

Dutch

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1. Introduction

Even as of today the famous medieval animal epic *Van den Vos Reynaerde* ('Reynard the Fox') is still considered by many critics to be the most outstanding piece of literature ever written in Dutch. It was originally created during the thirteenth century in the County of Flanders, the southwestern part of the language territory, and consequently, it was written in Flemish, the then most prestigious variety of Dutch. In present day Standard Dutch, though, Flemish is not the most prominent component anymore. Yet, it certainly has contributed massively to the codification and elaboration of the Dutch language. In the present article I will analyze the (extra-)linguistic factors that account for this evolution.

Dutch is the/an official language of three countries: Belgium, The Netherlands and Surinam. As far as the standardization process is concerned, the evolution in the latter country is not relevant and will, consequently, not be discussed here. For the same reason I will not go into the situation in the Dutch overseas territories known as The Antilles (i.e. Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao and some smaller islands in the Caribbean).

The Kingdom of Belgium (10 million inhabitants) is a trilingual and federal country, consisting of four different language areas: the Dutch speaking community (called Flanders; 58% of the population), the French speaking one (called Wallonia; 32%), the small German speaking community (0.6%) and the Dutch-French bilingual community of Brussels (9.5%). Since regional governments have legislative powers the frontiers of their jurisdiction, being language borders, are defined in the constitution (Treffers and Willemyns 2002). An estimated six million Dutch speakers live in Belgium and approximately 16 million in The Kingdom of The Netherlands. Although other languages are used on a more or less regular basis by important groups of immigrants (Van Bree and De Vries 1996: 1144), there is only one indigenous minority language in The Netherlands, viz. Frisian, which has

regional official status in the province of Friesland (approximately 4% of the total population; see Hoekstra, this volume).

Today Dutch is a pluricentric language (cf. Clyne 1992), but this has not always been the case. Therefore, I will, whenever necessary, diversify the story of the development and standardization of the language according to what is relevant for which country. Language development in general and standardization in particular proceed in a specific way in the case of pluricentric languages. A common characteristic to all peripheral language territories is that linguistic usage and variety distribution diverge to a certain extent from the centre (Bister-Broosen and Willemyns 1988). This occurs in the internal periphery as well as in the external periphery. In the latter case the centre of gravity is situated outside the country. In the Dutch language area Flanders is the external periphery and, consequently, language standardization in Flanders can never proceed along exactly the same lines as in the centre of gravity, the northern *Randstad* (the area comprising the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague and Utrecht).

2. Historical background

We know of only a few written records of Dutch that were produced prior to the twelfth century'.¹ Although Dutch was definitely used in writing earlier than that, we have to wait until the second half of the thirteenth century to see the beginning of an uninterrupted written tradition.² Traditionally, Low Franconian is seen as the Germanic basis of Dutch. Ingvaeonic elements played a part as well, but there is no unanimity as to its amount or real impact (Buccini 1992). In spite of the fact that the earliest Dutch documents originate from the eastern part of the language territory, it is definitely Flanders that emerges as the cradle of Dutch. When in the course of the thirteenth century Latin was gradually replaced by Dutch as the administrative language in the Low Countries, it appeared that Brugge (Bruges) rapidly emerged as the centre of written Dutch as far as the administrative as well as the literary variety of the language was concerned (Gysseling 1971). As Flanders merged with the Duchy of Burgundy in 1384, Brugge became the most flourishing trade capital of that empire and also culturally a most important trend-setting city. Brugge's language variety has contributed decisively to the development of Dutch (Willemyns 1971). Yet, Burgundian rule also marked the increase of administrative bilinguality in the Low Countries (Armstrong 1965) and thus created the Dutch-French language contact that would be so decisive for the formation of Dutch.

From the very beginning of the Middle Dutch writing tradition a linguistic contrast between an eastern and a western variety can be witnessed. The written language of the Middle Dutch period was firmly western (specifically Flemish) in

its roots even in the non-Flemish parts of the language territory.³ In the sixteenth century, though, the economic and political centre of gravity of the Dutch language area shifted to Brabant, the central area of the language territory. An early standard variety began to take shape based on the language varieties of both Flanders and Brabant. The practices of certain book printers may give us an idea of an implicit norm. Willemyns (1997a) shows in detail how the Antwerp printer Jan van Ghelen replaced almost all West-Flemish forms in a selection of the works of the West-Flemish playwright Anthonis de Roovere (1430–1482) in 1562, not by their Brabantic dialect counterparts, but by more or less “unmarked” forms which still exist in the present-day standard language.

This standardization process, though, would very soon change its course dramatically. The revolt of the Low Countries against their Roman Catholic Spanish rulers and the subsequent political split of the Dutch language territory during the second half of the sixteenth century had a dramatic impact on the history of Dutch. The centre of gravity of standardization gradually passed from the South to the North (more or less the present-day Netherlands), which had come out victoriously and as an independent nation from this war. From 1585 onwards the Low Countries were divided into two separate parts (more or less the present-day Netherlands and Belgium), each with its specific political, cultural, religious, and social development. The large number of (mostly wealthy, influential and highly educated) southern immigrants accounted for permanent contact with Southern (i.e. Flemish and Brabantic) Dutch, which was, at that stage, still the prestige variety of the language. Yet, it was gradually ruled out as far as its influence on the evolution of Standard Dutch was concerned. My account of the standardization of Dutch will start at this point.

The Netherlands’ seventeenth century is known as its “Golden Age”, reflecting both economic and cultural prosperity. Influential writers such as Vondel (1587–1679), Hooft (1581–1647), Bredero (1585–1618), Cats (1577–1660) and Huygens (1596–1687) shaped the writing standard in a Republic that had developed into one of the superpowers of that time, the economical centre of which was situated in the provinces of North and South Holland. The southern Low Countries, on the contrary, stagnated culturally, economically and intellectually. In the North, the standardization of Dutch, although still strongly influenced by the southern tradition, gathered momentum in a specifically Hollandic way.⁴

As a result of the Spanish War of Succession (1702–1713), the southern “Belgian” territories were passed on from the Spanish to the Austrian branch of Habsburg, ruling through the end of the eighteenth century. The consolidation of French as the more socially acceptable tongue continued and Dutch lost a number of its functions to French and its contribution to the elaboration of the Dutch standard language decreased and eventually stopped. In the North the glory of the

Golden Age faded and gave way to what is known as the *pruikentijd* ('the age of dullness').

In 1795 the "Belgian" territories were annexed by France. Their inhabitants were considered citizens of the newly created French Republic, and for the first time in history there was a massive official attempt to change the linguistic habits of the masses by suppressing the Dutch language (Deneckere 1975). The Netherlands were overrun by French revolutionary troops as well, however, here no conscious effort was made to suppress the vernacular language. It was during the French time that two of the main instruments for the standardization of Dutch were published, viz. Siegenbeek's spelling and Weiland's grammar, which will be discussed further below.

The short-lived reunion of the "Belgian" territories and The Netherlands as one *United Kingdom of The Netherlands* (1814–1830) was of the utmost importance to the Flemings, who rediscovered their language for administration, politics, the courts, and education; that is, areas where it had but seldom been used for almost two centuries. Although the reunification period was too short for the official policy of "Dutchification" to really succeed in the "Belgian" region, a small group of cultural leaders and intellectuals were strongly influenced by both the Dutch standard language and the new linguistic opportunities, a fact which was decisive for the eventual success of the Flemish Movement.

By 1830 Belgium had become an independent constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system dominated by the bourgeois elite, for whom French was a "natural" choice as the language of the state, the administration and public life in general. The government appointed only French-speaking civil servants and the discrimination of Dutch throughout the nineteenth century was generalized and deliberate (Witte *et al.* 1997). Hence, despite the fact that Dutch speakers constituted the majority of the population, no legal means were provided for their language.⁵ The abovementioned Flemish Movement was started up almost immediately and fought a long lasting battle for cultural and linguistic rights for Dutch speakers. It took until 1898, though, to declare Dutch and French the two official languages of the country. Only in 1930 was Dutch introduced as medium of instruction at the tertiary level, and two sets of laws (1932 and 1963) guaranteed what had been the ultimate goal of the Flemish Movement i.e. the official and complete "Dutchification" of Flanders. As the Walloons, however, were opposed to widespread bilingualism throughout the country, Belgium gradually turned to the territoriality principle to accommodate the various linguistic groups. Further revisions of the constitution in 1970, 1980, 1988 and 1993 (Coudenberg 1989; Witte 1990; Alen and Suetens 1993) finally turned Belgium into the federal country it is now, with cultural autonomy and a considerable amount of self-determination for the linguistically divided parts of the country.

As far as the language-political background for standardization is concerned, the history of the northern part of the Low Countries after 1830 was decidedly less eventful. The only real language conflict that emerged during that time was the “Frisian problem”. The linguistic consequences of the de-colonization are discussed in Van Bree and De Vries (1996).

3. Selection and codification of norm

Language planning and standardization prior to the nineteenth century

From the early sixteenth century onwards, efforts were made to regulate the Dutch language by means of corpus planning devices, such as dictionaries and grammars. The shift of the centre of gravity from Flanders to Brabant, which drew attention to linguistic diversity and variation, may have been one of the triggers for standardization; the need, mainly created by the Reformation sweeping over the Low Countries, to produce texts for large religious audiences in various parts of the language territory, certainly was another one.

In the course of the sixteenth century Dutch has, as De Vries, Willemyns and Burger (1995: 59) put it, “come of age”; it was now “a language to speak and to write, to praise God, to pursue science, alongside with being the language of poets and administrators it had been for centuries already”. The lingua franca at the European level, though, continued to be Latin. As more and more people urged the use of the mother tongue in as many domains as possible, the awareness grew that it needed some “refinement and uniformization” (Van den Branden 1956) in order to be able to assume the kind of functions performed by the classical languages. The *Naembouck* (‘Name book’, c.1551), a dictionary published by the Ghent printer Joos Lambrecht (1490–1556) was one of the very first corpus planning instruments. He, and many of his successors, had commercial motives as well: the more people were able to read a particular language variety, the more books they could sell. This explains why so many printers were involved in the “language unifying business”. Lambrecht, as well as all those coming after him, condemned and stigmatized loanwords from other languages, especially French.

Status planning was provided e.g. by scientists who wrote their treatises in the vernacular. The famous botanist Rembert Dodoens (1517–1585) from Mechelen published his *Cruijde Boeck* (‘Book of plants’) in 1554, the Ghent surgeon Carolus Baten his treatises on medicine in 1589 and 1590. By far the most productive linguistic innovator of his age, though, was Simon Stevin (1548–1620) from Brugge, an all round scientist (mathematician, musicologist, engineer, astronomer) who invented many Dutch words for scientific terminologies which previously existed

only in Latin, and which are still in use today (e.g. in the domains of mathematics and physics). Stevin, and with him many other scientists, had come to the conclusion that Dutch, the language of their home country, was the “best” language in the world. The idea that languages have intrinsic qualities was rather common at the time and was propagated by scientists and “language experts” in several countries. Joannes Goropius Becanus (1518–1572), the author of the *Origines Antwerpianae* in 1569 not only claimed Dutch to be the “best” but the oldest language as well; he was convinced that it was the language spoken by Adam and Eve in paradise (Hagen 1999a: 16–18).

Creating some kind of “general” Dutch, a variety understood by as many people as possible, was not only the ideal of the book printers. It was shared by those propagating Luther’s and Calvin’s religious reforms. Both the preaching and the Bible reading necessitated some kind of a standardized language variety and, consequently, some of the preachers turned into “linguists”, trying to establish a standard language. Some even tried to create a mixed language, which would be understood in both the Dutch and the Low German areas. None of them was very successful, though (De Vries, Willemyns and Burger 1995: 60–62). It took until 1637 for the *Statenbijbel* (‘Bible of the states’) not only to create, but also to implement and spread a standardized language, which influenced modern Standard Dutch more than anything else (Van Dalen-Oskam and Mooijaart 2000).

At the same time, the sixteenth century was a period in which scores of *spraakkonstenaars* (‘grammarians’) were struggling with spelling and grammar (considered by most to be one and the same thing). The same Joos Lambrecht already mentioned as the first lexicologist, was also the author of the first spelling treatise: his *Nederlandsche Spellinghge* (‘Dutch spelling’) was published in 1550. Yet, in the realm of spelling and grammar the ideal of a common language was less obvious and most of the *spraakkonstenaars* were looking for creating a norm based on their own dialect. The most important, though not necessarily the most influential one was Pontus de Heuiter (1535–1602) from Delft, whose *Nederduitse Orthographie* (‘Dutch orthography’) published in 1581 was the only one based on an intended general language instead of a particular dialect (Dibbets 1968). Although appreciated by present-day linguists, his proposal was not very popular with his contemporaries. The most important sixteenth century grammar was the *Twe-spraak van de Nederduitsche Letterkunst* written by Spiegel (1549–1612) and published by the Amsterdam *redereijkerskamer* “*De Eglantier*” in 1584 (Hagen 1999a: 14–16).⁶ This popular and influential grammar is usually seen as the real beginning of a tradition of prescriptive grammars in Dutch, based on the rules of the Latin grammar. The author emphasized that his language, and therefore his norm, is not that of the common Hollander, but the sociolect of the cultivated and educated classes. This marks the beginning of a new approach in the standardization debate: as far as the elaboration and implementation

of the norm were concerned, the social prestige variable grew ever more important, to the detriment of the regional variable.

Scientific lexicology in the sixteenth century prospered even more than grammar. After Joos Lambrecht's *Naembouck* a couple of professional lexicographers appeared on the scene. The Antwerp master printer Christoffel Plantijn (1520–1589) wrote, as well as commissioned, important and innovating dictionaries (Claes 1970). His own *Tetraglotton*, a quadrilingual dictionary combining Latin, Greek, French, and Dutch, was probably partly edited by Cornelis Kiliaan (1528–1607), who also was the author of one of the most famous dictionaries in the Low Countries ever, the *Etymologicum Teutonicae linguae sive Dictionarium Teutonico-Latinum*, first published in 1574, but best known in the revised third edition of 1599. Kiliaan not only described the vocabulary of Dutch, he also included etymological comments and indicated in which regional dialects the listed words were used. Finally, he added the translation in both High German and Latin. He definitely produced the first scientific dictionary of a vernacular which was second to none in Europe. This dictionary was the most important status planning instrument of the Dutch language in the field of lexicology; Spiegel's *Twe-Spraack* has to be attributed the same status in the field of grammar.

Yet, by the time both books were published, an event had taken place that would change the evolution of Dutch more decisively than any language planning effort ever, viz. the so-called Eighty Years War, the revolution of the Low Countries against their Spanish, Catholic rulers. In the summer of 1585 the Spanish commander-in-chief Alexander Farnese (1545–1592) recaptured Antwerp, the last of the important cities of the Low Countries to fall into Spanish hands. The split of the country was a fact now. The massive exodus of inhabitants of the southern Low Countries to England, Germany, but mostly to the North (i.e. The Netherlands) reached its climax. Antwerp emptied: in a few years its population decreased from 100 000 to 42 000. Amsterdam's population increased from 50 000 to 100 000 by the end of the century, even 150 000 by 1650. A census taken in 1622 revealed one third of Amsterdam to be of southern origin, in Haarlem it was 50% and in Leiden 67%. As to their social status, the immigrants were not only skilled craftsmen: in 1611 half of the 310 most important merchants of Amsterdam were southerners (Van Leuvensteijn 1997). Holland became the economic and cultural centre of Europe, but the glory of the Golden Age of The Netherlands was largely paid for by money coming from Flanders and Brabant.

The massive exodus was also a "brain drain", emptying the southern Low Countries of its influential philosophers, scientists and artists. Many of them were "men of words" and the people of The Netherlands were now taught by southerners, heard southern sermons in their churches and were entertained by southern *rederijkers* playing in their theatres. The spoken word in Holland was heavily

accented with a southern flavour and a lot of that Flemish and Brabantic influence was there to stay in Standard Dutch forever, be it mostly in the more formal written variety. We may conclude that, although the sixteenth century bubbled with language planning activities, it is not easy to identify an explicit norm for the standardized language, or to understand how exactly the language was built up and what were its main components.

From the very first decades of the Golden Age of The Netherlands, we witness the appearance of a large number of treatises on grammar and spelling. The most influential one, *De Nederduytsche spraec-konst ofte tael-beschrijvinghe* ('Dutch grammar or language description'; 1633) was written by the mathematician Christiaen van Heule. The main objective of these grammars was to prescribe a norm and to change the language accordingly. Influenced by their admiration for the classical languages, the authors were eager to introduce rules based on the rich system of conjugations and declinations known from Latin and Greek. In addition, the acclaimed writers of the time were, of course, influential in their own right, both by the way they wrote and by what they had to say on language usage. Jacob Cats, the most popular of them, tried to contribute to "general" Dutch, by successfully mixing elements from Zeeland (his province of origin) with such from Holland and Brabant. According to Vondel, the most famous poet of the time, the norm of the language was to be found in the sociolect of the upper classes of both Amsterdam ("the most magnificent mercantile centre of the world") and The Hague ("the capital").⁷ Once again we see how the social variable superseded the regional one.⁸ Until well into the nineteenth century having a regional accent would be deemed less of a problem than having the wrong social accent (up to a point this is still the case today in The Netherlands).

The most influential language planning instrument by far, though, was the *Statenbijbel* mentioned above. The executive body of the northern protestant state commissioned a translation of the Bible that was carefully checked for both religious orthodoxy and the linguistic North-South balance. As a result, the language of the *Statenbijbel*, actually created for the purpose, combined northern and southern characteristics and became the basis for the northern writing tradition, thus preventing northern and southern varieties of the language of growing too far apart. A detailed account of both the translation procedure and the resulting language forms is to be found in De Vries, Willemyns and Burger (1995: 82–87).

It is generally thought that the impact of eighteenth century grammarians on the evolution and standardization of northern Dutch was rather limited. Yet, there are quite a few influential grammarians to be mentioned. The *Nederduitsche spraekunst* ('Dutch grammar', 1706) by Arnold Moonen (1644–1711) was very popular (there were at least four reprints) and was, according to its author, following the Greek and Latin grammatical tradition as well as being inspired by the work of the famous

German grammarian Justus Georg Schottel (see Mattheier, this volume). In the equally famous *Nederduytsche Spraekkonst* (1708) the author, Willem Sewel (1654–1720), explicitly stated that, in his opinion, Hollandic, i.e. the language variety as used in the province of Holland, was definitely to be considered the “best” kind of Dutch (De Bonth *et al.* 1997: 367). In the eighteenth century grammars, we also witness the breakthrough of a new and inspiring grammatical principle, viz. that grammarians ought not to invent rules but only should propagate those rules which can be derived from real language usage. Lambert ten Kate (1674–1731) first formulated this point of view in his internationally famous *Aenleiding tot de kennisse van het verhevene deel der Nederduitsche sprake* (‘Introduction to the knowledge of the superior part of the Dutch language’, 1723).⁹ Although he proved to be an excellent analyst of language change and linguistic evolution, less gifted colleagues of his were more successful and influential. Their work deepened the gap between the spoken and the (over-formalized) written language and their linguistic views came to be known as “language despotism”. Its most famous representative was Balthazar Huydecoper (1695–1778), who, in his *Proeve van taal- en dichtkunde* (1730) criticized the “ungrammatical” language as used by Vondel (De Vries, Willemys and Burger 1995: 99 ff.). Thanks to Ten Kate, we also know that in the early eighteenth century a more or less “general” spoken Dutch did definitely not exist. He, and some of his colleagues, pointed out that the language differed from province to province and even from city to city (quoted in De Bonth *et al.* 1997: 363). Yet, his statement that language “unity” did exist in the written language must not necessarily mean that a standardized variety, comparable to the present one, had already emerged.

In the second half of the century language planning activities regained some of the popularity they enjoyed during its initial decades. One of the most noticeable signs of this revival is the foundation, in 1766, of the *Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*; a ‘Society for Dutch Literature’, in which the study of “literature” included that of “language”, and which continued to exist until the present day.

Meanwhile, in the southern Low Countries, Dutch was gradually losing more functions to French. Although Dutch was still spoken and written by the large majority of the population and used for administrative purposes on a local level, it had lost its prestige and, because it lacked contact with the North, did no longer participate in the language standardization process that took place over there. Although most of the many southern grammarians advised their readers to conform to the northern norm, the southerners had no way of knowing how language was developing in the northern parts. The same, evidently, applied to the grammarians themselves who prescribed rules of their own, mostly based on their personal regional dialect. One of the most popular grammarians was Andries Steven (1676?–1747) from Kassel (now in the North of France, at that time still part of the Dutch

language area), whose *Nieuwen Nederlandschen Voorschriftenboek* (1711) enjoyed numerous reprints and was in use in some schools as long as the early nineteenth century (Smeyers 1959). More influential still was Jan des Roches (1740–1787). This former teacher from The Hague was the secretary of the “Imperial Academy of Sciences” in Brussels and the most important advisor to the Austrian rulers in the fields of language and education. He published both a grammar *De nieuwe Nederduytsche Spraekkonst* (‘The new Dutch grammar’, 1761) and a dictionary *Fransch-Nederduytsch woordenboek* (‘French-Dutch dictionary’, 1782). Although a number of grammarians can be identified in the southern Low Countries during the annexation to France and the United Kingdom of The Netherlands, nothing spectacular emerged since most of them carried on in the eighteenth century tradition. Smeijers (1959) gives a detailed overview of their production (see also De Groof 2002).

4. Language planning in the nineteenth century

The selection of norm in the South

The first leaders of the Flemish Movement were trained during the reunification time (1814–1830). Their views on language evolution and the way it could possibly be planned were entirely dominated by the political goals they wanted to achieve. Language planning indeed was not an aim in itself but a tool in a much broader social, cultural and political plan. It appeared very soon that to obtain linguistic rights for Dutch-speakers was only possible by means of a linguistic legislation, which in its turn could only be brought about by enhancing the prestige of the language. At the same time increased linguistic rights for Dutch speakers were a necessary condition for influencing language development. Consequently, several problems emerged simultaneously, one of them being that the Dutch language had lost so many functions that it was not equipped to assume the tasks its advocates had in mind. The Dutch language needed standardization, it needed to be transformed into a tool fit to perform all the functions a language had to perform in a modern, industrialized state. The situation, therefore, was favourable for language planning activities.

Two factions may be discerned: those who were advocating a domestic standardization, based on the local, regional varieties, the so-called *particularists* and those who insisted that the northern model should be followed, in other words, that the Flemings should take over as much as possible the standard language as it already existed in the North. They were called the *integrationists*. After a few decades it clearly appeared that the integrationist solution had prevailed, and their victory was never to be seriously challenged afterwards. One of the reasons for this

victory was undoubtedly a socio-political one: the only possibility for successfully repelling the competition of French — it was generally felt — was the elaboration of a language that could be accepted as being the same as the one used in The Netherlands, in order to profit domestically from the prestige the language had acquired abroad (Willemys, De Groof and Vandebussche 2002). As to its implementation, the strategy used to convince the population was quite simple and straightforward (and indeed the same as the one used to beat the particularistic adversaries): if you want rights for your language (and for those who speak it) you should use the prestige variety which, in the course of centuries, has only been preserved in Holland. To adopt it now means only to gain repossession of the heritage which has always been there for you to collect! It is obvious that this action was essentially ideological, appealing to political and nationalist feelings which, as years went on, grew more and more intense in large portions of the population. The results of this first period of language planning in modern Belgium were, therefore, essentially of an attitudinal nature, in that language activists tried to convince the population to adopt the same language as their northern neighbours (Willemys 1996).¹⁰

Integrational efforts and the codification of the norm

An intellectual elite, which had acquired experience with using Dutch in administrative, literary and scholarly writing was the first group to experience that it was necessary to unify, modernize and standardize the language. Most of them were part of the integrationist faction that suggested to organize a *Nederlandsch Congres* ('Dutch Congress') in 1849 (De Vroede 1950). This North-South reunion was to serve a double purpose: (a) to strengthen the Flemish movement, and (b) to establish contact with "men of letters" from The Netherlands which would favour "the advancement of the Dutch language and literature".

Though the particularistic faction did not attend, and the Dutch in general were rather indifferent to the cause of the Flemish activists as they did not want to interfere in what they considered to be "domestic Belgian policy" (Vanacker 1982), the First Congress on 26 August 1849 at the University of Ghent started a tradition of congresses (called *Nederlandsch Taal- en Letterkundig Congres* 'Dutch Congress on Language and Literature') which was to continue until 1912 (De Clerck 1975). Despite their limited influence on the course of the Flemish Movement and the status of Dutch in Belgium, the congresses positively contributed to intensifying contact with fellow Dutch speakers of the North and to gaining sympathy and support in The Netherlands for the Flemish cause (Willemys 1993).

One of the most important practical results of the congress (on the corpus planning level) was the decision, in 1849, to commission an extensive dictionary

(De Vries, Willemyns, and Burger 1995). The Dutch linguist Matthias de Vries (1820–1892) was the first author of the very extensive *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* ('Dictionary of the Dutch Language'), which was to be written in the tradition of the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* of the Grimm brothers, and which would become a major instrument in both the elaboration and the implementation of the integrationist norm. The dictionary has only been brought to a successful end in 1998, when the fortieth and final volume was published, making the *WNT* the largest dictionary in the world (Moerdijk 1994). From the very beginning financial support was provided by both the Dutch and the Belgian governments. Later it was carried on by the bi-national *Instituut voor Nederlandse Lexicografie* ('Institute for Dutch Lexicography') in Leiden, which still coordinates the official lexicographic efforts of the Low Countries under the auspices of the *Nederlandse Taalunie* ('Dutch Language Union', see below).

Ius et norma loquendi

In the Low Countries a language in contact situation with French has always existed. Yet, it is undoubtedly in the South that it had the most penetrating influence on language usage and on the structure of the languages (Willemyns 1996b). It even interfered in both corpus and status planning, since the language policy of the advocates of French considerably influenced the debate and the course of the standardization of Dutch in the nineteenth century. The struggle for the *ius loquendi* has definitely influenced the *norma loquendi*.

Until recently the tendency prevailed to underestimate the perversity of the purposeful official discrimination of Dutch by the first "Belgian" rulers. One single quotation may suffice. In 1830 the provisional government issued a decree to justify why only French could function as the official administrative language of Belgium, and why the majority language apparently could not be used in this function:

Considérant d'autre part que les langues flamande et allemande, en usage parmi les habitans de certaines localités, varient de province à province, et quelquefois de district à district, de sorte qu'il serait impossible de publier un texte officiel des lois et arrêtés en langues flamande et allemande. ('Considering on the other hand that Dutch and German, used by the inhabitants of certain places, may vary from province to province and even from county to county, it would be impossible to draft an original official text of laws and decrees in either Dutch or German.'; cited in Peeters 1930: xiv; translation R. Willemyns).

In spite of the obvious malevolence (laws and decrees had been drafted exclusively in Dutch from 1824 to 1830) as well as the downright offence of calling the language of the majority of the Belgians a "language used by the inhabitants of certain

places”, the opinions expressed in such texts were taken to heart by the Flemish activists and generated a kind of “minority complex” which has influenced the standardization policy and the semi-official language planning for more than a century and a half. By the same token this helps us to understand why the Flemings were so obsessed with wanting to convince everybody (and the French speakers in the first place) that their language was not a mere bunch of varying dialects, but a real standard language instead. And this, they believed, could only succeed if that standard language was the same one as the language used in Holland. This is yet another justification of the integrationist discourse.

Although French may not have been the language of the majority of Belgians, it surely was the country’s prestige language, and its societal superiority was not only held responsible for the discrimination of Dutch but for its “corruption” as well. Nineteenth century integrationist language reformers, the most famous of which were Willem de Vreese (1869–1938) and Hippoliet Meert (1865–1924), have constantly repeated that the language of even the best educated Flemings had been corrupted because of the language in contact situation with French, which inevitably led to numerous calques and Gallicisms (De Vreese 1899; Meert 1899). Some quotations may serve to illustrate this point of view. Meert, e.g., explains:

Hoe zou de Vlaming nu, die een slordig onderricht in zijn taal ontving, die geen steun vindt in eene algemeene, beschaafde omgangstaal, hoe zou hij zuiver Nederlandsch kennen? ... Zoo menige Fransche uitdrukking blijft ons in ‘t hoofd hangen, waar wij de Nederlandsche weerga niet van leerden kennen, dat wij ze onbewust vertalen. (‘How could you expect the Fleming, who received sloppy instruction in his mother tongue, and who, consequently, cannot turn to a general, civilized daily language [i.e. a standard language, RW] for support, how could you expect that Fleming to master pure Dutch? ...so many French expressions are locked in our head, the correct Dutch equivalent of which we never acquired and which, therefore, we unwittingly translate.’; Meert 1899: 21; translation R. Willemyns).

His colleague Willem de Vreese, combines a similar complaint with a theoretical justification of the integrationist views :

Het is onloochenbaar dat wij Zuid-Nederlanders, onder den invloed van allerlei betreurenswaardige omstandigheden en oorzaken, waaraan tot nu toe nog zeer weinig, ja niet verholpen is, nagenoeg alle taalgevoel verloren hebben, en ik meen dat wij, zoolang die toestand voortduurt, het best doen onze taal opnieuw te leeren bij hen die ze kunnen, d.i. bij de Hollanders. (‘It cannot be denied that we, people of the southern Low Countries, because of all kinds of deplorable circumstances and causes, which have hardly or not been remedied so far, have lost our language flair almost completely, and I am convinced that, as long as this situation continues, our best option is to learn our language again from those who master it

[i.e. those who never lost its command, RW], viz. the Hollanders.’; De Vreese 1899; translation R. Willemyns).

De Vreese’s status as an academically trained linguist allowed him to let language-political arguments overshadow purely linguistic ones:

Ik zie alleen heil in een nauwe aansluiting bij het zoogenaamde Hollandsch [...] Liever Hollandsch dan Fransch. Dat is mijne manier om Flamingant te zijn. (‘The only possible solution I see is to rely as much as possible on Hollandic. I prefer Hollandic over French. That is my way of being a Flemish activist.’; *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie van Taal- en Letterkunde*, 1899; translation R. Willemyns).

The responsibility of the governmental Frenchification policy for the “language corruption” is also demonstrated by Haest (1985). Her investigation of the syntax of Antwerp newspapers shows that 2% of all attested Gallicisms in her corpus appeared in 1700, 6,8% in 1750, and 12,2% in 1800. After the foundation of Belgium the percentages increased: in 1850 the total reaches no less than 44,6% and slows down to 34,1% in 1900. The explanation is quite simple, she says: “the complete and systematic Frenchification of education and administration in the young Belgian state, where now not only the upper class but the petty bourgeoisie as well has almost daily contact with the French language” (Haest 1985: 112). Ongoing investigations of my Brussels research team consistently confirm that real Frenchification in Flanders has mainly started from 1830 onward, i.e. after the Belgian state was founded. Only from the 1930s (i.e. with the “Dutchification” of the university of Ghent) was it possible to bring actual language performance in line with the convictions and attitudes discussed above, since only by then had Dutch in Belgium become a language used in and for science.

Official language planning: the spelling

As mentioned, 1777 is the year that saw the first official spelling norm in The Netherlands, viz. Jan des Roches’ *Nederduytsche spraek-konst*. In the North Siegenbeek’s spelling (*Verhandeling over de spelling der Nederduytsche taal en bevordering van eenparigheid in derzelve*, ‘Treatise on the spelling of Dutch and on how to increase its uniformity’, 1804), commissioned by the government of the *Bataafsche Republiek* was the compulsory guideline in education as well as administration from 1804 onward.

Yet, in the course of the nineteenth century, both the spelling system and the political situation of the Low Countries changed often and considerably, and so did the outcome of their interplay. From 1795 through 1814, during the annexation of the southern Low Countries to France, French was the only official language and its

use was obligatory in all official circumstances. An official spelling for Dutch, consequently, did not exist. In the United Kingdom of The Netherlands (1814–1830) the use of Dutch as an official language was compulsory by law from 1824 onward. The Siegenbeek spelling system was obligatory in the North, but the government never issued a decree to make it compulsory for the southern part of the realm as well. To a certain extent, therefore, its usage may have been a sign of political allegiance.

After 1830, French was the sole administrative language of the newly created Belgium. Its use was not compulsory, but was firmly encouraged by the government. Many city and other administrations switched to French to the detriment of the Dutch majority language. Yet, during all that time, documents were written in Dutch in all Flemish city halls (albeit in very varying quantities) and, consequently, those who wrote them had to make decisions regarding the orthographic system. It is only later that the Royal Decree of 1 January 1844 made the so-called “Committee-spelling” official. Finally, in November 1864 the “De Vries and Te Winkel”-system, which was used in the North as well, was made compulsory by Royal Decree (Couvreur and Willemys 1998).

The so-called “Committee-spelling” resulted from a struggle between the opposing particularists and integrationists. The dissolution of the United Kingdom of The Netherlands in 1830 had given way to a renewed feeling of uncertainty and insecurity as far as the norm of the language and its spelling was concerned. In order to remedy this situation the Belgian government, strongly lobbied by integrationist organizations, held a competition to design a spelling system and installed a committee to judge the entries. The jury unanimously rejected all twelve submitted entries and, in 1839, published a system of its own, known as *de commissie-spelling* (‘the committee-spelling’). With only a few exceptions the committee-spelling mirrored the Siegenbeek-spelling in use in The Netherlands and in so doing the committee practically introduced the orthographic unity between the North and the South (De Groof 2001).

In spite of the fierce opposition of particularists the Belgian government made the committee-spelling official by Royal Decree. In order to grasp the impact of this decision, one has to realize that at this time orthography was still considered as an integrated part of the language or, even more to the point, that the spelling *was* the language. Taking over the northern spelling system consequently was seen as taking over the northern language variety. The symbolic value of this decision was enormous. The particularists experienced the decision as a harsh defeat, whereas the integrationist supporters cheered it as a decisive victory. And from that moment onwards indeed, the particularists never again succeeded in really influencing the views of the mainstream Flemish cultural elite.

Ongoing research on the way city officials reacted to these language planning measures and spelling norm changes, are currently yielding insights on two different levels, viz. language choice and language use which are new and rather fascinating. This research can be summarized as follows (Willemyns and Vanhecke forthcoming):

- a) Language choice in the chancelleries of smaller cities is completely different from what could be expected on the basis of the prevailing assumptions.
- b) In spite of the rapid succession of spelling systems the scribes appear to have been remarkably well informed about them.
- c) The clerks and scribes must have made some kind of an agreement as to which spelling system to use.
- d) The spelling inconsistency is rather restricted and the amount of spelling “variation” does not even remotely match the amount found in non-professional lower and lower middle class texts.
- e) It remains unclear so far whether switching to another orthography at the onset of a new political regime is an expression of political allegiance, but it seems a plausible assumption.
- f) It is not yet sure whether pressure has been exerted and by whom, but it is remarkable that the scribes had the competence to adjust to new rules, regardless of the question whether they were forced to adjust or not.
- g) Corpus planning appears to have been quite successful, at least in the professional scribes examined so far.

As far as the written language of the majority of the Flemish population was concerned, this remained largely unaffected by language planning activities: most Flemings did not conform to any official or unofficial spelling norm, but made use of highly individual spelling systems instead (Vandenbussche 1999). Only towards the end of the nineteenth century did standardized spelling finally spread in Flanders, apparently from the higher towards the lower social classes (Vandenbussche 2001).

The codification of Standard Dutch in the North (The Netherlands)

In The Netherlands, a country without language conflicts and limited language contact, there was no reason in the nineteenth century for language planning measures aimed at enhancing the status and prestige of Dutch, which was the sole official language of the country. Consequently, the activities of language purists, teachers and linguists alike were concentrated on that particular language, on prescribing how it ought to be normalized, standardized and used.

The early nineteenth century saw the real beginning of “Netherlandistics” as a scholarly, academic discipline and its two pioneers were Matthijs Siegenbeek

(1774–1854) and Petrus Weiland (1754–1842), the authors of the official and authoritative spelling and grammar. Weiland's grammar (*Nederduitsche spraak-kunst*, 1805) consisted of two volumes, the first on phonetics and morphology, the second on syntax. Like Siegenbeek's orthographic treatise, these two volumes are the typical, and probably also "best" representations of the so-called "normative tradition" which characterizes the linguistic activity of the early nineteenth century (de Bonth 1997: 380 ff.).

In the mid-nineteenth century the normative tradition gave way, as far as scholarly linguistics was concerned, to historic-comparative linguistics, a development which would also affect the standardization process. The aforementioned Matthias de Vries was a prominent scholar of historical linguistics as a professor of Dutch philology, and he felt it was necessary to devise a new orthography of Dutch for the publication of the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT).¹¹ The orthography was primarily designed by De Vries' co-author of the WNT, Lammert Allard te Winkel (1809–1868). The spelling system, known as the De Vries-Te Winkel- system, was made compulsory by the Belgian government in 1864, and was officially accepted by the government of The Netherlands shortly after. It was this system which definitively established orthographic unity in both parts of the Low Countries, albeit that in the North, for lack of legal compulsory measures, numerous literary authors continued to use a spelling system of their own.

Hulshof (1997: 455) described the outgoing nineteenth century in The Netherlands as "a period of transition from an unnatural written language to a civilized spoken language".¹² From various sides indeed, the slogan *schrijf zoals je spreekt* ('write as you speak') was heard and this principle was to be the basis of a language planning action, mainly supported by writers and linguists in order to, as Kollewijn put it, "simplify the written language" (De Vries, Willemyns and Burger 1995: 159).¹³ The main literary impulse came from famous poets like Kloos (1859–1938), Gorter (1864–1927), Van Deyssel (1864–1952) and other so-called *Tachtigers*, as well as the novelist Multatuli (pseudonym of Eduard Douwes Dekker, 1820–1887).¹⁴ The main literary journal propagating those views was *De nieuwe Gids*, and as far as linguistics is concerned, a similar role was played by *Taal en Letteren*, succeeded in 1907 by *De nieuwe Taalgids*.

Whereas the norm of the written language was, at least, "identifiable", this was hardly the case with the spoken language which around 1900 was still very much characterized by regionally different features. As the spoken language was proclaimed the main source of the language during the nineteenth century, this generated a new kind of norm problem. Again, the social variable was paramount: the only spoken language deemed fit to imitate in writing was the so-called *beschaaefde taal* ('civilized language') of the small social and intellectual elite (Hulshof 1997: 458). Even half a century later, the famous Dutch linguist G. G. Kloeke

(1951) estimated that competence in ABN was limited to some 3% of the population of The Netherlands. Anyway, as Hulshof (1997: 477) rightly observes, at the end of the nineteenth century, the linguistic picture in The Netherlands is still firmly characterized by a regionally flavoured spoken variety on the one side and a normative, slightly old-fashioned written language variety on the other.

5. Twentieth century: Elaboration and implementation

The Netherlands, prior to World War II was, as Van den Toorn (1997: 479) reminds us, a conservative country and “that applies to the Dutch language as well: there were no substantial changes until long after 1940” (*ibid.*). Between 1920 and 1940 the main language planning focus was on “the longing for and the pursuit of a standardized language” (*ibid.*). As far as linguistic characteristics were concerned, the basis of that emerging ABN is the language used by the better situated classes in the larger western cities (the *Randstad*). This Hollandic variety has won acceptance and has subsequently been implemented through the educational system as well as through the influence of existing (newspapers) as well as the new media (radio). According to Van den Toorn, the acceptance and usage of ABN had become “a characteristic of civilization and a product of disciplining: it was a voluntary effort to accept a general norm” (*op. cit.*: 480). Yet, gradually, he says, the western flavour grew more important than the “general” characteristics and whereas in the first half of the twentieth century the traditional definition of an ABN-speaker, in imitation of Jespersen’s famous words, still was somebody whose speech did not betray his geographic origins, in the century’s second half “somebody whose speech does betray his western origin” was the more adequate description. All of this, as well as Kloeke’s (see above) and other people’s estimations of the amount of ABN-speakers, clearly depends on how the standard language is perceived and defined, and what is considered to be its norm; in other words, on the amount and the kind of norm variation one is prepared to accept. This is further discussed below.

During the whole nineteenth and part of the twentieth century the lack of direct and frequent contact with The Netherlands made the implementation of the standard norm in Belgium a precarious and difficult problem. The practical obstacles, for one, were so huge that it was only after World War II that substantial success could be expected and actually occurred. The popularization of radio and, afterwards, television was undoubtedly the first major development helping to overcome practical problems. Yet another was the massive “entrance into battle” of the core of Flemish linguists. Especially in the sixties and seventies the Flemings were not only constantly exposed to the northern norm in the media, but the Flemish media also contributed actively by giving academic linguists the opportu-

nity of addressing their audience and of spreading their views. All radio and television channels had a prime time program and almost every newspaper had a daily column to help Flemings to gain proficiency in the northern flavoured standard language which was, as was constantly repeated, *their* own. Most of these programs were of the “do not say ... but say...” kind. Following the column title (*Uit de taaltuin*, ‘From the language garden’) of one of the prestigious newspapers all of these activities were called *language gardening*, and mostly the “gardeners” were established linguists and university professors. The results of this combined efforts were quite amazing and basically succeeded in what is a very tough and unusual task, viz. to provide almost an entire population in a couple of decades with a more or less new language or, to put it more correctly, with a less known variety of their own language. As opposed to The Netherlands, during the larger part of the twentieth century the focus was on eliminating regional accents, rather than on stressing the social component. Yet in Flanders too, the “civilized” component of ABN (General *Civilized* Dutch) used to be heavily stressed.

Another unusual factor should also be emphasized, viz. that this massive language status planning effort was performed with almost no official government involvement. Although there can be no doubt that the integrational policy enjoyed the moral support of almost the entire cultural establishment, there was but very little official governmental backing and the main effort was performed through private initiative. There was substantial governmental action on the corpus planning level, though (cf. Willemyns and Haeseryn 1998).

Since Dutch was the mother tongue and vehicular language of at least 60% of the Belgian population, it would seem altogether natural for the Belgian government to be concerned with its promotion and to be anxious to remain in permanent contact with the government of The Netherlands. As history reveals, the Belgian government has for a long time been hostile to the language of the majority of its subjects and this has limited such contacts until after World War II, when the so-called Cultural Agreement (officially the “Convention on the Cultural and Intellectual Relations”) between both countries was ratified. It has always been the ultimate goal of the Flemings to associate the Dutch to their efforts and this has often proven to be a tough job. The conclusion of the “Cultural Agreement” has been acclaimed as an important step in the desire for integration.¹⁵ It was, however, undoubtedly the *Taalunie* which has been felt to be the real consecration of these efforts. The *Nederlandse Taalunie* (‘Dutch Language Union’) was installed under a treaty passed by the Dutch and Belgian governments in 1980, transferring to this international body their prerogatives in all matters concerning language and literature.¹⁶ The *Taalunie* is composed of four institutions: a *Committee of Ministers*, comprising ministers of both countries; an *Inter-parliamentary Commission*, comprising MP’s of both countries; a *Secretary General* and a *Council for Dutch*

Language and Literature (Willemyns 1984). Aiming at “integrating as far as possible The Netherlands and the Dutch Speaking Community of Belgium in the field of the Dutch language and literature in the broadest sense” (art. 2), the *Nederlandse Taalunie* is undoubtedly a remarkable piece of work and a very unusual occurrence in international linguistic relations, since no national government has so far conceded to a supra-national institution what is generally considered to be its own prerogative, i.e. to decide autonomously on linguistic and cultural affairs. The activities of the *Nederlandse Taalunie* lie both in the fields of corpus and of status planning.

As stated above, the traditional definition of Standard Dutch — as it exists in the general public consciousness — has always been: the language which is used by educated and cultivated people in the western part of The Netherlands. In its first edition (1984) the authors of the ultimate normative instrument for the grammar of Dutch, the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* (‘General Grammar of Dutch’; called the ANS), state that it has been written in order to enable language users “om zich een oordeel te vormen over de grammaticaliteit en de aanvaardbaarheid van hedendaags Nederlands taalgebruik” (‘to judge the grammaticality and acceptability of the present-day usage of Dutch’; ANS 1984: 10). They then explain what has to be considered present-day usage of Dutch, and in so doing almost officially define the norm. I quote:

De ANS geeft in principe een beschrijving van het moderne Nederlandse taalgebruik, zoals dat tot uiting komt in de standaardtaal. We verstaan daaronder de taal die in alle regio’s van het Nederlandse taalgebied bruikbaar is in zgn. secundaire relaties, d.w.z. in het contact met ‘vreemden’. De standaardtaal is bovengewestelijk en algemeen bruikbaar: het gaat hier om taalvormen die niet gebonden zijn aan een bepaalde stijl (dus bijv. woorden, vormen of constructies die alleen maar in de schrijftaal of alleen maar in de spreektaal verschijnen), aan een bepaalde regio (dus bijv. taalvormen die alleen maar in het zuiden of alleen maar in het oosten van ons taalgebied voorkomen) of aan een bepaalde groep (dus bijv. taalvormen die alleen maar door de beoefenaars van een bepaald beroep gebruikt worden). Standaard-Nederlands is dus de taal waarmee men in secundaire relaties altijd en overal in het Nederlandse taalgebied terecht kan. (‘The ANS gives a description of the present-day usage of Dutch as it emerges in the standard language. We consider the standard language to be the language which can be used in all parts of the Dutch language territory in so-called secondary relations, i.e. in contact with strangers. The standard language is a supra-regional variety which is usable in all kinds of circumstances, which is not restricted to a specific style (e.g. words, forms or constructions limited to the written or to the spoken language), a specific region (e.g. only in use in the south or the east of the language territory) or a specific group (e.g. only in use in the jargon of a specific profession). In sum, Standard Dutch is the language which

guarantees contact in secondary relations in the Dutch language territory always and everywhere.’; ANS 1984: 12; translation R. Willemyns).

In the second edition of 1997 the above definition has disappeared and has been replaced by a more extensive description of language variability. The only thing remaining in the way of a definition is that Standard Dutch is “de taal waarin geen elementen of structuren voorkomen die duidelijk opvallen als niet-algemeen” (‘the language variety containing no elements or structures which definitely strike as being ‘non-general’; ANS 1997: 16).

Attempts in other grammars or dictionaries to define what Standard Dutch is or to locate its norm are equally vague. For the most part, the amount of variation which is allowed within the confines of the norm is not theoretically specified, presumably because there is no way of describing or delineating it. Yet, it often occurs that particular utterances are labelled either “substandard” or are described by any other term that indicates a deviation from the norm. Such labels may, of course, vary in the course of time.¹⁷

Dutch being a pluricentric language, it is not only normal that the actual realization of the norm may vary slightly according to region, but even that the very notion of the norm itself is not necessarily identical in all parts of the language territory. In Flanders, as we have seen in the controversy between nineteenth century particularists and integrationists, such discussions have a very long tradition. But although nowadays the consensus on the norm is much larger than it used to be, different views may still set apart the *Randstad* from the internal or external periphery. Most people, be it professional linguists or amateurs, explicitly or implicitly accept the norm to be a changing notion, i.e. a device which may change in time or from region to region. Yet, the view that the norm is something unchangeable does still exist and can still be heard in similar discussions as well. Both as far as the arguments on regional and social variation as well as on the status of the norm in the Dutch language area are concerned, I am confining myself to two references, viz. De Vries (1987) and Willemyns (1987), which were published in the same volume and offer a fair overview of arguments as well as opposing points of view regarding the status of the norm.

Finally, as far as the norm instruments are concerned, there is a general consensus on where they are to be found: *Van Dale’s* dictionary (*Groot Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal*) and the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* (ANS) are undoubtedly the generally accepted reference works in norm discussions. They also function as prescriptive instruments, although their authors prefer to consider their works to be descriptive. The *Woordenlijst der Nederlandse Taal*, published under the auspices of the *Nederlandse Taalunie*, is the official guideline for the spelling of Dutch.

6. Present day distribution of standard and non-standard varieties

The Netherlands

Almost half of The Netherlands's sixteen million people live in the *Randstad*, the area where the modern Dutch standard language took shape from the seventeenth century onwards. It spread geographically as well as socially over the rest of the territory, at first only within the borders of The Netherlands, and afterwards also into Belgium. A map shown in Hagen (1989) illustrates how dialect use and mastery increase the further one moves away from the *Randstad*. Yet, more recent studies (all discussed in Willemyns 1997b) demonstrate that very often matters are much less straightforward. Both the acceptance of and the attitudes towards linguistic varieties are determined by the fact that the western flavoured standard language is not only a supra-regional means of communication but also the sociolect of the so-called "better situated" classes in the country at large. Socially determined linguistic attitudes are the strongest in the *Randstad* itself: the habitual varieties of the popular classes in this highly urbanized region (called *stadsdialecten* 'urban dialects') mostly provoke negative attitudes. Despite the fact that, from a purely linguistic point of view, the so-called *regiolecten* differ more widely from the standard than the urban dialects, the attitudes toward them are generally more favourable, mainly because they (still) lack the social stigma.¹⁸

Although, overall, dialects appear to be losing ground rapidly, there is no unanimity among scholars as to the pace of their disappearance. A discrepancy has indeed been observed between positive attitudes towards the dialects on the one hand, and yet a rapid decrease of those dialects on the other hand. Also, there appears to be no direct relationship between dialect proficiency and dialect usage: even in places where proficiency is still high a dramatic and rapid decrease in dialect usage has been observed (Willemyns 1997b).

It has never been possible to identify a clear-cut border between the dialects spoken on both sides of the Dutch-German border. Yet, due to dialect decline and the ever-increasing penetration of the respective standard languages on both sides of the border, what used to be a dialect continuum is rapidly falling apart into two different language areas. Studies edited by Bister-Broosen (1998) detail all aspects of this evolution and demonstrate how nowadays the differing standard languages even affect the dialects themselves.

As far as the state border between The Netherlands and Flanders is concerned, the most relevant observation is that not one single distinctive bundle of isoglosses is running parallel with it (cf. the map in Weijnen 1966). Consequently, the West- and East-Flemish dialects constitute a continuum with those spoken in the Dutch province of Zeeland, as do the dialects of the Belgian provinces Antwerpen, Vlaams-

Brabant and Limburg with those of the Dutch provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg. Yet, here too, dialect decline is disrupting linguistic ties of old, but since these dialects are “roofed” (*überdacht*) by the same standard language nothing as dramatic is happening as on the German-Dutch border.

Flanders

The present day language situation in Flanders is characterized by a rather complicated use of several codes. The theoretical range of the linguistic continuum reaches from dialect to Standard Dutch, with several intermediate codes in between. The decisive criterion is dialect interference: the more one goes into the direction of the standard, the less interference can be noticed. The diglossic and bilingual situation as it existed in the nineteenth century has gradually been dissolved during the first half of the twentieth century. Linguistic legislation already mentioned and the gradual loss of all functions for French led to Flanders becoming strictly monolingual. Dialect loss and dialect levelling gained momentum after WW II and are responsible for the disappearance of the former diglossic situation in Flanders (with the exception of the province of West-Flanders where the former situation, although changing as well, may still be said to persist; Willemys 1997b).

During the last few decades the mastery and use of regional dialects have declined dramatically and, at the same time, the use of and the proficiency in the standard variety has considerably increased. Consequently, the communicative habits of most youngsters and of most inhabitants of the central regions of Flanders have shifted towards the standard pole of the continuum. Although the social value of the codes and the discriminating use made of them by members of various social classes is still less explicit than it is in many other West European communities and in The Netherlands in particular, code usage is increasingly socially determined.

The close contact which exists between French and Dutch in Belgium in general and in bilingual Brussels in particular has led to a considerable amount of linguistic interference. This contact situation also entailed consequences for the standardization process of Dutch itself.

South-North variation

In order to adapt their linguistic performance to the northern norm, the Flemish standard language learner/speaker had to come to grips with pronunciation, lexical aspects and morphological and syntactic issues.

Pronunciation is the aspect which caused the least trouble and convergence towards the northern norm was reached very early (i.e. before World War II; Goossens 1985; Cassier and Van de Craen 1986). Recent research has established

that the southern Standard Dutch pronunciation has hardly changed over the past half-century. The norm seems to have remained the pronunciation standard as it has been laid down by Blancquaert in 1934: the /ʁ/ is velar and shows no signs of rasping (the *zachte g* ‘soft g’); the place of articulation of the /r/ is mostly alveolar (*tongpunt-r* ‘tongue tip r’), with the uvular (*huig-* r as a valuable alternative and the /w/ is usually bilabial instead of labio-dental. Mostly “ee” en “oo” are pure monophthongs; the voiced pronunciation of word initial /v/ and /z/ is the habitual one (Van de Velde 1997: 56). The same used to be the case in what Van de Velde calls *Older Northern Standard Dutch*, i.e. the variety recorded between 1935 and 1950. In *Present Day Northern Standard Dutch* (i.e. after 1950) a number of characteristic novelties appear: a very distinct devoicing of /v/ and /z/ in word initial position, a strong uvular vibration of the /ʁ/ and the diphthongization of /e/ and /o/. The vocalic realization of /r/ is rapidly gaining field and trilled realizations of postvocalic /r/ have disappeared almost completely. Van de Velde (1997) concludes that there is no evidence that the norm has really been abandoned neither in The Netherlands nor in Flanders over the past sixty years. Yet, around 1935 the Dutch started to slowly shift away from the norm which used to be also theirs. This shift has gained momentum over the past decades, but has not been followed in Flanders (Van de Velde 1996). Also, it has to be noted that most speakers in the southern part of The Netherlands, i.e. the internal periphery, are much nearer to the Belgian than to the northern pronunciation.¹⁹

In the lexical field the picture is slightly different. The discussion of nineteenth century particularism has revealed that tenacious and often bitter debates took place regarding the amount of southern vocabulary that ought to be retained or even introduced into the general norm. Vocabulary is undoubtedly what appeals most of all to the imagination of the public and lexical change hardly ever passes unnoticed. In general, Flanders displays a strong attitude towards stigmatizing French influence, so much so that language planners advocating the northern norm have quite a problem in dealing with over-zeal resulting in hypercorrection. Southern dialects have retained numerous French loan words and so does Standard Dutch. The problem is that they are not always the same ones and so overzealous “Dutchifiers” have established a habit of finding a Dutch alternative for most loans. In some cases where southern dialects and the northern standard have the same French loanword, the southern substandard has a number of “Dutchified” equivalents (so-called *purisms*) which exist neither in the dialects nor in the northern standard (Goossens 1975). Most of the remaining lexical variation can be attributed to the following categories: official terminology, archaisms, dialectisms, loanwords and neologisms. An extensive analysis of all categories is to be found in Willemyns (1990).

Anyway, in the lexical field too, recent investigations reveal that North-South levelling is a still continuing process. Between 1950 and 1990, as Geeraerts, Grondelaers and Speelman (1999) discovered, lexical convergence between Flanders and The Netherlands has constantly increased. As to the direction of this convergence, Deygers and Van den Heede (2000) demonstrate that in most cases the South adapted to the North, rather than the other way around. As to the procedures, both theoretically possible mechanisms do occur: taking over “typically northern” items as well as gradually dropping “typically southern” expressions. The latter mechanism, though, appears to be more frequent than the former one.

North-South convergence in the field of morphology and syntax has been less well investigated so far and variation, therefore, often passes unnoticed. A notorious exception, though, is the discussion on the pronominal system with respect to the forms of address. Most southern dialects have a one-pronoun system of address (viz. *gij*), as opposed to the so-called T-V distinction in Standard Dutch. For a long time and despite language planning efforts, this one-pronoun system remained characteristic of the standard language of many southerners to the extent that it was sometimes considered to be a core value of southern language usage. The advocates of the northern norm succeeded in even taking this stronghold. Yet, replacing a one-pronoun system by a T-V system is not only a matter of attitude and goodwill but may lead to practical problems, even for those who made the conscious decision to adopt it. The existence of two systems in one individual (i.e. a one-pronoun system in the dialect or *Umgangssprache* and a T-V system in the standard language) inevitably leads to interference, especially for those who display a lack of confidence and security in their use of the standard language. Switching from one system to another and especially using T and V forms in inappropriate conditions (even in some very formal and guarded circumstances) are some of the characteristics of what I described as a *pronominal chaos* (Willemyns 1990), a frequent sign of linguistic insecurity in a transitional period. As a consequence of the destandardization wave to be discussed below, there seems to be a revival of some kind of the one-pronoun southern (Brabantic) system.

7. The future evolution and potential destandardizing tendencies

In The Netherlands some linguists are currently detecting increasing variation away from the conventional norm of spoken Standard Dutch. I am referring here to what Stroop has called *Poldernederlands* (Stroop 1997 and 1998). An equally centrifugal evolution seems to be occurring in Flanders where we witness the development of a spoken linguistic variety often referred to as *tussentaal* (Taeldeman 1993, Jaspers

2001), *Verkavelingsvlaams* (Van Istendael 1993) or, more recently, as *Schoon Vlaams* (Goossens 2000). For a constantly growing part of the population, both in the North and in the South, the conventional norm of the standard language appears to be no longer the target language in an increasing number of settings. The fact that both centrifugal developments, although unrelated, occur simultaneously may decisively influence the evolution of Dutch as a pluricentric language in the twenty-first century.

The most prominent characteristic of *Poldernederlands* is the pronunciation *aai* for the diphthong /ei/: *tijd* > *taaid* ‘time’, *klein* > *klaain* ‘little’. Yet, a similar change appears to affect other diphthongs as well: /ui/ turns into *au* (*buik* > *bauk* ‘belly’, *huis* > *haus* ‘house’) and /ou/ turns into *aa* (*getrouwd* > *getraauwd* ‘married’); Stroop 1998: 25–26). The trigger for this lowering of diphthongs, Stroop argues, is the diphthongization of the long vowels, a process which has been in progress in the western part of The Netherlands for decades. The real origin, he continues, is socially and not geographically determined. The group of speakers responsible for both the origin and the very fast spread of *Poldernederlands* are young, highly educated females.

In the South the centrifugal tendency has led to the development of a variety, based on essentially Brabantic characteristics often referred to as *Verkavelingsvlaams* or as *Schoon Vlaams*. The most characteristic way in which this *Schoon Vlaams* differs from the norm is not pronunciation or even the lexicon, according to Goossens (2000), but grammar and the grammatical features in question have been directly borrowed from central, southern dialects (he discusses adjective and pronominal inflection as examples). It has not — in my opinion — been emphasized strongly enough so far that the genesis of *Schoon Vlaams* has to be related to the current process of dialect loss, that one is indeed a direct, and probably also an inevitable consequence of the other. The process of dialect loss and levelling, which has started considerably later in Flanders than in The Netherlands, is now gaining momentum. Thanks to a considerable number of investigations over the past decades (an overview in Willemyns 1997b), we know that in many cases the variety replacing the dialect is not the standard language but an equally informal variety, i.e. an *Umgangssprache* or regional standard which very often has a decidedly Brabantic flavour even outside the Brabant region.

Successful language changes, i.e. developments that eventually succeed, are mostly the result of compromises between what is called *taalnatuur* (‘language nature’) and *taalcultuur*, (‘language culture’), i.e. developments located between the natural language evolution on the one hand, and language planning efforts directed at bringing about these changes on the other hand. Since in these particular cases *taalnatuur* has been allowed to proliferate, it is quite comprehensible that the call for remedying interventions is growing louder. Yet, let us not forget that all

of this is highly speculative. *Poldernederlands* is a very neatly defined linguistic notion but whether it will have the projected far reaching consequences surely remains to be seen. *Verkavelingsvlaams*, on the other hand, is a rather confused notion, since it has become sort of a collective name for various different tendencies, which may still develop in diverging directions.

Most of all, from a historical perspective everything discussed so far is short-term change, brought about and used by specific portions of the population in different parts of the language community. However attractive structural explanations may appear, the question whether short-term change will eventually evolve into long-term change, in durable change affecting the language and its norm, will depend upon sociolinguistic factors determining the spread of change through time and space. The usual variables like social and occupational class, age group, gender, as well as domain specification and language planning factors are likely to interfere with this process. Predictions, therefore, are not very helpful, except for this one: the linguistic evolution of Dutch in the twenty-first century promises to be an exiting and thrilling affair, worthwhile to participate in and to be closely observed!

Notes

1. One of the best-known texts is a psalm translation called *De Wachtendonckse Psalmen*. It is supposed to have been written in the ninth/tenth century in the Rhine-Meuse region (Krefeld/Venlo) in an eastern variety of Dutch, labeled Old Low Franconian by some. An edition with ample comments and an overview of recent and former research is to be found in De Grauwe (1979).
2. Willemyns (1979: 16–19) gives an overview of all the available texts written down during the thirteenth century. The so-called *Corpus-Gysseling* is an annotated edition of all texts written prior to 1300 (Gysseling 1977).
3. Van Loey (1937) lists some of the Brabantic (=eastern) regional characteristics that were gradually abandoned in Brabantic texts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, due to the influence of the more prestigious Flemish (=western) writing tradition.
4. A discussion of the English terminology with respect to regional varieties of Dutch can be found in Donaldson (1983).
5. 2 300 000 Dutch speakers as opposed to 1 200 000 French speakers (Ruys 1981: 47).
6. A *rederijkerskamer* is a play writing and play performing literary society. They were very popular and very prestigious all over The Netherlands.
7. In his *Aenleidinge ter Nederduytsche Dichtkunste* (1650). The relevant, extensive quotation is also to be found in Hagen (1999: 27).

8. In the same sentence, Vondel states that the “old Amsterdam” language is too ridiculous and the “old Antwerp” language too disgusting to be able to function as the basis for a “civilized” standard language.

9. Ten Kate was also the first linguist to discover the regularity of the system of strong verbs in the Germanic languages and one of the pioneers of historical linguistics.

10. Unfortunately, the term “particularists” is not only used for those language planners advocating a domestic standardization or a more extensive share of southern vocabulary in a northerly flavoured standard language. The term “second generation particularists” is also used to refer to a particular branch of the particularist movement that was very active during the final quarter of the nineteenth century in the province of West-Flanders, for whom the language aspect was only a by-product of a religious fundamentalist movement and whose main purpose was to safeguard the strict catholic character of (West-)Flanders (Willemyns 1997c).

11. It were two students of his, Jacob Verdam and Elco Verwijs who were the authors of the ten volume *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* (‘Middle Dutch Dictionary’), the first volume of which appeared in 1885.

12. In the original Hulshof uses the very familiar abbreviation ABN (*Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands* ‘General Civilized Dutch’) which has been used for decades to designate, both in The Netherlands and in Belgium, the normative standard language. It has now been replaced by AN (= *Algemeen Nederlands* ‘General Dutch’).

13. Kollewijn devised a new spelling system for which he succeeded to gather so much support that he founded a *Vereniging tot vereenvoudiging van onze schrijftaal* (‘Organization for the simplification of our written language’). His system was never officially implemented, though.

14. A famous poetry movement named after the decade it started in (tachtig ‘eighty’).

15. In January 1995 this Cultural Treaty has been replaced by a new one, this time concluded between the Government of The Netherlands and the autonomous Government of Flanders, to which the constitutional reform had granted the right to conclude treaties with foreign nations.

16. The *Nederlandse Taalunie* (‘Dutch Language Union’), has been established as a consequence of the “Treaty between the Kingdom of Belgium and the Kingdom of The Netherlands concerning the Dutch Language Union” on 9 September 1980; the instruments of ratification were exchanged in The Hague on 27 January 1982. The text reads that “His Majesty the King of the Belgians and Her Majesty the Queen of The Netherlands ... have decided the instalment of a union in the field of the Dutch language”. The seat of the *Taalunie* is in The Hague.

17. A few decades ago the (slight) diphthongization of the long vowels /e/, /o/ and /ø/ was deemed “substandard” whereas of today it is considered the “normal” pronunciation not only of the *Randstad*, where it originated, but in *Algemeen Nederlands* in general (even though it does not often occur in the pronunciation of southerners).

18. According to Hoppenbrouwers (1990), the *regiolect* is a complex of non-standard varieties in a given region.

19. In The Netherlands the so-called *zachte g* is seen as a shibboleth, even a stigma for the southern provinces Noord-Brabant and Limburg.

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Germanic Standardizations

Past to Present

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John Benjamins Publishing Company
Amsterdam/Philadelphia