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## Chapter 7

# Frenchification in discourse and practice: loan morphology in Dutch private letters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

## 1 Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss the influence of French on Dutch in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when French is assumed to have been the dominant language of upward social mobility in the Low Countries. While the period under discussion has often been described and criticised as one of *verfransing* “frenchification”, both by contemporary commentators and by later (language) historians, this view has come under attack in recent years. In our study, we focus both on ideological aspects of the language contact situation and on aspects of language use.

We first give a brief overview of the political situation in section 2. In section 3, we discuss language choice in different domains of society in the Early and Late Modern period, focusing on the use of French. We will show that in some domains, such as trade and education, the use of French was quite common throughout the period. The presence or even dominance of French in certain domains gave rise to a *complaint tradition* (cf. Milroy & Milroy 1985) specifically focused on French. The discourse on the alleged frenchification of the Netherlands will be discussed in section 4. In the second part of the chapter, we turn to linguistic aspects of the language contact situation. Section 5 briefly discusses some unambiguous examples of French influence on Dutch, viz. in the lexicon. It is notoriously difficult, however, to determine the extent to which loans have become integrated into the host language and to evaluate their degree of conventionalisation across the language community. In our empirical study, reported on in section 6, we therefore focus on a different aspect of the language, viz. derivational suffixes borrowed from French. Using two unique and in part socially stratified corpora of private letters from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, we will investigate patterns of regional, social and gender variation.

## 2 Sketch of the political situation in the Early and Late Modern period

The Low Countries, presently consisting of three separate states, viz. the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, were historically a collection of counties and duchies, brought together into the personal union of the Seventeen Provinces by Charles V (1500–1558), the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. After his abdication in 1555, opposition to the taxation and religious policies of his successor Philip II of Spain (1527–1598) resulted in the Dutch Revolt, which began in the 1560s and only ended with the Treaty of Münster, part of the Peace of Westphalia, in 1648. Crucially, the Dutch Revolt led to a separation of the Low Countries into a southern part, which remained subservient to Philip II, and a northern part, which formally declared its independence from the Spanish king in 1581 in the so-called *Plakkaet van Verlatinghe* “Act of Abjuration”. From then on, the Northern Netherlands developed into the sovereign Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, while the Southern Netherlands remained under Habsburg rule, first as the Spanish Netherlands, and from 1714 onward as the Austrian Netherlands.

The political split came to an end in 1795, when French troops invaded the Netherlands. The years 1795–1815 constitute the so-called French period, when the Netherlands were *de facto* a vassal state of France. After the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), the southern and northern parts were unified into the (United) Kingdom of the Netherlands, created as a buffer-state against France at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Luxembourg was also part of the Kingdom, albeit by a personal union. The Kingdom of the Netherlands was brought to an end by the Belgian Revolution of 1830, when the present situation of three separate states was more or less established.

The divergent political histories of the Southern and the Northern Netherlands in the Early and Late Modern Period are of crucial importance for a thorough understanding of the Dutch–French language contact situation, as well as for the language ideologies connected to it.

## 3 Language choice in different domains

The history of the Early and Late Modern Low Countries as a multilingual area – with its many and not always mutually intelligible Dutch dialects, with its Frisian and French-speaking areas, and with its many immigrants speaking languages such as French, German, Portuguese and Norwegian – remains to be written (cf. Frijhoff 2010, this volume). Domain-specific language choices, however, are

easily identified. We will mainly focus on the use of French in the Low Countries. The following discussion should be interpreted against the background of the hegemony of French throughout Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when French gradually developed into the main language of diplomacy, was spoken at courts from the Netherlands to Russia and became an important language for international scholarly periodicals, which were incidentally often printed in the Netherlands by Huguenot refugees (Burke 2004: 86–87).

From the Middle Ages onward, French had been in use in diplomacy and international commerce. Multilingual (self-help) language guides with vocabulary lists and dialogues were available to students of foreign languages, the most well-known example being the *Vocabulare* by Noël de Berlaimont (?–1531), which in its first edition of 1527 comprised only Dutch and French, but which was reprinted about 150 times in the following two and half centuries, throughout Europe, incorporating many other languages such as Latin, Spanish, Italian, German, English, Portuguese, Czech, Polish and Hungarian (van der Sijs 2004a). French was also taught in schools, and moreover, a school type came into existence that was mainly focused on teaching French. The so-called French schools date back at least to the sixteenth-century, when they originated as a form of vocational education, preparing boys for a career in trade. Reading, writing, arithmetic and French were the main subjects (Dodde 1991: 67). In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the French schools developed into fully-fledged educational institutions, offering both primary and secondary education. Many schools added new subjects to the curriculum, including history, geography, astronomy, German and English (Boekholt & de Booy 1987: 49–50; Dodde 1991: 117). French schools offering such a wide variety of subjects were mainly oriented to the upper (middle) ranks of society, as tuition fees largely depended on the number of courses taken by the students. Quantitatively speaking, however, the French schools did not make up a major part of the educational system. It is estimated, for example, that in the Northern Netherlands in 1811, only 2 to 3% of the male and female population of approximately 6 to 17 years old learned French through schooling, mostly at such French schools (Dodde 1991: 117; Frijhoff 2010: 47–48).

Apart from the French schools, two other school types need to be mentioned: the *Nederduitse scholen* '(Nether-)Dutch schools' and the Latin schools. The Dutch schools mainly offered primary education, limited to – in descending order of importance – religion, reading, writing and sometimes arithmetic (Boekholt & de Booy 1987: 33–41). Latin, as the language of the church and of the learned, was probably the most important foreign language in the educational system of the Middle Ages and well into the sixteenth century (Boekholt & de Booy 1987: 10). It was used in the international Republic of letters, where it was gradually

being replaced by French in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Frijhoff 2010: 20).

In connection with the religious upheavals of the Early Modern period, many protestant French immigrants settled in the Netherlands from the late sixteenth century onward, where they founded their own Francophone, so-called *Waalse* “Walloon” churches. Furthermore, French was the main variety spoken at the court of the *stadtholders*, i.e. the princes of Orange-Nassau. Because of its importance in diplomacy, trade, education, public and religious life, as well as at the court, it has been argued that French was the most important second language in the towns and cities of Holland in the seventeenth century (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 234). It needs to be stressed, however, that quantitative studies of language choice are scarce.

In addition, French gradually developed into the distinctive language of the upper ranks of society (van der Wal & van Bree 2008: 254). A well-known example constitutes the private correspondence of the Huygens family, where Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), the secretary to the three successive princes of Orange-Nassau, is the central figure. While the letters written by his mother and sisters are in Dutch (e.g. Howell 2006 and the references there), Constantijn himself and his sons – among them the physicist Christiaan (1629–1695) – often wrote their family correspondence in French (e.g. van der Wal & van Bree 2008: 230). Although it is not probable that many speakers of Dutch adopted French for all communicative purposes, it is beyond doubt that French was used as a means of social exclusivity and social exclusion. The French schools, for example, showed a large amount of variation in the qualitative and quantitative presence of French at school. On the one hand, there were schools that offered French as a mere subject, where Dutch remained the language of instruction. On the other hand, much more expensive “true” French schools also existed, where French was the language of instruction for all courses, and where fully mastering the language as such was more important than a mere practical working knowledge of French (cf. Boekholt & de Booy 1987: 49–50, 54). Especially the latter type was oriented towards the prosperous upper (middle) ranks of society. Vandebussche (2004) argues that French was used as means of social exclusion in town council meetings in Bruges in the nineteenth century. In this specific communicative context, upper class members of Bruges society preferred French so as to be able to exclude non-upper class members from political participation. When convening in the context of the archers’ guild, however, the same members of the upper class did use Dutch, as non-upper class citizens were excluded from guild membership and there was thus no need to consistently use French as a means of social distinction.

While the importance of French in domains such as trade, diplomacy and education is characteristic of both the Southern and the Northern Netherlands,

as of so many other areas in Europe at the time, there are fundamental differences as well. Importantly, in the domain of politics, the States General of the Northern Netherlands switched to predominantly Dutch in 1582 (van der Wal 1994), while French remained important as a language of administration in the Southern Netherlands. French continued to be used as a language of law and higher administration in the Spanish and Austrian periods in the Southern Netherlands of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the local level, however, Dutch remained in use on a very large scale in the Southern Netherlands. De Ridder (1999) argues that 90 to 95% of all official documents relating to Brussels from before 1794 were drawn up in Dutch.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the frenchification of the Southern Dutch local administration did not take off before the French invasion of 1795. In the next section, we will zoom in on the presumed frenchification of the Netherlands in the eighteenth century.

## 4 The discourse on frenchification

In the previous section, we listed various domains of society where French became an important language in the Early and Late Modern period. The growing importance of French in historically Dutch-speaking areas is often referred to as *verfransing* “frenchification”, and opposition to this frenchification is as old as the use of French in the domains referred to itself. Due to the importance of French in Early and Late Modern Europe, fear of frenchification was a wide-spread phenomenon across Europe. Complaints of *francomania* are attested, for example, in the German, English, Italian and Spanish language areas (von Polenz 1994: 49–50; Nevalainen 1999: 359–360; Burke 2004: 151, 153, 158; Beal 2012). With regard to the Netherlands, it is in the linguistic history of the Southern Netherlands in particular that the alleged frenchification of large parts of society is a recurrent topic. De Ridder (1999: 151–152) noted that lists of domains and/or social ranks where French was commonly used are often interpreted as proof of frenchification, especially with regard to the Southern Netherlands – whereas similar lists can also be drawn up for the Northern Netherlands, as we did in section 3, or for England, without contemporary or present-day commentators claiming that the community was predominantly frenchified. In the present section, we focus

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hasquin (1979: 200), who came to similar conclusions: “Certes, il est vraisemblable que le bilinguisme s’était considérablement répandu parmi la population flamande. ... Mais il est tout aussi vrai que lorsqu’il s’agissait de régler des questions relatives à leur vie privée (testaments, contrats de mariage, conclusions de baux, emprunts), la langue maternelle reprenait le dessus ainsi qu’en témoigne l’écrasante supériorité des actes en flamand [sic]”.



on such discourses on frenchification, arguing that they reveal the ideological function of metalinguistic discourse rather than describe the actual sociolinguistic situation.

#### 4.1 Types of opposition to frenchification

The use of French in the Low Countries, and its growing importance throughout Early and Late Modern Europe, led to different types of opposition to the frenchification of Dutch society. As to influence from the French language, we can distinguish at least two closely related types of opposition also well-known from other language areas, which are characterised by the increasing importance they attach to the French peril.

The first type is *purism*, which mainly aims at offering Germanic alternatives to lexical items borrowed from French and Latin (cf., e.g., Langer & Davies 2005). As early as 1553, a puristic dictionary appeared providing Dutch equivalents of French and Latin loans used in legal discourse. Ironically, the dictionary was called *Tresoor der Duytsscher talen* ('Treasure of the Dutch language'), with the French loan *tresoor* in the title, which was purified into *Den schat der Duytsscher talen* in the second edition of 1559.<sup>2</sup> Another example is the *Nederlandsche Woorden-schat* ('Dutch lexicon'), which was first published in 1650 and which saw its twelfth edition as late as 1805. The *Nederlandsche Woorden-schat* was also a purist dictionary offering Dutch alternatives to *onduytsche woorden* ('un-Dutch words') and *basterdt-woorden* ('bastard words, loans').<sup>3</sup> The opposition to French and Latin loans persisted well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but was gradually replaced by opposition to German and, at present, English loans.

A second type of opposition to French is similar to lexically oriented purism, but shifts attention to the *use* and *status* of the language as a whole, while focusing on specific social contexts and/or ranks. In particular, the complaint now concerns French being the preferred language of the upper classes, and the harmful effect this may have on the native varieties of Dutch as such, not just on specific lexical elements. Again we can trace such grievances to at least as far back as the sixteenth century, when a well-known author such as Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert (1522–1590) as well as the anonymous author of the first full grammar of Dutch (1584) complained about the Dutch–French language mixing which was

<sup>2</sup> The author was the Antwerp-based regent Jan van de Werve (1522–1576), see Claes (1977: 207).

<sup>3</sup> The first edition was authored by Johan Hofman (?–1666), the second, third, fourth and fifth editions by Lodewijk Meijer (1629–1681), who would appear on the title page of later editions as well. The book was continuously reworked and expanded. See van Hardeveld (2000).

thought to have resulted from the previous era of the Burgundian and Habsburg reign in the fifteenth century and sixteenth centuries:<sup>4</sup>

Overmits onze spraack in korte Jaren herwerts, (sedert dat wy met de Walsche steden onder een ghemeen Vórst ende hóf zyn gheweest) zó zeer met uytheemsche wóórdn vermengt is, dattet schier onder t'vólck een onghewoonte zou zijn enkel Duits te spreken. (*Twe-spraack* 1584: 6; cf. Dibbets 1985: 511–513)

[‘Because a few years ago (since we were united with the French cities under a common ruler and court) our language became so mixed with foreign words that it is almost unusual among the people to speak only Dutch.’]

This complaint also persisted well into the following centuries. In its most extreme form, it not only criticises the (wrong) language choice of parts of the population, but even warns of the native language being pushed aside by French, i.e. of the ultimate risk of language death. The extreme formulation is perhaps not as common as the weaker variant, but it characterises the sociolinguistic situation in the Southern Netherlands, where it gained momentum in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By then, it was often claimed that the entire frenchification of the upper ranks of society in the previous period prevented the Dutch language from developing into a standardised or cultivated form. Instead, Dutch in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Southern Netherlands was supposed to have been “merely” a collection of spoken local dialects, while official, cultural and public functions of language were all fulfilled by French (Vosters 2011; Vosters et al. 2012). Considering the fact that supralocal written varieties of Dutch had been in use in the sixteenth century, the presumed *dialectisation* of Dutch in subsequent periods was interpreted as the virtual death of Dutch in the South (cf. Rutten & Vosters 2012). In a somewhat softened way, this view can still be found in recent histories of Dutch, where it is always linked to the political split at the end of the sixteenth century (van der Sijs 2004b: 52; Janssens & Marynissen 2008: 137; van der Wal & van Bree 2008: 378).

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<sup>4</sup> The first full grammar of Dutch, the *Twe-spraack vande Nederduitsche letterkunst* (‘Dialogue on Dutch grammar’) was published anonymously in 1584 by the Amsterdam chamber of rhetoric *De Eglantier* (‘The Eglantine’), well-known for its motto *In liefd bloeyende* (‘Flourishing in love’). It is assumed that Hendrik Laurensz. Spiegel (1549–1612) was the author. See Dibbets (1985) for a discussion of Coornhert’s complaints about French influence on Dutch (e.g. 1985: 70).

## 4.2 Frenchification as a cultural yardstick

The impetus for both types of opposition to frenchification were concrete sociolinguistic facts, viz. loans and language choice. As indicated above, however, frenchification developed into a major theme in discourses on language and culture from the eighteenth century up to the present day, both in the Northern and Southern Netherlands. In this development, language ideological positions have been revealed, more specifically, in nineteenth and twentieth-century nationalist historiography, where eighteenth and nineteenth-century elites are often criticised for their love of French, and depicted as largely francophone (Frijhoff 1989, and Frijhoff, this volume). While this francomania and complaints about frenchification are as much part of Northern Dutch as they are of Southern Dutch historiography, it is in the Southern Netherlands that they acquired the most prominent position in discourses about language and culture. The historical linguistic textbook account claims that the political split of the Southern and the Northern Netherlands at the end of the sixteenth century led to political independence, extreme prosperity, flourishing of the arts and language standardisation in the Northern Netherlands, while the Southern Netherlands remained under foreign rule, sank into poverty and were subject to cultural decline and the above-mentioned *dialectisation* (de Vooys 1952: 116–119; van den Toorn et al. 1997: 563; van der Sijs 2004b: 52; Janssens & Marynissen 2008: 138; van der Wal & van Bree 2008: 377–378). This means that any frenchification in the Northern Netherlands would still occur against the background of the standardisation of Dutch, whereas the sociolinguistic situation in the South did not allow for any relevant opposition to frenchification (see also Willemyns, this volume).

There is, in other words, a discursive connection between the political history of the Low Countries, the assumed presence or absence of standardisation and frenchification. Where frenchification competed with standardisation, it was relatively harmless, while French could take over many important functions in the Southern Netherlands in the absence of a Dutch standard. The traditional view capitalises on the standard language ideology as analysed in the works of Milroy & Milroy (1985) and Lippi-Green (1997), which in the Dutch situation not only amounts to the concept of an idealised homogeneous variety, but also, historically, to the development of this variety in the Northern Netherlands, with simultaneous dialectisation in the Southern Netherlands. The traditional view has come under attack in more recent times and systematic empirical research has been called for, not least because many proofs of frenchification are entirely anecdotal, singling out individuals who preferred French to Dutch – such as Belle van Zuylen (1740–1805), who was born in the Northern Netherlands into a Dutch noble family and would become the well-known francophone writer Isa-



belle de Charrière – and disregarding others who preferred Dutch (cf. Frijhoff 1989; de Ridder 1999; Vandebussche 2001; Vanhecke & de Groof 2007). Moreover, the presumed frenchification of southern Dutch elites in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the concomitant neglect of the Dutch language, were ideologically interconnected in nineteenth and twentieth-century Flemish emancipatory discourse (van der Horst 2004; Rutten & Vosters 2012). When in the course of the nineteenth century, the *Vlaamse beweging* ('Flemish movement') began its pursuit for the cultural revitalisation of the Southern Netherlands and for a linguistic reunion with the Northern Netherlands, its agents were in need of a discursive opponent in order to render their own deplorable cultural and linguistic situation as plausible as possible. This opponent was found in French domination, both cultural and political, in the previous period, which had stifled the Dutch language and culture. Or, to take another example, in twentieth-century nationalist historiography, eighteenth-century Northern Dutch elites have been described as fully frenchified, entirely unwilling to speak Dutch (Frijhoff 1989: 596–597). However, when Ruberg (2007: 65, 271) investigated elite correspondence from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, she found that only 17% of the letters were in French. De Ridder (1999) argued against the presumed frenchification of Brussels before 1794, showing that 90 to 95% of official documents relating to Brussels were in Dutch.

Despite the absence of empirical research covering the whole period and the whole language area, we may still hypothesise that the concept of frenchification has a number of "mythical strands" (cf. Watts 2000) attached to it. In the Southern Netherlands in particular, the discourse on frenchification acquired an extreme character, with mid-twentieth century commentators claiming that Dutch "disappeared as a civilised language; it was abandoned to the lower classes" (Deneckere 1954: 262, as translated by Vosters 2011: 26), that it became "impossible [in the French period around 1800] for an entire generation to acquire a Dutch culture, so that the language shrivelled and became corrupted" (Wils 2003: 33, as translated in Vosters 2011: 26), and that, finally, where Dutch did not die out, it was heavily influenced by French, both lexically and grammatically (Vosters 2011: 27). Contrary to the idea that the Dutch language was nothing more than a collection of local spoken dialects in the eighteenth century, recent research has revealed that there was a vivid linguistic culture in the Southern Netherlands in the eighteenth century, with schoolteachers and grammarians producing language guides and grammars – a linguistic culture that could even be described as one of standardisation (Vosters 2011; Rutten 2011; Rutten & Vosters 2012). Put (1990: 202) had already argued that most primary schools in the late eighteenth century owned such a grammar, along with reading materials and a catechism.

From both eighteenth-century and more recent discussions of the language contact situation, we can deduce at least three hypotheses. First, French was widely used in the Low Countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it is unlikely that there were any social groups appropriating French in every social context, despite the fact that some individuals did. Second, French was more in use among the upper ranks of society than among the lower ranks. Third, French was more widely used in the Southern Netherlands than in the Northern Netherlands. These are very general and still quite impressionistic observations, and it is against this very general background that we will carry out one of the first systematic empirical studies of the actual influence of French on eighteenth and nineteenth-century Dutch. Our case study will allow us to address the second and third of the observations made.

## 5 French influence on Dutch

What may immediately come to mind when discussing the influence of French on Dutch is the lexicon. In the corpora that we used for our case study, many striking examples of French loans can be found. The corpora will be introduced in section 6. Here, it is important to note that they comprise private letters from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In these letters, nouns such as *arrivement* ‘arrival’, *compliment* ‘compliment’ and *correspondent* ‘correspondent’ are highly frequent (1–3):

- (1) *make uwEd: mijn arrivement bekend*<sup>5</sup>  
 make you my arrival known  
 ‘I make known to you my arrival’
- (2) *versoeke ok mijn compliement an uee geerde famielie*<sup>6</sup>  
 request also my compliment to your honoured family  
 ‘I request also [that you send] my compliment to your honoured family’
- (3) *Edog dit behoeven onse Corispondenten [...] niet te weeten*<sup>7</sup>  
 but this need our correspondents not to know  
 ‘but our correspondents do no need to know this’

<sup>5</sup> Dutch *Letters as Loot* Corpus (S.H. Cadenski, 30 May 1781).

<sup>6</sup> Dutch *Letters as Loot* Corpus (A. Donker, 29 November 1780).

<sup>7</sup> Dutch *Letters as Loot* Corpus (N. Reuvenhagen, 16 December 1780).

However, it is notoriously difficult with lexical borrowings to determine their degree of integration into the linguistic system, where they are caught between the tension of imitation and adaptation (van Coetsem 1988: 8–12).<sup>8</sup> From a modern perspective, for instance, *compliment* and *correspondent* are widely used in Dutch. The origin of these nouns may or may not be known to speakers, and while it seems unlikely, it may still be the case that some speakers consider them as loans. *Arrivement* is obsolete in present-day Dutch. However, these intuitions do not bring us any closer to the status of these words in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially since conventionalisation need not be a linear process. One way to determine the degree of integration of these nouns into the linguistic system of speakers of Dutch might be to study their derivational and compounding possibilities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, on the assumption that this would provide an indication of their conventionalisation in the language community (cf. Nevalainen 1999: 362–363). We did not, however, believe that the available sources allowed for such an extensive investigation. We therefore decided to focus on another part of the language, viz. derivational morphology.

Dutch has borrowed many suffixes from French throughout history, and our corpus study consists of an investigation of such loan suffixes in Dutch. To determine the extent of borrowing, we based ourselves on van der Sijs' (2005) loan dictionary, which features an extensive list of French loan suffixes used with nouns, adjectives and verbs (van der Sijs 2005: 188–194). Examples (4) to (7) illustrate the process of suffix borrowing with examples from our own corpora:

- (4) *voyage* 'trip, travel' < Fr. *voyage* 'trip, travel' (15<sup>th</sup> century)

*ik hebben zeer wel geweest op mijn voijage*<sup>9</sup>

I have very well been on my travel

'I have fared very well on my travels'

- (5) *maîtresse* 'girlfriend, mistress' < Fr. *maîtresse* 'mistress' (17<sup>th</sup> century)

*ben Ik verwonderd hoe dat nog al gaed met mijne maetresse*<sup>10</sup>

am I curious how that still all goes with my mistress

'I am curious how my mistress is doing'

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Cajot (2004), who discusses other difficulties investigating lexical borrowings from a North–South perspective in present-day Dutch.

<sup>9</sup> Napoleonic Soldiers' Letters Corpus (F.J. Pinson, 1813, letter 139).

<sup>10</sup> Napoleonic Soldiers' Letters Corpus (P. Vermuelen, s.a., letter 001).

- (6) *kleerage* ‘clothing’ < Du. *kleren* ‘clothes’ + Fr. *-age* (ca. 18<sup>th</sup> century)  
*ik hebbe geen sleggter kleeragen en hebbe ik nooit gedragen*  
 I have no worse clothing NEG. have I never worn  
*als nu*<sup>11</sup>  
 as now  
 ‘I have never worn any worse clothing than I do now’
- (7) *minnares* ‘girlfriend, mistress’ < Du. *minnen* ‘love’ + Lat. *-aar* + Northern Fr. *-esse*  
*met [...] Hoogagting, Lievdraagende Minnaarres, UEd:D:W: Dienaar*<sup>12</sup>  
 with regards loving mistress your servant  
 ‘with regards, my loving mistress, your humble servant’

Crucially, these are grammatical, not lexical elements. As derivational morphology is situated lower on the stability gradient than the lexicon, suffixes are less easily borrowed than whole loan words (Van Coetsem 1988; Howell 1993). Evidence of morphological borrowing thus implies a greater intensity of language contact than in the case of mere lexical borrowings. However, it is typical for borrowed derivational morphemes that they enter the recipient language through lexical borrowings, but acquire morphological productivity when enough items have been transferred (Winford 2010: 175–176). In this case, this means that such suffixes can eventually occur both with Romance and Germanic stems. Initially, these suffixes came into Dutch attached to a French loan word, as in examples (4) and (5): *-age* as in *voyage* is still used for abstract and common nouns, whereas *-es* as in *maîtresse* is used for feminine agent nouns. Later, such loan suffixes became productive and started to be attached to Dutch bases, as in examples (6) and (7): in the case of *kleerage*, the borrowed *-age* suffix could operate on the Dutch base *kleren*, and in the case of *minnares*, the older combination of *minnen* plus the Latin-based suffix *-aar* combines once more with the French loan suffix *-es*, generating *minnares* as a mixed equivalent for the lexically borrowed *maîtresse*.

<sup>11</sup> Napoleonic Soldiers’ Letters Corpus (J. La Roi, 1806, letter 089).

<sup>12</sup> Dutch *Letters as Loot* Corpus (C. De Somer, 26 January 1781).

## 6 Empirical study

### 6.1 Corpora

To test the degree of suffix borrowing, we looked through two private letter corpora: one from the Northern Netherlands and one from the Flemish South. The northern corpus consisted of a selection of 384 private letters, which are part of the *Letters as Loot* corpus compiled at Leiden University.<sup>13</sup> All our letters date back to between 1777 and 1783, with the large majority of them being written in 1780 and 1781. In those days, ships often operated as mail carriers between the Netherlands and its territories in the Caribbean and the East Indies, and these letters were captured by English privateers from Dutch sailing vessels during the 4<sup>th</sup> Anglo-Dutch War and the American Revolutionary War. The letters have been kept in the archive of the British High Court of Admiralty, currently at The National Archives (TNA) in Kew (London). These private letters are interesting for historical-sociolinguistic research, because they were written by both men and women from various social ranks, including sailors and captains, but also kitchen-aids and cabin-boys, sailors' wives and family members, and other Dutch men and women living in the Netherlands or in some distant outpost of the Republic. About 7% of the individual scribes can be traced back to the lower social classes, 28% could be characterised as lower middle class, 34% belonged to the upper middle class and about 31% can be said to be upper class. It is important to note that what we call the upper class was in fact not the highest rank of Dutch society at the time, where we should distinguish a top layer of the nobility and the gentry.<sup>14</sup> Scribes have also been grouped according to their age category, with 41% being under 30, 48% between 30 and 50 and just 11% over 50 years old. Most letters originate from the (north)west of the language area (the provinces of Zeeland, Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland – with the city of Amsterdam accounting for about 48% of the total), but other regions of the Netherlands are also represented.

Our southern corpus is based on Jan van Bakel's collection of soldiers' correspondence from the Napoleonic era (van Bakel 1977). It contains 317 letters sent by 282 young Flemish conscripts, who had been drafted into the French revolution-

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<sup>13</sup> Research program *Letters as Loot. Towards a Non-Standard View on the History of Dutch*, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). See van der Wal, Rutten & Simons (2012) for an overview. See [brievensbuit.inl.nl](http://brievensbuit.inl.nl) for the corpus.

<sup>14</sup> The social stratification is primarily based on the letter writers' occupation and/or the occupation of family members. It closely follows the social stratification commonly used by historians (cf. Frijhoff & Spiess 1999: 190–191).



ary army, and who wrote home to their families from the various battlefields all over Europe. The letters come from a slightly later period than the *Letters as loot* letters, dating from the early days of the Consulate (1799) until the end of the First Empire around 1813. Many of the letters are not autographed, but were written by “social scribes”: literate fellow soldiers who would take it upon themselves to write down the words dictated by their illiterate peers. Conscripts in those days were all men, usually in their late teens or early twenties and not surprisingly mostly from the lower ranks of society. As we do not have solid biographical data available for most writers, we cannot determine their social rank with absolute certainty, but when we do have incidental evidence about their social background available from the content of the letters, it points towards the lower and lower middle classes: many of these soldiers come from families of servants, day labourers, skilled and unskilled workers, and local craftsmen. The letters were sent to many different destinations in West and French Flanders, where, in nearly all cases, the hometown of the writer is located.

## 6.2 Methodology

Based on the loan suffixes for nouns, adjectives and verbs listed in van der Sijs (2005), we wrote a series of regular expressions to search for the many spelling variants in both sub-corpora. Parts of letters completely written in French were, of course, excluded altogether. We strictly limited ourselves to the loan suffix categories defined by van der Sijs, basing ourselves on the semantic and formal criteria she discusses. This means, for instance, that a token such as *correspondent* ‘correspondent’ was included in the analyses, as the *-ent* suffix stems from French, but that a token such as *regi-ment* ‘regiment’ was excluded, as the *-ment* suffix was borrowed from Latin – even though *regiment* as a whole is a word borrowed from French. Several etymological dictionaries were consulted to corroborate borrowing, and cases of persistent doubt were excluded from the final analyses.

**Table 1.** Loan suffixes under investigation

Suffix	Example <sup>15</sup>	Suffix	Example
– NOUNS – <sup>16</sup>			
<i>-aard</i>	<i>lafaard</i> ‘coward’	<i>-cide</i>	<i>genocide</i> ‘genocide’
<i>-erd</i> (< <i>-aard</i> )	<i>leukerd</i> ‘wisecracker’	<i>-oïde/ide</i>	<i>hominide</i> ‘homonid’
<i>-es/esse</i>	<i>prinses</i> ‘princess’	<i>-ine</i>	<i>cocaïne</i> ‘cocaine’
<i>-e (-nte/-inge)</i> <sup>17</sup>	<i>studente</i> ‘female student’	<i>-isme</i>	<i>calvinisme</i> ‘calvinism’
<i>-ette</i>	<i>misdienette</i> ‘altar girl’	<i>-teit</i>	<i>majesteit</i> ‘majesty’
<i>-ier</i>	<i>aalmoezenier</i> ‘chaplain’	<i>-lei</i>	<i>allerlei</i> ‘all sorts of’
<i>-ist</i>	<i>orangist</i> ‘Orangist’	<i>-tiek</i>	<i>boetiek</i> ‘boutique’
<i>-ant</i>	<i>predikant</i> ‘pastor’	– ADJECTIVES –	
<i>-ein/ain/ijn</i>	<i>republikein</i> ‘republican’	<i>-aal</i>	<i>amicaal</i> ‘friendly’
<i>-ees</i>	<i>Chinees</i> ‘Chinese’	<i>-air</i>	<i>elitair</i> ‘elitist’
<i>-ent</i>	<i>producent</i> ‘producer’	<i>-eel</i>	<i>financieel</i> ‘financial’
<i>-eur/teur</i>	<i>ambassadeur</i> ‘ambassador’	<i>-esk</i>	<i>soldatesk</i> ‘soldierly’
<i>-iaan</i>	<i>Indiaan</i> ‘Indian’	<i>-eus</i>	<i>complimenteus</i> ‘complimentary’
<i>-iet</i>	<i>islamiet</i> ‘Muslim’	<i>-iek</i>	<i>politiek</i> ‘political’
<i>-ade</i>	<i>blokkade</i> ‘blockade’	– VERBS –	
<i>-age</i>	<i>lekkage</i> ‘leakage’	<i>-eren</i>	<i>waarderen</i> ‘appreciate’

<sup>15</sup> Examples from van der Sijs (2005).

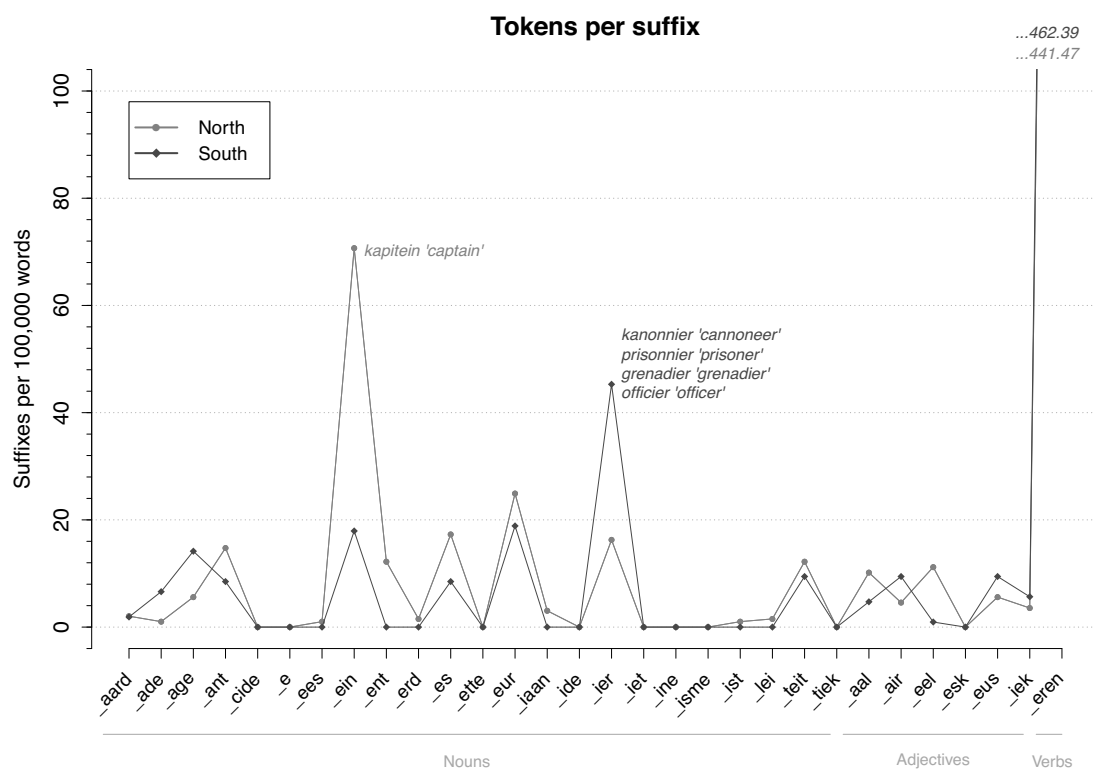
<sup>16</sup> The suffixes *-ij* and *-ie* mentioned by van der Sijs (2005) were not included in our analyses, as it could not be generally determined whether the suffix was borrowed from French, which had in turn borrowed it from Latin (e.g. *poëzie* ‘poetry’), or if it derived from Latin directly (e.g. *academie* ‘academy’).

<sup>17</sup> As corpus searches for the ending *-e* gave too many false positives, we only focused on words ending in *-nte* (e.g. *producente* ‘female producer’) and *-inge* (e.g. *Zuiderlinge* ‘female Southerner’), where the feminine agent suffix *-e* is added to the words with the existing suffixes *-ent/-ant* (which in itself are loan suffixes from French) and native *-ing*.

## 6.3 Results

### 6.3.1 Overall frequency in North and South

Figure 1 shows the raw token counts per suffix. To correct for the different size of the two sub-corpora,<sup>18</sup> the absolute numbers were weighed over 100,000, thus giving us the suffix frequency per 100,000 words in each corpus. As is clear from the graph, most suffixes actually occur only a handful of times, or hardly at all: the large majority of suffixes occur less than 20 times per 100,000 words. The one major exception is *-eren*: this verbal suffix proves to be extremely frequent in comparison to the noun and adjective suffixes, with a rate of over 400 tokens in each sub-corpus:



**Figure 1.** Loan suffixes in both sub-corpora

Additionally, figure 1 shows a strikingly similar distribution of suffixes in each sub-corpus. There are some discrepancies that can be explained by referring to the specific text types under investigation. A first case is the more frequent *-ein* in

<sup>18</sup> 196,617 words for the northern sub-corpus, versus 105,972 words for the southern sub-corpus.

the northern data, which proves to be mainly due to the frequent lemma *kapitein* ‘captain’ (108 out of 139 tokens) – typical, of course, for sailors’ correspondence; or the more frequent *-ier* suffix in the southern data, to a large extent caused by the lemmas *kanonnier* ‘cannoneer’, *prisonnier* ‘prisoner’, *grenadier* ‘grenadier’ and *officier* ‘officer’ (32 out of 48 tokens) – typical, of course, for soldiers’ correspondence. These obvious discrepancies aside, we can observe that loan suffixes are distributed in a very similar way in both Northern and Southern Dutch.

For our further analyses, we will move away from the token count per individual loan suffix and turn to the total loan suffix frequency over 100,000 words per scribe. Thus grouping all northern and all southern scribes, we can get an additional idea of the overall frequency of loan suffixes in each sub-corpus. The median suffix frequency per 100,000 words is almost identical for both groups (486 for the North, 471 for the South, with an inter-quartile range of 746.25 and 664.25 respectively). According to a Mann-Whitney U Test, this difference in median loan suffix frequency is not significant ( $W = 42057.5$ ,  $p = 0.65$ ), suggesting that overall loan suffixation occurs to very comparable degrees in both our northern and our southern sub-corpus.<sup>19</sup>

### 6.3.2 Region

Moving beyond the general North–South division, our data also allow us to group scribes based on their regional background. Figure 2 shows the suffix frequency per 100,000 words for each of the scribes in our sample, grouped by their regional background. All southern scribes originate from the Flemish dialect area (around West and French Flanders), while the northern scribes come from various regions in the Republic. Note, however, that most northern scribes in our corpus originate from the coastal provinces, and especially for the Southeast region, the number of scribes is extremely limited ( $n = 3$ ).

Nonetheless, some regional differences are visible – especially when we focus on the coastal areas. A Kruskal–Wallis rank sum test indicates that the median frequency scores are significantly different among the regions ( $H = 15.95$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = 0.04311$ ). As a rough general trend, we can observe that, as we move further away from the Dutch–French language border in the South – i.e. moving northwards along the coastline – the median loan suffix rate drops from 471 in Flanders to 409 in South Holland and less than 400 in Zeeland and North

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<sup>19</sup> Additionally, according to a Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the loan suffix frequency rates per scribe in the northern and in the southern sub-corpora are also not distributed in a significantly different way ( $D = 0.0495$ ,  $p = 0.874$ ).



**Figure 2.** Scribes' loan suffix rates per region

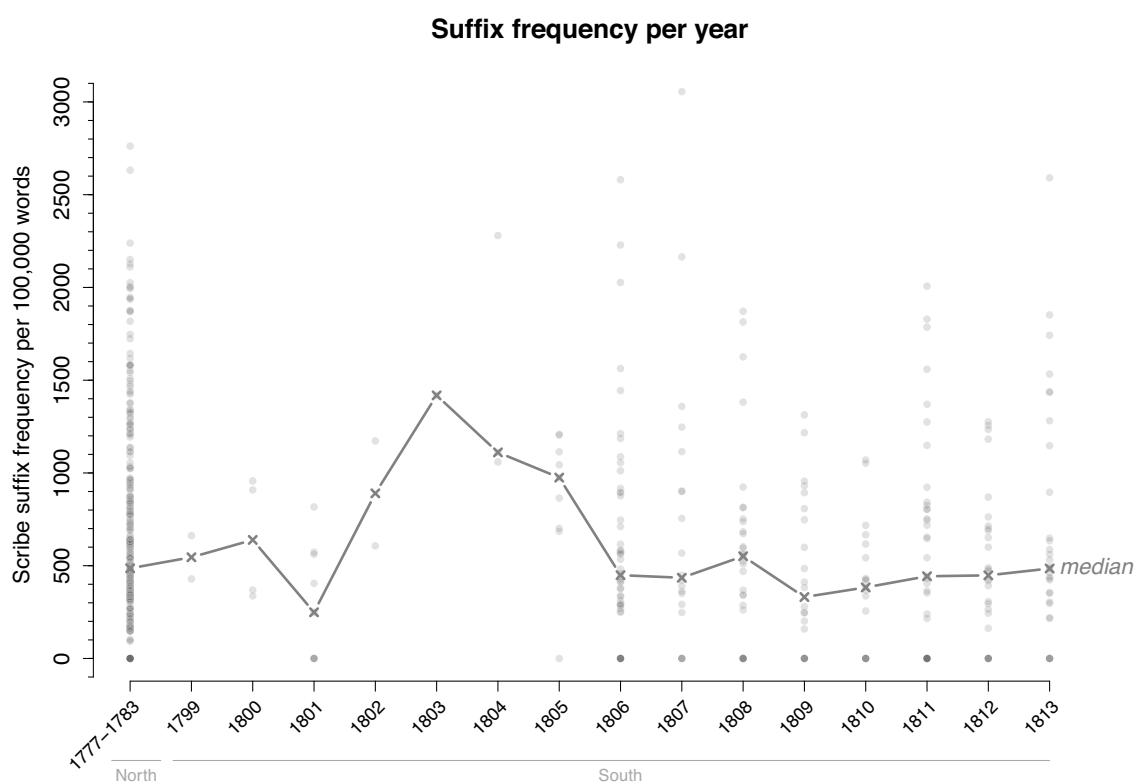
Holland. The difference between Flanders, on the one hand, and Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland, on the other hand, is remarkable, as is the difference between these provinces and the even more remote Northeast. One notable exception to this pattern is the city of Amsterdam. This, however, is not unexpected at all, given that contact with and exposure to French must have been more common for the inhabitants of the capital. The scores for the Central region and for scribes coming from abroad are also extremely high. This may in part be due to the limited number of data points in our sample, but further investigation would be needed to explore these regional discrepancies in more detail.

### 6.3.3 Changes in real and apparent time

As mentioned earlier, most of our northern letters were written in 1780 and 1781 (with a small number of exceptions as early as 1777 and as late as 1783), whereas the southern letters range from 1799 to 1813. Figure 3 shows the suffix frequency for each scribe in the different time frames, overlaid with the group medians. As



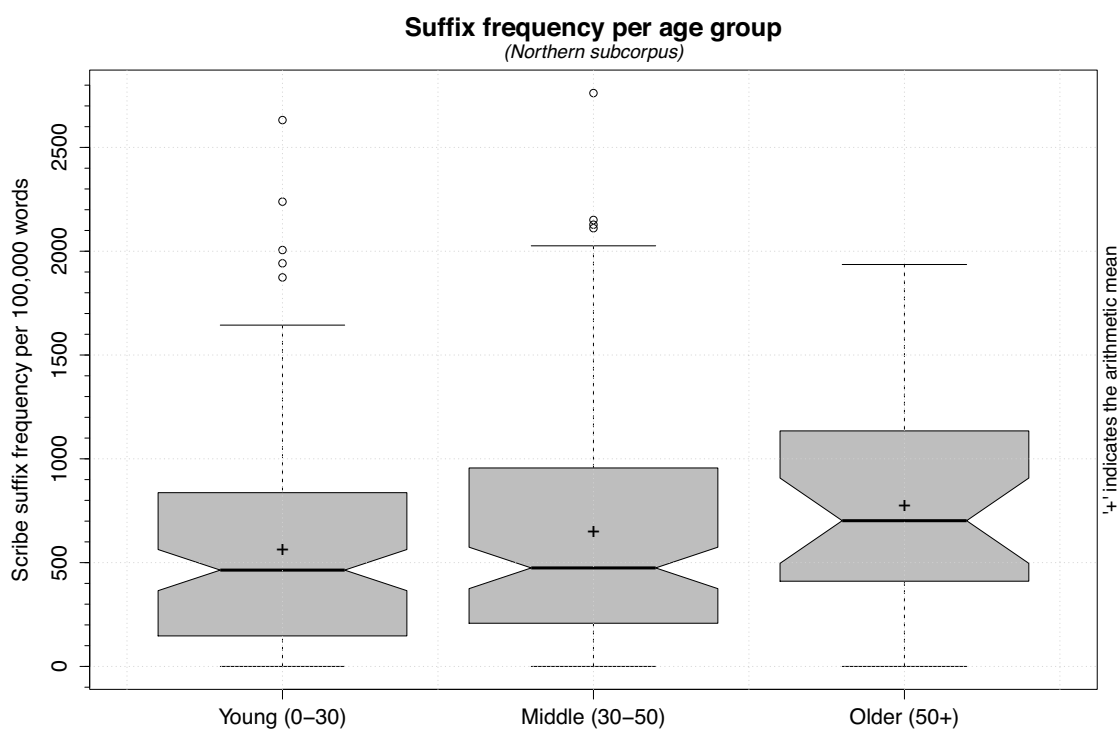
is clear from the figure, the extreme variation in the median loan suffix rate for the earliest years of the southern data is due to the limited number of scribes for those years. If we compare the scores from 1806 onwards, when our data are more robust, loan suffixation seems fairly stable: just as in the earlier northern data, the median scores per year all lie around the overall Flemish median of 471 and the overall northern median of 486. A Kruskal–Wallis rank sum confirms that these scores are not significantly different per year ( $H = 20.80$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p = 0.1432$ ), suggesting the absence of an overall effect of year of writing. In other words, the use of French loan suffixes remained fairly stable over time in our sample, even though the earliest scribes would have learned to write *before* the French occupation in the 1790s, and the later scribes would probably have received their (limited) education under the French regime, possibly even partly in French.



**Figure 3.** Scribes' loan suffix rates per year

Apart from the real-time dimension, which best represents our southern data, the northern data can be explored through apparent time: we have age information available for most northern scribes, who can be divided into a young (under 30),

a middle-aged (between 30 and 50) and an older age group (over 50).<sup>20</sup> While the use of French loan suffixes remained stable over time in the southern sub-corpus, our northern material does exhibit an apparent-time effect, as shown in figure 4. Interestingly enough, we see that the use of loan suffixes goes up with age, and especially the older scribes tend to use many more French suffixes than the middle-aged and the young group. A Mann–Whitney U Test correspondingly indicates a near-significant difference between the median scores for the two youngest groups, on the one hand, and the older group on the other hand ( $W = 4898$ ,  $p = 0.054$ ):



**Figure 4.** Scribes' loan suffix rates per age group (northern sub-corpus)

Taking into account that the northern letters were mostly written around 1780 and 1781, and assuming that loan suffixation would be fairly stable across the life span, this apparent-time dimension then suggests that French loan suffixes had been slowly on the decline over the course of the eighteenth century, up until a few years before the French annexation. However, for exactly that period, our southern data suggest that its frequency somehow stabilised. The increased

<sup>20</sup> For the southern sub-corpus, reliable age information is only available for under 10% of all scribes, with 21 of 23 scribes belonging to the youngest group. The age effect will thus only be further explored for the northern sub-corpus.

contact with French during the 1790s and early 1800s may thus have halted or mitigated an ongoing trend of decreasing suffix borrowing from French.

#### 6.3.4 Social class

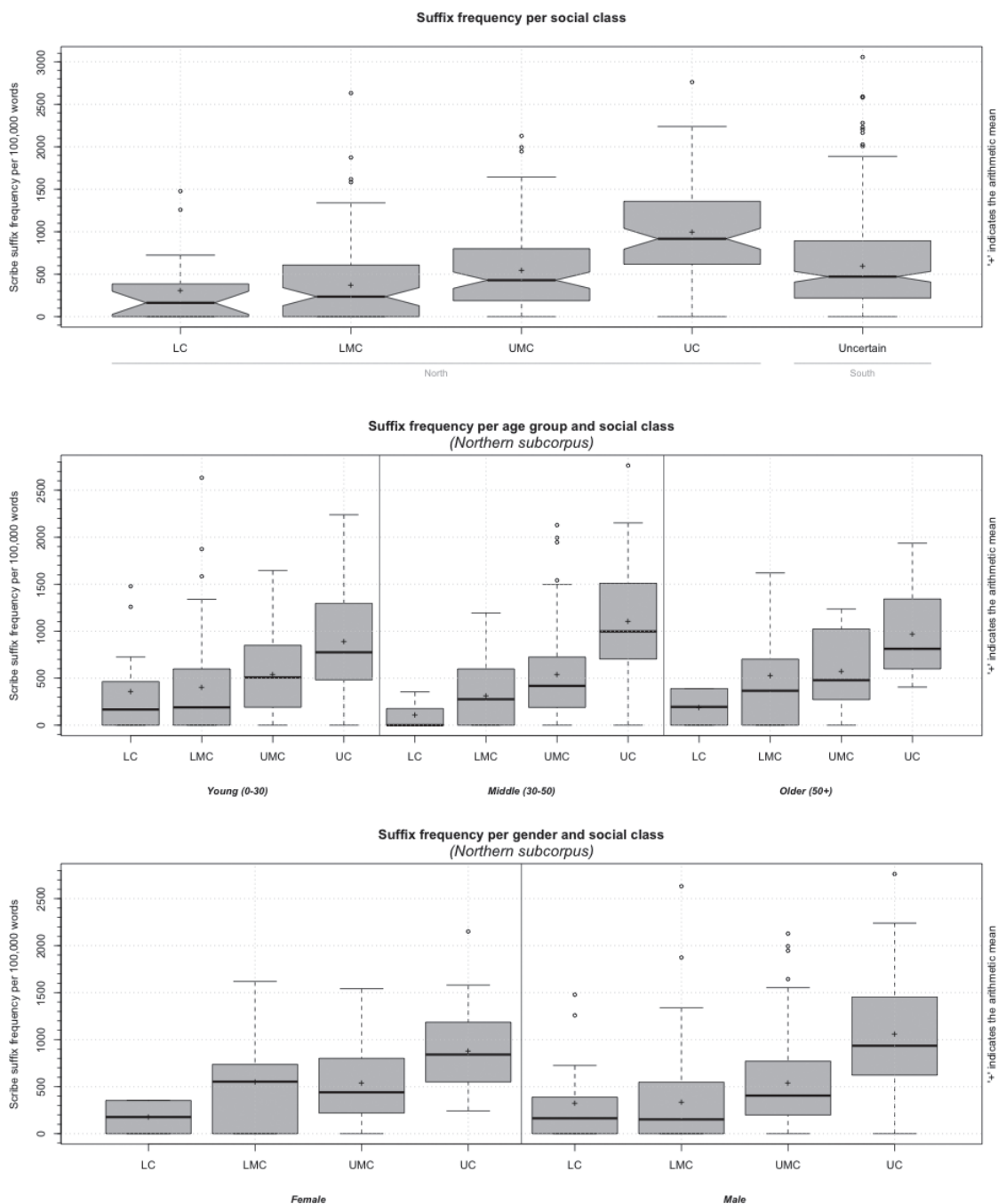
The scribes of the northern sub-corpus can be grouped into four social class categories based on information about their social and professional background (cf. Nobels & van der Wal 2011; van der Wal, Rutten & Simons 2012). This gives us the data shown by the four first boxes of the top panel of figure 5, where we can observe a steady rise of the median loan suffix frequency as we move up the social ladder: every social class group tends to use more French suffixes than the social class groups under it. This strong effect is confirmed by a Kruskal–Wallis rank sum test, suggesting that the differences between the social class group scores in the northern sub-corpus are highly significant ( $H = 71.06$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In inverse terms: the lower a scribe's social class may be, the less likely he or she is to use French loan morphology in our corpus.

Moreover, this effect proves to be robust. Splitting up the data per age group generates the same stepwise increase of the loan suffix medians per social class, as shown in the middle panel of figure 5. Here, too, it is especially the UC group which towers far above the other social classes in terms of loan suffix use. Splitting up the social class data per gender gives us a similar pattern, as shown in the bottom panel of figure 5, where, however, the results for the LMC seem to diverge from the overall pattern.<sup>21</sup>

Returning to the overall social class effect in the top panel of figure 5, we can also compare the northern scribes to the Napoleonic soldiers of our southern sub-corpus. As we discussed in section 6.1, the social rank of these Flemish soldiers cannot be determined with certainty, although a majority of them can probably be situated in the lower classes of society, roughly corresponding to the LC or LMC categories of the *Letters as Loot* corpus. Thus comparing the southern soldiers to their lower class peers from the North, we observe a marked difference between both groups: the median loan suffix rate for the southern scribes

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<sup>21</sup> There is a striking gender difference in the LMC group. The men of this group use a lower than expected amount of loan suffixes (median 152, IQR 547), with a median score at about the same level as the LC men (median 163.5, IQR 387.25). The women of this LMC group, however, score remarkably higher (median 553, IQR 634). This loan suffix rate exceeds that of their male social peers, but even outperforms that of the women belonging to the UMC (median 440, IQR 580.5). Regional background seems to be partly responsible for this effect, as some of the top-scoring LMC women come from the relatively high-suffixation regions of Amsterdam and – to a lesser extent – Zeeland.



**Figure 5.** Scribes' loan suffix rates per social class

is much higher than that for the northern scribes in the LC or LMC. A Mann–Whitney U Test comparing southern scribes, on the one hand, and both the northern LC and LMC groups, on the other hand, confirms that this difference is highly significant ( $W = 10303$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In fact, not only do the Flemish soldiers tend to use more loan suffixes than their LC and LMC peers from the North: the southern scribes even seem to use French loan suffixes to a similar degree as the northern scribes from the UMC. This interaction of social class and North–South

differences may thus signal a larger underlying North–South difference: our observations from the lower classes suggest that, if we correct for social class, southern scribes tend to use more French loan suffixes than northern scribes. Moving beyond the limitations of our corpus, this could indicate that suffixes from French were somewhat more prominent in Southern Dutch at the time than in the Northern Dutch.

## 7 Discussion and conclusions

Comparing these findings to our hypotheses, the process of suffix borrowing gives us an interesting insight into the influence of French on Dutch at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

First and foremost, we established that loan suffixes constitute a linguistic feature that is strongly conditioned by the social background: the higher the social class of a writer, the more borrowing from French can be encountered. This confirms the dominant image in Dutch language history that contact with French mainly affected the higher echelons of society. However, we found that the lower social ranks were clearly influenced by the process as well, and borrowed suffixes occurred in the writings of scribes from all social levels. This suggests that the influence of French went beyond those parts of the population which may have regularly come into contact with the source language.

Secondly, we were able to confirm that, among the lower social classes, loan suffixes were more common in our southern than in our northern data. We certainly have to take the different nature of the sub-corpora and the lack of systematic and reliable background information for the southern scribes into account, but this may suggest that the influence of French may have been larger in Flanders than in the Dutch Republic. Further study will need to investigate whether this effect holds true for other types of sources as well. Nonetheless, we also found considerable regional differences within the Dutch North, with the northernmost regions using fewer French suffixes than the areas closer to the language border, and with the capital of Amsterdam also scoring considerably higher than the surrounding hinterland. On top of the regional distribution, this also hints at a distinction between urban metropolitan centres and smaller cities or towns – which is not surprising, given that exposure to French would have been more intensive in the capital. For the South, we could only investigate sources from the Flemish dialect area, but here, too, we should be careful not to treat the entire region as one homogeneous block without diverging regional patterns. French influence on Dutch may thus have been stronger in the South than in the North,



but some regions or cities may have been more affected than others, regardless of the North–South distinction.

Finally, combining real-time and apparent-time data, we established that suffix borrowing from French may not have been equally frequent over the years. Our northern data showed, in apparent time, a pattern where loan suffixation was on the decline, while our southern data indicated, in real time, that the process had stabilised in terms of frequency. Given that our northern material is slightly older than our southern material, and combining the apparent and the real-time dimensions, we were able to hypothesise that loan suffixes had been losing ground throughout the eighteenth century, but that this downward trend came to a halt around the 1790s, possibly as a result of the intensified contact with the source language during the early years of French expansion after the 1780 revolution. Future studies with older and more recent material will need to corroborate this hypothesis, investigating how the observed pattern might fit into a larger trend of varying French influence on the Dutch language over time.

While our study showed that loan suffixes from French formed an integral part of Dutch morphology in the Late Modern period, French influence on Dutch, more broadly speaking, may not be overestimated on the basis of these findings either. With around 481 French loan suffixes per 100,000 words (i.e. 0.48% of the total lexicon), the phenomenon is still fairly marginal. While a study of less stable aspects of the language such as the lexicon may reveal a stronger influence of French than is apparent from our focus on the less borrowable derivational morphology, we also need to take the strong lexical conditioning often associated with the register typical of these letters into account. Military terms borrowed from French frequently occurred in the case of the soldiers' correspondence, while the Northern Dutch letters often contain information about the ships and their captains (cf. figure 1). Only comparable studies over larger time spans, e.g. also exploring the phenomenon in current-day corpus data, can put these absolute figures into a more relative perspective. Although our study may have raised more questions than answers and should be seen as nothing more than a first exploration of Dutch–French language contact in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we hope that it can serve as a basis for future research into the actual influence of French on past stages of the Dutch language, moving away from anecdotal and possibly ideologically motivated observations about the state of the language as a whole and towards more corpus-driven empirical analyses.

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