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Standard language ideology and Dutch school inspection reports (1801–1854)

Abstract: The decades around 1800 saw the rise of standard language ideology in the Northern Netherlands, and its almost immediate implementation in concrete policy measures. For the first time, the national government initiated official spelling and grammar regulations (1804, 1805). Policy measures were also taken to reorganize and nationalize the field of education. The language and education policies were part of a wider range of measures aimed at the formation of a Dutch nation-state. One of the control mechanisms introduced in this period was a national school inspection system. In this paper, we discuss school inspection reports of the first half of the nineteenth century, focusing on the way language planning and multilingualism interacted. In particular, we want to find out whether school inspectors and teachers actively promoted the officially codified variety, and to what extent this implied discouragement of the use of other varieties of Dutch.

Keywords: language planning, nationalism, Dutch, language ideology, language-in-education

1 Introduction

Around 1800, a period of official language planning began in the Northern Netherlands which lasts until the present day.¹ For the first time, the national government initiated official spelling and grammar regulations, which were published in 1804 and 1805. The use of the officially codified version of Dutch was strongly recommended to professionals in administrative and educational domains. In the same period, policy measures were taken to reorganize and nationalize the field of education. Important instruments in this respect included the compilation of an official reading list, and the establishment of teacher training institutes and a school inspection system (Boekholt/de Booy 1987: 97–101). The language and education policies were part

¹ Throughout this paper, when we talk about *Dutch*, *Netherlands*, *Northern Netherlands*, we refer to the northern parts of the Low Countries roughly corresponding to the present-day Netherlands.

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of a wider range of measures aimed at the formation of a Dutch nation-state, the ideological backdrop of which is constituted by the rise of cultural nationalism in the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus, the decades around 1800 saw the rise of standard language ideology in the Northern Netherlands, and its almost immediate implementation in concrete policy measures. The official promotion of a standardized variety aimed at the homogenization of the language community, thus ending its ‘internal’ multilingualism, that is, the co-existence of multiple varieties of Dutch (Rutten 2016a).

One of the control mechanisms introduced in this period was a national school inspection system, which has generated substantial archival sources. In this paper, we discuss school inspection reports of the first half of the nineteenth century, focusing on the way language planning and internal multilingualism interacted. In particular, we want to find out whether school inspectors and teachers actively promoted the officially codified variety, and to what extent this implied discouragement of the use of other varieties of Dutch. Was standard language ideology part of everyday teaching practices and of the professional activities of school inspectors?

In section 2, we discuss the historical-sociolinguistic context of the school inspection reports, focusing on language ideological aspects and on the concrete language policy and educational policy. In section 3, we introduce the Dutch school inspection reports as intriguing sources for historical-sociolinguistic research, and analyze the metalinguistic commentary found therein. We conclude with some final remarks in section 4.

2 Historical-sociolinguistic context

2.1 Standard language ideology

Nation-state formation involves nation-building as well as the establishment of state institutions. The former preceding the latter is traditionally considered the German model, the other way around the French model (Wright 2012). These models are ideal types, according to which a German sense of ethnological unity preceded the actual state-formation in the late nineteenth century, whereas in France, the nationalization of institutions from the eighteenth century onward was instrumental in the construction of a French national identity. In the case of the Northern Netherlands, it is assumed that nation-building preceded state-formation (van Sas 2004: 42–43). Specifically, cultural nationalism arose in the eighteenth century, and became particularly strong in the second half of the century. The nationalization of institutions took off from the 1790s onward, with the constitution of 1798 a landmark.

Dutch eighteenth-century cultural nationalism comprised a process of cultural unification from c. 1750 onward as part of the Dutch Enlightenment project (van Sas

2004: 42). This so-called nationalization of the Enlightenment was largely carried out in Dutch. Socially, it remained restricted to the upper and upper middle ranks of society (van Sas 2004: 43). Many of the semi-public societies that operated at the local, regional and national level and that characterize the Dutch eighteenth century were engaged in discussions about politeness and education, more specifically, about educational reforms that would ensure children to grow up to become well-respected and responsible members of the Dutch nation, and citizens of the Dutch state (de Vries 2001; Los 2005).

Discussions about the form and function of the Dutch language were part of these semi-public debates about education as well as of the tradition of normative grammar (Noordegraaf 1999, 2012; Rutten 2012). Thus, linguistic nationalism arose as part of the broader development of cultural nationalism. An increasingly uniform body of normative rules founded on the literary language of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was prescribed, though significant variation persisted in eighteenth-century normative grammar (Rutten 2012). From c. 1750 onward, consensus arose that the written language as laid down in the literary tradition and in normative grammars should be considered to be the variety of Dutch with the most, if not the only right to exist. The label used to identify this variety was *moedertaal* ‘mother tongue’. In educational discourse, it was argued that this mother tongue was a key instrument in the education and emancipation of the population, and therefore, that it should be taught in schools. The combination of education, top-down concern with the emancipation of the people, particularly the less-privileged, and the concomitant instrumentalization of a national ‘mother tongue’ signals the rise of standard language ideology (Rutten 2016a; Milroy 2001; Lippi-Green 2012).

Efforts toward a homogeneous, standardized form of the language implied a discourse against other varieties. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and well into the nineteenth century, a strong anti-French discourse characterized the Dutch sociolinguistic situation, similar to the complaints about ‘Frenchification’ in other parts of Europe (Frijhoff 2015). In the context of educational reforms aimed at the entire population, however, the discursive battle against so-called internal multilingualism is more important (Vogl 2012). With the promotion of written Dutch to the status of the national standard, nationalist discourse also targeted regional varieties, which would prevent their speakers from participation in the Dutch nation-state and the Enlightenment (Rutten 2016b). In a standard language culture, political participation is assumed to depend on the standard language as the only viable tool for supraregional communication.

In addition, the topic of the nationalization of language became associated with one of the prime purposes of Enlightenment, viz. to advance the ability to think, which, in its turn, was considered crucial for responsible members of the nation-state. The link between linguistic cultivation and cognitive capacity is a well-known topic in Enlightenment philosophy, where it is usually discussed at the level of *nations*: those with the most highly cultivated language also have the most highly cultivated

culture (Christmann 1966; Neis 2003). In sum, a standard language was needed both from a political and a cognitive perspective, and this led to a negative attitude toward non-standard varieties. The discourse against non-standard varieties recalls similar actions against regional variation in France (de Certeau et al. 1975).

In addition to the variation in the spoken language, the written language of the late eighteenth century was also still characterized by a large degree of variation (Rutten/van der Wal 2014). Hence, the ideological discourse in favor of a national standard constituted an intervention in a variable situation. This ideological intervention was soon transformed into concrete policy measures affecting language and education.

2.2 Educational policy and language policy

One of the semi-public societies strongly engaged in debates about the necessity of educational reform was the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* 'Society for Public Advancement', founded in 1784 and adherent to an inclusive ideology (Mijnhardt 1987: 264–270). After the establishment of the so-called Batavian Republic in 1795, education became a focal point of the new government (Boekholt/de Booy 1987: 95–96). In 1796, it sought the advice of the Society for Public Advancement, which published a report with *Algemeene denkbeelden over het nationaal onderwijs* 'General ideas on national education' in 1798. This would exert a strong influence on educational policies throughout the nineteenth century (Dodde 1971). It argued that the education system should come under national political control, and that specific attention had to be paid to the dissemination of the national language (Dodde 1971: 12; Lenders 1988: 36–38).

The government consisted of so-called *agenten* 'agents, ministers'. One of them was the *Agent van Nationale Opvoeding* 'Agent of National Education'. After having obtained the expert advice of the Society for Public Advancement, the national parliament issued an *Instructie voor den agent van nationale opvoeding* 'Instruction to the agent of national education', which summarized the tasks of the new minister of education (Boekholt/de Booy 1987: 97). He should enact a law that would regulate school attendance in order to advance *de verlichting en beschaving van alle de Leden der Maatschappij* 'the enlightenment and cultivation of all the members of society' (*Instructie* 1799: 3). He also had to provide a list of books to be used throughout the country – books that would praise good morals, republican virtues and love of the fatherland (*Instructie* 1799: 4). Furthermore, he had to establish teacher training colleges, teacher exams and an inspection system (Boekholt/de Booy 1987: 97). In 1801, 1803 and 1806, the minister of education issued three laws for national primary education (Boekholt/de Booy 1987: 97–101) that were strongly influenced by the educational discourse of the preceding decades, particularly by the *Algemeene denkbeelden* (Los 2005: 324–325).

With respect to language, the *Instructie* (1799: 6) said that the minister had to “take all possible measures to purify and cultivate the Dutch language, and to regulate its spelling”. The background to this particular instruction was probably the complaint in the *Algemeene denkbelden* (1798: 61) that ‘an easy yet adequate Dutch grammar’ was still required. Next, the minister of education, J.H. van der Palm, contacted prominent members of societies such as the Society for Public Advancement. In October 1801, a small circle of learned men came together at van der Palm’s house, and decided to ask Matthijs Siegenbeek, professor of Dutch at Leiden University, to compose the national spelling, and another widely recognized language expert, Pieter Weiland, to write the national grammar (Siegenbeek 1804: XVIII–IX). After several rounds of consultation with language experts and representatives of important learned societies, the official codification of the national language materialized. In 1804, Siegenbeek published his orthography. In 1805, Weiland’s grammar came out.

The government decided to publish Siegenbeek’s spelling and to subsidize it, to use it in all governmental publications, to encourage the entire administration to adopt it in other writings as well, to prescribe its use in schoolbooks, and to ask school inspectors to implement it in the educational system (Siegenbeek 1804: XVI–XVII). In August 1805, the government took the same decisions with respect to Weiland’s grammar (Weiland 1805: V–XII). Importantly, the actual implementation of the language-in-education policy was the responsibility of individual school inspectors, making inspection reports crucial historical-sociolinguistic sources.

3 Metalanguage in school inspection reports

3.1 Inspection reports as a source in historical sociolinguistics

The Dutch school acts of 1801–1806 established an extensive system of school inspection (Dodde 1968). A body of 35 school inspectors ensured the implementation of the school acts and the reform of the school system. They monitored the quality of education and provided feedback to teachers and policymakers. School inspectors were mainly recruited from people who had been active in educational reforms, for example as advocates of the new school acts or as pedagogues in favor of new teaching methods. They represented a wide range of professions including teachers, clergymen and politicians, and they generally belonged to the upper and upper middle ranks in which the movement for school reform rooted (Schama 1970: 576).

The inspection system was organized on a departmental, i.e. provincial level. Within the departments, each school inspector was responsible for his own school district. He would visit the schools in his district two to four times per year. The prime focus of the school inspection system was on the public Dutch schools, even though French and Latin schools formally also fell under its authority. The inspector would

indicate problems and issues in need of improvement in his inspection reports, which were subsequently discussed in the quarterly meetings of the departmental educational committees.

Comments on a single school range from a few lines to multiple pages. Complete reports comprising comments on all schools in a district range from five to sixty pages. Many of these handwritten reports are accessible today in regional archives throughout the Netherlands. For the present paper, we have investigated 307 reports from the archives of North-Holland, the center of the language area, and from Groningen, a peripheral region in the northeast bordering on Germany, from the establishment of the inspection system in 1801 until 1854, after which no reports are retained until the transformation of the inspection system in 1857. North-Holland was the birthplace of school reforms, and home to the Society for Public Advancement and various influential pedagogues such as P.J. Prinsen and N. Anslijn. Groningen boasted the highest school attendance rates in the country. Due to influential teachers such as H. Wester and Th. van Swinderen, it was also the leading province in implementing new teaching methods (Knippenberg 1986).

Following Langer (2011), we consider school inspection reports highly valuable sources in historical sociolinguistics. They provide information on topics such as teaching methods and materials, the skills and quality of teachers, school attendance, the use of schoolbooks, school buildings and legal and financial aspects of the school system. Contrary to the prescriptive nature of sources such as schoolbooks, pedagogical literature and official regulations, these reports provide descriptions of actual classroom practices. It should be noted, however, that given the varying professional backgrounds of school inspectors, different interests prevail in the reports. Some inspectors focus exclusively on matters of organization and finance, while others focus more on issues of pedagogy and the contents of education. Examining these reports, our focus was on all matters pertaining to language, linguistics and language-in-education.

In this paper, we concentrate on two themes related to the implementation of standard language ideology in education. First, we discuss the transmission of language norms, specifically the officially codified form of the language (Siegenbeek 1804; Weiland 1805). Secondly, we focus on actual language use in the classroom, specifically on the ways in which non-standard language was policed.

3.2 Language norms

In the first half of the nineteenth century, pupils acquired active knowledge of language norms through advanced writing education, so-called grammatical writing (Fairman 2015), and through grammar as a distinct school subject. Grammatical writing consisted of the autonomous composition of sentences, letters and essays, in which children learned to ‘express their thoughts in writing’ (*Algemeene denkbeelden*

1798). It was called *grammatical* because it required the active application of rules of orthography, morphology and syntax. The inspection reports show us the kind of exercises teachers used and how pupils performed:

1. [The teacher] dictated to the pupils of the highest grade an excerpt titled the Netherlands, its goal was to inspire in the pupils love for and dedication to the fatherland – I looked over five of them and found, that they were pure in regard to language and spelling, in only two I found one spelling mistake. (Van Cleef, April 1832, 889:47 GA)²
2. in comparing the monthly writing exercises it became apparent that the progress was remarkable. – conjugation and declension were very good – the essays of the children on a given word, e.g. Bible – Moonlight, etc. pleased me in particular and I found in them several sentences that showed great progress in the Dutch language and in the intellectual development of the children. (Rugers, Juli 1818, 889:40 GA)³

Grammatical writing was contrasted with mechanical writing, i.e. the technical skill of writing letters and words. Until the nineteenth century, the emphasis in writing education was on mechanical writing. The quality of handwriting in terms of gracefulness and readability was a marker of status, and likewise the quality of a school was measured by the teacher's handwriting (van Gestel/van der Laan 1915). Knowledge of language norms was no prerequisite for good writing. Teaching consisted of copying handwritten examples such as religious maxims and prayers. In the early nineteenth century, following the rise of the uniform national standard, the focus shifted to grammatical writing. The quality of handwriting, however, remained an important criterion for good writing education.

Grammar as a separate subject was, until the nineteenth century, limited to secondary education, specifically to so-called French and Latin schools. Since only 5–6% of the population attended such schools, and since knowledge of the national language was deemed important for every citizen, the school acts of 1801–1806 listed grammar as a compulsory subject in primary schools (Frijhoff 1983: 23; van Hoorn 1907: 224). It consisted of identifying the parts of speech, declension and conjugation,

2 Rijkens [de onderwijzer] dicteerde de leerlingen der hoogste klasse een stukje ten opschrift hebbende Nederland, het doel en de strekking van hetzelfde was den leerlingen liefde voor en gehechtheid aan den vaderlandsche grond in te boezemen – Ik zag een vijftal van dezelve na, en ondervond, dat zij wat taal en spelling aanging volkomen zuiver waren, in slechts twee ontmoette ik ééne spelfout. 3 bij het vergelijken der maandelijksche schriften bleek het dat de vorderingen zeer aanmerkelijk waren. – het vervoegen en verbuigen was zeer goed – bijzonder gevielen mij zeer de opstellen der kinderen over een opgegeven woord B.V. Bijbel – Maanlicht &c. en ik vond daaronder verscheiden volzinnen die mij en van de vorderingen in de Holl. taal en van de verstandsontwikkeling der kinderen zeer gunstige begrippen gaven.

and from the 1820s onwards, sentence analysis. Again the reports show us how grammar was taught. A common exercise was the correction of erroneous sentences:

3. I gave [the pupils] a lengthy and difficult exercise, which consisted of some randomly written lines, in which almost no word could be found in which the rules of proper spelling were not neglected, and above all I had made sure, to add erroneous and difficult declensions and conjugations [...] I had all pupils correct this excerpt [...] with the result, that in the end only two mistakes remained. In particular, I found that there were among those pupils some who were not unfamiliar with the spelling of Professor Siegenbeek. (Beets, 1806, 89:27 NHA)⁴
4. On the blackboard was written: the ox is a large animal when he is slaughtered, [lus ik hem wel] I like him, instead of [lust ik hem wel] I like him, and on another blackboard was written: [welke weg] which road should I take to Delfzijl, instead of [welken weg] which road. (Van Swinderen, 1824, 889:43 GA)⁵
5. An essay on the board with this content: [“God lied adam wonen in dal paradies een groot en schooner woning in het hertogdom Luxemburg, het ligt dicht bij de revieren de wolga & de loire”] “God let adam live in valley paradise a big and clean dwelling in the duchy Luxembourg, it lies close to the rivers the wolga & the loire” was analyzed and corrected very well. (Bouwers, April 1822, 889:42 GA)⁶

Direct references to language norms (example 4) are relatively rare in the reports. The same applies to references to the Siegenbeek spelling (1804) and the Weiland grammar (1805; cf. example 3). Usually, school inspectors wrote about language norms in general terms, that is in terms of ‘good’ or ‘pure’ or ‘uncivilized’ language (example 1). Although it is plausible that such general comments did refer to Siegenbeek and Weiland, this was not necessarily the case. Particularly in the early decades of the nineteenth century, knowledge of Siegenbeek’s orthography and Weiland’s grammar was not ubiquitous. As we argue in the next section, there were school inspectors who

4 Aan [de leerlingen] gaf ik eene [...] uitvoerige en moeilijke proeve op, welke laatste bestond in enige voor de vuist geschreven regelen, waarin men bijkans geen woord vond, of den regelen eener goede Spelkunst waren daarin verwaarloosd, en wel vooral was ik bedacht geweest, om verkeerde en moeilijke verbuigingen en vervoegingen erin te vervlechten [...]. Ik liet dit stuk door alle de leerlingen [...] verbeteren, [...] met dien uitslag, dat er in het einde slechts twee fouten overbleven. Als eene bijzonderheid ontdekte ik, dat er onder die leerlingen waren, die met de Spelling van den Hoogleraar Siegenbeek niet geheel onbekend waren.

5 Op het bord [ter verbetering] stond: de os is een groot dier als hij geslacht is, lus ik hem wel, inplaats van lust ik hem wel, en op een ander bord stond: welke weg moet ik nemen naar Delfzijl, inplaats van welken weg.

6 The Dutch sentence is full of mistakes in capitalization, punctuation, orthography, declension etc.

did not adhere to the strict uniformity implied by standard language ideology, and who were tolerant of more variable normative practices.

The school inspection reports give us a detailed account of language norm transmission. They provide an insight into methods, materials, exercises and performance in everyday classroom situations. But important insights can also be gained by looking at what is absent from the reports. In his study of school inspection reports from nineteenth-century Schleswig-Holstein, Langer (2011: 180) observes that “[i]n relation to the sheer size of the corpus, the number of references to linguistic matters is small [...]. This is surprising given the ever present tension between the use of High German in schools and Low German in everyday rural life”. A similar observation can be made with respect to the Dutch reports. Despite the importance attributed to the national language in educational discourse, and despite the publication of the official Siegenbeek/Weiland norms, the number of references to language teaching and norm transmission is relatively low. This can partly be explained by the fact that some school inspectors reported exclusively on organizational and financial matters. Others, however, did report on the content of education, and still hardly any references to language norms are found in their reports. The reason behind this is that in many schools in this period, the amount of time spent on grammatical writing and grammar was low. This, in turn, was due to a number of factors.

Before the school acts of 1801–1806, neither grammatical writing nor grammar were part of the primary school curriculum. In writing education, mechanical aspects of writing prevailed, such as writing posture, pen handling and fine writing. Grammar was limited to secondary schools. This changed at the turn of the century, when educational discourse stressed the importance of writing skills and knowledge of the national language, and both grammatical writing and grammar were added to the curriculum. However, due to limited financial means and opposition to reform, the implementation of the new curriculum was slow and gradual. The first half of the nineteenth century was a transitional period, in which old and new teaching practices coexisted (Boekholt 1978: 374). Both teachers and school inspectors had to get used to new methods of teaching. This explains why some school inspectors, who report quite extensively on writing education, do so exclusively in technical terms, i.e. in terms of writing posture, the quality of pen and ink, and the quality of handwriting.

Successive teaching was another old and continued practice limiting the time available for grammatical writing. Traditionally, reading and writing were taught successively, as young children were deemed unfit for the fine art of handling quill and (costly) ink and paper. In practice, writing education did not start until the age of 8–9 (de Booy 1977: 41). But in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the average school-going age was 5–10, after which most children, except those with higher social backgrounds, joined the labor force (de Booy 1977: 41). This means that most children spent only a year or two in writing education, and did not progress beyond basic mechanical copying exercises. In the new curriculum, reading, writing and grammar were, ideally, taught simultaneously from an early age on. The introduction

of slates for writing aided in this process, yet the late start of writing education was still common practice in many schools in the first decades of the nineteenth century (Davies 2005; Verhoeven 1994: 152).

The absence of references to language norm transmission in school inspection reports shows that this was not a self-evident part of school programs in the first half of the nineteenth century, and that educational practices in many schools differed considerably from what we might expect based on official discourses and documents. At the same time, the reports show how schools that did teach grammatical writing and grammar integrated the teaching of language norms into exercises and other classroom practices. In both cases, the value of inspection reports for historical sociolinguistic research is undeniable.

3.3 Language use

Apart from commenting on language norm transmission, some inspectors also reflected on the language that was used in the classroom by teachers and pupils. Against the background of the strongly ideological approach taken in official discourse and in policy measures, we expect policing practices to be omnipresent, specifically with respect to non-standard variants in the spoken language. Again, metalinguistic comments turn out to be relatively rare and seemingly random. Still, this tells us something about the way in which school inspectors perceived language and about their attitudes to variation. Contrary to language norm transmission, policing language use was not part of the official language-in-education policy. Although the acquisition of so-called civilized speech was, in educational discourse, believed to be an important aspect of child development, this was not made explicit in curricula. There was no distinct subject nor were there separate methods or materials aimed at the acquisition of a spoken standard. For those who adhered to standard language ideology, of course, it was an implicit goal underpinning all educational activities.

The most common way for school inspectors to discuss language use is by stigmatizing dialect. The standard language was seen as the proper, civilized variety, while non-standard varieties were considered to be incorrect and uncivilized. We see this reflected in the reports:

6. The second and highest grade reads well and is questioned well; unfortunately the civilization slightly suffers from dialectal expressions such as [dou, dy] you,

instead of [gij en u] you, every time the teacher [...] talks with his pupils, which in general could be more friendly. (Adriani, Oktober 1821, 889:42 GA)⁷

7. Where spelling and reading were completely [Omlandsch] before, it is now pure and common [Hollandsch]. (Van Eerde, Juni 1805, 888:5 GA)^{8 9}

The idea that ‘civilization suffers’ because of dialectal speech, or that there is a hierarchical opposition between ‘boorish’ and ‘pure’ types of spoken language, is characteristic of standard language ideology. In some instances school inspectors point out specific features that are typical of the regional language (cf. example 1):

8. Reading and pronunciation were pretty well. The sch however was generally pronounced as sk. (Van Goens, Juli 1837, 89:117 NHA)^{10 11}

Despite the fact that the ‘civilization’ of speech was not an explicit part of the curriculum, the reports show that teachers sometimes actively sought to suppress dialectal speech:

9. Meanwhile the middle grade, under supervision of the second assistant teacher [...] had to write down some 50 words (without distinction) beginning with h, which is especially suitable for these regions, because of the wrong pronunciation of that letter. (Stecher, April 1848, 889 GA)^{12 13}
10. [I noticed] that the younger children hinder the older children and distract their attention in class. Above all this took place because the older children had learned to speak civilized and the small ones, not having learned this yet, gave

7 De tweede en hoogste klasse leest vrij wel en wordt tamelijk wel ondervraagd; jammer dat de beschaving eenigzins lijdt door de gewestelijke uitdrukkingen van dou, dy, inplaats van gij en u, wanneer de onderwijzer [...] met zijne schoolieren spreekt, het welk over 't algemeen ook wel wat vriendelijker behoorde te zijn.

8 ‘Omlandsch’ was the dialect of the province of Groningen; ‘Hollandsch’ was often used to refer to the standard language.

9 waar voorhenen geheel lomp Omlandsch gespeld en gelezen wierd, las men thans zuiver Hollandsch en algemeen.

10 In parts of North Holland, the [sk] cluster is maintained until today, whereas many other varieties of Dutch including the standard variety have the fricativized variant [sX] (De Wulf, Goossens & Taeldeman 2005: maps 9–11).

11 Het lezen en de uitspraak was vrij wel. De sch werd echter algemeen door sk uitgesproken.

12 Prevocalic [h] is (or: used to be) deleted in parts of Groningen (Weijnen 1996: 248–249; De Wulf, Goossens & Taeldeman 2005: map 214).

13 Intusschen had de middelste klasse, onder toezigt van den tweeden ondermeester H. Barman (3 rang) een 50tal woorden (zonder onderscheid) beginnende met h moeten opschrijven, 't geen in deze streken overal zeer doelmatig is, om de slechte uitspraak dier letter.

the older children reason for loud laughter every time they expressed themselves in the Groningen dialect. (Van Swinderen, Oktober 1845, 889:61 GA)¹⁴

11. When I came into this school for the first time, and heard the children read with [Omlander] accent, I told them, that they should not read like that. To which [the teacher] answered, that it wasn't the children's but his fault: that he was born and schooled in the village, and never learned or taught his pupils anything else, but that he would improve. And so it happened, because when I came back after four months, the [Omlander] accent had disappeared completely and was replaced by the [Hollandsche]. (Van Eerde, Juli 1809, 888:15 GA)¹⁵

These comments follow a pattern that we expect based on standard language ideology: regional variants are stigmatized (in this case Groningen variants), dialectal speech is suppressed and the standard is promoted. It should be noted, however, that it was not always clear what the spoken standard variety was or should be. Contrary to the written standard, codified by the Siegenbeek/Weiland publications, the spoken standard variety was by and large based on the language spoken by the 'civilized' elites in the province of Holland (examples 7, 11). Knowledge of this variety had to be acquired through contact with standard speakers, in the absence of which teachers sometimes turned to the spelling for guidance. This often led to confusion:

12. [The teacher] said that he couldn't understand the tax collector, because he spoke too [Hollandsch]; but [the teacher] probably doesn't realize that he himself spoke quite affected [Hollandsch], when he said this. He must not indulge in this. There is a distinction between civilized and affected speech. – The first is praiseworthy, the second blameworthy. (Van Swinderen, Oktober 1836, 889:52 GA)¹⁶

14 [Ik bemerkte] dat de kleine kinderen de grooten hinderlijk zijn en bij hun onderwijs de aandacht der grooten tot zich trekken. Vooral had dit plaats omdat de grootere kinderen hadden geleerd beschaafd te spreken, en de kleinen, dit nog niet geleerd hebbende, gaven telkens, wanneer zij zich in de Groningse tongval uitdrukten, aanleiding tot een luid gelach bij de grooten.

15 Toen ik de eerste maal in deze school kwam, en de kinderen met Omlander accent hoorde lezen, zeide ik tegen dezelve, dat zij het zoo niet moesten leezen: waarop hij [de meester] antwoordde, dat dit niet de schuld der kinderen maar de zijne was: dat hij in zijn dorp geboren en onderwezen was, en nooit zelf(s) anders geleerd, of kinderen onderwezen had, maar dat hij het zoude verbeteren: en waarlijk dat gebeurde ook, want na drie vier maanden terug komende, was de Ommelander uitspraak geheel verdwenen en had voor de Hollandsche plaats gemaakt.

16 Van Oosten zei, dat hij de tolmeester niet verstond, omdat die zoo Hollandsch sprak; maar Van Oosten gevoelt zeker niet, dat hij zelf ook wat gemaakt Hollandsch sprak, toen hij dit zeide. Hij moet zich hierin niet toegeven. Er is onderscheid tusschen beschaafd en gemaakt spreken. – Het eerste is te prijzen, het tweede te laken.

13. The only comment I made was on the pronunciation of the Dutch language, which the teacher spoke and taught too literally. (Beeloo, April 1854, 89:123 NHA)¹⁷

The comments so far are in line with what we would expect based on official discourse, where standard language ideology had taken hold by the early nineteenth century. However, such comments are rather the exception than the rule. In the majority of inspection reports, there is no reflection on language use, and no metalanguage signaling policing practices. This is surprising given the tension between the promotion of the standard in official discourse, and the use of dialect in everyday life, which was normal for the vast majority of the population. The question is why there is so little reflection on actual language use?

A possible answer is that the spoken language was not on the curriculum and that school inspectors had enough other topics to direct their attention to (cf. Langer 2011: 180–181). As we saw in section 3.2, there were serious limitations to language norm transmission in education. Also, some school inspectors were officials and local or church authorities rather than pedagogues and teachers. They directed their attention to organizational and financial issues rather than to the contents and quality of teaching. However, there is more to account for the silence in linguistic matters, for which we have to return to the concept of standard language ideology.

In standard language ideology

the ideal state of a language is one of uniformity, the standard form is inherently superior to other varieties [...]. Language is rigidified, and the distinction between what is correct and what is incorrect sharply delineated. The boundaries between one language and the next are made clear-cut and associated inseparably with nationality. The elasticity and flexibility of vernacular speech with the notion of dialect continua are firmly rejected. (Lodge 2014: 217)

Lodge, in an article on metalanguage in the diaries of the French glazier Jacques-Louis Ménétra, tries to capture the way ordinary people viewed language before the advent, or rather the hegemony of, standard language ideology. Like the majority of school inspectors, Ménétra fails to mention linguistic variation, or standard/dialect opposition, in a time when official discourse was steeped in standard language ideology. This is due, Lodge argues, to the fact that before the advent of standard language cultures, people were used to dealing with situations of multilingualism, variation and dialect continua. In recent years, research has shown that before the nineteenth century, multilingualism in different forms was the norm rather than the exception (Vogl 2012). Variation, in other words, was “so much part of the natural

¹⁷ Alleen meende ik aanmerking te moeten maken op de uitspraak der Nederlandsche taal, welke de onderwijzer te letterlijk opvatte en ook spreken liet.

world as to go without saying”, and people dealt with it through different forms of accommodation (Lodge 2014: 212), and in a much less ideologized way than today.

A similar observation holds for most school inspectors. Despite being representatives of official policies and discourses, they were also men of practice, who dealt with teachers, parents and officials from different regions and with various social backgrounds on a daily basis. They lived and worked in a society where variability in the spoken language was self-evident and not as commonly problematized as it would be in more recent 19th and 20th-century nationalist discourse and standard language ideology. The rise of standard ideology would alter the way people viewed this multilingualism, but it had not yet done so in the first half of the nineteenth century. Standard language ideology was not yet accompanied by a generally accepted and lived standard language culture, that is, by a socially firmly established standard language, with standard ideology as the hegemonic language ideology (Milroy 2001: 535). This may explain why the majority of school inspectors did not comment on dialect use in the classroom, or at least did not consider it problematic and significant enough to direct much attention to.

4 Final remarks

Around 1800, a period of intense nation-building led to concrete language and language-in-education policies in the Netherlands, including the official codification of the national language and a series of school reform acts. Thus, the rise of standard language ideology in the late eighteenth century immediately affected policy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. An important question pertains to the implementation of these policies in the field of education. As part of the educational reforms, a national school inspection system was established. School inspection reports provide detailed information about the implementation of policies in local schools. In line with the nationalist ideology and the official policy, inspectors and schoolteachers imposed the national language on pupils in a process of norm transmission in classroom practices. Likewise, the reports show evidence of inspectors and teachers policing non-standard language use in the classroom. At the same time, however, such evidence is relatively sparse given the number and size of the archival sources. Apart from practical reasons related to teaching programs and educational traditions, an important explanation lies in the fact that standard language ideology was still primarily just that: an ideology informing policy, not a lived experience in the wider language community. Therefore, many inspectors and teachers readily accepted the variability characteristic of contemporary language situations.

5 References

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