 April 1754). And in a letter dated 27 September 1749 he had provided a handful of “samples” of the “infinite” kinds of “vulgarism in language” that betray their user's “bad” or “low education, and a habit of low company.” Words like *smart* or *vastly* as well as “pronunciation of proper words” like “the earth [as] *yearth*” and “*obleiged* not *obliged*” “carr[y] the mark of the beast along with” them (I, 463–464; CLXIII). For anxious readers, these specific but random examples became much more accessible with the index prepared by John Nichols and appended to the letters starting with the seventh (1776) edition. The entry for “*Orthography*” consists of the sentence that “one single error in it may fix a ridicule on a person for life, 204” and leads back to *grandure* and *enduece*. And the index entry for “*Vulgarity of Language*, how acquired, 163” leads back to *obleiged* not *obliged* (Gulick 1979, 69–70; Stanhope 1776: *Index*, 37, 54).

From the present entry in the modern *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, one might conclude that the count noun *vulgarism* reflected and entrenched an aristocratic perspective on eighteenth-century usage. Not



fully updated since 1920, this OED entry lists a 1746 letter of Horace Walpole's as the earliest example of the word to mean "[a] vulgar phrase or expression" (2a), and the 1749 manuscript of Chesterfield's letter as their earliest example of *vulgarism* meaning "[t]he quality or character of being vulgar; vulgarity" (3a). Aristocrats were not the only commentators opposed to vulgarisms. A search of Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) reveals other examples of *vulgarism* referring to low language well before the 1774 publication of the letters – including the popular *Grammar of the English Tongue* commissioned by the vintner John Brightland, written anonymously by Charles Gildon, and advertised energetically in an insurance newsletter (as well as fashionable periodicals). In 1712, the use of *of* to mean "through" in the phrase "'tis of God's great Mercy" is described as "a Vulgarism, and scarce worth Notice" (Gildon and Brightland 1712, 106). Aristocrats were attentive to vulgarisms, and so were others.

Chesterfield criticized the English of a broad social spectrum, including aristocrats. In a dialogue he invented for his son, he implicitly criticizes proverbs and colloquialisms and vernacularity by attributing them to a pack of "idle, sauntering, illiterate English" aristocrats failing to apply themselves on their Grand Tour. Declining the idle youths' invitation for a jaunt and then for breakfast, young Stanhope replies that "I can't do that neither, I am engaged" [sic]. Chesterfield represents his son as engaged in studying modern languages, implicitly so that he can "convers[e]" "at Cardinal Albani's" and "at the Venetian Embassadress's." To the "Englishman" in the dialogue, these people are "those foreigners" – not low but "formal fine company" (I, 451–454 [451, 453]; CLXI, 12 September 1749).

As we can infer from young Stanhope's imagined "multiple negation" above, grammatical standards were changing and confusing through Chesterfield's lifetime. Some forms of double negation had been stigmatized as early as 1711 and had likely disappeared from some educated registers much earlier (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 11). However, in the printed edition of Chesterfield's letters *n't...neither* is attributed to young Philip without stigma. In 1749 when Chesterfield wrote this letter authoritative standards were still elusive: Lowth's grammar was not to be published until 1762. Moreover, since *n't...neither* remained in the edition (e.g. Stanhope 1776, II, 210), was it not yet incorrect? Reporting earlier research by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2006, 2010), Fitzmaurice has demonstrated that there were different kinds of negative concord and that examples like "Stanhope's" might have persisted in informal correspondence, even as they disappeared from dramatic representations of upper-class speech (2012, 312–314).

In 1774, Chesterfield's best-selling *Letters* would have enhanced readers' anxieties about acquiring and performing vernacular accuracy. First of all, although the French and Latin letters were translated, it is clear that for Chesterfield good English was linked inextricably with multilingual learning. Second, although he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of correct English to Philip, Chesterfield includes relatively few specific errors: the letters make good English seem important but elusive. Chesterfield mentions that he's read and corrected and returned one of Philip's letters in French, but does not specify the errors to him or the reader (1774, I, 10; V). Indeed, these letters epitomize a more hidden tradition of prescriptivism – children's letters to parents, and parents' to children, or siblings to each other (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009, 47, 84).

The difficulty of learning correct English from books can be illustrated with the French loanword *oblige*, and its pronunciation. Among the vulgarisms of pronunciation that “carr[y] the mark of the beast” is the following: “he is OBLEIGED, not OBLIGED to you” (I, 464; CLXIII, 27 September 1749). In 1791, John Walker claims in his *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* that it was Chesterfield's “authority” and “influence with the polite world” that caused the disappearance of the “affected” “French” variant that rhymed with *besieg'd* – a rhyme that Walker illustrated from Pope's poetry (1791, 15). However, in 1936, H.C. Wyld argued that it was much more likely that Chesterfield preferred the variant *oblige*, which was both current and French, and that the Walker tradition makes Chesterfield say “exactly the reverse of what he intended” (1936, 226, cited in the OED, s.v. *oblige*, v.). This uncertainty about which pronunciation Chesterfield was criticizing does make the point that it is difficult to learn good English and especially pronunciation from books.

As well as exemplifying errors rarely and randomly and ambiguously, Chesterfield occasionally made correctness sound rather subjective. A letter of 19 December 1751 considers the need for “extreme clearness and perspicuity” “in writing letters of business.” Yet after Chesterfield objectively distinguishes *who* from *which* according to animacy, he then explains that both *which* and *that* can refer to things, and that sometimes the choice is determined by euphony (or rather “εὐφωνία”). Monolingual readers might have been additionally confused not only by the untranslated Greek word but also by the following injunction to “[c]arefully avoid all Greek or Latin quotations” in a business letter (II, 190–191; XLI, 19 December 1751). These grammatical distinctions had been mentioned in the popular periodical *The Spectator*, and remind us of the role of periodicals in the prescriptive tradition (Yáñez-Bouza 2015, 293). But of course periodicals – like collections of letters – are not structured to codify a language

comprehensively or coherently. Chesterfield's association of correct and elegant English with "the best authors" was also unhelpfully subjective (II, 36; IX, 9 July 1750), although he did sometimes identify them: "You have with you three or four of the best English Authors, Dryden, Atterbury, and Swift; read them with the utmost care, and with a particular view to your language; and they may possibly correct that *curious infelicity of diction*, which you acquired at Westminster" (I, 498–9; CLXXI, 24 November 1749). The publication of Johnson's dictionary with its comprehensive and coherent list of words illustrated with "EXAMPLES from the best WRITERS" perhaps helped to make subjective taste more objective and more accessible.

### 3. Chesterfield, Johnson, and the commodification of transformational habits

In this short paper I cannot establish the extent of Chesterfield's influence on English, (n)or of Johnson's. Mugglestone enumerates numerous competing contemporary dictionaries (2012). And she elsewhere identifies contemporary authors who were not influenced by Johnson – including Chesterfield and Dodsley (2015, 200–201). But Tiekens-Boon van Ostade shows how some people imitated Johnson's language, and not just through the dictionary (2009, 107–108). And in *Samuel Johnson & the Journey into Words*, Mugglestone concentrates on the consequences of Johnson's decision to distance his dictionary from "the great" (2015, 49), including issues of hierarchy and authority. Hudson describes Johnson as refusing to "pander" to the great (2012, 360).

Johnson's dictionary certainly aligned authority with sources other than aristocrats. His assertion that the dictionary was written "without any patronage of the great" received emphasis of end-position, in the last paragraph of his Preface ([C2v]). Johnson's documentation of usage from the "best authors" balanced empirical "collection" with subjective "canonicity" (Mugglestone 2015, 57–58). He included a few examples from fewer women authors (C. Brewer). And his status as a descriptivist has been debated (McDermott 2005). But by distinguishing himself also from "the learned" Johnson implicitly rejected accusations of pedantry and also grounded the dictionary in usage that was neither pedantic nor fashionable (McDermott 2005, 124–126). And he tolerated variation and multiple authorities in more than one entry. For instance, the dictionary contains headwords for *ambassador* and *embassadress* as well as *ambassadour* [sic], and an acknowledgment that despite the prevalence of *embassy*, "our authors write almost indiscriminately *ambassador* or *ambassador*, *embassage*

or *ambassage*” (s.v. *embassage, embassy*; Mugglestone 2015, 103). This toleration of linguistic variation might be seen as a rejection of possible social hierarchies. The existence of variation made the dictionary more difficult to imitate.

Johnson’s contemporaries (and successors) often contrast him with Chesterfield. Likely in the wake of Johnson’s death, William Hayley composed *Two dialogues; containing a comparative view of the lives, characters, and writings, of Philip, the late Earl of Chesterfield, and of Dr. Samuel Johnson* (1787). Hayley also contrasted the earl’s artificial politeness with Johnson’s unpleasant honesty. As summarized by Montagu, Chesterfield’s seemingly “pleasing manners [...] grace[d] Vice,” while Johnson’s “brutal insolent manners disgraced” the author’s “Virtue” (II, 218; 31 December 1787). In cultural histories of the period, francophilic aristocratic politeness stereotypically yields to vernacular middling-class sincerity, if not like Johnson’s (Fitzmaurice 2016). In Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*, published in 1791, Johnson and Chesterfield are contrasted as natural and artificial: the “manly” Johnson expresses genuine “contempt and indignation” to the aristocrat’s “studied compliments” (I, 138–139, 142). Like men (and women) below him and to hopeful readers imitating him, Lord Chesterfield was indebted to art for the transformation of his natural qualities.

However, the tradition of these contrasts reminds us that the men were contemporaries, or nearly so. They had other things in common with each other. Both men were also authors for Dodsley and periodical moralists, their writing influencing public opinion. Both men were celebrated as conversationalists, although Johnson’s conversation involved not giving compliments but “talking for victory” (Boswell 1791, I, 324). And both were the products of education, both author and aristocrat. Indeed, as Pat Rogers writes of Johnson, both men epitomize “the triumph of the mind over the recalcitrant body”: the entries for both men in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* emphasize how each was severely disfavoured by nature: Johnson was awkwardly tall, with a face scarred by smallpox and scrofula, and “a body afflicted by involuntary convulsions ... odd grunts and head-rolling,” while Chesterfield was a “stunted giant,” with a “large head” and “bad teeth,” and a “shrill scream” of a voice (Rogers 2009; Cannon 2012). But readers of their works knew the men by their prose.

Both men were products of their education, which must have involved similar methods. In the mid 1730s, Johnson advised “the young Samuel Ford” to acquire “a habit of expression” in both English and Latin with “a daily imitation of the best and correctest authors” (1992, 12, reported by Mugglestone 2015, 31). Chesterfield’s methods for mastering

the vernacular involved a great deal of labour and application (in addition to keeping good company). Philip was expected to improve his English not only by associating with polite company, but by reading the best authors, writing letters to and compositions for his father, and by translating “every day, only three or four lines, from any book, in any language, into the correctest and most elegant English that you can think of” (II, 351; LXXVI, 26 February, 1754). In general, Chesterfield emphasizes the power of education to transform nature in a way that would be appealing to the socially ambitious as well as encouraging (or hectoring) to his son by blood. The earl consistently and frequently told the younger Philip that (in general) he could accomplish whatever he directed his attention to, and that it is “Education, more than Nature” that accounts for “that great difference [...] in the characters of men” (I, 481; CLXVIII, 3 November 1749). “A drayman is probably born with as good organs as Milton, Locke, or Newton; but, by culture, they are as much more above him as he is above his horse” (I, 278; CXV, 1 April 1748). “Sixtus the Fifth was the son of a swineherd, and raised himself to the papedom by his abilities: he was a great knave, but an able and singular one” (I, 298; CXXI, 31 May 1748).

Chesterfield’s opinions about application and habits can be contextualized in studies of eighteenth-century aristocracy, both empirical and theoretical. Briefly, it seems that education became increasingly important to European nobility, including not only multilingual education but also vernacular high culture (Dewald 1996, 157). In part this reflected social challenges from below: some of the few new peers created were not related to existing peers, but had been educated as lawyers. In part the rise of aristocratic education reflected the rise of modernity: as warfare and finance became more complex, so did nobility and royalty: in 1743 George II was the last reigning British king (or king of Britain) to ride into battle. Dewald describes the rise of what he calls administrative nobility, reliant more on words than on the sword: serving the state required investments in education (57–59, 97). But education seems to have played multiple roles: facilitating mobility for a few attorneys, but for many more – like Chesterfield – not simply aiding but also justifying the power they held. European aristocrats competed with rival elites and justified their own superiority not just by expanding their cultural sophistication on the grand tour – but also and especially by making all of this inimitably difficult knowledge seem effortless and natural and therefore justified (Dewald 1996, 151–162). Chesterfield exemplifies how what looked “natural” was actually the result of application-formed habits. It was important for an educated aristocrat to distinguish himself from a pedant.

Dean long ago recognized that Chesterfield's "focus on discipline and regulation" would appeal to the socially mobile because it "evokes the social practices associated with capitalist organization of social life, rather than the communal social rounds often associated with aristocratic life and courtly culture" (Dean 2005, 699). Chesterfield repetitively makes correctness accessible with care and attention: after all, "every man who has the use of his eyes and of his right hand, can write whatever hand he pleases." In the printed book, the six words "can write whatever hand he pleases" aptly and dramatically appear in different and handwritten scripts (II, 36; IX, 9 July 1750). That handwriting reflects purpose rather than personality is a very pre-Romantic notion – and seems to me a stereotypically "middle-class" one. Both Johnson and Chesterfield (posthumously) were of course best-selling educationalists – their works were both worth 1500 guineas, the amount that Eugenia received for the copyright to Chesterfield's letters (Cannon 2012; Rogers 2009). The publication of Chesterfield's letters was Philip's widow's initiative. She claimed that Chesterfield agreed that his letters "would form a fine system of education if published," though he added that there was "too much Latin in them" for the general public" (quoted by Bailey 7). Their publisher was Robert Dodsley's brother James.

Johnson epitomizes eighteenth-century social shifts for Nicholas Hudson: having arrived in London with little money and no connections, the author rose "from poverty to fame" with "people of great wealth and eminence among his personal connections." Among the "exceedingly rich" were the Dodsley brothers, the publishers of Johnson and of Chesterfield (360–362). Tiekens-Boon van Ostade has already established Robert Dodsley's importance in commissioning Lowth's grammar as well as Johnson's dictionary. Her work reminds us that the most important influencers of English were neither aristocrats nor authors but publishers (2011, 18).

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# JAMES BOSWELL PRACTISING FRENCH AND LEARNING DUTCH IN THE NETHERLANDS<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Start of a *grand tour*

It was at noon on 7 August 1763 that James Boswell (1740–1795) arrived in the Netherlands, where he was to stay for almost a year before continuing his *grand tour* via Germany and Switzerland to France and Italy.<sup>2</sup> Since the late 16th century, the grand tour had been a familiar enterprise for sons of the aristocracy and, increasingly, of the non-noble ruling ranks and important merchants with international networks. These young men from Western and Northern European countries travelled abroad to become familiar with foreign culture and art, to visit antiquities and to learn and practise foreign languages such as French and Italian (cf. Frank-van Westrienen 1983; Towner 1985; Verhoeven 2009).<sup>3</sup>

The young Scot James Boswell, however, started his continental trip with the study of civil (Roman) law at the University of Utrecht. Studying Roman law in the Netherlands was a not uncommon practice for Scots, as Scottish law was mainly based on Roman law, of which the Dutch were “the great masters” at that time (Pottle 1952, 2–3). The choice for Utrecht, and not Leiden, where his father had studied, was determined by James’ mentor Sir David Dalrymple (1726–1792), who himself had studied

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<sup>1</sup> Ingrid Tiekens once advised me to bring my research on Boswell’s foreign language acquisition, published in Dutch (van der Wal 1998, 2001), to the attention of an English audience. The present, elaborated and updated article fulfils her wish.

<sup>2</sup> See Blanton (2002, 30–43) for Boswell’s travels after his sojourn in the Netherlands.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, the Dutch diaries of Arnout Hellemaans Hooft (grand tour 1649–1651; Grabowsky and Verkrujssse 2001) and Coenraad Ruysch (1674–1677; <https://alanmoss.nl/ruysch/>), and the Dutch letters sent to young merchant Michiel Heusch (1664–1665) by his relatives in Hamburg (van der Wal 2019).

in Utrecht. James would have preferred to study in France, but relinquished his preference, as we learn from his letter to Dalrymple, dated 25 June 1763:

As to the particular place, I shall not insist on having my own way. Indeed, what you say of a French Academy has altered my views of it. The only thing that I imagined it preferable for, was that I could acquire the French language better in the country itself, than in Holland. However, you seem to think that I may have that advantage at Utrecht (Tinker 1924, 11–12).

Grand tour travellers often acquired and practised French, the prestige language of the higher ranks of Western Europe, in France or in particular towns in Switzerland such as Geneva, but, according to Dalrymple, the city of Utrecht would also offer that opportunity.

Indeed, French played an important role in the Dutch society of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, a society which has been characterised as “truly multilingual” (Frijhoff 2015, 115). French schools and tutors of French were found in most towns and for a long time a pervasive influence of French language and culture has been assumed (on this so-called *frenchification*, see van der Wal and van Bree 2014, 230–231, 254–255; Rutten, Vosters and van der Wal 2015). However, the degree to which the French language functioned in various domains of daily life is still a matter of historical-sociolinguistic research, which is conducted in the Leiden research programme *Pardon My French? Dutch-French Language Contact in The Netherlands, 1500–1900*.<sup>4</sup> In the context of language contact, the experiences of the foreign student James Boswell, described in his correspondence, notes and diary, may give an interesting view of the daily practice of written and spoken communication in various Dutch circles.

## 2. Improving and practising French

James took a few practical measures to learn and improve his French. He was looking for “a good French servant of undoubted character” (letter to Dalrymple; Tinker 1924, 29) and found that servant in the person of François Mazerac (Pottle 1952, 19, footnote 4). A certain Carron, clerk of the English Presbyterian church, who had a French father and an English mother, became his French tutor and taught him three times a week (Pottle 1952, 46). In the evening he read Voltaire for two hours, looked up unfamiliar words in his dictionary and wrote them down along with their meanings (Pottle 1952, 55). He also intended to write an essay of two pages

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<sup>4</sup> This programme, directed by Gijsbert Rutten and funded by NWO, runs from 2018 to 2023.

in French every day, which resulted in an accumulated total of 232 quarto pages during his stay in the Netherlands.

James had various opportunities to practise his French. Every Wednesday evening he participated in a literary society “where it is not permitted to speak a word of anything but French” (Pottle 1952, 55). He also regularly dined at Robert Brown’s (1728–1777), vicar of the Scottish Presbyterian Congregation, where he had to speak French in the company of the vicar’s Swiss wife and her sister, neither of whom spoke English. Sometimes, out of laziness, he spoke English or “barbarous Latin” with Brown (Pottle 1952, 56). By 31 October 1763, he rather disappointedly remarked: “Yet I cannot observe that I am making rapid progress. In writing, I am slow and clumsy, and in speaking I have great difficulty in expressing myself and often make terrible blunders” (Pottle 1952, 55). The mistakes he mentions include *je suis* (instead of *j’ai*) *bien chaud* and *les magistrats d’Utrecht ont besoin de faire allumer* (instead of *illuminer*) *la ville* (Pottle 1952, 56, footnote 1).

Countess Johanna Gevaerts Nassau Beverweerd (1733–1779) took Boswell under her protection and introduced him into the higher, French-speaking circles (Pottle 1952, 68–69). When he met Belle van Zuylen (1740–1805) and fell in love with her, James was all the more stimulated to improve his French.<sup>5</sup> His mentor Dalrymple appeared to have met the old, noble family Van Zuylen in the past. In his letter dated 11 April 1764, he remembered Belle’s taste for poetry and asked whether her brother Reynold was still alive.<sup>6</sup> Dalrymple’s striking observation that “He [Reynold] used to speak Dutch and French together” and said “*Je ne saurais singer*” (I cannot sing), when asked to sing (Pottle 1952, 236), gives us a glimpse of the French competence of children in high society circles.

On 10 April 1764 James had to confess that he still did not speak French correctly. He repeated a remark made by Belle van Zuylen who had commented that Englishmen never properly respected the tenses or genders, although they had learned them in Latin. Again James resolved to carefully write two pages in French every day and, for each grammatical mistake, he intended to pay a fine of a sou to the poor (Pottle 1952, 208).

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<sup>5</sup> James corresponded with her for many years (Pottle 1952, 54, footnote 1, 55, 285–289; Barfoot and Bostoen 1994, xi).

<sup>6</sup> Reinout Gerard, Belle van Zuylen’s eldest brother, drowned in 1759 at the age of eighteen (Pottle 1952, 236, footnote 2).

### 3. Learning Dutch: The traditional and natural method

Although James managed to communicate well during his stay in the Netherlands from August 1763 to June 1764, both at the university with lectures in Latin and in the higher social circles using French, he became interested in the Dutch language. On 2 January 1764 he wrote a letter in Dutch to young Archibald Stewart, a merchant in Rotterdam (Barfoot and Bostoen 1994, xii–xiii). Ten days later he mentioned in his diary that he “did well at dinner in speaking Dutch” (Pottle 1952, 115) and on the evening of 20 January he was busy writing a Dutch song (Pottle 1952, 117). Clearly, Boswell was trying to speak and write Dutch. From 1 February to 6 March 1764 he even wrote twenty brief Dutch essays or compositions, which comprised observations of daily life, an account of his visit to the Van Zuylen family and his and others’ opinions of the work of the famous linguist Lambert ten Kate (1674–1731).<sup>7</sup> In these essays he characterises Dutch as an old, strong and rich language and appears to be annoyed by the frequent mixture of Dutch with French heard in The Hague (Barfoot and Bostoen 1994, 6). What makes the limited material of only twenty quarto pages most interesting, however, is that we have the opportunity of catching foreign language learning in the act. Barfoot and Bostoen’s 1994 edition of the essays allows us to analyse and evaluate Boswell’s Dutch.<sup>8</sup> I have even been able to determine how he learnt Dutch: whether he followed the traditional method of using manuals, grammars and dictionaries or the natural method of learning from native speakers in everyday life.<sup>9</sup>

What was Boswell’s method when writing his Dutch essays? According to his letter to Archibald Stewart, dated 2 January 1764, he did not have a dictionary to help him in writing (Barfoot and Bostoen 1994, xiii). We may wonder whether that was still the case when he started writing his essays on 1 February. Remarkably, his eleventh essay, dated 16 February, begins with the following phrase:

Ik sall een maal probeeren een half bladje te schryven **als Ik spreek. Ik zaal geen Wordenboeken neemen**, maar Ik zaal allen die woorden dat in myn

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<sup>7</sup> For Boswell’s reception of Ten Kate’s main work, his *Aenleiding tot de kennis van het verhevene deel der Nederduitsch sprake* (1723), see van der Wal (1998, 183–184).

<sup>8</sup> In the following, *B&B x* refers to the page number of this edition. Apart from a few corrections and alternatives, the English translations of quotes from the Dutch essays originate from the B&B edition.

<sup>9</sup> For methods of language learning and teaching see, for instance, Mc. Lelland (2017) and Noordegraaf and Vonk (1993).

hooft comen introduceeren. Ik moet ook **franschen woorden meleeren**, terwyl ik zyn zoo veel hooren alle dagen in alle Gezelschappen (B&B 24; bold MvdW).

‘For once I shall try to write half a page the way I speak. I will not use a dictionary, but I shall introduce only those words which come into my head. I must also intermingle French words, since I hear so many every day in all kinds of company’

Boswell intends to write spoken language and he plans to intersperse his Dutch with French words, since he hears these often in various circles. Note that in this particular essay we only find the French loans *introduceeren* ‘to introduce’, *meleeren* ‘to mix’, [*het heeft*] *manqueerd* ‘it has failed’ and the Latin loan *probeerden* ‘to try’. He explicitly indicates not using a dictionary, which seems to differ from his earlier practice. Examining Boswell’s peculiar usage in the ten essays prior to this one, I have been able to prove that he indeed used a contemporary English-Dutch/Dutch-English dictionary: W. Sewel, *A Large Dictionary of English and Dutch/ Groot Woordenboek der Engelsche en Nederduytsche Taalen* (1727 or a later edition) (see van der Wal 1998, 184–186). Whether he also used Sewel’s well-known *A Compendious Guide to the Low-Dutch Language/ Korte Wegwyzer der Nederduytsche Taal* (1754, second edition), a Dutch grammar in English with many dialogues, cannot be determined. Boswell appears to be familiar with grammatical characteristics of written 18th-century Dutch, as shown by his correct use of the dative after prepositions, for instance, in *Men zeg dat de hollansche taal is een taal voor den Paarden* ‘People say that Dutch is a language for horses’ (B&B 8) and *in zynen pleytingen invoeren* ‘introduce into their pleas’ (B&B 20). Relying on a dictionary or possibly a grammar, and thus following the traditional method, however, did not exclude learning Dutch in everyday conversation with native speakers, as we may conclude from a number of oral phenomena found in his essays.

#### 4. Oral characteristics: Traces of the natural method of language acquisition

Boswell did not only stay in Utrecht, he also visited towns in the province of Holland (cf. Barfoot and Bostoen 1994, xxvii–xxviii), where he must have heard the everyday spoken language of the region. According to the quote from his eleventh essay above, James intended to write spoken Dutch in his essays, which was indeed what he did. His essays contain quite a few oral characteristics – that is, features which do not occur in 18th-century

grammars or printed publications.<sup>10</sup> For instance, Boswell uses personal pronouns that were mainly limited to 18th-century spoken Dutch: the subject *u* ‘you’ as second person form of address instead of *gij*, and the object forms *myn* ‘me’ and *zyn* ‘him’ instead of *my* and *hem*.<sup>11</sup> Remarkably, Boswell’s *zyn* replaces plural *hen* ‘them’ (see example (3)).

- (1) *Wat zeg u vrow?* ‘What are you saying, woman?’ (B&B 10)
- (2) *Hy heeft myn ontvangen* ‘He has received me’ (B&B 12)
- (3) *Ik weet weel dat voor ‘t meerderdeel men zyn “Professeurs” noemen*  
‘I am well aware that they are usually called “Professeurs” (B&B 6)

These variants also occurred in late-18th-century handwritten egodocuments. The same applies to Boswell’s diminutive *-ie* in *blaadie/bladie* ‘little page’ (B&B 20, 24, 30), *bladyes* ‘little pages’ (B&B 4) and *beytie* ‘little bit’ (B&B 4, 14, 42) (cf. van der Wal 2006, 2007; Simons 2013, 231–257). The diminutive *-ie*, an oral characteristic, is not found in grammars and printed publications, which mention only diminutive *-(t)je* and, to a lesser extent, *-ke* (Moonen 1706, 119; Sewel 1754, 19–20; van der Wal 2007, 88–91). The verb forms *ik bin* ‘I am’ (B&B 4, 10, 30), *zy bin* ‘she is’ (B&B 22), *Wy binnen* ‘we are’ (B&B 18), *u bin* ‘you are’ (B&B 4, 30), *zij binnen* ‘they are’ (B&B 24) were also characteristics of spoken 18th-century Dutch.<sup>12</sup> The regular verb forms in grammars and printed publications are *ik ben*, *gij zijt* or *gij bent*, *hij/zij/het is*, *wij zijn*, *gij* (or *gijlieden*) *zijt*, *zij zijn* are (cf. Moonen 1706, 144; Sewel 1754, 82).

18th-century comparatives show *als-dan* variation such as *groter als* and *groter dan* ‘larger than’ (van der Wal and van Bree 2014, 237–238). The second option is propagated in grammars and other prescriptive publications. Sewel’s dictionary mentions both variants as translations of *than* “Dan, als.” Taking into account Boswell’s English mother tongue, we would expect the choice of *dan*, but in all cases he uses *als*, as in *meer*

<sup>10</sup> Dutch grammars do not explicitly mention the stigmatised forms *mijn* or *zijn*. In Sewel’s English grammar (Sewel 1754, 64), however, “aan *myn* or *my*” is found as a dative variant in the first person pronoun paradigm.

<sup>11</sup> The form of address *ue* occurs only twice in one and the same sentence which is a literal quote of Vicar Brown: *Hier heb ue fier taalen en hier heb ue heelen goeden dissertaties op te spraak int’ algemeen* ‘Here you have solid languages, and here you have an excellent discussion of language in general’ (B&B 16).

<sup>12</sup> In the late 18th-century part of the Leiden *Letters as Loot* corpus (brievens/buit.inl.nl) the dialectal, oral verb forms are only a small minority in the private letters: for instance, *bin* 6% versus *ben* 94%.

*gelukkig als eening Scotsman* ‘happier than any Scotsman’ (B&B 10). We may conclude that, just as in the previous examples, he adopted *als* from spoken everyday conversation.<sup>13</sup> The orthography of words sometimes reveals that Boswell must have had a sharp ear for particular pronunciations. The spelling *Aarmin* ‘poor people’ (B&B 28; instead of written *Armen*) represents the palatal *i*-pronunciation of the schwa, a frequent 17th- and 18th-century phenomenon (see van Bree 1975, 68–69). Such examples as *Ik verwach niet* ‘I do not expect’ (B&B 18; instead of *verwacht*) indicate that he rightly observed *t*-deletion, a spoken language feature of the provinces of Holland and partly Utrecht.

Taking all the oral characteristics into account, we may conclude that in learning Dutch Boswell also followed the natural method of adopting linguistic phenomena, from everyday conversation.

## 5. Interference of English and imperfect learning

Imperfect learning is a common phenomenon in the process of foreign language acquisition, as is interference of the mother tongue. We may wonder what stage of perfection Boswell achieved during his stay in the Netherlands. Analysing his essays, we find various examples of imperfect learning. A morphological example is Boswell’s usage of *sall*: alongside correct instances as *ik sall schryven* ‘I will write’ (B&B 4), incorrect *wy sallen* ‘we will’ instead of *wy sullen* (B&B 6) and *onze raadsheeren sallen* ‘our counselors will’ instead of *sullen* (B&B 20) occur. This imperfect generalisation of the vowel *-a* is, at the same time, a case of interference, since in 18<sup>th</sup>-century English this vowel occurs in the whole present tense paradigm of the verb *shall* (Sewel 1754, 75). Here, imperfect learning and interference are two sides of the same coin.

Contemporaries were aware of the difficulties that Dutch articles and demonstrative pronouns presented for native speakers of English, who were not familiar with gender distinctions and the related morphological features. See the following illustrative quote:

Whereas the English always use the Particles *The, that* and *this* promiscuously before all Nouns (...); it seems an almost unsurmountable difficulty for the English to learn the right use of these Particles, because there have not yet any sufficient rules been given for it (Sewel 1754, 14).

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<sup>13</sup> *As* after comparatives also occurred in Scottish dialects, but Scottish interference is not likely, as Boswell’s English letters exclusively show *than* (personal communication Ingrid Tiekens).



Boswell was no exception: feminine or masculine nouns occur with the article *het* and the demonstrative pronoun *dat* instead of *de* and *die*, such as *het engelsche taal* ‘the English language’ (B&B 38) and *dit brief* ‘this letter’ (B&B 28). Sometimes, neuter nouns have an incorrect article *de* instead of *het*, such as *de Boek* ‘the book’ (B&B 14).

From the perspective of the English uninflected adjectives (for example, *good*) we also understand Boswell’s problem of acquiring the Dutch rule of the *goed/goede* distinction. Non-neuter nouns require the inflected form (*de goede vrouw/ een goede vrouw* ‘the good woman/ a good woman’); neuter nouns vary depending on definiteness: *het goede kind/ een goed kind* ‘the good child/ a good child’. In Boswell’s essays we find correct instances such as *Het is een schandelyke Zaak* ‘It is a scandalous matter’ (B&B 6), a mixture of correct and incorrect adjectives as in *een bevallig en heel voltooide vrouw* ‘a charming and very accomplished woman’ (B&B 10) and incorrect instances such as *met een zoo corte uitspreken* ‘with such a clipped pronunciation’ (B&B 8).<sup>14</sup> The incorrect use of both articles and adjectives is primarily a feature of imperfect learning, often found in the usage of second language learners of Dutch from various linguistic backgrounds. Interference of English would have resulted into a general use of the *de* article and the uninflected adjective. For these morphological phenomena, Boswell remained in a stage of imperfect learning, which we will also notice at the syntactical level of word order.

Boswell’s essays show remarkable word orders. After a preposed phrase or preposed subordinate clause, regular inversion is often lacking in a main clause, as examples (4), (5) and (6) show, although a correct word order as in (7) also occurs. At the same time, Boswell correctly applies the word order rule for a complex verb phrase in the main clause: no verb cluster, as in English, but a final infinite verb (the so-called “tangconstructie”) such as *sal (...) doen, heb (...) gezenden, heb (...) gedronken*.

*Main clause*

- (4) ... en dat *ik sal* noit doen  
‘and that I shall never do’ (B&B 6)
- (5) Naamiddag te zes heuren *Ik heb* myn kneght naar de eerwardig  
Hogleeraar gezenden  
‘This afternoon at six o’clock I have sent my servant to the worthy  
Professor’ (B&B 16)

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<sup>14</sup> See van der Wal (2001, 127–129) for a more elaborate discussion of Boswell’s articles and adjectives.

- (6) Als van daag is Het eerst van Februari, *ik begin* ...  
‘As today is the 1st February, I am beginning’ (B&B 4)
- (7) Laatst Maandag *heb ik* Thee gedronken ...  
‘Last Monday I have drunk tea’ (B&B 12)

*Subordinate clause*

- (8) ... ik verhoop dat hy *sall* niet Kwaardaardig worden  
‘I hope that he will not be put out’ (B&B 4)
- (9) ... zoo dat ik *moet* een recht kennis van dit Zaak hebben  
‘so that I will have proper knowledge of this matter’ (B&B 28)
- (10) ... dat zy niet in goed luym *was*  
‘that she was not in a good mood’ (B&B 12)

The Dutch SOV word order in subordinate clauses differs from the English SVO word order. Sometimes Boswell uses the correct verb final word order as in (10), but examples (8) and (9) still show a stage of imperfect learning.<sup>15</sup> Instead of a final verb cluster, Boswell splits the complex verb phrase into a verb second and a final verb, which is the word order rule he acquired for the main clause. At the word order level I conclude that Boswell had not sufficiently mastered the rules of inversion and subordinate clause word order, which he mostly applied incorrectly, but that he was well aware of the word order rule for complex verb phrases, which he even generalised in subordinate clauses.<sup>16</sup> Yet another verbal phenomenon, the past participle, will reveal his generalising efforts.

Boswell often uses the perfect tense and therefore Dutch past participles. These participles differ from the English through the occurrence of the prefix *ge-*: this difference leads Boswell to use examples that lack a prefix as in *Het is derdtig Jaaren zeedert myn vaader te Leyde heeft studeerd* ‘It is thirty years since my father has studied in Leiden’ (B&B 22) and *Ik heb veel gaaten daarin vonden* ‘I have found many holes in them’ (B&B 24). English and Dutch share the distinction between strong and weak verbs, but Boswell does not always place the Dutch verb in the right

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<sup>15</sup> Boswell also applies the Dutch subordinate word order in a main clause as in *Juvrow zyn doghter seer vermaaklyke was* ‘His daughter was very pleasant’ (B&B 12). We cannot consider this mistake as an earlier stage of language acquisition compared to (10), as both examples occur in the same essay.

<sup>16</sup> To avoid any misunderstanding, I mention that both present-day inversion and verb final subordinate word order are features of 18th-century Dutch.

category. Illustrative examples are the strong verbs *schrijven* ‘to write’ and *spreken* ‘to speak’ with incorrect weak past participles:

- (11) Mynheer Johnson (..) **heeft** myn een brief uyt Londen **geschryft**  
 ‘Mr. Johnson has written me a letter from London’ (B&B 28) –  
 correct *geschreven*
- (12) hy **heeft gespraakt**  
 ‘he has spoken’ (B&B 40) – correct *gesproken*

Moreover, many weak verbs occur with an incorrect strong past participle form (ending in *-en*), including the following selection:

- (13) Hy **heeft** myn **belooven** een vol verhaal daarof  
 ‘He has promised me a full account of them’ (B&B 28) – correct  
*beloofd*
- (14) zy **hebben** (...) **bewaaren**  
 ‘they have kept’ (B&B 20) – correct *bewaard*
- (15) Waar **heb** u allen uw daagen **geleeven**...  
 ‘Where have you lived all your life’ (B&B 30) – correct *geleefd*
- (16) ...dat in het hollansche taal **oversetten is**  
 ‘which has been translated into Dutch’ (B&B 28) – correct *overgeset*
- (17) ...en hy **heeft** in frankryk, Spanye en Italic **geryzen**  
 ‘and he has travelled in France, Spain and Italy’ (B&B 34) – correct  
*gereisd*

From the perspective of the verb system, we might expect the regular weak forms to proliferate at the cost of the irregular strong forms, but Boswell generalises the strong past participle *-en* suffix and even adds this suffix to the past participles *gecoft* ‘bought’ and *geweest* ‘been’, which results in the double forms *gecoften* (B&B 24) and *geweesten* (B&B 40).

Even when a strong verb is correctly labeled, the right past participle form does not always occur, as in (18) and (19):

- (18) hy heeft t’huys **geblyven**  
 ‘he has remained at home’ (B&B 40) – correct *gebleven*
- (19) Het is (...) **geschryven**  
 ‘It is written’ (B&B 16) – correct *geschreven*

The examples (13)–(19) clearly show that Boswell generalises the Dutch strong verb classes 5, 6 and 7, the verb classes with the same vowel in the infinitive and past participle such as *meten* – *gemeten*, *lachen* – *gelachen*, *laten* – *gelaten* ‘to measure, to laugh, to let’ (van der Wal and van Bree 2014, 147–148).<sup>17</sup> In this way, he appears to simply create his own system of strong verbs.

## 6. Conclusion

Boswell’s ego-documents (notes, diary, letters and essays) are useful material to reveal his linguistic experiences in the Netherlands, where he had the opportunity to practise and improve his French. He received comments on his spoken French and Vicar Brown corrected his French essays. Brown also intended to correct the Dutch essays James wrote during a brief period (see B&B 4, 26), but careful correction appears to be lacking in the surviving versions of the essays.<sup>18</sup> What they show is Boswell’s learning of Dutch caught in the act: imperfect learning, interference of English and also correct language acquisition. Close scrutiny of the essays reveals that Boswell acquired Dutch by following both the traditional method (using Sewel’s dictionary) and the natural method (adopting phenomena from spoken everyday conversation).

Boswell’s intention was *te minsten een beytie te leeren zoo dat ik can met de Hollanders conversatie hebben* ‘to learn at least a little, so that I can talk with Dutch people’ (B&B 4). The grammarian Sewel, who mentioned the difficulty of the different preterites *hoopte*, *kofte*, *liep* in the case of the verbs *hoopen*, *koopen*, *loopen* ‘to hope, to buy, to walk’, gave the following advice: “And therefore the easiest way will be to learn those variations by a frequent and attentive reading, and dayly speaking if one has occasion to converse among the Dutch” (Sewel 1754, 91). We do not know

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<sup>17</sup> It does not mean that no correct past participles are to be found in Boswell’s essays, but the incorrect forms dominate. Correct forms are, for instance: *ik heb gebrogt* ‘I have brought’ (B&B 10); *heeft gedronken* ‘has drunk’ (B&B 40); *geleefd hadden* ‘had lived’ (B&B 8); *...u heeft...gesproken* ‘you have spoken’ (B&B 30); *Ik heb waargenome* ‘I have observed’ (B&B 20); *Hy heb ...geweest* (B&B 12) ‘he has been’. Boswell’s mistakes deviate from the mistakes made by 20th-century second language learners of Dutch (see Van der Wal 2001, 131–135).

<sup>18</sup> Barfoot and Bostoen (1994, xiv–xv) assume that either Boswell’s notebook with later Dutch essays was lost, as was his Dutch journal, or that he had lost interest in the Dutch exercise and continued writing his French essays and letters “presumably because of its greater usefulness in the social world in which he moved and his anticipation of further travels on the Continent.”

how frequently Boswell read Dutch, but in daily life he must have talked regularly with Dutch people. He himself refers to the circumstances of a foreigner abroad in one of his essays: *Moet hy niet in die Schuyten ryzen? Moet hy niet in hollanschen huizen en Winkelen worden? En zeekerlyk hy moet in die straten wandelen* ‘Must he [the foreigner] not travel in the draw-ships? Must he not find himself in houses and shops? And surely he must walk in the streets’ (B&B 32). In his diary he recorded that he spoke plenty of Dutch when he was looking for pleasure in the red light district of Amsterdam, “but could find no girl that elicited my inclinations” (Pottle 1952, 254–255).

In a letter dated 23 March 1764, Boswell evaluates his efforts: “I have advanced very well in French (..) I have picked up a little Dutch” (Pottle 1952, 190). Indeed, our analysis shows that he acquired *een beytie hollansche* ‘a little bit of Dutch’ (B&B 14), probably enough to chat with Dutch people during the rest of his stay in the Netherlands.

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“I CAN READ HOLLANDSCH VERY FAIRLY.”  
THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN  
JAMES MURRAY (1837–1915)  
AND PIETER JACOB COSIJN (1840–1899)

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## 1. Introduction

When it comes to the study of language use throughout the history of English, there is no better research tool than the *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth *OED*).<sup>1</sup> The importance of its publication in fascicles from 1884 to 1928 and subsequent supplements and updated editions cannot be overstated, even though scholars have also questioned some of the implicit and explicit biases of the *OED*'s editors and voluntary readers (Brewer 2019). Awareness of the subjectivity of some of the *OED* data has sparked an interest in the history of this ambitious dictionary project (e.g. Willinsky 1994; Mugglestone 2000; Brewer 2007; Gilliver 2016). Scholars have thus far focussed on various aspects of the *OED*'s coming into being, including a biography of its legendary founding editor James A. H. Murray (1837–1915) (Murray 1977), a tracing of the “hidden history” of the *OED* through a study of such unpublished archival material as annotated proofs (Mugglestone 2005), and a popular novelisation of the *OED*'s connection to one of its notable voluntary readers, William Chester Minor (Winchester 1998). This article seeks to contribute to this growing body of *OED* historiography by considering how the *OED*'s editor James Murray sought the help of the Dutch philologist Pieter Jacob Cosijn (1840–1899) through the medium of scholarly correspondence. In doing so, it provides another behind-the-scenes look at the genesis of the most important dictionary of

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of how to use the *OED* for historical sociolinguistic research into Late Modern English, see Ticken-Boon van Ostade (2006, 53–75).



the English language and its connection to its Dutch equivalent, the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal (WNT)*.

Lynda Mugglestone (2005, xviii–xix) has demonstrated how unpublished archival material may illuminate the elusive working methods of the *OED*'s early editors and collaborators. Scholarly correspondence is particularly suited for this purpose, since scholars relied on letter-writing for collaboration, peer-feedback and the building and sustaining of academic networks (see e.g. Ellis and Kirchberger 2004). Writing about scholarly correspondence in relation to the history of philology more generally, Ton van Kalmthout (2018) has pointed out that the value of letters for the historian of scholarship is threefold. First of all, letters were considered a quick, efficient way to share insights, data and discoveries with colleagues; since the road to publication was often long and expensive, letters were a preferred medium for knowledge transfer and some findings never found their way to print. Secondly, letters allow historians to reconstruct the “ethnology of knowledge,” i.e. how ideas developed and in what social and institutional contexts they were disseminated. Lastly, as private documents, letters reveal something of the personalities, ambitions and daily lives of the correspondents (van Kalmthout 2018). As this paper hopes to demonstrate, the correspondence between Murray and Cosijn indeed offers valuable insights into nineteenth-century lexicography and two of its practitioners.

## 2. Two lexicographers: James Murray and Pieter Jacob Cosijn

The life and career of James A. H. Murray, from teaching at Hawick Grammar School to becoming the primary editor of the *OED*, are well documented, thanks to a biography by his granddaughter Elisabeth (Murray, 1977). Murray was a keen etymologist, polyglot and active member of the Philological Society. His talents made him a suitable candidate to spearhead the Society's ambitious project to produce a new English dictionary on historical principles that would replace that of Samuel Johnson. He was appointed as the dictionary's primary editor in 1879 and would continue to serve the dictionary until his death in 1915 (Willinsky 1994, 35–56; Gilliver 2016, 109–329). In his capacity as the main editor of the *OED*, Murray relied on correspondence for much of his work: voluntary readers sent in slips with quotations by post, and Murray negotiated with the publisher and sub-editors via letters (Mugglestone 2005). Murray's correspondence was so voluminous that the Post Office decided to install a post box outside

Murray's Oxford residence for his convenience (Gilliver 2016, 268).<sup>2</sup> Part of Murray's correspondence was devoted to requesting help and support from various scholars unconnected to the *OED*, whom he credited in his prefatory material as follows:

Independently of the Readers and Sub-editors already mentioned, I have had constantly to seek advice and assistance on various points, literary, critical, philological, phonological, bibliographical, historical, scientific, and technical. Such advice and assistance has been most liberally given, often by men whose time is much occupied, but whose interest in this under-taking has led them willingly to place some of it at the Editor's service. (*OED Volume I Part I: A–Ant* 1884, v)

This statement was followed by a long list of names, including those of such notable philologists as Eduard Sievers, Walter William Skeat and Henry Sweet. In subsequent fascicles, the list was supplemented with the names of other helpful scholars, including one “prof. Cosijn of Leiden” (*OED Volume I Part II: Ant–Batten* 1885, vi).

Like Murray, Pieter Jacob Cosijn (1840–1899) started his career as a school teacher.<sup>3</sup> During his teaching years, he wrote various textbooks on grammar for pre-university students and set up a journal for etymological and text-critical studies.<sup>4</sup> In 1871, he moved to Leiden in order to join the editorial board of the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (*WNT*), a lexicographical project as ambitious as the *OED*; it had been initiated by Matthias de Vries (1820–1892) around 1850 and would be finished only in 1998. At the *WNT*, Cosijn worked on etymologies of various Dutch words and produced a number of important studies on Old Dutch texts, including a set of Old Dutch Psalms. In 1877, Cosijn became Leiden University's first professor of Old Germanic and Anglo-Saxon and his focus shifted towards Old English. He made his mark in the field of Anglo-Saxon studies with an exhaustive grammar of West-Saxon and a work of textual criticism on the

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<sup>2</sup> The bulk of Murray's correspondence in relation to the *OED* is kept in more than twenty-four uncatalogued archive boxes as part of the James Murray Papers at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Part of Murray's correspondence also survives in the *OED* archive at Oxford University Press.

<sup>3</sup> For a short biography of Cosijn, see Bremmer 1991. I would like to thank Rolf Bremmer for sending me a revised and updated version of his biography of Pieter Jacob Cosijn, as well as for his helpful comments on a draft version of this article.

<sup>4</sup> The *Taal- en Letterbode*, which ran from 1870 to 1875. In 1881, Cosijn initiated the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde* which currently still exists; for Cosijn's role, see van Anrooij and Ruijsendaal (2000, 305–16).

Old English poem *Beowulf*.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the interest in the etymologies of Dutch words never left him: Cosijn was involved, as an adviser and translator, in the production of the first Dutch etymological dictionary on Neogrammarian principles, the *Etymologisch Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* (1884–1892) by the German scholar Johannes Franck (on this dictionary and Cosijn’s involvement, see Cox 1990; Bremmer 1990).<sup>6</sup>

Given Cosijn’s expertise, Murray could not have asked for a better correspondent on etymological matters concerning English words of Dutch origin. Indeed, it is for this category of words in particular that Murray sought Cosijn’s advice, as he put it in his first letter to the Dutch scholar: “I should be glad to be permitted to apply to you occasionally for assistance, especially with words which are (or may be) of *Nederlandish* origin” (Murray to Cosijn, 30-04-1884).<sup>7</sup> It is unclear why Murray decided to approach Cosijn out of the blue at the end of April, 1884, and not before. Possibly, he had been advised to contact Cosijn by members of his expanding scholarly network which also included people with whom Cosijn was in correspondence.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps more likely, Cosijn had caught Murray’s attention because the latter had just got his hands on the published first fascicle of Franck’s etymological dictionary of Dutch, written with Cosijn’s assistance. In Murray’s first letter to Cosijn, he expressed his enthusiasm for Franck’s work:

I have just examined with much interest the 1st part of Dr Franck’s *Etymologisch Woordenboek*, and I am full of admiration of it. Naturally, I have been interested in comparing his treatment of the words with which I

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<sup>5</sup> Cosijn’s work on *Beowulf* was translated into English in 1991, see Bremmer, van den Berg and Johnson (1991).

<sup>6</sup> Cosijn’s correspondence largely survives in the Leiden University Library; parts of Cosijn’s correspondence have been published and contextualised in a number of recent publications, see Porck (2018a,b), van Baalen (2018) and Eskes and Mudde (2019a,b,c).

<sup>7</sup> The full text of the correspondence between Murray and Cosijn is reproduced in the Appendix of this article. References to the correspondence in the main text of the article are to the Appendix.

<sup>8</sup> Like Murray, Cosijn corresponded with Henry Sweet, Eduard Sievers and Julius Zupitza (see Bremmer 1991). Murray had met Zupitza two weeks prior to writing to Cosijn, at the Tercentenary Celebrations of Edinburgh University on 15 April, 1884 (Murray 1977, 235). Murray would have heard of Cosijn by 1883 at least, when one of his voluntary helpers at the Dictionary, James Platt Jr, was censured by the Philological Society for plagiarism of Cosijn, Sievers and Sweet; Murray had lent Platt the proofs of Henry Sweet’s *Oldest English Texts*, which had brought the plagiarism to light (van Baalen 2018).

also have had to deal, as *aal4*, *aanbeeld*, *aap*, *aars*, *aarts-*, *abeel*, *abrikoos*, *abt*, *adeler*, etc. etc., and I have been delighted to see the resulting harmony. (Murray to Cosijn, 30-04-1884)

Murray's apparent ability to peruse a Dutch etymological dictionary demonstrates his affinity with a wide range of languages. In the same letter, Murray tells Cosijn: "In your answer, you may write in Hollandsch, German, or French, as most convenient. I can read Hollandsch very fairly" (Murray to Cosijn, 30-04-1884). All extant postcards sent by Cosijn to Murray were indeed written in Dutch.

Murray's initial letter was the start of a correspondence which lasted at least until 1887 and has survived only fragmentarily: a mere two letters by Murray to Cosijn are kept in the Special Collections of the Leiden University Library;<sup>9</sup> four postcards by Cosijn were pasted into one of Murray's old algebra notebooks and are now part of the *OED* papers at Oxford University Press;<sup>10</sup> and one more postcard by Cosijn was identified in the uncatalogued James Murray Papers at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. The correspondence: Etymological advice and disagreement

The extant correspondence between Murray and Cosijn concerns the etymology of the following English words: *arsedine*, *asparagus*, (*h*)*arquebus*, *asquint*, *beg*, *Beghard*, *biltong*, *boor* and *calkin*. Interestingly, some of Cosijn's postcards to Murray were cited in the etymology sections of these entries in the *OED* and remain so until this day. For the word *Beghard*, for instance, the etymology section cites Cosijn's letter in translation:

An extraordinary error, which appears even in Littré,<sup>12</sup> refers it to an alleged Flemish *beggen* 'to beg,' which never existed. (On the contrary, Old French *begard* may be the source of the English *beggar* and *beg*; see these words.) It has been by some referred directly to the adjective *bègue* 'stammering' as

<sup>9</sup> Leiden, University Library, Special Collections, LTK 1762.

<sup>10</sup> Thanks are due to Beverley McCullough, archivist of the *OED* papers at Oxford University Press, for giving me access to these postcards.

<sup>11</sup> In a personal communication, Peter Gilliver, historian of the *OED*, first made me aware of the existence of this letter, found in box 7/2 of the James Murray Papers at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The letter is not included in the incomplete index to the correspondence in box 25 of the James Murray Papers.

<sup>12</sup> A reference to E. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, 4 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1863–1873).

if it meant originally ‘stammerer,’ and has been ‘derived’ in various other ways. But its origination in the name of *Lambert Bègue*<sup>13</sup> is ‘now established beyond all dispute’ (Prof. Cosijn). (*OED Volume I: A–B*, 1888, s.v. *Beghard*)

Er bestaat geen nl. of vlaamsch werkwoord *beggen*. Dr. De Jager in zijn *Woordenboek der Frequentatieven in het Nederlandsch*,<sup>14</sup> I, 15 vermoedt een ww. *beggen* (in den zin van *bägen*, *bäggen*, een Zwitschersch woord zie Stalder I,<sup>15</sup> 121) als simplex van *beggelen* “babbelen.” Maar het woord komt niet voor. Littré is geen autoriteit. De afleiding van *begijn*, t.w.v. Lamb. Bègue, is boven bedenking verheven. (Cosijn to Murray, 07-11-1885)<sup>16</sup>

The *OED* entry’s reference “(Prof. Cosijn)” is vague and it is only because of Cosijn’s postcards that reconstruction of this reference is possible. In the etymology section for the related verb *beg*, the reference to the content of Cosijn’s postcard is even more obscure: “The Flemish *beggen* appealed to by Littré under *Beguine* has no existence (Cosijn)” (*OED Volume I: A–B* 1888, s.v. *beg*). In the case of *beghard* and *beg*, the references to Cosijn are retained in the online version of the *OED*, which, by the time of writing this article, still features the original entries (*OED Online*, s.vv. *beghard*, *beg*).

By contrast, the entry *boor* used to include a reference to one of Cosijn’s postcards but as of June 2019 it no longer does. The original entry contained the following information about the Middle Dutch cognate of *boor*:

Mdu. *ghebure*, *ghebuer*, and *buer*; also (late) *geboer*, which was not properly a Du. form, but probably, according to Cosijn, adopted from Frisian, or, according to Franck, from the LG. on the eastern frontier of the Netherlands. This last is in mod.Du. *boer*. (*OED: Volume I: A–B* 1888, s.v. *boor*)

While the reference to Franck can be traced to the *Etymologisch Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (1884–1892, s.v. *boer*), the reference

<sup>13</sup> Lambert Bègue was a twelfth-century priest from Liège, founder of the Beguine order.

<sup>14</sup> A reference to A. de Jager, *Woordenboek der Frequentatieven in het Nederlandsch* (Gouda: G.B. van Goor Zonen, 1875–1878).

<sup>15</sup> A reference to F. J. Stadler, *Versuch eines schweizerischen Idiotikon*, 2 vols. (Aarau: Heinrich Remigius Sauerländer, 1806–1812).

<sup>16</sup> “No Dutch or Flemish word *beggen* exists. Dr. De Jager in his *Woordenboek der Frequentatieven in het Nederlands*, I, 15, suspects a verb *beggen* (with the meaning of *bägen*, *bäggen*, a Swiss word, see Stalder I, 121) as a simplex of *beggelen* ‘to chat’. But the word does not occur. Littré is not an authority. The derivation of *begijn* from Lambert Bègue is established beyond all dispute.”

to Cosijn is not to a published work, but to his unpublished postcard to Murray:

Mnl. *boer* komt niet voor, wèl de volle vorm *geboer* nevens *gebuer* òf de vorm *buer*. De *oe* berust volgens Franck op de uitspraak der Oostelijke (Saksische of Geldersche) Nederlanders, bij wie og. *û* = *oe*, eng. *oo* luidt. Maar de vorm kan ook Friesch zijn, wat mij waarschijnlijker voorkomt. (Cosijn to Murray, 22-09-1886)<sup>17</sup>

In the current version of the entry for *boor*, from June 2019, the information about a possibly Frisian origin of Middle Dutch *geboer* no longer occurs (*OED Online*, s.v. *boor*).

In at least two entries, Murray had used information provided to him by Cosijn but failed to mention his correspondent's name. A case in point is the entry for *biltong*, which uses a quotation from Changuion's *De Nederduitsche Taal in Zuid-Afrika Hersteld* (Rotterdam, 1848), provided by Cosijn:

South African Dutch, < *bil* buttock + *tong* tongue, 'because it is mostly cut from the buttock, and in appearance resembles a smoked neat's tongue' (Changuion). (*OED Volume I: A–B*, 1888, s.v. *biltong*)

Het woord *biltong* is niet Nederlandsch, maar uitsluitend Kaapsch. Changuion in zijne Grammatica (Rotterdam 1848) verklaart het als samengesteld uit *bil* en *tong*:

'Rookvleesch, aldus genaamd omdat het veelal uit een bilstuk gesneden wordt, en in gedaante eenigzins met eene gerookte ossentong overeen komt.' (p. IX). (Cosijn to Murray, 05-05-1886)<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, the etymology section for *calkin* uses information provided by Cosijn but without attribution:

Possibly going back to a Middle English *\*calkain*, < Old French *calcain* heel < Latin *calcāneum* heel; but the earliest form *kakun* agrees with the Dutch

<sup>17</sup> "Middle Dutch *boer* does not occur, its full form *geboer* does, alongside *gebuer* or the form *buer*. According to Franck, the *oe* stems from the pronunciation of Eastern (Saxon or Guelder) Dutchmen, for whom Old Germanic *û* = *oe*, English *oo*. But the form can also be Frisian, which seems more likely to me."

<sup>18</sup> "The word *biltong* is not Dutch, but solely Cape Dutch [= Afrikaans]. Changuion in his grammar (Rotterdam 1848) explains it as being compounded from *bil* and *tong*: 'Smoked meat, named as such because it is mostly cut from the buttock, and in appearance resembles a smoked neat's tongue.'"

*kalkoen*, Middle Dutch *calcoen* 'ungula,' < Latin *calx*. (*OED Volume II: C* 1893, s.v. *calkin*)

*Calcoen* komt driemaal voor in Maerlants *Historie van Troyen* (= *ungula equi*). Afgeleid van lat. *calx* met het suffix *-ôn-*. (Cosijn to Murray, 26-08-1887)<sup>19</sup>

As with *Beghard* and *beg*, the information provided by Cosijn for the entries *biltong* and *calkin* is still found in the online version of the *OED* by the time of writing this article (*OED Online*, s.vv. *biltong*, *calkin*). Cosijn's replies to Murray's inquiries about the words *arsedine*, *asparagus*, (*h*)*arquebus* and *asquint* have not come down to us and it is, therefore, impossible to reconstruct how Murray dealt with the information Cosijn provided.

Aside from demonstrating the origin of some of the etymological information in the *OED*, the correspondence between Cosijn and Murray also demonstrates the latter's meticulousness in drafting his dictionary entries. In his first letter to Cosijn, Murray apologetically declares "Accept of my apologies for thus troubling you: only the ambition to attain as nearly as possible to truth impels me" (Murray to Cosijn, 30-04-1884). Indeed, Murray does not show himself easily convinced: apparently unsatisfied with Cosijn's initial answer to his question whether the French word *haquebute* (whence English (*h*)*arquebus*) might derive from Dutch or Flemish, he repeated the question in his second letter: "I hoped to find a Flemish form intermediate between *Hakenbüchse* and the French. Is O. F. *haekbuyse* certainly from French?" (Murray to Cosijn, 10-05-1884).<sup>20</sup> Similarly, after having received Cosijn's opinion on the etymology of the word *Beghard*, Murray had apparently written to Matthias de Vries to double-check. De Vries's reply was short and snappy: "What Mr. Cosijn wrote you on the subject, was the expression of our common opinion" (de Vries to Murray, 04-01-1886; cited in Stuurman 1994, 57). Clearly, Murray was not prepared to skate on thin ice when he weighed the advice of correspondents and this may have contributed to the lengthy process of bringing the *OED* to print.

When it came to matters of etymology, Cosijn, in turn, often voiced his disagreement with his friend and collaborator Johannes Franck. Despite the fact that the two had worked together for the etymological dictionary of Dutch, Cosijn often tells Murray that his opinion differs from Franck's: "De etymologie van dr. Franck [...] deugt niet" (Cosijn to Murray, 07-11-1885)

<sup>19</sup> "*Calcoen* occurs three times in Maerlant's *Historie van Troye* (= *ungula equi*). Derived from Latin *calx* with the suffix *-ôn-*."

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *OED Online*, s.vv. *arquebus*, *hackbush*, which indeed suggests a Dutch or Low German origin for the French *harquebuse*.

and “Met *boort* heeft Franck zich vergist” (Cosijn to Murray, n.d. but after 22-09-1886).<sup>21</sup> Cosijn’s letters to Murray are a testimony of the growing tension between Cosijn and Franck over the etymologies of words, a tension that would ultimately culminate in Cosijn demanding that his name be taken off the eventual title page of Franck’s etymological dictionary (Eskes and Mudde, 2019c).<sup>22</sup> In a letter to Murray, Cosijn clearly disassociates himself from Franck’s etymological opinions:

Het feit, dat dr. Francks naam alleen op den titel voorkomt, bedoelt niets anders dan dat hij uitsluitend voor den inhoud aansprakelijk is. Ik mag adviseeren, maar daaraan is geene verantwoordelijkheid verbonden. Voor etymologische questies kunnen zelfs twee menschen niet altijd gelijkelijk denken. (Cosijn to Murray, n.d. but after 22-09-1886)<sup>23</sup>

Cosijn’s outright criticism of his friend Franck’s work demonstrates a point made by Ton van Kalmthout about scholarly correspondence in general: “letter writers were often more candid than they could afford to be elsewhere” (2018, 162–63).

#### 4. Cosijn as a link between the *OED* and the *WNT*

The correspondence between Murray and Cosijn appears to have been instrumental in establishing an exchange of dictionaries between the *OED* and its Dutch equivalent, the *WNT*.<sup>24</sup> From Murray’s second letter, we can surmise that Cosijn had mediated between Murray and the main editor of the *WNT*, Matthias de Vries:

It will give me great pleasure to make the exchange of Dictionaries which Prof. De Vries proposes. What do you think will be the best way of sending them from London to Leiden and *vice versa*? (Murray to Cosijn, 10-05-1884)

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<sup>21</sup> “The etymology proposed by dr Franck ... is no good.”; “Concerning *boort*, Franck has made a mistake.”

<sup>22</sup> An additional reason for Cosijn to distance himself from Franck’s work was that Franck’s dictionary relied too heavily on the *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (1883) by Friedrich Kluge, almost to the point of plagiarism (see Cox, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> “The fact that Dr Franck’s name is the only one to appear on the title page means nothing other than that only he is responsible for its contents. I can advise, but there is no responsibility connected to this. For etymological issues not even two people can think alike all the time.”

<sup>24</sup> For a comparison between the *OED* and the *WNT*, see Osselton (2000).



This initial exchange of dictionaries was the start of a fruitful collaboration between two of the most ambitious dictionary projects of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As Frits Stuurman (1994) has outlined, the exchange of dictionary fascicles continued until the *OED*'s completion in 1928, even though both parties occasionally lost track of how the exchange had been established. Upon request of one of Matthias de Vries's successors at the *WNT*, Jacob Wijbrand Muller (1858-1945), Murray himself recalled with difficulty Cosijn's mediating role between the *WNT* and *OED*. To ensure the continuation of the exchange, Murray sent over Cosijn's letter for inspection:

I have at once looked to see if I could find the letter in which Dr De Vries proposed to me the exchange; but no such letter was to be found in my letter-books, and no correspondence with Dr de Vries until a much later date. My own memory of the matter was quite indistinct, and I thought I should have to write and give you meekly my impression; but in pondering over the matter last night, it recalled to me that the original proposal was not made directly by Dr de Vries, but by someone else, and a further research today has disclosed this letter of Prof. Cosijn, which I have taken out of my letter-book (tearing it in the process) in order to send it for your inspection. When done with, please return it. If prof. Cosijn keeps letters which he receives, he will have my answer acceding to his proposal.

From the letter it would seem that the parts of the Dutch Dictionary are sent me by the Redaction and not by Dr De Vries personally, & that the copy of the Eng. Dict. belongs to the Redacteuren, I suppose I asked Cosijn how to address it. I think you also have advised me of the sending of parts of the Dutch Dictionary, on some occasions.

I shall of course continue to send you the parts of the new English Dictionary. When the next is ready, I should either have addressed it to you, or written to ask how you wish it addressed. Please inform me as to this.

I did not know anything about the Dutch Dictionary until Prof. Cosijn thus wrote to me about it, nor did I (ignorant man!) know anything then of Dr. De Vries or of his relation to the work.

Yours very truly,

J. A. H. Murray<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> James A. H. Murray to Jacob Wijbrand Muller, 09-09-1892. Leiden, University Library, Special Collections, LTK 2018 M 54.

Unfortunately, the letter by Cosijn that Murray sent to Muller has not come down to us.<sup>26</sup> As such, the scholarly correspondence between Cosijn and Murray does not only illustrate how such letters were fundamental in establishing scholarly relationships, it also demonstrates the volatility of this type of source material; its survival is highly influenced by its perceived utility to later generations and, therefore, correspondence between scholars is often incomplete.<sup>27</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

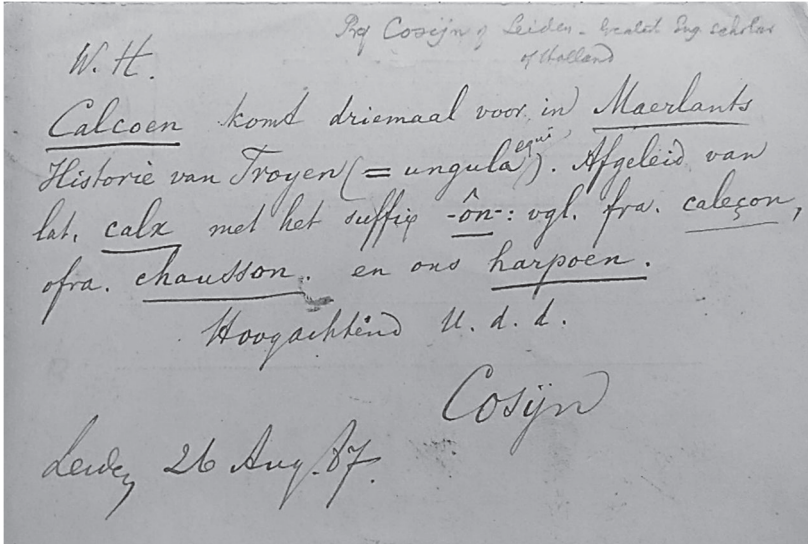
The correspondence between Murray and Cosijn provides an intriguing backstage look at one of the most important lexicographical projects of the past two centuries. In most cases, Cosijn's advice appears to have been heeded by Murray and often the correspondence alone allows for the reconstruction of how the *OED* came to include some of its information. The correspondence was also instrumental in establishing a connection between the *OED* and the *WNT*. Murray acknowledged his debt to Cosijn by adding his name to the list of scholarly correspondents in the prefatory material of the *OED* as "prof. Cosijn of Leiden" in *Volume I part II: Ant-Batten* (1885) and as "Prof. E. H. [sic!] Cosijn of Leiden" in *OED Volume I: A & B* (1888). On the basis of the misspelling of Cosijn's initials in the 1888 volume, Stuurman (1994) has hypothesized that the relationship between Murray and Cosijn may not have been too personal. Be that as it may, the fact that Murray saw fit to cite some of Cosijn's letters in his entries to the *OED* suggests a measure of respect for the Dutch scholar. This regard for Cosijn is confirmed by a note in James Murray's hand, written in the top margin of a postcard by Cosijn on the etymology of the Dutch word *calcoen* 'calkin': "Prof. Cosijn of Leiden - Greatest Eng. scholar of Holland." High

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<sup>26</sup> A reference to a letter by Cosijn dated to 5 May, 1884 survives in a hand-written index to Murray's correspondence in box 25 of the James Murray Papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. However, this letter cannot be found in the archive at present (Lucy McCann, senior archivist at the Bodleian Library, personal communication). This letter would have been written 5 days after Murray's initial letter to Cosijn on 30 April, Murray's second letter, dated 10 May of the same year; starts with "Many thanks for your very kind letter." The now-lost letter of 5 May likely contained Cosijn's thoughts on the words *arsedine*, *asparagus* and (*h*)*arquebus* that Murray had inquired after.

<sup>27</sup> On the role of correspondence on scholarly networks and the issue of fragmentary survival, see, for example, the various contributions to Porck, van Baalen and Mann (2018).

praise for the first of many excellent English philology professors at Leiden University!<sup>28</sup>



Postcard by P. J. Cosijn to J. A. H. Murray, 26-08-1887. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, James Murray Papers, box 7/2. Photograph by the author.

<sup>28</sup> Following Cosijn, notable Leiden University professors with a focus on English philology include Christianus Cornelis Uhlenbeck, Anton Adriaan Prins, Noel Edward Osselton, Rolf H. Bremmer Jr and Ingrid Ticken-Boon van Ostade.

## Appendix: Annotated edition of the correspondence between Murray and Cosijn

The edition below is a semi-diplomatic rendering of the correspondence between James Murray and Pieter Jacob Cosijn. The following guiding principles have been used for this edition:

- Original spelling and capitalisation are preserved, but the punctuation is normalized to aid the modern reader (e.g. full stops have been added after abbreviations and at the end of sentences).
- Murray and Cosijn inconsistently underlined lemmata, book titles and phrases in languages other than the main language of the letter; in this edition, these features are consistently indicated by the use of italics.
- Underlining for emphasis in the original has been retained.
- The letters and postcards are numbered in chronological order.
- Changes and corrections by Murray and Cosijn themselves are not noted in the edition; the text represents the final version of the letters.
- Explanatory notes as well as Modern English renderings of Cosijn's Dutch postcards are provided in the footnotes.

### 1. Murray to Cosijn (30-04-1884)<sup>29</sup>

Mr James A. H. Murray LL. D  
London  
30 April 1884

Dear Sir,

You may perhaps have heard of the *new English Dictionary*, which I am preparing. I should be glad to be permitted to apply to you occasionally for assistance, especially with words which are (or may be) of *Nederlandish* origin. In the 'proof' which I send to you, the word *Arsedine* has completely foiled my efforts to trace it. As it is also called *Dutch gold*, ?'Deutsches bold' or ?'Nederlandsche goud', it is possible that you may be able to help me with it.

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<sup>29</sup> Leiden, University Library, Special Collections, LTK 1762.

2) *Asparagus*. Barnaby Googe (1580) in his translation of Conrad Heresbach’s *Husbandrie*,<sup>30</sup> says ‘the Dutch men call it *Sperages* and *Spiritus*, because it comes up of itself.’ Now *Sperage* was the regular name of *Asparagus* in English from 1530 to 1700. Do you know of any old form like *Sperages* in German or Nederlandsch? One thinks of *Spargen*, *Spargel*, *Sparge*, *Sparger*, but none of these suit. I should desire *sperage* from Middle French *esperage*, formed in the common med. Lat. *Sparagus*, vel Ital. *sparágio*, *sparácio*.

Accept of my apologies for thus troubling you: only the ambition to attain as nearly as possible to truth impels me.

In your answer, you may write in Hollandsch, German, or French, as most convenient. I can read Hollandsch very fairly.

I have just examined with much interest the 1st part of Dr Franck’s *Etymologisch Woordenboek*,<sup>31</sup> and I am full of admiration of it. Naturally, I have been interested in comparing his treatment of the words with which I also have had to deal, as *aala*, *aanbeeld*, *aap*, *aars*, *aarts-*, *abeel*, *abrikoos*, *abt*, *adeler*, etc. etc., and I have been delighted to see the resulting harmony. I had almost forgotten: Can you also give me the old Nederl. vel Vlaamsche forms intermediate between German *Hakenbüchse* and Fr. *haquebute*, *harquebuze*. I believe the French was taken from Flemish, and not directly from German, and I should like to know all the 15th 16th c. Flemish forms. I have seen *haeckebuyse* given as one.

Yours very truly,

James A. H. Murray

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<sup>30</sup> Conrad Heresbach, *Four Books of Husbandrie*, trans. Barnaby Googe (London: Richard Watkins, 1577).

<sup>31</sup> Johannes Franck, *Etymologisch Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1884–1892).

## 2. Murray to Cosijn (10-05-1884)<sup>32</sup>

Many thanks for your very kind letter. It will give me great pleasure to make the exchange of Dictionaries which Prof. De Vries proposes. What do you think will be the best way of sending them from London to Leiden and *vice versa*? I have, as you know, only Part I ready: I do not know how much of the *Groote Ndl. Woordenboek* has been published.

I want to know all that you can tell me of the history and etymology of *schuin*, *schuinen*, *schuinte*: which is the parent form? What are the Germanic affinities? How early is *schuinte*? The latter seems to me the only probable source of Eng. *asquint* ‘*scheel*, *loensch*’, which appears already in 1225 or 1230 in *Ancr. Riwle*:<sup>33</sup> *Biholdeð luft and asquint*. The separate ‘*squint* adv. and adj. was a much later aphetic form of *asquint*; thence still later (1600) *squint* vb. and sb. Hence, *asquint* is the original form in English of which we have evidence and this makes one think of *schuinte*, and desire to know its age and history. *Geschuind* also suggests itself. I cannot suggest how a Hollandsch or Flemish word could appear in Eng. by 1200; but there seems to be no help from O. E. (=Ags.) or any other source. Please tell me what you think of the matter.

Yours very truly,

J. A. H. Murray

Mill Hill, London, N.W.

[in the margin:] I hoped to find a Flemish form intermediate between *Hakenbüchse* and the French. Is O. F. *haekbuyse* certainly from French?

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<sup>32</sup> Leiden, University Library, Special Collections, LTK 1762.

<sup>33</sup> *Ancrene Riwle*, an early thirteenth-century monastic guide for anchoresses.

### 3. Cosijn to Murray (07-11-1885)<sup>34</sup>

W. H.,

Er bestaat geen nl. of vlaamsch werkwoord *beggen*. Dr. De Jager in zijn *Woordenboek der Frequentatieven in het Nederlandsch*,<sup>35</sup> I, 15 vermoedt een ww. *beggen* (in den zin van *bägen*, *bäggen*, een Zwitschersch woord zie Stalder<sup>36</sup> I, 121) als simplex van *beggelen* “babbelen.” Maar het woord komt niet voor. Littré<sup>37</sup> is geen autoriteit. De afleiding van *begijn*, t.w.v. Lamb. Bègue,<sup>38</sup> is boven bedenking verheven. De etymologie van dr. Franck (*Et. Wdb.* 69) deugt niet.

Hoogachtend heb ik de eer te zijn

uw ever Cosijn.

Leiden 7 Nov. 85.

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<sup>34</sup> Oxford, OUP Archive, *OED Papers*. “Dear Sir, no Dutch or Flemish word *beggen* exists. Dr. de Jager in his *Woordenboek der Frequentatieven in het Nederlands*, I, 15, suspects a verb *beggen* (like *bägen*, *bäggen*, a Swiss word, see Stalder I, 121) as a simplex of *beggelen* ‘to chat’. But the word does not occur. Littré is not an authority. The derivation from *begijn*, from Lambert Bègue, is established beyond all dispute. The etymology proposed by dr Franck (*Et. Wdb.* 69) is no good. Sincerely I have the honour to be your ever Cosijn.”

<sup>35</sup> A. de Jager, *Woordenboek der Frequentatieven in het Nederlandsch* (Gouda: G.B. van Goor Zonen, 1875-1878).

<sup>36</sup> F. J. Stadler, *Versuch eines schweizerischen Idiotikon*, 2 vols. (Aarau: Heinrich Remigius Sauerländer, 1806-1812).

<sup>37</sup> E. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, 4 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1863-1873).

<sup>38</sup> I.e. Lambert Bègue, a twelfth-century priest from Liège, founder of the Beguine order.

#### 4. Cosijn to Murray (05-05-1886)<sup>39</sup>

W. H.,

Het woord *biltong* is niet Nederlandsch, maar uitsluitend Kaapsch. Changuion in zijne *Grammatica* (Rotterdam 1848)<sup>40</sup> verklaart het als samengesteld uit *bil* en *tong*:

‘Rookvleesch, aldus genaamd omdat het veelal uit een bilstuk gesneden wordt, en in gedaante eenigzins met eene gerookte ossentong overeen komt.’ (p. IX)

Cosijn

Leiden 5 Mei 86.

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<sup>39</sup> Oxford, OUP Archive, *OED Papers*. “Dear Sir, the word *biltong* is not Dutch, but solely Cape [South African]. Changuion in his grammar (Rotterdam 1848) explains it as being compounded from *bil* and *tong*: ‘Smoked meat, named as such because it is mostly cut from the buttock, and in appearance resembles a smoked neat’s tongue.’”

<sup>40</sup> A. N. E. Changuion, *De Nederduitsche Taal in Zuid-Afrika Hersteld: Zijnde eene Handleiding tot de Kennis dier Taal naar de Plaatselijke Behoeft van het Land Gewijzigd*, 2nd edn. (Rotterdam: J. van der Vliet, 1848).



## 5. Cosijn to Murray (22-09-1886)<sup>41</sup>

W. H.,

Mnl. *boer* komt niet voor, wèl de volle vorm *geboer* nevens *gebuer* òf de vorm *buer*. De *oe* berust volgens Franck op de uitspraak der Oostelijke (Saksische of Geldersche) Nederlanders, bij wie og.  $\hat{u} = oe$ , eng. *oo* luidt. Maar de vorm kan ook Friesch zijn, wat mij waarschijnlijker voorkomt. Zie voorts Verdam, *Mnl. Wdb.*<sup>42</sup> I, 1486. Ook is het lang niet zeker, dat Mnl.  $\hat{u}$  altijd als  $\bar{u}$  werd uitgesproken, zoodat de schrijfwijze *buer* niet de questie afdoende beslist.

Garne zou Prof. De Vries vernemen of Gij de twee laatste afleveringen van het *Nl. Wdb.* ontvangen hebt.

Hoogachtend,  
Uw ever  
Cosijn

Leiden 22 Sept. 86

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<sup>41</sup> Oxford, OUP Archive, *OED* Papers. “Dear Sir, Middle Dutch *boer* does not occur, it’s full form *geboer* does, alongside *gebeur* or the form *buer*. According to Franck, the *oe* stems from the pronunciation of Eastern (Saxon or Guelder) Dutchmen, for whom Old Germanic  $\hat{u} = oe$ , English *oo*. But the form can also be Frisian, which seems more likely to me. See also Verdam, *Mnl. Wdb.* I, 1486. It is also unclear whether Middle Dutch  $\hat{u}$  was always pronounced as  $\bar{u}$ , so that the spelling *buer* does not form conclusive proof. Professor de Vries would like to know whether you have received the last two fascicles of the *Dutch Dictionary* [*WNT*]. Sincerely, your ever Cosijn.”

<sup>42</sup> J. Verdam and E. Verwijs (Eds.), *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* I (1885).

## 6. Cosijn to Murray (undated; after 22-09-1886)<sup>43</sup>

De Mnl periode eindigt ±1500. Wanneer de korte vorm *boer* het eerst voorkomt, kan ik U niet zeggen, maar daar *geboer* Mnl. is, kan eng. *bour* zeer goed vóór 1551 met wegwerping van *ge-* ontleend zijn. Maar de vorm *boer* moet oud zijn: het Oudfriesch kent dien en daaraan hebben wij dien te danken.

Met *boort* heeft Franck zich vergist: hij had moeten schrijven: mnl. (vroeg mnl!)

Het feit, dat dr. Francks naam alleen op den titel voorkomt, bedoelt niets anders dan dat hij uitsluitend voor den inhoud aansprakelijk is. Ik mag adviseeren, maar daaraan is geene verantwoordelijkheid verbonden. Voor etymologische questies kunnen zelfs twee menschen niet altijd gelijkelijk denken.

Cosijn

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<sup>43</sup> Oxford, OUP Archive, *OED* Papers. “The Middle Dutch period ends ±1500. When the short form *boer* first occurs, I cannot tell you, but since *geboer* is Middle Dutch, English *bour* could very well be borrowed before 1551 with the omission of the *ge*. But the form *boer* must be old: it is known in Old Frisian and we owe it to that.

Concerning *boort*, Franck has made a mistake: he should have written: Middle Dutch (early Middle Dutch!).

The fact that Dr Franck’s name is the only one to appear on the title page means nothing other than that only he is responsible for its contents. I can advise, but there is no responsibility connected to this. For etymological issues not even two people can think alike all the time.”

## 7. Cosijn to Murray (26-08-1887)<sup>44</sup>

W. H.,

*Calcoen* komt driemaal voor in Maerlants *Historie van Troyen* (= *ungula equi*).<sup>45</sup> Afgeleid van lat. *calx* met het suffix *-ôn-*: vgl. fra. *caleçon*, ofra. *chausson* en ons *harpoen*.

Hoogachtend U.d.d.  
Cosijn

Leiden 26 Aug. 87<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, James Murray papers, box 7/2. “Dear Sir, *calcoen* occurs three times in Maerlant’s *Historie van Troye* (= *ungula equi*). Derived from Latin *calx* with the suffix *-ôn-*: cf. French *caleçon*, Old French *chausson* and our *harpoen*. Sincerely, your humble servant Cosijn.”

<sup>45</sup> Reference to the thirteenth-century Dutch poet Jacob van Maerlant’s lengthy poem *Historie van Troyen*, an adaptation of the twelfth-century *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte Maure.

<sup>46</sup> Added in the top margin, in the hand of James Murray: “Prof. Cosijn of Leiden - Greatest Eng. scholar of Holland.”

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## **PART III**

# **USAGE GUIDES AND LINGUISTICS NORMS**





# “LOWTHIAN” LINGUISTICS REVISITED: CODIFICATION, PRESCRIPTION AND STYLE IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

A considerable number of historical-sociolinguistic case studies have been published since the gradual emergence of the discipline from the 1980s onwards (Auer et al. 2015). The vast majority of studies focus on one particular language or language area. Comparative historical sociolinguistics aims to move beyond analyses of individual languages and language areas (Nevalainen and Rutten 2012; Ayres-Bennett and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2016). Can we identify parallel social and sociolinguistic developments across different language areas, and compare developments in language use occurring under the influence of these social and sociolinguistic developments? Examples of such social and sociolinguistic changes include urbanisation, migration, colonisation and war. Language standardisation is another one: the volume edited by Deumert and Vandebussche (2003) compares standardisation histories across a large number of Germanic languages. In a similar vein, the volume edited by Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Percy (2016) explores standardisation and the interrelated phenomenon of prescriptivism across various languages and geographical contexts. In this paper, we offer some more suggestions for comparative historical-sociolinguistic analyses.

Adopting the view that standardisation and prescriptivism are major sociolinguistic events found in many European languages, including Dutch and English, the research topic that we focus on here is the effect of linguistic prescription on language use (section 2). Prescription, as a stricter

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<sup>1</sup> The research for this paper was carried out within the project “Going Dutch. The Construction of Dutch in Policy, Practice and Discourse, 1750–1850,” awarded to Gijsbert Rutten (VIDI-grant, Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research). Andreas Krogull was a PhD student on this project.

or even regulatory alternative to previous codification practices, characterises the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in both England and the Netherlands. Our focus in this paper is on grammar, in particular on the effects of grammatical prescriptions found in the official grammar of Dutch authored by Weiland and published in 1805. This official grammar was part of the so-called *schrijftaalregeling* ‘written language regulation’ (section 3), in which context an official orthography was also published (Siegenbeek 1804). In order to assess the influence of Weiland’s (1805) grammatical prescriptions on language use, we built the multi-genre, diachronic Going Dutch Corpus. The corpus was thus specifically designed to answer the research question of the success of the *schrijftaalregeling*. We report on two case studies here (section 4) involving two grammatical variables, viz. relative pronouns and the genitive case. We also reflect on the relevance of style and different stylistic “levels” conditioning the distribution of grammatical variables. In addition to the shift from codification to prescription, style and stylistic levels also constitute a possible point of comparison for historical sociolinguistics.

## 2. Codification, prescription, implementation

Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade has written about many different topics. Eighteenth-century English normative grammar and the rise of prescriptivism towards the end of that century are topics that she has devoted an impressive number of publications to. One of the core texts is Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011) about Robert Lowth (1710–1787), the alleged father of English prescriptivism. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011) focuses on the contents of Lowth’s grammar and on the sociohistorical context in which it was written. 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. In fact, eighteenth-century normative grammars often describe usage as much as they prescribe forms and proscribe other forms, and the grammarians themselves do not always follow their own strictures (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 224–253). This tradition of normative grammar gradually became stronger in the eighteenth century, and the number of grammars produced increased significantly, particularly in the second half of the century (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 258). An increase in strictures can also be seen, though it has to be noted that Lowth was not among the strictest grammarians (2011, 256). In the 1770s, a new genre emerged parallel to the normative grammars, viz. the usage guide. This is a genre that differs strongly from traditional grammars in form, function and metalanguage (2011, 262), though it often

addresses similar topics such as stranded prepositions, split infinitives and double comparatives. In terms of the Milroviaan standardisation model (Milroy and Milroy 2012), both the increase in strictures and the rise of the usage guide signal the shift from codification to prescription (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 257, 259–260).

Similar developments occurred in Dutch metalinguistic discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Rutten 2012). There was an increase in grammar production from the 1750s onwards, particularly in the southern Low Countries (today's Flanders) and to a lesser extent also in the north (today's Netherlands). A certain “pedagogisation” can be discerned in the second half of the eighteenth century: a range of didactic features, such as the use of transparent (non-Latinate) terminology, renders the genre more accessible to a wider audience. The texts also become easier: theoretical diversions are avoided, which places the emphasis more strongly on the language norms. These changes in metalinguistic discourse are connected to ongoing social change. Cultural nationalism developed into a major force in Dutch society, again from the 1750s onwards. This culminated in an official language policy in the 1790s and early 1800s (Rutten 2019). In 1804 and 1805, an official orthography (Siegenbeek 1804) and grammar (Weiland 1805) came out on behalf of the national government, designed to be used in the educational and administrative domains. The publication of these texts generated a stream of new prescriptive works in the first decades of the nineteenth century, aimed at the dissemination of the newly codified and prescribed rules of language – that is, of written Dutch. The language policy marks the shift from codification to prescription in the Dutch metalinguistic tradition. In Haugen's standardisation model, it embodies the implementation stage, which he describes as “the activity of a writer, an institution, or a government in adopting and attempting to spread the language form that has been selected and codified [...] the spread of schooling to entire populations in modern times has made the implementation of norms a major educational issue” (Haugen 1987: 61; cf. Rutten, Krogull and Schoemaker 2020).

### 3. The *schrijftaalregeling* as a matter of national concern

The officialised spelling and grammar rules, published in 1804 and 1805, constitute the so-called *schrijftaalregeling* ‘written language regulation’. Matthijs Siegenbeek (1774–1854), professor of Dutch at the university of Leiden, was assigned the task to codify the national spelling, and Pieter Weiland (1754–1841), a minister based in Rotterdam, wrote the national grammar. Although new elements can certainly be found, their texts

strongly relied on the normative tradition of the previous century (Noordegraaf 1985). Siegenbeek largely followed the orthographical principles proposed by Adriaan Kluit (1735–1807) in the 1760s and 1770s. Weiland’s grammar is the culmination of the eighteenth-century codifiers of Dutch.

The national government had requested these codifying reference works and supported their publication. Up to the present day, the Netherlands still has an official spelling, developed and published at the request of and on behalf of the government. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the spelling also has official status in Belgium. The 1805 grammar was the first but also the last official grammar of Dutch. Today, the *Nederlandse Taalunie* ‘Dutch Language Union’ (a policy organisation of the Belgian, Dutch and Surinamese governments) supports work on the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* ‘General Grammar of Dutch’, but unlike the official spelling, the use of this grammar is not compulsory for civil servants in the educational and administrative domains.

The *schrijftaalregeling* thus marks the beginning of a continued national language policy, and can in fact be seen as a textbook example of language planning inspired by the emerging nationalist ideologies in Late Modern Europe (Rutten 2019). The language planning measures were part of the broader phenomenon of educational reform. Feeding on decades of cultural nationalism, the political nationalism and the actual nation-state formation of the period around 1800 appropriated various cultural fields that had previously been limited to private and semi-public initiatives, or that had been organised at a local or regional level. Education is a case in point. Under the old regime, education was primarily organised by church and city authorities, and regulations had a limited geographical scope. As one of the first countries in Europe, the Netherlands installed a Ministry of Education in the 1790s, whose central task was to nationalise the field of education. To this end, educational reform acts were issued in 1801, 1803 and 1806. One of the most important results of these educational reforms was the establishment of a national system of school inspection (Schoemaker and Rutten 2017).

The school inspectors were crucial for the implementation of the school acts. Partly depending on their own interests, they monitored the quality of education, of teaching methods and materials, they commented on the skills of the teachers, they collected data on school attendance, inspected the buildings and the financial records of the school, and so on. Many school inspectors also commented on language education since explicit attention to language was an important innovation in the school acts of the early 1800s. Reading, writing, arithmetic and religious education used

to be the core elements of primary school curricula, but with the school act of 1806, religious education was replaced with knowledge of the language (cf. Rutten 2019, 223). In school inspection reports from the first half of the nineteenth century, numerous examples can be found where inspectors focus on language norms and language use, and as early as 1806 some inspectors were monitoring the extent to which Siegenbeek's spelling was adopted (Rutten 2019, 228).

In the slipstream of the language policy, many schoolbooks and related reading materials shifted to the new spelling (Schoemaker 2018; Rutten, Krogull and Schoemaker 2020). Older books were respelled in order to comply with the Siegenbeek spelling, and school grammars that had previously prescribed forms different from Siegenbeek's preferences shifted to the new paradigm. With respect to spelling, the 1804 codification was extremely successful. Prescriptive works from the first half of the nineteenth century adopted the new spelling across the board. Moreover, language users also adopted the newly prescribed forms to a considerable extent, even in handwritten ego-documents such as private letters and diaries (Krogull 2018a, 2018b; Rutten, Krogull and Schoemaker 2020). These changes in both prescription and language use are all the more remarkable in view of the complexities introduced by Siegenbeek, whose spelling rules often incorporated etymological differences that had long levelled out in many spoken varieties of Dutch.

## 4. Grammatical prescriptivism and stylistic levels

### 4.1 *Assessing the effects of grammatical prescriptions*

Compared to Siegenbeek's influence on spelling in actual language use, the effects of the prescriptions of Weiland (1805) and the prescriptive tradition following him are less clear-cut. Despite the official status of his grammar, Weiland showed quite some awareness of variation and different stylistic levels in language use. This, in fact, is another parallel with Lowth's approach to grammar writing (Rutten 2012). As Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011, 183–184) points out, Lowth occasionally distinguished between different styles of writing, such as “familiar,” “polite” or “solemn and elevated,” which he linked to different linguistic variants. Weiland adopted the Dutch terminology introduced by his eighteenth-century predecessor Lambert ten Kate (1723), referring to three stylistic levels called *gemeenzaam* ‘familiar’, *deftig* ‘polite’ and *hoogdravend* ‘elevated’, although somewhat more implicitly and less systematically than ten Kate. On both sides of the North Sea, therefore, grammarians were introducing the

traditional rhetorical differences in style into grammar, assigning variants to different stylistic levels.

Since grammatical norms became a matter of national concern in the period around 1800, aiming to spread the newly codified standard across the population at large, the question arises to what extent Weiland’s (1805) prescriptions actually influenced language use. Unlike Siegenbeek’s remarkably successful spelling prescriptions, the effects of Weiland’s grammar appear to be more difficult to trace (Krogull 2018b). However, at least with regard to the “Lowthian” stylistic distinction of grammatical variants, some interesting developments can be observed.

We investigated diachronic changes in a substantial multi-genre corpus of historical Dutch. Specifically compiled to measure the effectiveness of the national language policy, the Going Dutch Corpus represents authentic written language use in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dutch. With the *schrijftaalregeling* of 1804 and 1805 serving as our main point of departure, the corpus is composed of two diachronic cross-sections, viz. one before (1770–1790) and one after (1820–1840) the national prescriptions took effect. It comprises more than 420,000 words of texts from different regions in the Netherlands, and from both men and women (see Krogull 2018b for a comprehensive description of the corpus). Another crucial external variable integrated into the corpus design is that of genre, allowing us to compare the prescriptive effects in two types of ego-document, i.e. private letters and diaries, as well as in newspapers. Private letters constitute the most informal and most “oral” sources in our corpus, whereas newspapers, by definition printed and published, are relatively formal and typically “written” texts, though still locally produced and distributed. Diaries take an intermediate position in our corpus design, as they tend to be less “oral” and closer to supralocal writing traditions than private letters. On the basis of those genre differences, we can also reflect on Weiland’s awareness of stylistic variation and how it affected nineteenth-century language practice. In the following, we focus on two morphosyntactic features in his national grammar, viz. relative pronouns and the genitive case.

#### ***4.2 Two grammatical case studies***

Unlike in eighteenth-century grammars, relativisation became a more prominent topic in Weiland (1805; cf. van der Wal 2002). He was the first Dutch codifier to provide a more or less complete inventory of the different forms of relative pronouns as well as the conditions under which these forms should be used (see also Weiland 1799). For each of the available forms, we

give an example taken from the Going Dutch Corpus, illustrating both the neuter (1–5) and the masculine/feminine paradigms (6–9).

- (1) *een steigertje **dat** Papa en ik reeds gezien hadden*  
'a small jetty that Dad and I had already seen'
- (2) *Ons rytuig **wat** wy om 8 Uur besteld hadden*  
'our coach that we had ordered at eight o'clock'
- (3) *het gure en regenachtig weder **het geen** reeds den geheelen dag had geduurd*  
'the biting and rainy weather which had already lasted the whole day'
- (4) *het geheim **welk** 'er gaande was*  
'the secret that was happening there'
- (5) *het voornaamste **hetwelk** er bij mijne ziekte is voorgevallen*  
'the main thing which happened during my illness'
- (6) *een sterke Donderbui, **die** met eenen harden wind en sterken regen begon*  
'a heavy thunderstorm, which started with a strong wind and heavy rain'
- (7) *de Heer Jan van Cleef **wie** lekker bier brouwt*  
'Mister Jan van Cleef who brews delicious beer'
- (8) *een elendige kok, **welke** nog geen eens aardappelen kan koken*  
'a miserable cook, who cannot even cook potatoes'
- (9) *een zware hoofdpyn **dewelke** wel haast met braken ge verzeld ging*  
'a bad headache which was almost accompanied by vomiting'

As for prescriptions, Weiland noted for instance that only *w*-forms (*wie* 'who', *wat* 'what') could function as free relatives. He was even more prescriptive in the case of relative pronouns referring to noun phrases, rejecting the use of *wat* altogether. Interestingly, Weiland was also aware of the existence of stylistic differences between relativisers. In terminological reference to ten Kate (1723), he distinguished between forms of the "polite" style (i.e. *deftig*) and forms of the "familiar" style (i.e. *gemeenzaam*): "*Welke*, or *dewelke*, as the most proper relative pronoun, is mostly used in the polite style, the shorter *die* [...] in the familiar style" (Weiland 1805, 244, our translation). Weiland thus assigned *welke* 'which' and *dewelke* 'the which' to a higher stylistic level than *die*. While he did not explicitly refer to the neuter counterparts of these relative pronouns (i.e. *welk*, *hetwelk*, *dat*), he added one example sentence to illustrate the use of *dat* (*het huis*, *dat* 'the



house that’). This implies a similar stylistic distinction as for the masculine/feminine pronouns, i.e. “familiar” *dat* as opposed to “polite” *welk*, *hetwelk*.

Is this differentiation also reflected in nineteenth-century language use? Our corpus results indeed suggest a strong genre effect on the distribution of relativisers in both neuter and masculine/feminine paradigms. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the stylistically higher variants *hetwelk* and *welke* appeared to be particularly frequent in newspapers, but considerably less so in private letters. Here, the shorter *d*-forms *dat* and *die*, both stylistically lower options according to Weiland, prevailed. The special intermediate position of diaries becomes evident when we consider genre-specific changes in the distribution of relativisers (Krogull, Rutten and van der Wal 2017). In eighteenth-century diaries, the distribution of variants (especially *hetwelk* and *welke*) was fairly similar to that in private letters, i.e. the other type of ego-document. In the nineteenth century, however, the “polite” options *hetwelk* and *welke* gained considerable ground, at the expense of “familiar” *dat* and *die*. Diachronically, and at least in the choice of relativisers, diaries seem to have converged towards a more “written” and formal style also found in newspapers. Either indirectly or directly, we may ascribe these developments to Weiland’s prescriptive influence.

The second feature we are looking at is the genitive case. The Dutch case system, including the genitive, had been in decline for centuries and was gradually replaced by periphrastic constructions. By the eighteenth century, synthetic genitive forms were largely restricted to higher registers of the written language, while the alternative construction with the preposition *van* ‘of’ had gained in importance. These two options are illustrated in examples (10–11), which are also taken from the Going Dutch Corpus.

- (10) *het gegons der muggen*  
‘the buzzing of the mosquitos’
- (11) *de deur van de kelder*  
‘the door of the cellar’

Weiland clearly preferred the old genitive, which he laid down and officialised in his 1805 grammar. This striking return to the synthetic form as the only option went against the grain of the developments in metalinguistic discourse. In the course of the eighteenth century, grammar writing witnessed an increasing acceptability of the analytic *van*-construction (Rutten 2016). Weiland himself did not comment on stylistic differences between synthetic and analytic options. However, eighteenth-

century grammarians, and ten Kate (1723) in particular, explicitly assigned the synthetic genitive to a higher stylistic level (“elevated”) that the option with *van* (“polite,” “familiar”). From this normative tradition and Weiland’s ultimate choice we can thus deduce that he believed it was the highest stylistic level, rather than the familiar style of everyday language, that should set the norm for the Dutch national standard (Rutten 2012, 55).

The same question remains whether Weiland’s prescription (in favour of the synthetic genitive) affected usage patterns in the nineteenth century. Generally speaking, an effect as strong as in the case of spelling cannot be observed. Also, it should be emphasised that the analytic alternative was already the most frequent option by the end of the eighteenth century, and continued to be so after the *schrijfaalregeling*. Yet, our corpus results show a noticeable increase of synthetic forms in the first half of the nineteenth century across all genres, even in the most “oral” genre of private letters. Of all genres, the rise of the genitive case is most distinct in diaries, which is in line with their (stylistic) convergence towards more formal writing attested for relativisers. Although Weiland might have failed to “revive” the genitive on the whole, these developments in language use suggest his influence at least to a certain degree. Importantly, we have argued elsewhere that internal factors probably played a role too (Krogull and Rutten 2020).

To sum up, the effects of Weiland’s (1805) grammar prove to be fairly subtle and difficult to pinpoint. However, our two case studies show that they can still be traced in our corpus, especially when we utilise its genre dimension to assess different stylistic levels in grammatical prescriptivism.

## 5. Concluding remarks

Sociolinguistic change is often not confined to nation-states or language areas. Events that seem important in the history of one language may be paralleled by similar events in other language areas, where they occupy an equally important position in the history of the language. The developments in eighteenth-century English normative grammar, with Lowth (1762) as a key text, and the subsequent rise of a prescriptive tradition are clearly contemporaneous with the changes in eighteenth-century Dutch normative grammar that eventually led to the national language policy and its implementation in the early nineteenth century. In the English tradition, *politeness* and *polite society* are often-used sociohistorical concepts that help explain changes in metalinguistic discourse and practices (e.g. Beal 2004; Hickey 2010). In the Netherlands, the rise of cultural nationalism and

actual nation-state formation played a crucial role (Rutten 2019). In a comparative analysis, the question should be answered whether politeness/polite society has explanatory power in the Dutch situation, and whether nationalism/nation-building can explain the changes in Britain. In more general terms, the time has certainly come for a comparative historical sociolinguistics (Deumert and Vandenbussche 2003; Nevalainen and Rutten 2012; Rutten, Vosters and Vandenbussche 2014; Ayres-Bennett and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2016) now that so many in-depth case studies of many European languages have been carried out. An excellent example is the work by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (e.g. 2008, 2011), which has greatly enhanced our knowledge of norms, prescriptions and language use in eighteenth-century England.

For the Dutch case presented here, it is clear that Siegenbeek’s (1804) orthographical prescriptions were successful. The same goes for Weiland (1805), but to a lesser extent. Style appears to be an intersecting factor, and this again ties in with the approach to language also advocated by English normative grammarians such as Lowth (1762). Furthermore, the notions of style and stylistic levels also seem to bear on genre, in that different types of ego-document behaved differently with respect to stylistically higher variants preferred by Weiland (1805). Differences between private letters and diaries in the light of variation and ongoing change would also constitute an interesting line of research in a comparative historical-sociolinguistic framework.

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# HAVE WENT AND FLAT ADVERBS ONCE AGAIN – “IRISH STYLE”?

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This contribution was triggered by some recent articles by Ingrid Tiekens-Boon van Ostade on points of non-standard usage in English, in particular the so-called “flat adverb” and the combination of “have” with “went” instead of “gone” in the perfect tense. As regards the latter, in responding to an attitudes survey related to a research project by the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics called “Bridging the Unbridgeable: Linguists, Prescriptivists and the General Public,” “several speakers, all of them American teachers aged between 55 and 64, informed us that they regularly ‘hear[d] people say have went, not have gone’” (Tiekens-Boon van Ostade 2014, 11). In the same article, Tiekens notes that the usage of “have went” was already recognised as non-standard in the earliest usage guide, Robert Baker’s *Reflections on the English Language*, first published in 1770. She also links this feature to the character Lucy Steele in Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), who offends against another rule of English grammar as well, namely by using adjectives where adverbs would be required.

In 2015, Tiekens’s call for feedback concerning “have went” led to a discussion of it as apparently “an American usage problem” (Tiekens-Boon van Ostade and Kostadinova 2015). The matter of flat adverbs in Jane Austen’s letters had already been taken up in an earlier article (Tiekens-Boon van Ostade 2013). In this paper I intend to broaden the discussion to the more general point of non-standard usage of “have” plus preterite instead of past participle by bringing into play a late-twentieth-century usage guide on Irish English, which includes more instances of it, as well as samples of the flat adverb. I will also offer some suggestions for further research.

However, let us begin with recorded evidence from the more distant past. Early on in his *Reflections*, “the first usage guide,” by “hack writer” Robert Baker (Tiekens-Boon van Ostade 2010, 16), this author already comments in categorical terms on the usage of “have went”: “The Word *Went* is not be used with *have*, *had* or *having*.—*I should have went*.

*If I had went.—Having went.—This is bad English*” (Baker 1770, 7). Later on, he cites other phrases using the same construction, with “is” as well as with “has”: “*He is came*” (30), “*The Bird is flew*” (31), “*The Horse has fell*” (59). “In short,” he grumbles on page 31, “so many of our Verbs are Exceptions to the Rule above-mentioned that, if we should bring them all to conform to it, we should have a new Language.” In fact, the use of “have went” had already been criticised before, namely by grammarian James Greenwood in 1711, and “in even stronger terms” by James Harris, the author of a “philosophical grammar” in 1751, who cites examples with *wrote*, *drove* and *went* as instances of “corruption” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Kostadinova 2015, 294).

According to K.C. Phillipps, “[a]ll the eighteenth and early nineteenth century [sic] grammarians publish lists of confusable past tense and past participle forms of verbs” (Phillipps 1970, 146). From eighteenth-century grammarian Robert Lowth’s *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) he quotes: “We should be immediately shocked at ‘I have knew, I have saw, I have gave’ etc.: but our ears have grown familiar with ‘I have wrote, I have drank, I have bore’ etc., which are altogether as barbarous” (*ibid.*). Turning to his actual subject, Jane Austen’s English, Phillipps remarks that Austen put this type of “‘barbarity’ ... into the mouths of servants or vulgar characters, her Lucy Steeles, and the like.” The cited samples from Austen’s novels of preterites used where a past participle would be required are: “to have *went* away,” “had quite *took* a fancy,” “should have *gave*” (*Sense and Sensibility*, Lucy Steele), “He had got upon his horse and *rid* out into the country” (her sister Anne), and “It would have *broke* my heart” (Marianne Dashwood); “wine [would be] *drank*” and “much was *ate*” (from *Mansfield Park*); “The wedding cake ... was all *eat* up” (*Emma*); “the tables were *broke* up” (first edition of *Pride and Prejudice*) and “He will be *forgot*” (Jane Bennet). From Lucy Steele’s speech he could have added one new and three repeated instances: “the person it was *drew* for,” “having *took* such a liberty,” “he has never *gave* me one moment’s alarm,” and “after all the troubles we have *went* through lately” (Austen 2003, 126, 140, 141, 259, my emphasis). The last example is from a letter.

So far, we may conclude that the perfective construction of “have” (or passive “is”) with the preterite rather than the past participle form of the verb has been observed as well as invented<sup>1</sup> with various strong (or “irregular”) verbs, but that the combination with “went” instead of “gone” is particularly noteworthy. “*Have went* may seem a straightforward non-

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<sup>1</sup> In theory, novelists or playwrights have the liberty of putting into their characters’ mouths non-standard syntax, vocabulary or pronunciation that has not been encountered in reality.

standard grammatical form today, but it evidently has a different status in British and American English. While in British English it developed into a non-standard form after the codification of the strong verb system by the eighteenth-century normative grammarians, in American English it became a usage problem” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Kostadinova 2015, 293). The authors found no fewer than twelve hits for “have went” in HUGE, the *Hyper Usage Guide of English* ([www.huge.ullet.net](http://www.huge.ullet.net)), i.e. twelve usage guides dating from 1770 (Baker’s) to 2003 (*ibid.*, 296). This database does not include P.J. Flaherty’s *The English Language Irish Style*, with the jocularly illustrative subtitle: *As she do be spoke, proper, like, you know*. Self-published in 1995, this booklet has been described as “[a] slipshod and carelessly written hotchpotch of putative information on Irish English” (Hickey 2002, 68).

The author describes himself as “a secondary school teacher of English, based in Ireland” (Flaherty 1995, 87). If not already retired, he was probably elderly at the time of writing, since he dedicates his v + 93-page book, printed in Galway, to his own “witty and wonderful teacher of English ... who fostered the love of language and learning in tender minds ... long, long ago.” Its contents include a “[l]ist of actual “errors” in English as recorded from [Irish] Radio, T.V., Newspapers, Politicians etc.” (over 300 instances recorded on 223 occasions), followed by an extended list of these and similar “errors” with their “corrections.” The final pages form a rag-bag of “Bad Habits in Speech,” such as repetitions, half-sentences and clichés, “Americanisms” (mainly in pronunciation), and “Vulgarisms, Vices and Vanities” (four-letter words, crude jokes and political correctness), some instances of “Humour in Irish Speech” and three “Pomes” the author apparently found it worthwhile including.

Flaherty repeatedly emphasizes his awareness of the fact that English is still evolving, that its laws are not “immutable,” and that “[l]anguage is volatile, and ‘bad taste’ may become ‘good taste’ over time” (Flaherty 1995, iv). In the lists he provides “it is not to be implied that these are ‘errors’ in English, objectively ...,” but that they are “the subjective **opinions** of the author, not a definitive, immutable law” and only “**perceived**” by him to be errors, from which he may not be exempt himself (33). Still, it is clear that the author takes these “errors” very seriously: “It would seem, from observation, that the standard of spoken and written English in Ireland has fallen dramatically in recent years,” a fact he attributes mainly to deficient education, but also to the fact that the “Queen’s English” may not be particularly admired in his country, for “imperial” reasons as well as “for its perceived ‘snob’ values” (iii). His book “is intended as a handy reference text, or ‘reader’ for media people, politicians,



teachers, spokespersons, etc., as well as for the general public; but perhaps its primary application would be to formation or corrective therapy in schools” (iv). Although obviously not a usage guide based on professional linguistic principles, its contents are not without interest as a source of information on Irish English usage.

It is tempting to elaborate on the variety of Flaherty’s findings and comments (he is particularly sensitive to what he considers to be faulty greetings, as when people say “good night” when they should say “good evening” or when it is altogether the wrong time of day), but in what follows I will concentrate on the “have went” constructions, and on adjectives used as adverbs, since these feature as major, because recurrent, “errors” in Irish English. In his lengthy list of “Media Bloomers” (Flaherty 1995, 13-29), recorded between 1990 and 1995, the following perfective anomalies are cited and commented on (bold print as in the original): “I could have **went**,” “I would have **rang**” (13), “The estimates had **overran**” (14), “Having my hand **shook**” (15), “He got **beat**,” “Had I not **went** [heard from a “Teacher of English”!] (16), “Coalition was **broke** up,” “I have **wrote**,” “I must have **wrote** your name” (17), “We’re never **took** aside ...” (19), “The people we’ve **went** to” (22), “I would have **went** in,” “No sooner had farmers **began**” (25), “He was fairly **shook** himself ...,” and “I have never **drank**” (28).

On “I could have **went**,” Flaherty succinctly comments that it is “fairly common” (13), and indeed it is, having been recorded four times out of the total of fifteen. Other frequent specific errors, besides “faulty” greetings, are the use of a past participle where a preterite is required, and, with fourteen recordings, the verb “to rob” where standard (British) English requires “steal,” as in: “A doctor who **robbed** manuscripts from the Library” (19), recorded from “An ex-teacher.” In the lengthy “Corrections” chapter, which also comprises many (undated) examples of overheard “mispronunciation” as well as tautologies and other points of syntax, Flaherty includes three instances of *went* – “Had I not **went**” (34), “I was **after** just **having went** out to the cow byre” (47), and “The people we priests have **went** to” (51) – and one of *wrote*: “I have **wrote** several songs” (34), which is probably the same item more briefly cited on page 17.

“Have went” and its variants with other preterite verbs are clearly not just “an American usage problem” in modern times. One of the usage guides researched by Tieken and Kostadinova was the first one published in the United States, Seth T. Hurd’s *Grammatical corrector, or Vocabulary of the common errors of speech*, published in Philadelphia in 1847. Hurd was apparently able to locate this “*unpardonable blunder*” of “have went” “in the southern part of Ohio, in Pennsylvania, and to some extent throughout the Middle and Southern States” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Kostadinova

2015, 296). This was precisely around the time when more than a million Irish fled the Potato Famine, many of them emigrating to America. Could it be the case that this particular usage was, if not introduced, at least reinforced by Irish immigrants, many of whom would still have been native speakers of Irish rather than English, and whose English may have been “below standard”?

Some of the “errors” recorded by Flaherty are so-called “Hibernicisms,” i.e. constructions which are not “correct” according to the grammar of British Standard English, but are “calques” of the Irish language. A well- documented instance of this is the construction “to be after” for “to have just,” as exemplified in one of the instances quoted from Flaherty: “I was **after** just **having went** out to the cow byre” (Flaherty 1995, 47). Flaherty objects to both aspects of this sentence, but unlike “to be after” (from Irish *bí tar éis*), the combination of “have” plus past participle cannot be considered a literal translation from an Irish verbal phrase, and so this cannot be a likely explanation for its origins, either in Ireland or in America.<sup>2</sup> The “have went” construction must be a matter of English input, and may well have entered the American colonies directly from the first English-speaking settlers from the early seventeenth century onwards. However, the influx of many Irish immigrants may have given it a boost. A detailed study of a collection such as the *Corpus of Irish English Correspondence* (CORIECOR), rather than the literary *Corpus of Irish English* (CIE), may throw some light on this matter. Raymond Hickey briefly discusses the phenomenon in *Irish English*, noting a “frequent reduction in the number of verb forms” for colloquial forms of Irish English, the most common situation being “where the past participle is found for the preterite,” and citing four recorded instances of “have went” and a couple for “took” (Hickey 2007, 173–174). Sandra Clarke records just a single sample in her discussion of the English Irish perfect (“If I had a book wrote ...”), but without comment (Clarke 2012, 121).

A question that invites further investigation is: which specific verbs would be more likely to be found or more frequently used in this construction than others, and for what linguistic reasons? Obviously, the construction can only apply to those verbs that have different forms for the preterite and the past participle, that is to say, the (historically) “strong,” or as they are referred to in most grammars, “irregular” verbs. Of the 188 items listed in Van Helden’s *Concise English Grammar* (Van Helden 1967, 241–248), about two-thirds had or have identical ablaut or weak forms for

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<sup>2</sup> On the immediate perfective *be after*, see e.g. Hickey (2007, 197–208), and Clarke (2012, 114–118).

preterite and past participle, such as *bound*, *bled* etc. This leaves at least sixty irregular verbs (not counting composites included in longer verb lists) that could potentially turn up with preterite for past participle. So far we have come across: *beat*, *began*, *bore*, *broke*, *came*, *drank*, *drew*, *drove*, *eat*, *fell*, *flew*, *forgot*, *gave*, *overran*, *rang*, *rid*, *shook*, *took*, *went*, *wrote*. Some of these, of course, are fictional. A quick search in the three-part *Corpus of Late 18th-Century Prose* rendered eight hits for “have went” or “had went,” but none for “has gave” or “was drew,” both of which occur in the speeches Jane Austen assigned to her character Lucy Steele. Do we have to reject these items until we find them authenticated in a written or spoken record?

In her monograph on the life, work and language of Robert Lowth (1710–1787), Tieken devotes a section to “Treatment of strong verbs and irregular verbs” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 120–128), which may provide us with some answers as to how the usage came into being, and by what possible criteria specific verbs may be more or less liable to be rare or excluded. Referring to a case study by Larisa Oldireva Gustafsson, she notes that but for the normative grammarians the preterite of strong verbs might have served for the function of past participle as well. In the grammar section of his famous 1755 dictionary, Samuel Johnson writes: “Many words have two or more participles, as not only *written*, *bitten*, *eaten*, *beaten*, *hidden*, *chidden*, *shotten*, *chosen*, *broken*; but likewise *writ*, *bit*, *eat*, *beat*, *hid*, *chid*, *shot*, *chose*, *broke*, are promiscuously used in the participle” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 121). Steven Pinker, who observes a “larger erosion of the distinction between participles and past tense forms throughout the verb system,” cites a list of non-standard past participle forms from an early-twentieth-century publication by the American language historian H.L. Mencken: “(*has*) *ate*, *blew*, *broke*, *did*, *drank*, *drive*, *froze*, *gave*, *rode*, *rose*, *ran*, *stole*, *swam*, *took*, *tore*, *woke*, *wore*, and *wrote*” (Pinker 1999, 77, 78). A majority of the instances recorded are cases where the past participle in standard English has retained the Germanic *-(e)n* ending: *beaten*, *bitten*, *blown*, *borne*, *broken*, *chosen*, *done*, *drawn*, *driven*, *eaten*, *fallen*, *flown*, *forgotten*, *frozen*, *given*, *ridden*, *risen*, *shaken*, *stolen*, *taken*, *torn*, *worn*, *written*. If an over-enthusiastic further dropping of this ending is a criterium for the usage under discussion, one might also expect “have,” “had,” “having” etc. to be followed by preterite forms such as: *befell*, *bade*, *clove*, *forbad(e)*, *forgave*, *forsook*, *grew*, *saw*, *strove*, *throve*, *trod*, and *wove*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins’ famous sonnet “God’s Grandeur” contains the line “Generations have trod, have trod, have trod,” but this may be a case of poetic licence...

Lowth “denounced the general tendency to ‘confound,’ as he phrased it, ‘the Form of the Past Time ... with that of the Participle’ as ‘a very great Corruption’” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011, 122). The participle forms he proscribed are listed in Table 4.6 on page 124: “arose, bore, befell, begot, began, bid, broke, chose, drank, fell, got, hid, held, interwove, mistook, rode, rose, shook, spoke/spake, sprang, stole, took, wove, writ/wrote.” His list contains 24 items in all, of which I have italicized the instances cited from sources above. It is not clear whether Lowth actually encountered all these forms in spoken or written form, or whether it was a matter of prescriptive linguistic principle. It is likely that forms like *began* and *drank* arose from the confusion of strong verbs forms that have or had an i-a-u ablaut. Eighteen such verbs are listed in Table 4.5 on page 123. With the exception of *drank* (proscribed), all participles had <u> in Lowth’s days, but the preterite had <a> as well as <u> in twelve instances, which in Present Day English have been reduced to three (*shrank/shrunk*, *spun/span* and *stank/stunk*); seven verbs now have <a>, and eight <u> in the preterite. We may assume that forms like “have began” are the result of users’ confusion during and even after the “codification” of this type of verb. “Have went” may be a form induced by analogy with other monosyllabic participles in <-nt>, like *bent*, *blent*, *lent*, *meant*, *sent*, as well as by its frequent use. Pinker argues that “[i]rregular verbs are pairs of words retrieved from the mental dictionary, a part of memory” (Pinker 1999, 117), but he does not discuss the distinctive forms between preterites and participles. The question whether in non-standard English the “have-went” construction is a matter of “rules” or of “words” remains unanswered.

Concerning “flat adverbs” or, as Heinz Giegerich calls them, “uninflected adjectives” (Giegerich 2012, 343), we may be more concise. These are “adverbs that have the appearance of adjectives in that they lack the distinguishing adverbial suffix *-ly*” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2013, 91). Once again, Lowth and Baker are early informants, the former being “believed to be the first” (99). Baker cites only three examples: *previous*, *agreeable* and *bad* (instead of *ill*) (Baker 1770, 65–66). The examples Tieken quotes from Lowth’s grammar to confirm the adverbial usage of *exceeding* in Jane Austen’s letters are also mostly of a similar, namely intensifying nature: “Adjectives are sometimes employed as Adverbs; improperly, and not agreeably to the Genius of the English Language,” citing: “*extreme elaborate, marvellous graceful, extreme unwilling, extreme subject, to live ... suitable to and describes ... agreeable to,*” and adding: “So *exceeding*, for *exceedingly* ... has obtained in common discourse” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2013, 96).

Phillipps calls Lowth’s statement “very debatable” (Phillipps 1970, 178). The “solecisms” he cites from Austen’s novels are “dress *smart* and behave *civil*,” “speak ... *high*” (Lucy Steele), “speaks ... *distinct*,” and “behaved ... *handsome*,” whereas “direct him ... *right*,” “acting *wrong*,” “taught *wrong*,” “go ... *slow*” (twice), “breathe ... *quick*,” “speaking *plain*” and “write ... *even*” are labelled as “archaic rather than vulgar usage, even today” (179). About instances of intensifying adverbs, Phillipps states: “The use of an adjective form as an adverb of degree is more acceptable at this date, and the older characters, especially, tend to use expressions like *monstrous pretty*, *prodigious good*, etc.,” also citing *exceeding good*, *horrid unpleasant*, *prodigious handsome*, *mighty delightful* and *certain true* in characters’ speeches, and *tolerable powerful* and *remarkable stout* only in the narrative (180). From Lucy Steele’s speech he could have added “an exceeding proud woman” (Austen 2003, 126). In her own informal letters, Austen also occasionally used *exceeding* adverbially, but only in collocation with *good* followed by a noun, as opposed to her consistent use of “exceedingly well” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2013, 96–97). In the *Corpus of Late 18th-Century Prose* I found seventeen instances of intensifying *exceeding*, used to qualify “sorry” four times, “good” three times, “bad” and “fine” twice each, and six other adjectives or adverbs once.

Most of the instances from Jane Austen’s letters adduced by Tieken, as well those cited from her novels by Phillipps, correspond with a matter instanced by Flaherty as well as in P.W. Joyce’s *English as We Speak it in Ireland*, originally published in 1910: “We have many intensive words, some used locally, some generally: – ‘This is a *cruel* wet day’; ‘that old fellow is *cruel* rich’; that’s a *cruel* good man (where *cruel* in all means *very*: Ulster) ... ‘I was *dead fond* of her’ (very fond) ... ‘my throat is *powerful* dry’ ... ‘This day is *mortal* cold’” (Joyce 1988, 89). Hickey also briefly notes: “As with so many varieties of English, vernacular Irish English does not usually show overt marking of adverbs,” adding later on: “Various English adverbs, which are not formally marked, have developed functions as intensifiers, e.g. *We were pure robbed* ... *Your man is fierce rich*” (Hickey 2007, 256, 363). The phrases cited are instances of intensifying adjectives used as adverbs modifying verbs as well as other adjectives (i.e. as adverbs of degree). They are of a type also noted in Irish English by Flaherty, who cites: “He played fairly **good**” (Flaherty 1995, 25, 55), “It came out **fantastic**” (22), “She is jumping **fantastic**,” “I’d be **doin terrible** well” (23), “Last night was **deadly**, really good” (24), and “She was **terribly** nice, **fierce** nice altogether” (46). Flaherty primarily objects to the use of “deadly” and “terribly” as intensifiers, whether (correctly) adverbial or

adjectival: “A contradiction: ‘terrible’ and ‘fierce’ are opposite to ‘nice’” (46).

Giegerich briefly discusses the instances of the post-modifying variety as dialectal versions of the uninflected adjective (Giegerich 2012, 350–351). To the pre-modifying variety he refers as “usually denoting ‘high degree’,” in other words, as intensifiers. Citing examples such as “blind drunk” and “cold sober,” he argues that they suggest “lexicalised, that is, compound adjective status rather than ... phrasal status” (350); “*Mad keen* is a compound adjective while *madly keen* is an adjective phrase” (356). Such constructions are reminiscent of the regular use of “high degree” compounds in Irish, with uninflected adjectives such as *dearg-* (“red”), *marbh-* (“dead”), *mór-* (“big”) and *síor-* (“eternal”) as intensifying prefixes.

From research done so far by Tieken and others, it is clear that both the “have/is”-plus-preterite construction and the flat adverb have been under scrutiny by authors of prescriptive grammars and usage guides for at least three centuries. Questions to be further investigated are: what people (well or less well educated, men or women, English, Irish or American etc.) used which forms, with what preferences and in what frequencies? Also, what, if any, are the linguistic (syntactic, phonological/euphonious, semantic) restrictions? With the increasing amount of written sources collected in online databases available, this should be an interesting field for future scholarship.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The author wishes to thank the reviewers for their very helpful comments and suggestions.

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# WRITE BACK IN ANGER: STORMING THE ACCENT BAR IN 20TH- CENTURY BRITISH WRITING<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

The title of this contribution invokes two works, each of which was foundational in its own way. The first of these, *The Empire Writes Back*, (Ashcroft et al. [1989] 2002) was highly influential in addressing the issue of the use of the English language in post-colonial literatures. The title itself, of course, references the Star Wars film *The Empire Strikes Back*, evoking the idea of “writing back” as an act of resistance to the imperialist hegemony. This is explicitly addressed in the Introduction: “One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. [...] Such power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice.” (Ashcroft et al. [1989] 2002, 7) The second allusion in my title is to John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956), the play which is often cited as heralding a radical new departure in British theatre, rejecting the “well-made play” with its upper/upper-middle class drawing room settings, focusing instead on everyday, often working-class and provincial life. The premiere of Osborne’s play at the Royal Court in 1956 has entered mythology as introducing the first of the “angry young men” (Taylor 1962, but see Rebellato 1999 for a counter-argument). Whilst language is not the focus of this play, nor of the protagonist’s anger, I have invoked this notion of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century “anger” to draw a parallel between the post-colonial authors’ wresting back of power from Standard British English and the working-class or provincial British authors’ “writing back” by using representations of non-standard accent and dialect to challenge the same hegemony.

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<sup>1</sup> I have chosen this topic in recognition of Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade’s work on the connections between 20<sup>th</sup>-century English literature and prescriptivism (2019, 185–197).



My sub-title references a paper by David Abercrombie, first published in *The Listener* in 1951, but reprinted in 1965 in the collection *Studies in Phonetics and Linguistics*. In this paper, Abercrombie writes of the social status of Received Pronunciation, stating that those who do not speak with this accent are barred from social advancement. It is important to note that Abercrombie's paper was first published in 1951, six years after the end of World War II and five years before the premiere of *Look Back in Anger*, not in the middle of the "swinging sixties." I begin this paper by examining the comments by Abercrombie and other linguists from the 1950s and 1960s, noting the references to the waning importance of RP in some of the later publications. I then make some observations on the social changes that may have led to a more negative attitude to RP and, conversely, a more positive attitude to non-standard accents and dialects. Following this, I examine extracts from plays and novels of the 1950s and 1960s to demonstrate how these authors "write back" by representing the speech of their protagonists as non-standard. I then discuss extracts from poems by Tom Leonard and Tony Harrison, written in the 1970s and 1980s, which both use and comment on non-standard language as a way of asserting the poet's right to speak in his or her own voice in the face of criticism from RP speakers and those who still consider RP the only voice of authority. I conclude that, whilst the hegemony and even the existence of RP are questioned today and the notion of an "accent bar" can be refuted by several counter-examples of successful Britons with regional accents, any use of non-standard English in literature is still marked and involves "writing back" to some extent.

## 2. The "accent bar"

Abercrombie introduces the notion of the "accent bar" in a paper originally published in 1951:

The existence of RP gives accent judgements a peculiar importance in England, and perhaps makes the English more sensitive than most people to accent differences. In England, Standard English speakers are divided by an 'accent bar', on one side of which is RP, and on the other side all the other accents [...] there is no doubt that RP is a privileged accent, your social life, or your career, or both, may be affected by whether you possess it or not. (Abercrombie [1951] 1965, 13)

As Abercrombie explains later, the term "accent bar" was coined by analogy with "colour bar," referring to what was then a legal and overt form of institutional racism, whereby people of colour could be denied access to

jobs, housing, etc.<sup>2</sup> Although, especially as I write this paper in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, it seems at least an exaggeration to equate prejudice against non-RP speakers to these blatantly racist practices, Abercrombie argues that RP is practically a birthright of the privileged: “One either speaks RP, or one does not, and, if the opportunity to learn it in youth has not arisen, it is almost impossible to acquire it in later life” (1963, 48–49). He also refers to the blind prejudice of those on the “right” side of the accent bar: “It is very difficult to believe, if you talk RP yourself, that it is not intrinsically superior to other accents” (1965, 15).

Whilst those in the public sphere in Britain (and especially England) who speak with marked regional accents still face hostility,<sup>3</sup> the “accent bar” is no longer strong enough to prevent many talented individuals from succeeding in life, despite not being RP speakers. For this reason, Abercrombie’s stark statement seems to belong to another age. Even between 1951, when Abercrombie’s paper was first published, and 1965, when it was reprinted, others were suggesting that RP might be a two-edged sword. Spencer, writing when sociolinguistics was so much in its infancy that it was hyphenated, but foreshadowing recent work on indexicality and enregisterment,<sup>4</sup> states that

The prestige of RP is due directly and solely to the prestige of the class or group which possesses it. It is an indicator [...] not of the extent of education of an individual, but of the type of education which he or she has received. The corollary also holds: the extent to which this accent is disliked is the direct result of the dislike aroused in certain quarters of the class or group which possessed it. (Spencer 1957, 13).

Indeed, Abercrombie himself warned that RP might not be the best choice of model for teaching English to speakers of other languages: “Its peculiar social position, which makes many people hostile to it, should not be forgotten.” (1963, 55). Spencer cites the diplomat and politician Harold

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<sup>2</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “colour bar” as “a system within a society, organization, etc., which denies black and other non-white people access to the same rights, access and opportunities as white people.” The entry has been updated, but the most recent citation is from 2002, and that in a historical account of apartheid in South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> See Snell (2013, 2) for a discussion of the case of Steph McGovern, at that time business reporter for the BBC, saying in an interview that she had faced discrimination at the BBC because of her Teesside (North-east England) accent, and had also received hostile letters from viewers.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance, the account of RP in Agha (2003).

Nicolson commenting on social changes which should have weakened the influence of RP, but had not yet done so:

Today class distinctions have been modified by the impoverishment of the rich and the self-assurance acquired by the Trades Unions and the Labour Party as a result of a long and highly successful exercise of power. The level of education provided by State and local schools is today equal to that given by the most expensive institutions: our universities are attended mainly by undergraduates who do not come from wealthy homes. Moreover, now that all men and women are obliged to earn their living, and that National Service assists the fusion of classes, the old segregations are less rigid and may become less apparent. Yet the accent, most unfortunately persists. (Nicolson 1955, cited in Spencer 1957, 16–17).

By the end of the 1960s, the rise of negative attitudes to RP had become sufficiently noticeable to cause Gimson to modify the section on RP in the second edition of *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*. The first edition was published in 1962, but in the preface to the second edition he states that “the changing status of RP, especially amongst young people, has necessitated the re-writing of the pages dealing with this matter” (1970, vi). In the section referred to, he writes:

[I]t must be remarked that some members of the present younger generation reject RP because of its association with the ‘Establishment’ [...]. For them a real or assumed regional or popular accent has a greater (and less committed) prestige. [...] Indeed, RP itself can be a handicap if used in inappropriate social situations, since it may be taken as a mark of affectation or a desire to emphasize social superiority. (Gimson 1970, 86)

Gimson also notes here the “more permissive attitude” of the BBC in using non-RP speaking announcers and speculates that RP might disappear “within the next century” (1970, 86).

So, it would appear that the “accent bar” was at its strongest in the early 1950s, with resistance building through the later 1950s and 1960s. In the next section, I consider the social changes which influenced this.

### 3. Social change in 1950s and 1960s Britain

The quote from Harold Nicolson cited above identifies some of the social changes which he believed at the time should have led to RP losing its status as a marker of prestige. He refers to the rise of the Labour Party and Trades Unions, national service, and mass education. Barber (1964) likewise suggests that the 1944 Education Act, the experiences of World War II and

the consequent democratization of British society, contributed to the decline in status of RP. In some ways, all these factors are connected. Conscription during World War II, continued as National Service from 1948 until its phasing out between 1957 and 1963, led to young men from different regions and social classes serving together and becoming familiar with a range of accents. Wilson explicitly links the election of the first Labour government to the experiences of wartime:

The Labour victory came as no surprise to those who had heard the way men spoke while on active service about their hopes for postwar Britain. Few, if any, wanted a return to the high unemployment and social divisions of the 1930s. (Wilson 2005, 502)

This Labour government was to bring in social reforms that improved the lives of less wealthy Britons, notably the establishment of the National Health Service, providing free medical care, and the Education Act of 1944. The last of these introduced free secondary education, potentially up to the age of 18, for all students. This opened up the potential for children of lower-income families to qualify for university and therefore become as well educated as the upper-class children who had acquired RP in public schools.<sup>5</sup> The connection between RP and public schools is explicitly acknowledged by Daniel Jones (1917) and Wyld (1920). Agha (2003) uses the emergence and diffusion of RP as a case study for his theoretical framework of enregisterment, whereby a set of linguistic variants becomes associated with social characteristics, and with the persona of an exemplary speaker, in this case the “public school man.” RP was enregistered in this way when attendance at a public boarding school was the norm for boys from upper-class families (and middle-class families who had the means), and subsequently a passport to university education, the highest ranks in the military, prestigious jobs and/or influential positions. That RP indexed a high level of education and, conversely, non-RP accents a lower level of education, was therefore not surprising. However, the opening up of secondary and university education to all meant that it became much more likely that a person could be well educated, even enter the professions, and yet still speak with a regional accent, albeit probably a less broad one. Nevertheless, the association of RP with prestige still persisted, and, as I discuss later, still persists today. In the next section, I present some

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<sup>5</sup> The term “public school” is confusing to those from outside the UK, as such schools are not “public” at all. The term refers to a group of elite boarding schools such as Eton and Harrow which were the incubators of RP in the nineteenth century and which, by association, gave it its prestige.

examples of 20<sup>th</sup>-century authors who challenge this association by “writing back.”

#### 4. Writing Back

Barber refers to the social changes outlined in the above section in discussing changing attitudes to RP, noting that “the new working-class intellectual and his resentment of the Establishment are certainly realities of our time. And this resentment can also be directed at Received Standard as the language of the Establishment” (1964, 27). The fiction and drama of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century provides many examples of intelligent, articulate protagonists who express their frustration with the status quo in voices that are represented by the authors as non-standard.<sup>6</sup> One dramatist who represents regional accent and dialect in his scripts is Arnold Wesker. His play *Roots* (1959) is unusual in that its protagonist is an angry young woman: Beattie has returned from London to her parents’ home in rural Norfolk, where she receives a letter from her mansplaining London intellectual boyfriend Ronnie, ending their relationship. In her final rant, Beattie expresses her frustration with the class she belongs to.

Do you think we really count? You don’ wanna take any notice of what them ole papers say about the workers bein’ all-important these days – that’s all squat! ‘Cos we aren’t. Do you think when the really talented people in the country get to work they get to work for us? Hell if they do! Do you think they don’t know we ‘ont make the effort? [...] ‘Blust’ they say, ‘if they don’t make no effort why should we bother?’ (Wesker [1959] 1976, 148)

Far from romanticizing the working class, Wesker here suggests, using Beattie as a mouthpiece, that they should “make the effort” to better themselves. However, as Mandala (2007) points out, Wesker’s use of Norfolk dialect in the speech of Beattie and her family is not designed to characterize them as inarticulate, but as articulate speakers of Norfolk dialect.

What Wesker may be showing us [...] is that [Beattie’s] home dialect serves just as well as Ronnie’s Standard English when it comes to asking questions,

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<sup>6</sup> As an anonymous reviewer has pointed out, earlier authors, notably Elizabeth Gaskell and D.H. Lawrence, also represented non-standard speakers as intelligent and articulate. These authors were representing the social and sociolinguistic realities of their respective times.

challenging the status quo, debating and ultimately connecting. (Mandala 2007, 78)

Of course, in drama, the effect of the non-standard accent and dialect used by the characters depends on the actors' performance. Apart from representing Norfolk dialect in the script, Wesker provides instructions in the prefatory notes to *Roots*: "as [*Roots*] is about Norfolk people it is important that some attempt is made to find out how they talk" ([1959] 1979, 83). As Mandala points out (2016, 68), Wesker goes on to provide explanatory notes as to how certain words should be pronounced. In fiction, the onus is much more on the author to represent explicitly the accent and dialect of characters if this is important.

Many novelists of the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century, in relating the stories of working-class characters, put non-standard accents and dialects into their mouths, as well placing them in working-class occupations and settings. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Sillitoe places his protagonist, Arthur Seaton, working in the Raleigh bicycle factory in Nottingham, and at leisure in a working-class pub. Arthur is 22 years old and has completed a year of National Service, having started work in the same factory as his father at the age of 15. Factory work is boring and repetitive, but suits Arthur because he can earn good money and has time to think for himself. Arthur is not university-educated but he is represented as articulate and intelligent. He is hedonistic but clearly understands political issues. Arthur, his friends and family are all represented as speaking in the accent and dialect of Nottingham, as in this extract.

"I said I was as good as anybody else in the world, dint I?" Arthur demanded. "And I mean it. Do you think if I won the football pools I'd gi' yo' a penny on it? Or gi' anybody else owt? Not likely, I'd keep it all mysen, except for seeing my family right' [...] I ain't a communist, I tell you. I like 'em, though because they're different from these big fat Tory bastards in Parliament. And them Labour bleeders too." (Sillitoe 1958)

Arthur Seaton, as represented in the novel here, and even more so as played by Albert Finney in the highly successful 1960 film, characterizes the working-class (anti-)hero of the "kitchen sink" literature and British New Wave film of the late 1950s and early 1960s. He is not an "angry young man" in that he is portrayed as happy with his hedonistic lifestyle and his playing of the system, but his resentment of the Establishment, the "big fat Tory bastards" is clearly articulated, and his dialect is both the medium and the message of his rebellion against the old guard.

In both Wesker's and Sillitoe's case, the author puts non-standard English into the mouths of working-class characters. The author's own voice, in Wesker's notes and in Sillitoe's narrative, is Standard English. They are making the point that a non-standard voice is a voice worth hearing, but not claiming this for themselves. In the next section, I discuss two poets writing in the 1970s and 1980s who explicitly claim the right to use their own voices rather than Standard English.

## 5. Them and [uz]

Gimson (cited in section 2 above) suggested in 1970 that attitudes to RP had changed in the preceding decade, going so far as to suggest that it might not survive. However, poets such as Tom Leonard and Tony Harrison provide evidence that writers from working-class backgrounds still had plenty to write back about. Harrison was born in Leeds in 1937 and won a scholarship to Leeds Grammar School, one of the Direct Grant schools founded after the 1944 Education Act. These schools were fee-paying, but open freely to those children of lower-income families who passed an entrance examination. Several of Harrison's poems express the alienation he felt at being taken out of his own class background. In *Them and [uz]*, first published in *Planet* magazine in 1974, Harrison relates how, when asked to read out a poem in class, his accent was ridiculed as unfit for poetry. In placing [uz] in phonetic brackets, he highlights one of the most salient features of a northern English accent, the lack of what Wells (1982, 351) calls the FOOT-STRUT split, whereby non-RP speakers from north of a line running across England just south of Birmingham pronounce these two words and others like them with the same vowel. Harrison returns to this feature in the poem:

I chewed up Litterechewer and spat the bones  
 into the lap of dozing Daniel Jones,  
 dropped the initials I'd been harried as  
 and used my name and own voice [uz] [uz] [uz]  
 ended sentences with by, with from  
 and spoke the language that I spoke at home  
 RIP RP, RIP TW

I'm *Tony* Harrison, no longer you! (Harrison 1987, 122–123).

Here, Harrison rejects the name by which his teacher addresses him (TW) and the accent that the teacher tries to impose on him: both are integral to his identity and are reclaimed in this poem. Nevertheless, the majority of Harrison's poem is written in Standard English. Tom Leonard, on the other

hand, writes entirely in the urban dialect of Glasgow. In his most famous poem *The Six o' Clock News*, the narrator of the poem quotes the reader of the six o' clock news and, although the poem is written entirely in urban Scots, the newsreader is telling us why such a dialect is unsuitable for the news.

Thi reason  
 a talk wi a  
 BBC accent  
 iz coz yi  
 widny wahnt  
 mi ti talk  
 aboot thi  
 trooth wi a  
 voice lik  
 wanna yoo  
 scruff (Leonard [1976] 1984, 88)

The last line of the poem is “belt up.” The newsreader is silencing the reader and anybody who does not have a “BBC accent,” and therefore “canny talk right.” This is a very powerful contradiction of Gimson’s statement (see section 2) about the “more permissive attitude of the BBC” from the late 1960s onwards, and indicates that little had changed by 1976.

Leonard’s poetry also needs to be considered in the context of the long tradition of writing in Scots. As Macaulay points out in a chapter dedicated to Leonard’s work, “[L]iterature in Scots goes back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century” (1997, 72), when Scotland was a separate kingdom with its own emerging literary standard. Following the Unions of the Crown (1603) and Parliaments (1707), Scots became stigmatised and was used less in literature. Revivals of writing in Scots took place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, led by Allan Ramsay, Robert Ferguson and, of course, Robert Burns, and again in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, led by Hugh MacDiarmid. MacDiarmid was reacting against the 20<sup>th</sup>-century followers of Burns and what he saw as their romantic attachment to rural dialects and created a literary dialect, “Lallans,” which he intended to be a medium for a Scottish national literature. He explicitly rejected the use of regional dialects of Scots, which he considered debased. Leonard, however, attempts to represent just such a “debased” dialect: the urban dialect of Glasgow. In another poem, Leonard lists all those who have “tellt” him that his “language is disgraceful.” This litany concludes with “even thi introduction tay the Scottish National Dictionary tellt mi” (1984, 120). Macaulay points out that this refers to a comment in the first edition by the editor, William Grant: “Owing to the influx of Irish and foreign immigrants in the industrial area near Glasgow,



the dialect has become hopelessly corrupt” (Grant 1931, xxvii cited in Macaulay 1997, 77). Although the BBC newsreader’s accent is English, the “scruff” he addresses could be from any industrial city in Britain. The Scottish establishment are equally disparaging of Leonard’s Glaswegian dialect, so, like Harrison, Leonard is “writing back” on behalf of his class rather than his nation.

## 6. “Writing back” versus “writing up”

In the previous sections, I have argued that some playwrights, novelists and poets of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century represented non-standard varieties of English in their works as a way of asserting the right of non-standard speakers to use their own voices and to be judged according to the content of their messages. It needs to be acknowledged at this point that not all British authors of this period supported the use of non-standard English. Indeed, as Cameron (2009) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2019) have demonstrated, other authors, whilst representing non-standard language in their works, advocated education in “correct” usage as a way for the lower classes to achieve social mobility. Most prominent in this regard is Kingsley Amis, whose usage guide *The Queen’s English*, features in the *Hyper Usage Guide of English* database (<http://huge.ullet.net>). This attitude persists amongst the general public. Leonard’s evocation of the belief that only a BBC accent can be trusted to talk about the truth brings to mind the language attitude research first presented by Giles (1970). The results of this survey into attitudes to a range of local and national accents of English and RP demonstrated that, on dimensions of attractiveness, ease of communication and prestige, RP was clearly judged more favorably than any other accent. This research was conducted amongst school pupils and published in an educational journal. Giles concluded:

It is clearly important [...] to at least provide the working-class child with a standard accent in his formative years, since it is unlikely that he will command sufficient adaptability in code-switching to compensate for his low-prestige idiolect. (Giles 1970, 127)

In other words, it is lower-class children who must change their accents, not the rest of society that need to change their attitude. Re-reading Giles’s paper whilst preparing this chapter, I was shocked by his conclusion. However, more recent surveys show that, as far as attitudes to RP are concerned, little has changed over the last 50 years. Bishop et al. (2005) report on a survey conducted for the BBC Voices project, the results of which are remarkably consistent with Giles’s findings in 1970. Ongoing

research reports similar findings from as recently as 2019. This can be seen in the results of the Accent Bias Britain research project ([www.accentbiasbritain.org](http://www.accentbiasbritain.org)) reported in the *inews* website on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019 with the headline “British people still judge how smart others are by their accent” ([www.inews.co.uk](http://www.inews.co.uk)). What has changed in the intervening years is that this association is increasingly viewed as a social problem: hence the name of the research project, not the neutral “attitudes,” but the negative “bias.” When a good education is no longer the exclusive preserve of public school pupils, it can easily be demonstrated that the association of RP with intelligence is a matter of prejudice, not fact. The accent bar, like the glass ceiling, has been breached, but still exists, at least in the minds of some people. If those people have the power to hire or promote, we have a problem, and our authors still have plenty to write back about.

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# THE NEXT STEP: CULTURAL USAGE GUIDES

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Writing a paper for Ingrid has to begin with this story (forgive me if you have read my telling it before) because it took place in Leiden in February 2012, where I had been invited to give a lecture. Which part of Leiden, exactly? Read on.

The country was in the grip of exceptionally cold weather. The canals were frozen and people were skating on them. The previous time the canals had frozen over like this, it seems, was 1997. So it wasn't surprising that after the lecture the dinner-time talk – four Dutch colleagues, my wife and me, with a conversation entirely in English – at one point turned to the ice skating. Which bits of the ice were safe? Which weren't? Under the bridges was dangerous, evidently, for it was warmer there. Our knowledge of ice-skating was increasing by the minute. It was a lively and jocular chat, and the exceptional weather formed a major part of it. Then one of them said something that I didn't quite catch, and the four Dutch people suddenly became very downcast and there was a short silence. It was as if someone had mentioned a death in the family.

I had no idea how to react. Somebody commented about it being such a shame, about the – I now know how to spell it – *Elfstedentocht*. One of the four noticed my confused face. “The 11-cities tour was cancelled,” he explained, adding “because of the ice.” Ah, so that was it, I thought. Some sort of cultural tourist event taking in 11 cities had been called off because the roads were too dangerous. I could understand that, as the roads were so slippery that I'd had to buy some special boots a few days earlier to keep myself upright. But why were my colleagues so upset about it? “Were you going on it?” I asked. They all laughed. I had evidently made a joke, but I'd no idea why. “Not at our age!” said one of them. I couldn't understand that answer, and didn't like to ask if it was a tour just for youngsters. Then I got even more confused, for someone said that it was the south that was the problem because the ice was too thin. But why was thin

ice a problem? That would mean the travelling would be getting back to normal. I was rapidly losing track of this conversation, as the four Dutch debated the rights and wrongs of the cancellation. It might still be held...? No, it was impossible. It would all depend on the weather... And eventually the talk moved on to something else.

What I'd missed, of course, was the simplest of facts – and cultural linguistic differences often reduce to very simple points – which I discovered when I asked my host about it afterwards. I learned that *Elfstedentocht* firstly referred to a *race*, not a tour (*tocht* in Dutch has quite a wide range of uses) and moreover an *ice* race, along the canals between eleven cities in the northern province of Friesland. It is an intensive experience, only for the fittest and youngest – hence the irony of my remark. But the semantics of the word was only a part of it. The full cultural significance of the word I had still to learn. I discovered it later in the website of the *Global Post*.

It's hard to overestimate the grip that the Elfstedentocht has on the Dutch psyche. For sports fans in the Netherlands the epic 200-kilometer (125 mile) skating race is like the World Series, Super Bowl and Stanley Cup combined. Its mythical status is enhanced by the fact that it can only be held in exceptional winters when the canals are covered by 15 cm (6 inches) of ice along the length of the course. [...] If the Elfstedentocht, or "11 cities tour," goes ahead, organizers expect up to 2 million spectators – one in eight of the Dutch population – could line the route. The race has only been held 15 times since the first in 1909, and winners become instant national heroes. The legendary 1963 contest was held in a raging blizzard. Just 136 finished out of 10,000 starters. (*GlobalPost*, 10 February 2012)

"It's hard to overestimate the grip that the Elfstedentocht has on the Dutch psyche." A stronger cultural affirmation is difficult to imagine. The fact that it was an ice race was so obvious, to the Dutch people at the table, that they took it completely for granted, disregarding the fact that for me, coming from Wales, the significance of the thickness of ice on canals would totally escape me.

As a regular visitor to the Netherlands (one of my daughters lives in Amsterdam), I would appreciate an English usage guide to Dutch cultural allusions, so that I could anticipate topics of this kind. And the same point applies to any country, for allusions like this are going to turn up in everyday conversation in English wherever I go. When a country adopts English as a local alternative means of communication, it immediately starts using it to meet the communicative needs of the region. Words for local plants and animals, food and drink, customs and practices, politics and religion, sports and games, and many other facets of everyday life soon accumulate a local

stock of words and idioms which is unknown outside the country and its environs. And in everyday conversation, these turn up repeatedly. People talk about the local shops, streets, suburbs, bus-routes, institutions, businesses, television programmes, newspapers, political parties, minority groups, and a great deal more. They make jokes, quote proverbs, bring up childhood linguistic memories (such as nursery rhymes), and recall lyrics of popular songs. They then take all this knowledge for granted and allude to it partially or indirectly in conversation. They also begin to use it outside the context where it originated, as I'll illustrate below. Visitors who do not know the original context become increasingly confused.

Often a problem of cultural misunderstanding is never recognized. People readily sense when someone's *linguistic* knowledge is imperfect, and may go out of their way to accommodate to an outsider by speaking more slowly or by simplifying sentences. But they are not so good at *cultural* accommodation. There is too ready an assumption that foreigners will know what they are talking about. People are always oblivious to the cultural knowledge of their non-native listeners and readers, whatever the language and whatever the setting. Because the words and phrases are so familiar and routine, people are usually not aware that they are using something which foreigners will not understand.

Conventional dictionaries don't help, because they won't include such localisms, especially if the expressions refer to local people, places, institutions, and suchlike. I know of one brave effort to incorporate cultural topics into a general dictionary: *The Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (1992, 1998, 2005), which went through three editions before it ceased publication over a decade ago. It is not difficult to understand why. As English becomes increasingly global, covering the cultural allusions of all English-speaking countries would become an overwhelming task. It would also require a faster rate of updating than any commercial operation could countenance. A change of government, for example, would bring new names, nicknames, and political issues, each of which might be dropped into a conversation at any time. To take a British example: a sentence such as *What will Basil do?* would have had little general significance in the UK (or EU) a couple of years ago. If somebody had used it in a conversation, listeners would have been within their rights to ask "Who's Basil?" But as soon as Mr Johnson became prime minister, nobody who was aware of British culture would ever need to ask such a question. *Maggie* provides a similar example from the Thatcher political era. Every country has its Basils and Maggies, and even the most famous and long-serving eventually become a distant memory. It is not that we have forgotten who they are; it is that we would not recognize a casual allusion

to them in an everyday conversation without spelling it out. *Winston* today means nothing without *Churchill*.

We need country-specific cultural usage guides that keep up-to-date with changing situations. It is the next step the genre needs to take, prompted primarily by the rapid growth of English as a global language. To cope with the geographical spread and the speed of change, these will need to be internet-based. And because the range of topics is so great – in principle, any aspect of human life can generate a cultural allusion – they would need to be wiki-like, crowd-sourced, though of course under editorial supervision and with clear guidelines. To illustrate the scope of such guides, I give below the results of a collection I made of potential cultural usage entries for British English, and an example of how they might be treated. They are all expressions I have heard in real conversations, whose meaning demands an understanding of the way a cultural allusion has been used metaphorically. That is a crucial point: a cultural usage guide is not an encyclopedia. Encyclopedic information is readily available in all sorts of places, and is infinite in scope. If I do not know what the Forth Bridge is, I do not need a linguistic usage guide to tell me: I will simply look up *Forth Bridge* in an encyclopedia or website. But something different happens when we hear someone say, while weeding a garden, “I feel like I’m painting the Forth Bridge.” The speaker has taken the literal meaning of a cultural allusion and adapted it to express an analogous situation. The metaphor is based on the belief that the Forth Bridge is so big that when painters finish giving it a protective coat, they need to start again. It expresses the never-endingness of a task. Where can the EFL learner look this up – or for that matter, young native-speakers for whom it might equally be opaque?

I actually tested this last point recently when talking to a class of native-speaking 17-year-olds in a British school. The example I chose was of someone leaving an office and saying *It’s like Clapham Junction in there!* To understand this, you have to know that Clapham Junction is a railway station in south London, said to be the most complicated of all British stations because of the number of platforms it has. People are always rushing about and getting lost. The speaker means “It was chaos in there.” But none of the students recognized it or could explain it. I don’t know how many of the following examples would be challenging to a younger generation. And conversely, given my age, the list below is missing the kind of cultural allusions which the youngsters would use, and which I would find opaque. Some of the examples also relate to old television catch-phrases, slogans, and programmes, and may no longer be in popular memory, though they would be frequent in any literature of an older period.

A historical and sociolinguistic perspective for any cultural usage guide is going to be essential.

Such a guide could be organized either alphabetically or thematically, in the manner of a thesaurus. Here are some very general themes.

### **People**

agony aunt; angry young man; Arthur Daley; Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells; Doubting Thomas; Hooray Henry

### **Places where something happens**

Aintree; Blarney Stone; Bond Street; Clapham Junction; Colditz; Cook's tour; Forth Bridge; Glastonbury; Hyde Park; magical mystery tour; Mayfair; Park Lane; Petticoat Lane; Piccadilly Circus; Portobello Road; Savile Row; Soho; Spaghetti Junction; The Archers; The Tower; Timbuktu; Wembley; Wimbledon

### **TV, film, and radio names and catch phrases**

action replay; and now for something completely different; boom boom; Carry On VERBING; Crimewatch; Eastenders; *ex-* usages [the parrot sketch from Monty Python]; Fawlty Towers; the good life; Hammer horror; hi-de-hi; I don't believe it; Mickey Mouse; nice to see you, to see you... nice; nudge-nudge, wink wink, say no more; pass [from Mastermind]; Pythonesque; Que?; Sir Humphrey; here's something I made earlier; Tardis-like; the full Monty; the man from Del Monte says yes; top of the pops; twenty questions; the Wombles; your starter for ten

### **Literary people and animals**

Atlas; beauty and the beast; big bad wolf; Big Brother; Billy Bunter; Cheshire cat grin; Cinderella; Dennis the Menace; Desperate Dan; fairy godmother; good Samaritan; handsome prince; Hercules; patience of Job; Prince Charming; Sherlock; sleeping beauty; Tweedledum and Tweedledee

### **Literary titles, events, and catchphrases**

cupboard is bare; elementary my dear Watson; feeding of the 5000; Guinness Book of Records; Holy Grail; Mills and Boon; 1984; open sesame; page three; thought police; Waiting for Godot; your nose is growing longer

### **Games and toys**

a duck [from cricket]; Action Man; an all-rounder; Aunt Sally; deuce [from tennis]; Happy Families; lucky dip; pass the parcel; Queensbury rules; tally-ho; Trivial Pursuit



**General activities**

act of God; an MOT; Brownie points; Changing of the Guard; Custer's last stand; D-day; Dunkirk spirit; GBH; gone AWOL; he's behind you (Oh no he isn't...); King Canute; QED; the blitz; the riot act; you cannot be serious

**General descriptions**

all-singing, all-dancing; all things bright and beautiful; blue flag; Buckingham Palace; Chamber of Horrors; crown jewels; Cruft's; Heinz 57; Marie Celeste; out of the Ark; Pandora's Box; the holy of holies

There are 125 here, each of which I have heard used in a metaphorical way, and that is only the tip of the usage iceberg. They are moreover all 20th-century items; earlier centuries would require their own lists. In many such cases the work has been done, though not presented in the form of a usage guide. A cultural usage guide to Shakespeare, for example, would be based on a compilation of all the explanatory notes in the editions of his plays and poems. The donkey-work has been done in his case. But some periods have very little material. It is very difficult to work out the meaning of items corresponding to the above in, say, the issues of Victorian magazines, as I recently had to do for a recent book, *That's the Ticket for Soup: Victorian views on vocabulary as told in the pages of Punch* (Crystal, 2020). Someone might allude to "Cremorne" in a suggestive tone. To make sense of this, you have to know that Cremorne Gardens was a hugely popular leisure park in Chelsea, laid out in the grounds of Viscount Cremorne's London house. It opened in the 1840s with numerous attractions. The "fast set" would have been there in force, and before long it developed something of a bad name. It lost its licence and closed in 1877.

How might one handle cultural linguistic material? A usage guide might restrict itself to succinct definitions, but without illustration these would mean very little, especially to people learning a second language. Alternatively, one could present the information in the form of a short exchange followed by a prose explanation and several usage examples; or in the form of a dialogue, which would introduce a range of associated vocabulary. I illustrate the first procedure in the Appendix below. A glossary of any difficult words could also be added, as any description has to take into account the needs of non-native speakers – and we are *all* non-native speakers of a cultural dialect other than the one(s) we have been brought up in. I am not a native-speaker of American cultural English, and still find it necessary to ask for explanations when I see a US expression (such as from baseball) being used metaphorically in a newspaper headline or at a conference. In 1992, David Grote compiled a book called *British English for American Readers*, which covers some of the topics in my list.

I need a book called *American English for British Readers* – and another called *Dutch English for British Readers*, and so on for all countries, and perhaps also for regions within countries. Actually, *Dutch English for Everyone* would suffice, as I don't suppose the needs of British and American (and other) users would differ very much. But you can sense the scale of the enterprise nonetheless.

This is doubtless well beyond the capacity of a traditional book publisher, but it is well within the capacity of the internet, once the appropriate organizational structure is in place. It would need an international team, perhaps housed within an institution that already has many country links, such as the British Council, a university, a dictionary company, or a worldwide teaching organization such as IATEFL. There are several groups of professionals who are already very familiar with the issues involved, such as translators and interpreters, lexicographers, the publishers of travel and culinary guides, and those who organize citizenship tests for migrants. Small-scale cultural lexicons (such as the Dutch *Cultureel Woordenboek*, 1992–2005; [www.cultureelwoordenboek.nl](http://www.cultureelwoordenboek.nl)) already exist. Language-teaching programmes, both first-language and second-language, often have a cultural element these days. The editor-in-chief could come from almost any background. It would have to be someone who is not scared by Big Data.

Such a project would start small. My experience of discussing local cultural expressions in workshops around the world is that a collection of over a hundred can be built up in just a few hours. It would then grow rapidly. The Urban Dictionary ([www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com)) shows just how quickly a crowd-sourced lexical project can be created and managed – and how large it can become. My list is for just one culture, British English. A similar list could be compiled for any culture where English is routinely used – which these days means all countries. There is no difference any longer between countries which use English as first, second, or foreign language. The distinction between native and non-native disappears. I can get linguistically lost in the USA or New Zealand just as easily as can any non-native speaker. As soon as there is a conversation in English, regardless of the fluency of the speakers, cultural usages will arise and assumptions of mutual understanding will be made which – as in the Dutch example with which I began – can fail. I was fortunate in that case, for my confusion did not last long. I had the best tutor to explain what was happening, as the conversation took place in Ingrid's dining room.

## Appendix

A suggested treatment of a British cultural allusion

### MOT

Overheard in a doctor's surgery waiting room:

Mary: Anything wrong?

Anne: No, just an *MOT*.

Mary: Oh good. I had one a month ago,.

Anne: Did you pass?

Mary: Yes, fine.

### Gloss

A routine check-up on health or well-being, pronounced “em oh tee,” never “mot,” so the indefinite article is *an*.

### Source

MOT stands for Ministry of Transport. People in Great Britain who own a vehicle that is three years old are obliged by law to have it tested annually to ensure it is safe, roadworthy, and not emitting an excessive amount of gas through the exhaust pipe. The only exemption is a vehicle built or first registered more than 40 years ago which has had no major changes. The name of the test has stayed the same, even though the name of the relevant government ministry was changed to Department for Transport in 2002.

### Typical literal usage

My car has to have its MOT test next week

Have you got the old MOT certificate? You'll need to bring it with you when you get to the garage.

It's passed/failed its MOT.

### Typical metaphorical usage

– In relationships

From a Government pensions site headed “Mid-life MOT: take control of your future”

Getting older is an opportunity to focus on what's important to you, and a mid-life MOT is a good place to start. ... The mid-life MOT is a package of support that gives you access to free, professional and independent guidance to help you with pension planning, working options and staying healthy.

- In gardens
  - A horticulturist (Auntie Planty Garden Advice) offers a Garden MOT
    - I can spend time with you in your garden giving you an inventory of the goodies and baddies, and what you can do to make your new garden sparkle all year round.
- In business
  - Jonstar Energy
    - We all need a helping hand from time to time and our business MOT is designed to give you peace of mind, save you time and increase your profits.
- Headlines from the Web
  - [From The Sleep Council] Bed MOT – Do I need a new bed?
  - [From *The Telegraph* 31 July 2018] Does your marriage need an MOT?

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