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**(Extra)Ordinary letters: A view from below on seventeenth-century Dutch  
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## Chapter 8. Diminutives

### 8.1. The history of the different types of diminutive suffixes

In present-day Standard Dutch the diminutive suffix is *-je* [jə]. It has five variants: *-tje* [cə], *-etje* [əcə], *-je* [jə], *-pje* [pjə] and *-kje* [kjə]. Which variant is used depends on the final sound of the root and of the quality of the vowel in the last syllable of the root. For instance, *boom* [bo:m] ('tree') receives the diminutive suffix *-pje* on the basis of the final [m] and the fact that the vowel in the last (and only) syllable is long and stressed. But the diminutive of the word *bom* [bɔm] ('bomb') is *bommetje* (with diminutive suffix *-etje*), given that the final consonant of the root is [m] and that the vowel preceding this auslaut is short and stressed.

In non-Standard Dutch, both in regiolects and sociolects, the *-je* diminutive suffix and its variants also occur, but sometimes with variations. For instance, the suffix and its variants can be pronounced with a final [n] (e.g. *boekjen* [bukjən] 'booklet') depending on the phonetic context and the dialect or regiolect of the speaker. And the rules governing the occurrence of the different variants of *-je(n)* can differ as well from region to region. Take for example the diminutive of the word *mouw* in the Dutch village of Voorthuizen and in its neighbouring village of Barneveld: according to the MAND (*Morfologische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten* 'Morphological atlas of Dutch Dialects') the diminutive of *mouw* is *mouwtje* in Voorthuizen (with the suffix *-tje*), while in Barneveld the diminutive is *mouwetje* (with the suffix *-etje*) (MAND I, De Schutter et al. 2005). Listing all the rules for the formation of diminutives in Standard and in non-Standard Dutch would certainly go beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is crucial for the research presented in this chapter to describe the origin of the suffix *-je(n)* and the history of diminutive suffixes in Dutch from Middle Dutch up to present-day Dutch.<sup>107</sup>

Over the past century, extensive research and intense linguistic discussions have resulted in a history of the Dutch diminutives upon which most scholars agree. Let us start with Middle Dutch, in which the suffix *-kijn* is said to be the central diminutive suffix (Van Loey 1970: 225-231). Other diminutive suffixes which occurred on a smaller scale were *-elkijn*, *-lijn*, *-sijn*, *-skijn*, *-tgin* en *-tiaen* (Bakema 1997: 203, Van Loey 1970: 225-231). The suffix *-kijn* gradually changed into *-je(n)* through palatalisation of

<sup>107</sup> The formation of diminutives in Dutch is described in detail in the ANS (*Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* 'General Dutch Grammar') (Haeseryn et al. 1997).

the [k] caused by the following [i] and through reduction of the ending. Kloeke, who first described this transition, stated that this change took place first in North Holland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and that this new suffix later spread to the south and to the north from North Holland (1923: 229). Pée confirmed this theory by showing that the Dutch dialects of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century contained several diminutive suffixes that illustrate a stage in the change from *-kijn* to *-je*, such as [tʃə] or [əʏə]. This process moved gradually, from word to word and from dialect to dialect, and could be traced back to North Holland, to the western regions of South Holland and to Zeeland (Bakema 1997: 207, Pée 1936-1938: 58-60, 107).

In some present-day dialects of Dutch, this change from *-kijn* to *-je* has not been completed yet. In fact, present-day dialects contain a multitude of diminutive suffixes, as can be gathered from map 1 below, taken from the MAND I (De Schutter et al. 2005). Furthermore, just like for the standard Dutch diminutive suffix *-je*, each dialect may have different variants of suffixes or different suffixes altogether, the occurrence of which is governed by a set of phonological or lexical rules. For instance, in Texel the diminutive of the word *ei* ('egg') would be ['eicə] with the suffix *-tje*, while the diminutive of the word *vis* ('fish') would be ['visi] with the suffix *-ie*. Therefore, a map of the diminutive suffixes of another root word may differ greatly from the map presented below based on the diminutives of the root word *brief* ('letter').

Two of the diminutive suffixes in the map are popular non-standard variants. The suffix *-ke* [kə] (also prone to occur with final [n]), clearly a direct descendant of the Middle Dutch suffix *-kijn*, stands out as the most frequent diminutive suffix for the root *brief* ('letter'). It occurs mainly south of North Holland and also in the north-east of the Netherlands. The second most frequent non-standard diminutive suffix is *-ie* [i] (also found with a final [n] in the north-east of the Dutch speaking region). Unlike *-ke*, this non-standard diminutive suffix occurs in the cradle of the standard diminutive suffix *-je(n)*, i.e. Holland.

It is known that in the seventeenth century, changes in the diminutive suffixes were still in full swing and several variants were used. The grammarian Van Heule mentioned in his grammar of Dutch that in different parts of the Low Countries different variants of diminutive suffixes were used: *-je* in Holland, *-kje* in Flanders and *-ke* in Brabant (Van Heule 1625: 91). In 1653 Petrus Leupenius, another grammarian, claimed that two different diminutive suffixes were used in Dutch: *-ke* and *-(t)je* (Leupenius 1653: 32-33 in Van der Wal & Van Bree 2008: 211-212). Furthermore, the suffix [i] is said to have first occurred in the seventeenth century, though not in written Dutch (Van Loey 1970: 230).

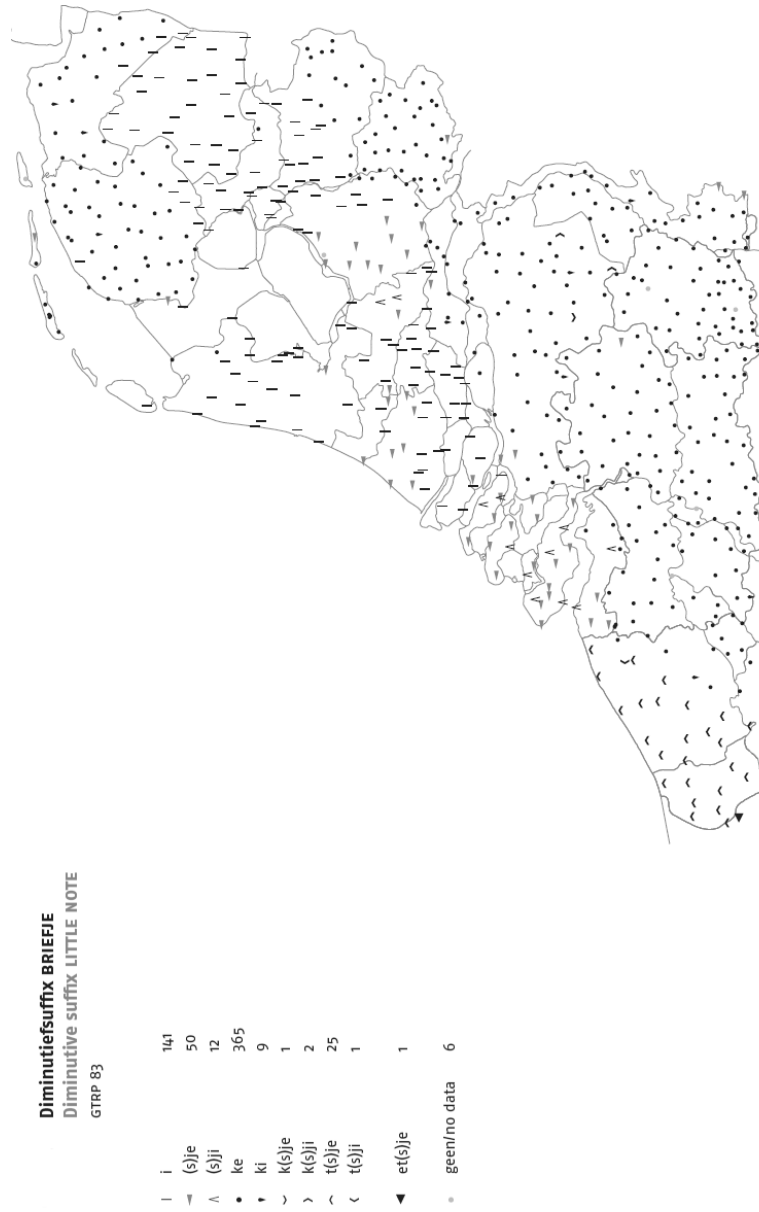


Figure 8.1: Diminutive suffixes for the root *brief* in dialects of Dutch from the Morphological Atlas of the Dutch Dialects, part I (MAND I, De Schutter et al. 2005: 50).

The seventeenth-century private letters are a new source of information on the Dutch language of the time that may contain language of immediacy and can bring us closer to the diminutives used in seventeenth-century everyday Dutch. By examining this corpus I am able to address several questions regarding the spread of the diminutive suffixes. Questions I would like to answer are: how far had the *-je* diminutive suffix spread regionally by the second half of the seventeenth century? Can we catch the claimed spread from North Holland? Are there any social variables influencing this spread? For instance, does the choice for a particular diminutive suffix relate to social class, gender, or age?

Answering these questions, however, is hindered by the fact that the seventeenth-century spellings do not always clearly show which type of diminutive suffix is being used. Especially the difference between [i] and [jə] suffixes is hard to determine, due to the old practice of representing both the vowel [i] and the semi-vowel [j] by <i>, <j>, <ij>, or <y> (e.g. *iaer* and *jaer* for [ja:r] ‘year’ or *iet* and *jet* for [it] ‘something’) which still occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century. Therefore I will examine whether there is a way to circumvent difficulties in categorising diminutive suffixes on the basis of spelling in §8.3, immediately after listing the different kinds of diminutive suffixes that were found in the corpus in §8.2. The regional distribution of the spelling of these diminutives will be examined in §8.4, while the influence of social variables will be dealt with in §8.5. The results of the categorisation of different spelling variants into different phonological types of suffixes will be examined in itself in §8.6. In §8.7, I will deal with the presence of a final [n] in diminutives and the differences between diminutives in proper names and diminutives in other types of words will be examined in §8.8. The conclusions of this research into the diminutives in seventeenth-century Dutch will be given in §8.9.

## 8.2. Diminutives in the corpus

The private letters of the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus contain a wealth of different diminutive suffixes. If a plural form of a certain type of diminutive is not considered to be a different form, the total number of differently spelled diminutive suffixes is 63. Of course, this large amount of variety is also caused by the fact that each type of diminutive suffix may have several variants depending on the auslaut of the root and the quality of the vowel in the last syllable. Just like *-je*, for instance, the diminutive suffix *-ke* can occur in different forms: as *-ke* in *vis-ke* (‘fish’), as *-ske* in *boek-ske* (‘booklet’), or as *-eke* in *matt-eke* (‘rug’). If I ignore this variation, I end up with 12 different orthographical types of suffixes.

In table 8.1 below, I have categorised all the different diminutive suffixes found in all of the seventeenth-century private letters (454 letters written by 408 different writers, see table 2.12 in §2.3.4 for the overview of the corpus) on the basis of their orthography. Discriminating between different suffixes on a phonological basis would be more desirable, but I will show in §8.3 that this can be problematic.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Variants</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>ie</b>	eitien	<i>meineitien</i> (proper name)	500	43%
	entie	<i>marrentie</i> (proper name)		
	etie	<i>kommetie</i> ('bowl')		
	etien	<i>tonnetien</i> ('barrel')		
	eties	<i>kinneties</i> ('barrels')		
	eutien	<i>Meijnneutien</i> (proper name)		
	ie	<i>briefie</i> ('letter')		
	ien	<i>stockien</i> ('walking stick')		
	iens	<i>pratiens</i> ('rumours' 'talk')		
	ies	<i>perkitties</i> ('budgies')		
	itien	<i>meijnitien</i> (proper name)		
	pie	<i>wellempie</i> (proper name)		
	tie	<i>sontie</i> ('son')		
	tien	<i>Dochtertien</i> ('daughter')		
	tiens	<i>swaentiens</i> ('swans')		
ties	<i>jaarties</i> ('years')			
iiie	<i>roockiie</i> (proper name)			
<b>ke</b>	aken	<i>tannaken</i> (proper name)	218	19%
	eke	<i>tonneke</i> ('barrel')		
	eken	<i>kendeken</i> ('child')		
	ekes	<i>hannekes</i> ('cockerels')		
	ekens	<i>kijnnekens</i> ('barrels')		
	ke	<i>soen hantke</i> ('handblown kiss')		
	ken	<i>wijfken</i> ('woman')		
	kens	<i>letterkens</i> ('letters')		
	kes	<i>weeskes</i> ('orphans')		
	xken	<i>pacxken</i> ('parcel')		
<b>je</b>	etje	<i>velletje</i> ('skin')	131	11%
	etjen	<i>kappetjen</i> (proper name)		
	je	<i>glaesje</i> ('glass')		
	jen	<i>dachjen</i> ('day')		
	jens	<i>nichtjens</i> ('cousins' or 'nieces')		
	jes	<i>bouckjes</i> ('books')		

	tje tjen tjes	<i>huijs vrouwtje</i> ('wife') <i>moertjen</i> ('mother' or 'grandmother') <i>kindertjes</i> ('children')		
<b>ge</b>	etge etgen etges ge gen gens ges ghe ghen ghens tge tgen tgens tger tges tgn	<i>tonnetge</i> ('barrel') <i>annetgen</i> (proper name) <i>kinnetges</i> ('barrels') <i>meere catge</i> ('guenon') <i>maetgen</i> ('friend') <i>vatgens</i> ('barrels') <i>vatges</i> ('barrels') <i>neelghe</i> (proper name) <i>packghen</i> ('parcel') <i>achtendeelghens</i> ('barrel') <i>leckertge</i> ('something sweet') <i>neeltgen</i> (proper name) <i>soontgens</i> ('sons') <i>Maertger</i> (proper name) <i>meutges</i> ('aunties') <i>aeltgn</i> (proper name)	104	9%
<b>ije</b>	eije eijen etije etijen etijes ije ijen ijes tije tijen tijes	<i>vrouweije</i> ('woman') <i>besteijen</i> ('animal') <i>maretije</i> (proper name) <i>annetijen</i> (proper name) <i>kinnetijes</i> ('barrels') <i>kaasije</i> ('cheese') <i>stuijkijen</i> ('part') <i>pockijes</i> ('smallpox') <i>sontije</i> ('son') <i>seeltijen</i> ('bill/list') <i>moijtijes</i> ('fine')	102	9%
<b>en</b>	en eten ten	<i>grijeten</i> (proper name) <i>gangeten</i> ('alleyway') <i>vrouuten</i> ('wife')	55	5%
<b>ye</b>	tye etyen tyen tyes ye yen yes	<i>maertye</i> (proper name) <i>annetyen</i> (proper name) <i>eessertyen</i> ('head brooch') <i>moytyes</i> ('well') <i>gertye</i> (proper name) <i>scortyen</i> ('pinafore') <i>gatyes</i> ('holes')	24	2%
<b>i</b>	is	<i>augurikis</i> ('gherkins')	9	0.78%



	tis	<i>voogeltis</i> ('birds')		
	in	<i>grietin</i> (proper name)		
	tin	<i>trijntin</i> (proper name)		
	etin	<i>annetin</i> (proper name)		
<b>gie</b>	etgien	<i>jannetgien</i> (proper name)	8	0.69%
	gie	<i>vatgie</i> ('barrel')		
	gien	<i>vatgien</i> ('barrel')		
	tgien	<i>aeltgien</i> (proper name)		
	tgin	<i>vroutgin</i> (proper name)		
<b>y</b>	hy	<i>magelynhy</i> (proper name)	3	0.26%
	ty	<i>krystyenty</i> (proper name)		
	y	<i>gryetty</i> (proper name)		
<b>kie</b>	ickie	<i>annickie</i> (proper name)	2	0.17%
<b>che</b>	che	<i>elsche</i> (proper name)	2	0.17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>63 variants excluding plural forms, 88 variants including plural forms</b>		<b>1158</b>	

**Table 8.1: The frequencies of the different orthographical types of diminutive suffixes and their subtypes in the corpus of seventeenth-century private Dutch letters.**

As is clear from the table, the *-ie* suffixes outrank the other suffixes by far. In no less than 43% of the cases, the diminutive suffix used is of the *-ie* type. In second place comes *-ke* (19%), closely followed by *-je* (11%). The nine remaining different types of diminutive suffixes each do not take up more than 10% of the total number of suffixes.

Before I can begin to examine the diminutives in the *Letters as Loot* corpus, however, some measures need to be taken. First of all, the number of occurrences of diminutive suffixes fit for examination of their relation with regional and social variables needs to be restricted. A large number of diminutive suffixes (805 in total) in the corpus of private letters occur in proper names and of these diminutive suffixes it is hard to tell whether they have been fossilized or not. This means that if writers use a certain type of diminutive suffix in a proper name, it is impossible to say whether they use this specific suffix because they themselves would use it spontaneously in forming diminutives or whether they only use this suffix because it is a fixed part of the name they want to write down. In §8.7 I will return to this problem and demonstrate what differences there are between diminutives in proper names and diminutives in other types of words. For now it will suffice to note that proper names will be excluded from the data altogether in order to avoid inaccuracy. This means that there are 353 occurrences of diminutive suffixes left in the corpus of private letters which can be properly

examined when exploring the influence of regional and social variables on the use of diminutive suffixes in §8.4 and §8.5.

Secondly, an extra problem in examining diminutive suffixes is the fact that some spellings are ambiguous: it is not always clear which phonological variant of the diminutive suffixes is represented. Given the ambiguity of the graphemes <i> and <j> for example (as mentioned above in §8.1), the suffix *-ie* cannot be identified as the [je] or as the [i] suffix straightforwardly. Is there a way to make sense of the data from a phonological point of view? In the following section I will illustrate the difficulties in getting past the spelling of the diminutive suffix. For the palatal suffixes in particular I will examine various methods which can be used to determine whether the suffix in question represents [i] or [jə].

### 8.3. Getting beyond spelling?

In §8.3.1, I will explain for each orthographical type of diminutive suffix that was found in the corpus of private letters, including the diminutives in proper names, which phonological types of suffixes they may represent. In §8.3.2, I will describe the method used to identify the phonological type of the <ie>, <ije>, <ye> and <je> suffixes and I will present the results of this method when applied to the non-proper names in the corpus of private letters.

#### 8.3.1. Spelling and phonology

##### *The <ie>, <ije>, <ye> and <je> suffixes*

It is particularly difficult to decide which phonological variant of the diminutive suffix is represented by the spellings <ie>, <ije>, <ye> and – to a lesser extent – <je>. This is the case because the graphemes <i>, <j>, <ij>, and <y> have a history of being interchangeable in the spelling of Dutch and there is a large amount of intra- and interspeaker variation. All of these suffixes could thus be interpreted either as representing [i] or [jə]. Even the <je> spellings, which seem to be straightforward, cannot be assumed to actually represent [jə] without any risk, as will be illustrated below. Various strategies can be devised to uncover the possible phonological nature of the diminutive suffix. In what follows, I will discuss these strategies and show when they might be used successfully and when they turn out to be inadequate for the seventeenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus.

The first method is to examine the spelling used throughout the letter(s) of one writer very closely in search of indications that show how to interpret the spelling of the diminutive suffixes. Ideally, it would be best to look for words that contain the same graphemes as the diminutive suffixes

and see whether these words would be expected to be pronounced with [jə] or [i].

Take for instance the spelling of the diminutive suffixes in two letters written by Dominicus Pottey.<sup>108</sup> The diminutives used by Dominicus are: *stuijckies* ('pieces'), *fergatie* and *fergattie* ('frigate'), *nightie* ('niece'), *kinderties* ('children'), and *glaesie* ('glass'). All diminutives have suffixes of the *-ie* type. When I look at the spelling in the rest of Dominicus' letter, I see this *ie* spelling turn up in words that are very likely to be pronounced with [i]: e.g. *sien* ('to see'), *die* ('who' or 'which'), *niet* ('not'), *vrienden* ('friends'), *colonie* ('colony'), *apparentie* ('appearance'), and *famillie* ('family'). Given that Dominicus' spelling in the rest of the letter seems fairly consistent and given that the <ie> spelling for an [i] pronunciation also occurs frequently in morphemes other than diminutive suffixes, I have good reasons to assume that when Dominicus Pottey spelled his diminutive suffixes as <ie>, the phonological type would be [i].

Of course it is difficult to be absolutely certain about the phonological type. There is still a possibility that the letter writer used <ie> not only for [i] but also for [jə]. It would therefore add some security to find that the letter writer spelled words differently that probably contained [jə] or [j] in their pronunciation. For Dominicus, this evidence is present. He uses the grapheme <j> where I expect to find [j] in the pronunciation, namely in the words *majoor* 'major', *ja* 'yes', and *junij* 'June'. It is unfavourable, however, that words containing [jə] or [j] in their pronunciation are not ubiquitous and that [j] is sometimes spelled with what seems like a capital letter at the onset of a word, requiring some study to be identified as <j> or as <i>. These facts often make it difficult to discover the necessary extra evidence in letters.

The present generation of speakers and writers of Dutch might be tempted to try out another way to establish whether the diminutive suffix should be interpreted as [i] or as [jə]. This has to do with the fact that in present-day Dutch there is an orthographical rule regarding consonants following a short vowel: if a syllable containing a short vowel and ending in a consonant is followed by an unstressed syllable starting with a vowel, the consonant in the auslaut of the first vowel should be doubled (*Woordenlijst Nederlandse Taal* 'Wordlist of the Dutch Language' 2005). The word ['penən] 'pens' should thus be spelled as <pennen>, while ['penən] 'carrots' should be spelled as <penen>. And ['pɔcə] 'jar' should be spelled as <potje>, while ['pɔti] should be spelled as <pottie> 'jar'. It would take us too far to explain this rule in detail, but if this rule would be projected onto the written

<sup>108</sup> Letters 17-06-2009 127-129 and 17-06-2009 130-132 in the corpus (HCA 30-223).

Dutch of more than 300 years ago, it would seem acceptable to conclude that if we encounter diminutives whose root ends with a syllable containing a short vowel and whose last consonant is doubled in front of a diminutive suffix spelt as <ie>, <ije> or <ye> – such as the word *fergattie* used by Dominicus Pottey in one of his letters – that we are dealing with a diminutive suffix of the [i] type rather than of the [jə] type.

However, it is hazardous to project this present-day orthographical rule of Standard Dutch onto Dutch written in the seventeenth century. That this present-day rule was probably not a rule for (all) seventeenth-century letter writers becomes very clear when we see that the doubling of the consonant also occurs in some words where one would not expect it on the basis of the orthography and the expected phonological types of suffixes. Take for instance the letters written by Henricus Cordes and Cornelis Brandt.<sup>109</sup> Henricus writes *mottjen* ‘auntie’ and Cornelis writes *Schottjens* ‘the Scots’. Their letters present no evidence for these diminutive suffixes representing [i] rather than [jə], since both writers use both the grapheme <i> and the grapheme <j> as we would in present-day Standard Dutch. Even though their diminutives <je> very likely represent the phonological type of diminutive suffix [jə], both writers double the <t> in front of the diminutive suffix. These examples show that this present-day rule of orthography is not reliable as a simple way to determine the phonological type of diminutive suffix used in seventeenth-century letters.

A similar indication which might be suggested by users of present-day Dutch, but which will again turn out to be unreliable, is the nature of phonetic context preceding the diminutive suffix. It is often claimed that the [i] suffix cannot occur when the auslaut of the root is [t]. Following a [t], the diminutive suffix [jə] should occur (Cohen 1958: 44-45). One could use this knowledge together with a further analysis of the spelling of certain writers to determine what the phonological diminutive suffix could be. However, again it is questionable whether this rule would have applied in seventeenth-century Dutch. It is not even applied in all present-day Dutch dialects, as can be gathered from different dialect maps of diminutives presented in the MAND I (De Schutter et al. 2005). The maps for diminutive forms of the words *voet* [vut] (‘foot’), *pot* [pɔt] (‘pan’), *rond* [rɔnt] (‘round’), and *draad* [dra:t] (‘thread’) show that in present-day dialects in the north-east of the Netherlands, roots ending in [t] do occur with the diminutive suffix [i]. The root *poort* [po:rt] (‘gate’) does not only occur in the north-eastern dialects with the [i] suffix, but also occurs with [i] in an area surrounding the city of Utrecht in the centre of the country. On top of the fact that [i] can follow the

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<sup>109</sup> Letters 08-01-2009 047-048 and 06-01-2010 216-218 in the corpus (HCA 30-646 and HCA 30-644).

root word ending in [t] in some present-day dialects, there is the fact that in the corpus I do not see any orthographical evidence for this rule: root words ending in [t] are not more often accompanied by a diminutive suffix of the *je* type than other root words. Furthermore, even if this rule was applied in spoken Dutch and the diminutive form of *kast* ‘cupboard’ with the [i] suffix could only occur if the [t] was dropped such as in *kassie* [‘kasi], this does not mean that letter writers also dropped the <t> in the spelling of this diminutive form. The spelling <kastie> thus does not necessarily have to be understood as [‘kascə]. Considering these facts, I can only conclude that it may have been possible that an [i] diminutive suffix could follow a root ending in [t] in the west of the Low Countries in the seventeenth century and that the method presented here cannot be used conclusively.

In conclusion of this overview of options to determine the phonological nature of the <ie>, <ije>, <ye> and <je> suffixes, only a careful analysis per writer of his/her spelling of words that in all probability contain [i] and [j] could reveal the phonological nature of the diminutive suffixes used. Whether this procedure is successful or not depends on the length of the letter and the other words used by a writer.

#### *The <ke> suffixes*

The *-ke* suffixes occur quite frequently in the seventeenth-century corpus. Although it is possible that letter writers who used *-ke* in their written Dutch may have used another type of diminutive in their spoken Dutch, it is hard to imagine that when they wrote *-ke*, they actually meant [i] or [jə], since the grapheme <k> is not simply interchangeable with <i> or <j>. These suffixes can thus be assumed to represent the diminutive suffix [kə] or maybe a slightly palatalised variant.

#### *The <ge> suffixes*

These suffixes seem to represent a stage in the change from the older *-kijn* or *-ke* diminutive to *-je*, when the [k] was beginning to become palatalised. It is often mentioned that this spelling might actually be a first attempt at representing the newer [jə] suffix (Van Loey 1970: 229). Which phonological representation is behind these suffixes is hard to decide on and may differ from writer to writer.

#### *The <en> suffixes*

The diminutive suffix *-en* does not occur very often in the corpus; it occurs 55 times in all the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus and occurs most often in proper names (*-en* occurs only 6 times in non-proper names). This diminutive suffix was probably already in use in Middle Dutch (Van Loey 1970: 226), but was probably less popular as a diminutive suffix than –

*kijn*. It leaves little fantasy to which phonological type of diminutive suffix lies behind this spelling: there is little reason to doubt that it represents [ən] or [ə].

*The <i> suffixes*

This spelling variant might represent the [i] diminutive suffix. In the cases of <is> and <tis>, there is very little doubt about [i] being the phonological representation. However, *-in*, *-tin* and *-etin* might also be alternative spellings for the above-mentioned <en> diminutive suffix, since it is probable that what in present-day Dutch is pronounced as a schwa had a more palatal pronunciation in the seventeenth century (Caron 1952, 1973). These spellings might be attempts to represent the more palatal sound.

*The <kie> and <gie> suffixes*

There are two diminutive suffixes that seem to be a combination of two suffix types: *-gie* and *-kie*. These suffixes clearly represent a form in between the old diminutive suffix *-kijn* [kin] and the newer diminutive suffix *-je* [jə]. However, it is hard to determine whether the graphemic representation <kie> represents something like [ki], [k<sup>i</sup>], or [k<sup>i</sup>ə]. The same goes for <gie>: this spelling could also represent a number of different forms, among which for instance [zə] and [zi].

*The <y> suffixes*

It is hard to imagine that the phonological representation of these suffixes is not the diminutive suffix [i]. There is no <e> following the <y> grapheme, which makes it very unlikely that it represents [jə].

*The <che> suffixes*

The two occurrences of this diminutive suffix occur in the same proper name *Elsche*. What phonological type of diminutive suffix they represent is unclear: maybe [kə], or [χə], or – considering that [s] is the auslaut of the root *Els* – possibly [jə].

### 8.3.2. From the spelling of palatal suffixes to their phonology

When examining the relation between diminutive suffixes and regional and social variables, it is crucial to be able to discriminate between [jə] and [i] suffixes. Therefore it was necessary to develop a method that would help to interpret the several spellings used to represent palatal suffixes. I did not make use of the orthographical indications (double spelling of the final consonant before [i]) or phonological indications ([i] cannot follow [t]) as I have already shown them to be unreliable for the seventeenth-century corpus. Instead, I focused on the way words containing a [j] or an [i] sound were

spelled in the letters of one individual and how this spelling related to the spelling of the diminutive suffixes. If letter writers were consistent in using one particular spelling occurring in the diminutive suffix for a particular phoneme (e.g. <ie> for [i]), this provided greater evidence for how they would have pronounced the diminutive suffix. However, I only considered the evidence strong enough if the letter also showed that a different spelling was used to represent the competing phoneme (e.g. <ij> for [j]). I will illustrate this with a few examples.

First I will look at the letter of Jan Eghbertz.<sup>110</sup> The diminutive occurring in his letter is *vatie* ('barrel'). Since Jan's other words with <ie> all represent the pronunciation [i] (*brief* 'letter', *die* 'who' or 'that', *Pieter* 'Peter', *niet* 'not', *hier* 'here'), that he spells words containing a [j] with <j> (*Jan* 'John', *jans* 'Johnson', *jannewary* 'January', *juny* 'June'), and that there is not a single <i> spelling to be found that can be linked to the sound [j], it is clear that Jan's diminutive suffix <ie> represents [i].

There are of course also letter writers whose spelling habits do not offer a clear picture. Take for instance the letter of Grietje Jans from Amsterdam to her husband Sijewert Leenders.<sup>111</sup> The diminutive occurring in Grietje's letter is *veschertje*, meaning 'a fisherman' or 'a fishing boat'. When coming across this diminutive with <je> spelling, one is inclined to categorise it as representing [jə], for <j> in the middle of a word is rarely a reflection of another sound. To corroborate this, Grietje seems to use the spelling <j> in words where I would expect there to be a sound [j]; at least Grietje can be shown to use a capital letter that should probably be interpreted as <J> in these two cases (*Jans* [jans] 'Johnson', *Jonge* [jɔŋə] 'young'). However, if I take into account the spelling in the rest of Grietje's letter, the categorisation must be reconsidered, because Grietje uses the spelling <je> four times in words where we would definitely expect the sound [i]: *vrjendelijcke* [vrindələkə] 'friendly', *grjetje* [ɣriti] or [ɣricə] a proper name for women, *brjef* [brif] 'letter', and *tjet* [tit] 'time' or 'period'. On the basis of these various spelling forms, it is impossible to categorise Grietje's diminutive suffixes as either representing [jə] or [i].

A second letter writer whose spelling habits leave us in the dark about the phonological interpretation of the diminutives is Maertie Nannings. Maertie writes several letters to her husband Pieter Pauelsz.<sup>112</sup> The diminutives occurring in her letter are *pennemesie* 'penknife', *vatie* 'barrel', and *briefje* 'letter'. For words containing [i] she uses the spelling <ie> almost consistently and a search for <j> spellings reveals that she uses

<sup>110</sup> Letter KB 227-2 010-011 in the corpus (HCA 30-227-2).

<sup>111</sup> Letter 06-01-2009 203-204 in the corpus (HCA 30-652-2).

<sup>112</sup> Letters 3-1-2008 091-092, 3-1-2008 093-094, 3-1-2008 097-098, and 16-06-2009 155-157 in the corpus (HCA 30-647).

this spelling for words which probably contain the sound [j], e.g. *jan* [jan] ‘John’ and *joris* [joris] ‘George’. All seems to point in the direction of <ie> being safely interpretable as [i]. However, a last check reveals that Maertie does not only use the spelling <j> for [j], but also <i>. Her letter contains the following examples: *iackop* [jakɔp] ‘Jacob’, *ian* [jan] ‘John’, *iaer* [ja:r] ‘year’, *iannwari* [janwari] ‘January’, *ia* [ja:] ‘yes’, and *iansen* [jansən] ‘Johnson’. And this discovery unsettles the interpretation of the diminutive suffixes <ie> as [i], for <ie> might thus represent [jə] as well.

The three examples presented above illustrate the methodology used in determining the phonological category of different diminutive suffixes. Incidentally, they also illustrated the difficulties that can arise in the determination. Nonetheless, of the 353 diminutive suffixes remaining in the corpus (after having excluded 805 diminutive suffixes occurring in proper names) 298 diminutive suffixes could be ascribed to a specific phonological type of suffix. I chose to employ six different categories: a first category of presumed [kə] suffixes, a category of suffixes somewhere in between the velar type and the palatal type for all the orthographic representations containing the grapheme <g>, a category of presumed [jə] suffixes, a category of presumed [i] suffixes, a category of suffixes that might be either [jə] or [i], and a residual category.

Table 8.2 below shows the distribution of the different types of suffixes in the entire seventeenth-century corpus. As is clear from the table, the most popular suffix seems to be the [i] type: of the 353 diminutive suffixes no fewer than 134 suffixes could be identified as possible [i] types. Next in line is [jə] with 20% of the suffixes. However, for 55 diminutive suffixes (16% of the total) it remained unclear whether they should be interpreted as [jə] or as [i]. This means that the percentages of [i] and [jə] suffixes are in reality higher than presented in this table.

<i>Type</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
[i]	134	38%
[jə]	69	20%
[jə] or [i]	55	16%
[kə]	50	14%
in between velar and palatal	39	11%
Other	6	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	

**Table 8.2: The frequency of the different phonological types of diminutive suffixes in non-proper names in all the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus**



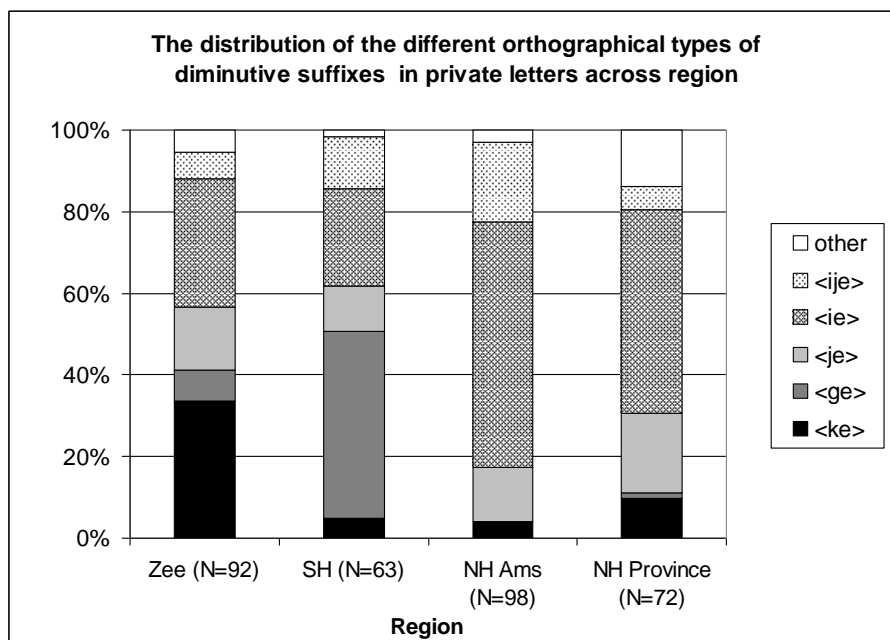
In conclusion: some of the orthographical variants seem to be quite readily interpretable, such as the <y> and <kə> suffixes. Others seem to present us with more problems, such as the <ie>, <ije>, and <ye> suffixes in particular. In some cases, a thorough analysis of a writer's spelling habits reveals the phonological type. In other cases, one has to accept that the connection between written and spoken language is difficult to find. In the following sections that deal with the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes across region, class, gender and age, this delicate relationship between spelling and phonology will require continuous attention.

## 8.4. Regional variation

### 8.4.1. Variation in spelling

To see whether I can catch the spread of the *-je* ([jə]) diminutive from Holland to the rest of the Dutch-speaking regions, I examined the distribution of the five most frequent diminutive types as presented in table 8.1 (*-ie*, *-ke*, *-je*, *-ge*, *-ije*) in private letters across the 3 most important regions in the corpus: Zeeland, South Holland, and North Holland (split up into the city of Amsterdam on the one hand and the province of North Holland excluding Amsterdam on the other). This distribution is presented in figure 8.2. As explained in §8.2, diminutives in proper names will not be included in the examinations of this section.

As is clear from figure 8.2, there are indisputable regional differences. Zeeland, the province located further away from North Holland than South Holland, has the most *-ke* suffixes. Almost 35% of the diminutive suffixes used in Zeeland are of the *-ke* type. In all of the other regions the *-ke* suffixes occur in no more than 10% of the cases. In North Holland (Amsterdam and the rest of the region) on the other hand, the combined amount of *-ie*, *-je* and *-ije* suffixes is remarkable. Independently of which phonological types of diminutives these three orthographical types actually represent, it is clear that in Amsterdam and in the rest of North Holland the rate of palatalisation of diminutive suffixes is higher than it is in South Holland and Zeeland. South Holland is geographically situated in between Zeeland and North Holland and the orthography of its diminutive suffixes seems to reflect this position. *-Ge* spellings of the diminutive suffixes occur in 45% of the cases and it is likely not a coincidence that just these spellings are quite frequent in South Holland: *-ge* spelled suffixes suggest a stage in the transition from velar *-ke* to palatal *-je*.

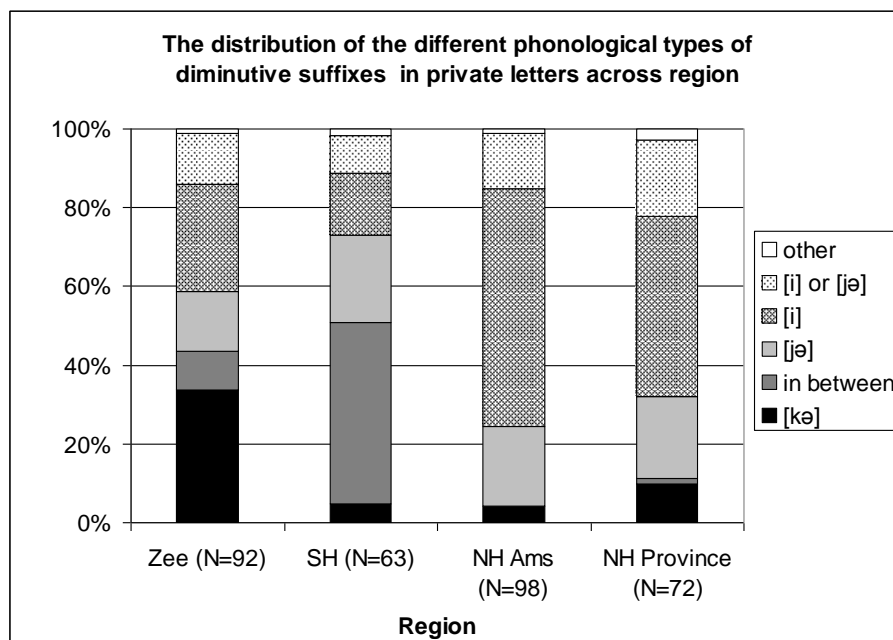


**Figure 8.2**

#### 8.4.2. Variation in phonology

However, figure 8.2 does not readily prove that the phonological variant [jə] first spread from North Holland because the spelling of the different palatal diminutive suffixes blurs our view on the phonological types. Therefore I will examine the distribution of the phonological types of suffixes in what follows.

It is needless to say, given the complicated relationship between spelling practice and phonology discussed above, that an overview of the distribution of the phonological categories of diminutive suffixes based on the method described above gives us indications of what might have happened on the phonological level in the seventeenth century, but that it is not completely infallible. Nonetheless, figure 8.3 may offer us more information about the seventeenth-century situation of the regional distribution of these suffixes. It is based on all the private letters from Zeeland, South Holland and North Holland (450 letters written by 331 different writers) which yielded 325 occurrences of diminutives in total.



**Figure 8.3**

Of course the bottom half of figure 8.3 is almost identical to that of figure 8.2, since the categories [kə] and in between velar and palatal almost have a one-on-one relationship with the orthographical categories *-ke* and *-ge* respectively. It is especially the top half of figure 8.3 that could provide us with more information about the actual phonological types. However, figure 8.3 does not prove that the [jə] diminutive suffix spread across the Netherlands from North Holland. In Amsterdam and in the rest of the province, the share of [jə] suffixes is about 20% which is not higher than its share in South Holland (22%) and not much higher than its share in Zeeland (15%). In reality, the percentages in North Holland may be slightly higher than in the other regions, for there remain some suffixes that might represent [i] or [jə] (14% in Amsterdam and 20% in the rest of North Holland). However, the share of this category of suffixes that might represent [i] or [je] is as large in Zeeland and South Holland as it is in North Holland. The data thus prove that by the second half of the seventeenth century, the [jə] suffix did not only occur in North Holland but also occurred about as often in South Holland and Zeeland.

About the distribution of the [i] suffix, figure 8.3 offers us a clear picture. Even though there remain a number of suffixes in each region that are ambiguous, it is indisputable that [i] has the largest share in Amsterdam and in North Holland: it occurs in 60% and in 46% of the cases respectively.

Even if all the ambiguous spellings in Zeeland (13%) and in South Holland (10%) would represent [i] and all the ambiguous spellings in Amsterdam and North Holland would represent [je], the share of [i] in Zeeland and South Holland would still not match the share of [i] suffixes in Amsterdam and North Holland. It has thus been proved that the [i] suffix, which also occurs in present-day Dutch dialects of South Holland – as shown in the MAND (MAND I De Schutter et al. 2005), found its origin in North Holland.

In conclusion, the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes differs at the level of orthography as well as at the level of phonology across the three large regions under examination. The data show that the [i] suffix seems to have spread across the Low Countries starting from North Holland and Amsterdam. By the end of the seventeenth century, it had reached South Holland and Zeeland, even though the velar type of suffix still had a large share in these regions. The data cannot be used to support Pée's claim that the suffix [jə] originated in North Holland (1936-1938: 229). This may be due to the large amount of time that had passed already since the first occurrences of [jə] in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By the seventeenth century, this diminutive suffix seems to have been used as frequently in Zeeland and South Holland as in North Holland. Even though the results did not offer a clear picture of the spread of [jə], the variable region has proved to have quite some influence on the distribution of at least some of the phonologically different diminutive suffixes: [kə], [i], and suffixes in between the velar and the palatal type. Will the social variables class, gender and age prove to be influential as well?

## 8.5. Social variation

Only autograph letters are suitable for an examination of the relation between language use and social variables. This diminishes the number of letters that can be used and the number of occurrences that can be studied. Furthermore, since I have shown in the previous section that there is a large amount of regional variation, the influence of the social variables should ideally be examined per region in order to avoid distortions. The unfortunate consequence of this all is that for Zeeland and South Holland the data become too scarce or are too badly distributed across gender and social class to yield reliable results. Only the region of North Holland has enough data to offer in order to examine the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes across social class, gender and age if I combine the data for Amsterdam and the rest of the province.

In what follows, I will examine the relationship of the data for North Holland with social class, age and with gender in the sub-corpus of private

autograph letters. I will do this first for the different spellings of the diminutive suffixes. Later I will attempt to get past the spelling variation into the realm of the phonological variation to see whether this deepens or changes our understanding of the results.

### 8.5.1. Variation in spelling

Table 8.3, which is based on 107 letters written by the 90 different writers from North-Holland whose social class is known, shows the distribution of the differently spelled diminutive suffixes across social class in North Holland. Since the diminutive suffix *ge* did not occur once in all the autograph letters from North Holland, it was not incorporated in this table or in the other tables considering spelling variation in North Holland. Since there were no diminutive suffixes found in the autograph letters written by members of the lower class from North Holland, no data for the lower class could be included in the table.

	<ke>	<je>	<ie>	<ije>	other	N
LMC	6%	13%	63%	6%	13%	16
UMC	5%	15%	53%	18%	8%	60
UC	36%	55%	0%	9%	0%	11

**Table 8.3: The distribution of the different spelling forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across social class.**

Interestingly, while the diminutive suffix spelled <ie> is the most popular suffix for the lower-middle class in North Holland (63% of the occurrences) and upper-middle-class writers (53% of the occurrences), the suffix is not used by the upper-class writers of Holland. For this group, <je> seems to be the preferred diminutive suffix, closely followed by <ke>. This latter suffix is used remarkably more frequently in the letters of the upper-class writers (occurring in 36% of the cases) than in the letters of the two lower classes (occurring in about 5% of the cases in both lower-middle class and upper-middle class). These 4 occurrences of the old diminutive suffix <ke> in the upper class do not all originate from letters written by writers over 50 years of age, as one might be tempted to presume, but 2 of them were produced by a writer younger than 30. The high percentage of this diminutive suffix in the upper class thus does not seem to be a side-effect of the distribution of writers belonging to different age-groups. The upper-class writers seem to behave rather differently from the other writers in North Holland with regard to the use of diminutive suffixes

What about a difference between men and women? Table 8.4 below shows the distribution of the differently spelled diminutive suffixes across gender, based on the private autographs linked to North Holland. This table

is based on more letters than the previous one, simply because the gender of all the letter writers of autographs in North Holland is known, while the social class could not be determined for some of them.

	<i>ke</i>	<i>je</i>	<i>ie</i>	<i>ije</i>	<i>other</i>	N
<b>Men</b>	9%	23%	51%	14%	3%	69
<b>Women</b>	5%	5%	47%	26%	16%	38

**Table 8.4: The distribution of the different spelling forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across gender.**

The important differences between men and women do not seem to lie in the use of the *ke* suffix, but in the use of the suffixes whose spelling suggests a palatal pronunciation: *je*, *ie* and *ije*. Just as women, men favour the diminutive suffix *ie*. It occurs in 51% of the cases in letters written by men and in 47% of the cases in letters written by women. However, the second most popular diminutive suffix with men is *je* (occurring in 23% of the cases), while women prefer *ije* (in 26% of the cases) over *je*, which occurs in only in 5% of the cases. Furthermore, women use more alternative spelling forms than men do. In 16% of the cases the spelling of their diminutive suffixes differs from <ke>, <je>, <ie> and <ije>, while with men the number of spelling forms diverging from these 4 common forms is only 3%.

The last social variable which can be examined is age. Are there differences in the way writers of different age groups use the diminutive suffixes? Table 8.5 below, based on 114 autographs written by the 97 different writers of North Holland whose age is known to us, shows that there is.

	<i>ke</i>	<i>je</i>	<i>ie</i>	<i>ije</i>	<i>other</i>	N
<b>&lt;30</b>	7%	19%	62%	12%	0%	42
<b>30-50</b>	6%	14%	43%	22%	14%	49
<b>50+</b>	17%	0%	42%	33%	8%	12

**Table 8.5: The distribution of the different spelling forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across age.**

The elder letter writers of North Holland use *ie* and *ije* most often (in 42% and in 33% of the occurrences respectively). The former suffix, *ie*, is also used by the younger letter writers and is the dominant diminutive suffix in these two groups. It is used most often by the youngest letter writers: in 62% of the cases. The other suffix *ije* however, seems to be used less by the younger letter writers (it occurs in 22% of the occurrences in letters written by writers who are between 30 and 50 years of age and it occurs only in 12% of the cases in letters written by the youngest group of writers). While *je*

does not occur in writings of the oldest letter writers, it takes up a modest number of occurrences in the letters of the two younger groups (14% in the letters of the group of writers between 30 and 50 and 19% in the letters of the youngest group of writers). Furthermore, younger writers seem to limit themselves to the use of the four main types of spelling, while the writers older than 30 do use spelling variants other than <ke>, <je>, <ie> and <ije>.

To sum up: social class, gender and age all seem to have a certain amount of influence on the use and spelling of the diminutive suffixes. While the palatal variants form the majority in each social group examined, there are some groups that still use the older suffix *-ke* more often than others: namely, writers from the upper class and older letter writers. The <je> spelling seems to be specific for men, members of the upper class and younger letter writers. Just like <je>, the <ie> spelling seems to have gained in strength through time: while the older generation uses it in 42% of the cases, the youngest generation uses it in more than 60% of the cases. The <ije> spelling, on the other hand, seems to be losing ground: it is used less often by younger letter writers. At the same time it is more typical of female writers than for male writers. The ‘other’ spelling forms are typical of lower- and upper-middle-class writers, women and older letter writers; upper-class writers, men and younger letter writers seem to prefer the 4 most common spelling forms <ke>, <je>, <ie>, and <ije>. This suggests that throughout the seventeenth century, spelling was becoming more and more uniform, especially with men and upper-class writers.

### 8.5.2. Variation in phonology

The variation in spelling suggests that the [jə]-suffix in the second half of the seventeenth century might be typical of the language use of men and writers from the upper class, and that the [i] suffix might be typical of the language use of the lower- and upper-middle-class writers, and the younger letter writers. Is there any further evidence to corroborate this? I examined the actual distribution of the phonological categories of diminutive suffixes in the autograph letters of North Holland. Of the 107 diminutive suffixes occurring in private autograph letters linked to North Holland, 90 were assigned to one of the following categories of phonological suffixes: [kə], [jə], [i] or ‘other’. This last category ‘other’ contains the rare suffixes [tə] and [ən]. The 17 remaining suffixes are doubtful cases that might represent either [i] or [jə]. Let us examine what this categorisation based on phonology rather than on spelling can reveal about the use of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Table 8.6 below shows how the different suffixes are distributed across the different social classes in North Holland. It is based on the 107

letters written by the 90 different writers linked to North Holland whose social class is known.

	<i>[kə]</i>	<i>[jə]</i>	<i>[i]</i>	<i>other</i>	<i>unknown</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>LMC</b>	6%	19%	38%	6%	31%	16
<b>UMC</b>	5%	22%	53%	2%	18%	60
<b>UC</b>	36%	55%	0%	0%	9%	11

**Table 8.6: The distribution of the different phonological forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across social class.**

It is the upper class that stands out in its use of the *[kə]*, *[jə]* and the *[i]* suffixes. Firstly, while the *[kə]* suffixes occur seldom in the lower- and upper-middle class, they occur in 36% of the cases in the upper class. Secondly, while *[i]* seems to be a very popular diminutive suffix in the lower-middle class and in the upper-middle class (occurring in at least 38% and 53% of the cases), it does not seem to occur in the letters written by members of the upper class. Thirdly, the presence of the *[jə]* suffix is greater in the upper social class than in the lower-middle and upper-middle class. In the lower-middle class the percentage of *[jə]* suffixes probably lies somewhere between 19% and 50% (depending on how much of the unknown suffixes actually represent *[jə]*) and in the upper-middle class it is probably situated between 22% and 40%, while in the upper-class it takes up 55% of all the occurrences. There is thus no doubt that the writings of the upper class contain the highest proportion of *[jə]* suffixes, although we do not know exactly how different this share in the upper class is from the shares of *[jə]* in the two lower classes.

For each class there remain a number of suffixes of which it is unclear whether they represent the *[jə]* or the *[i]* category. The consequence is that my conclusions are not definite. If the unknown suffixes for the lower-middle class would all turn out to be *[i]* suffixes, for example, while the unknown suffixes for the upper-middle class would all turn out to represent *[jə]*, this would mean that the lower-middle class and upper-middle class actually differ a lot from each other. But if all the unknown suffixes from the lower-middle class and for the upper-middle class would turn out to be *[jə]* suffixes, the lower-middle class and the upper-middle class would actually resemble each other more closely.

Table 8.7 below shows the results for gender, based on 122 autographs written by the 104 different writers of autograph letters in North Holland. The large number of unclear diminutive suffixes in the letters of women makes it very difficult to draw any conclusions on the use of *[jə]* and *[i]* suffixes related to gender. Men's and women's use of *[jə]* and *[i]* could thus be quite similar or very different. For instance, if all of the unknown



diminutive suffixes used by women would in reality be instances of the [i] suffix and if all the unknown suffixes used by men would represent [jə] suffixes, then women would use the [i] suffix in 77% of the cases. This would be much more often than men, who would use the suffix in 52% of the cases. And at the same time, this would mean that women use the [jə] suffix less frequently than men (in 18% of the cases vs. in 36% of the cases). However, if it were the case that the 32% of unknown suffixes in letters written by women would in reality represent 11% of [jə] suffixes and 21% of [i] suffixes and that the 7% of unknown suffixes of the men would all represent [i] suffixes, then women's and men's use of the [jə] suffix would be exactly the same and women would use the [i] suffixes only slightly more often than men would (in 66% of the cases and in 59% of the cases respectively). Although all possible distributions of the 7% and the 32% of unknown suffixes with men and women across the [i] and [jə] suffixes are imaginable, I do think it is most likely that a large number of these unknown suffixes actually represent the [i] suffixes (as will be argued in §8.6). Therefore I suspect that the [i] suffix was actually more popular with female writers than with male writers in North-Holland and that the [jə] suffix was slightly more popular with male writers.

	<i>[kə]</i>	<i>[jə]</i>	<i>[i]</i>	<i>other</i>	<i>unknown</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>Men</b>	9%	29%	52%	3%	7%	69
<b>Women</b>	5%	18%	45%	0%	32%	38

**Table 8.7: The distribution of the different phonological forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across gender.**

The last social variable to be examined is age. In table 8.8 below we see the distribution of the different phonological forms of the diminutive suffixes across the three different age groups. The table is based on 114 autographs written by the 97 different writers of North Holland whose age is known.

	<i>[kə]</i>	<i>[jə]</i>	<i>[i]</i>	<i>other</i>	<i>unknown</i>	<b>N</b>
<b>&lt;30</b>	7%	24%	57%	0%	12%	42
<b>30-50</b>	6%	22%	47%	4%	20%	49
<b>50+</b>	17%	25%	42%	0%	17%	12

**Table 8.8: The distribution of the different phonological forms of the diminutive suffixes in North Holland across age.**

It was already clear that the oldest generations in North Holland are keener users of the suffix [kə] than their younger peers and unfortunately, we cannot deduce new information about the use of [jə] and [i]. The number of suffixes that cannot be categorised as [jə] or [i] again makes it very difficult to draw

conclusions. However, the numbers across the different age groups are pretty similar overall for [jə] and the unknown suffixes. Only for [i] there seems to be a sturdy difference: the youngest generation appears to hold the most fervent users of this diminutive.

The examination of the different spelling variants earlier in this section had already offered us an idea about the distribution of the velar diminutive suffix [kə], but the exact distribution of the suffixes [i] and [jə] was clouded by the spelling variation. With an examination of each writer's individual spelling habits I tried to bring the distribution of the palatal suffixes [i] and [jə] to light. This gave clear results only for the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes across social class and less clear results for the relationship with gender and age. What can be concluded eventually?

### 8.5.3. [kə] as an archaic, but distinguished form, [jə] for writing, and the relatively young [i] for speaking

Let us start with [kə]: the relatively large share of this diminutive in letters of writers older than 50 can be explained most naturally. This diminutive suffix was clearly starting to become archaic in seventeenth-century Holland. It was being replaced by palatal variants. The fact that it occurs most often in the oldest group of writers simply reflects this. But the [kə] diminutive also occurs relatively often in letters written by members of the upper class. This suggests that the members of the upper class held on to the old writing convention longest. Archaic forms are frequently seen as distinguished forms and this is in all probability also the case with [kə]. In his grammar of Dutch, Petrus Leupenius (1607-1670), a minister and grammarian, remarks on the subject of diminutives:

*De verkleeninge van een selfstandige naame wordt gemaakt door toe doen van ken op het einde als beddeken, boomken, dierken. Maar om de soetvloeijsheid is meer in gebruik jen of tjen, dat ook soo veel uitneeminge niet is onderworpen als ken. (1653: 32)*

‘The diminutive of a noun is formed by *ken* at the end, such as in *beddeken, boomken, dierken*. However, for the sake of a fluent pronunciation *jen* or *tjen*, which doesn't come with so many exceptions, is used more often.’

Leupenius thus mentions [kə] diminutives first and only then admits that [jə] forms are used more often now. This suggests that Leupenius still sees [kə] as the proper diminutive suffix. Since using the [kə] suffix seemed to be an old writing convention – in 1625 the grammarian Van Heule marked this diminutive suffix as the best one (Van Heule 1625: 91) – it is not surprising

that specifically the upper-class letter writers seem to cling to this suffix the longest in writing. They are more likely to have had a good education and a lot of writing practice (Frijhoff & Spies 1999: 237-238) and were therefore probably more aware of the conventions of written Dutch.

However, even though [kə] was used more often in writing by members of the upper class than by members of other classes, [kə] was not the preferred form for writers of the upper class. Their preferred written form was [jə], as can be gathered from table 8.6, while the suffix [i] had the largest share in writings from the other social classes. This fits with the idea that [jə] was a variant considered to be accepted in written language – which is illustrated by the fact that it made it to be the standard Dutch variant today – while [i] was a variant which seemed to be used more in the spoken language. Social groups with less writing experience – typically the lower social classes and women in general – are expected to use variants typical of spoken language more often when writing than social groups with more writing experience. This is exactly what we see as far as social class is concerned and what I suspect to be true for gender: although the data cannot conclusively prove it, it seems likely that men used the [jə] suffix slightly more often than women did, while women used the [i] suffix slightly more often than men did.

The fact that [i] seems to be used more often by the youngest group of writers suggests that [i] was still an upcoming form in Dutch. However, [i] must already have been quite a popular diminutive suffix in the second half of the seventeenth century, since even the oldest letter writers use it quite often. So one can only assume that it must have been around for quite some time already: [i] does not seem to be a very recent innovation in the language use of the seventeenth-century writers. My data contradict Schönfeld's remark that [i] first turned up in the seventeenth century, though not in writing (Van Loey 1970: 230). They suggest that [i] may have occurred in North Holland already early in the seventeenth century and maybe even before the seventeenth century. Furthermore, [i] was represented in the written Dutch of the seventeenth century: it may have been absent in printed texts, but it was fairly popular in private letters.

## 8.6. The relationship between spelling and phonology

Now that I have successfully used a method to categorise different spelling variants of diminutive suffixes as particular phonological suffixes in order to examine the distribution of different diminutive suffixes across region, social class, gender and age, it would be interesting to examine the results of the categorisation in itself. How big is the variation? Does each writer really

have his or her own way of spelling [i] or [jə]? Or are there patterns to be found? Table 8.9 below shows how often each phonological type of suffix of the palatal class was rendered as a specific spelling in all of the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus (545 letters written by 408 different writers).

	<je>	<ie>	<ije>	<i>other</i>	<b>N total</b>
[jə]	50	0	19	0	69
[i]	1	124	5	4	134
[jə] or [i]	3	31	13	8	55
<b>N total</b>	54	155	37	12	258

**Table 8.9: The distribution of different spelling forms in the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus across the palatal phonological type of diminutive suffix.**

The table shows that there is indeed variation in the way writers represent the different phonological types of suffixes, but the table also shows large fields of overlap between some specific spellings and some phonological categories. For instance, <je> can almost always be safely interpreted as [jə] (in 50 out of the 54 cases). And <ie> does not always represent [i] for certain, but in the majority of the cases (124 out of 155) it seems safe to conclude that it does. Even though the remaining spelling forms still cause some confusion, it seems that there were some shared practices in the seventeenth century with regards to the spelling of the diminutive suffixes.

Now it is also interesting to retrace my steps and examine which social groups have the highest rate of suffixes that cannot be categorised as [jə] or [i], given that a high rate of these suffixes could be linked to a relatively low knowledge or use of these shared practices. Most interestingly, of all the social classes under examination, it is the lowest social class under examination (the lower-middle class) that has the highest rate of suffixes that are difficult to interpret. At the same time women's letters contain far more of these 'blurry' suffixes (in 32% of the cases) than men's letters (only in 7% of the cases). Again these two social groups, women in general and the lower social classes in general, behave similarly. And this comes as no surprise, for just these two groups are bound to have less writing practice than the other social classes and the opposite sex.

### 8.7. Final *-n*

What has not been taken into account in discriminating between different categories of diminutive suffixes is the presence or absence of final <n>, because the presence or absence of <n> in the spelling does not seem to be specific for one type of diminutive suffix. All different spelling forms occur with and without <n>. As Schönfeld (Van Loey 1970: 230) notes, the presence or absence of [n] seems to be a matter in itself, thus independent of the phonological category of the diminutive suffix.

In Dutch [n] has the tendency to be omitted following a weakly articulated vowel. The presence or absence of [n] depends on different variables: geographical, phonological, morphological, grammatical and social ones (Van Bree 1987: 80-81, De Wulf & Taeldeman 2001: *passim*, Van de Velde & Van Hout 2003: *passim*). A map created by De Wulf and Taeldeman (2001: 23) sums up the situation in present-day Dutch. The grey areas under (I), in the north-east and in the south-west, are areas with no to little apocope of [n]. The white areas under (II) are areas where [n] is almost always lost. The areas under (III) are areas in which the presence of [n] depends on phonological and grammatical variables. Finally, the small areas under (IV) represent areas in which the presence of [n] seems to vary randomly.

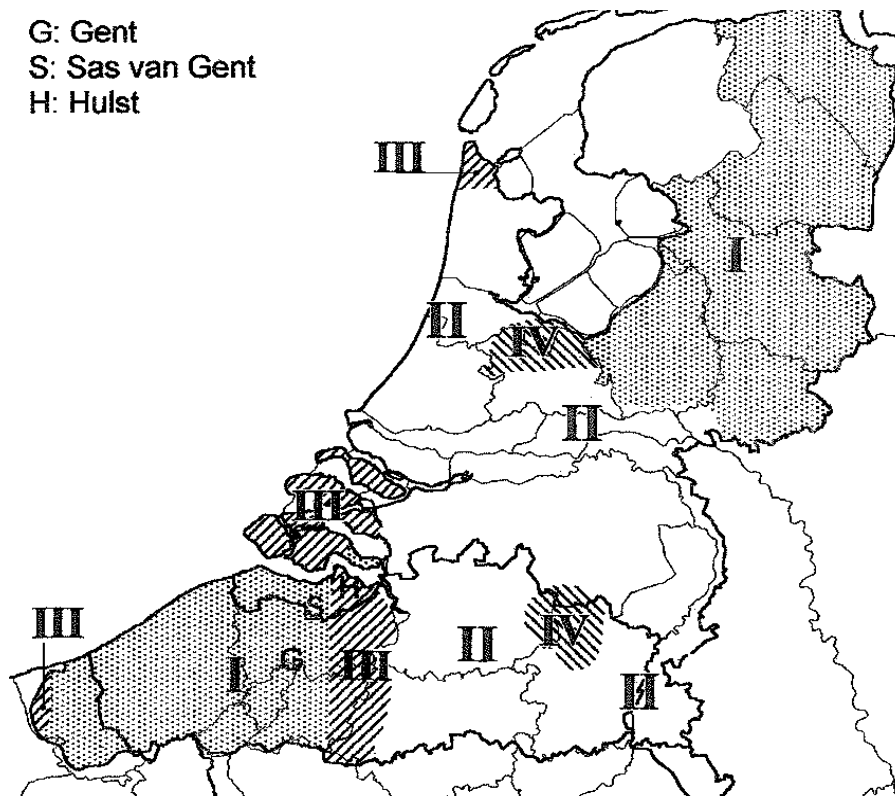


Figure 8.4

Classic examples of this apocope are the pronunciation of Dutch plurals and verb forms ending in <en>, pronounced as [ən] or as [ə]. However, there is also variation in the pronunciation of the diminutive suffixes. Not only *je* [jə] and *ke* [kə] suffixes can be pronounced with or without [n], but [n] is also optional following [i] (MAND I De Schutter et al. 2005: 41). Figure 8.5 shows how the diminutive suffix of the diminutive *plankje* ‘board’ is pronounced in the Dutch-speaking area of Belgium and in the Netherlands. As the map shows, [n] is present in areas in the north-east and in the south-west.

That there was already variation in the pronunciation of [n] following weakly articulated vowels in the seventeenth century is clear from the remarks of two different Dutch grammarians. In 1625 Christiaan Van Heule reports that [n] is often deleted in Holland, which he disapproves of. Some years later, in 1653, Petrus Leupenius as well mentions the deletion of [n] and calls it a bad habit of the Dutch (Leupenius 1653: 59-60 in Van der Wal & Simons 2010: 675).

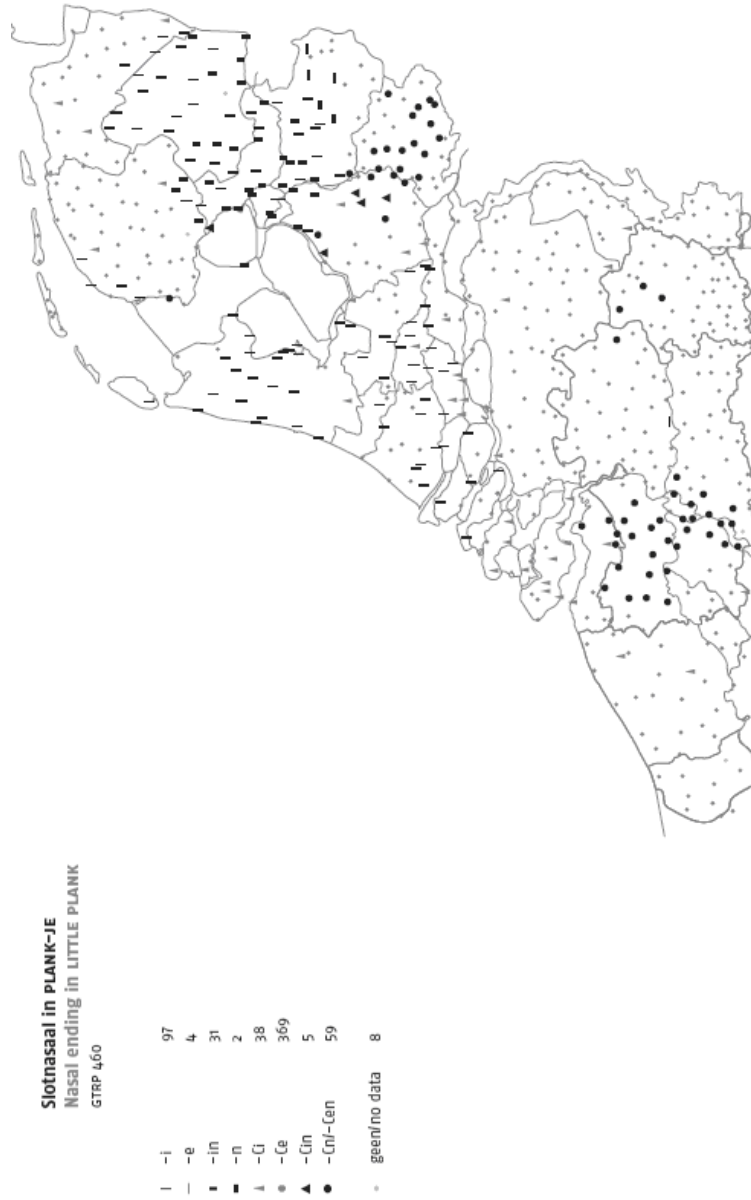
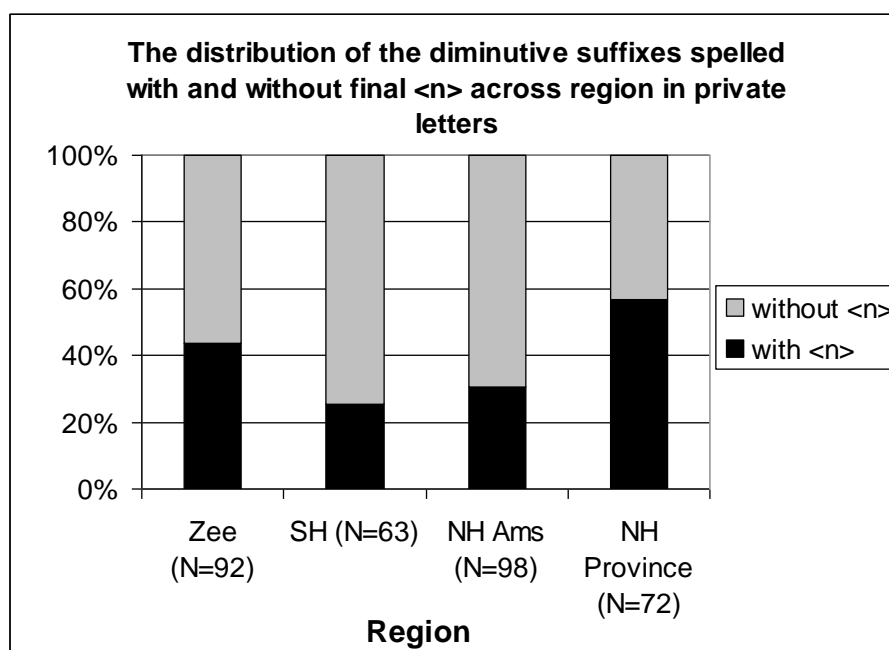


Figure 8.5: The nasal ending in the diminutive *plankje* ‘little plank’ from the Morphological Atlas of the Dutch Dialects, part I (MAND I De Schutter et al. 2005: 63).

Let us have a look at the presence of <n> in the spelling of the diminutive suffixes in the corpus. Again it is not straightforward to gather from the spelling whether any given writer would have pronounced [n] or not in the suffix, but it is possible that the distribution of the spellings with and without <n> across region, class and gender has some interesting information to offer.

Figure 8.6 below shows the distribution of diminutive suffixes with and without <n> in the spelling in private letters across region.



**Figure 8.6**

The data show that Amsterdam and South Holland are the regions where <n> is least present in diminutive suffixes. The two regions at the southern and northern periphery of the area under investigation, Zeeland and North Holland respectively, have a larger share of <n> in diminutive suffixes. A plausible explanation for these results is that [n] was probably still pronounced more often in Zeeland and in North Holland. This explanation would fit well with the current situation in spoken Dutch as shown in the map in figure 8.4, for North Holland and Zeeland are two regions where in present-day spoken Dutch [n] can still be heard after weakly articulated vowels. Zeeland in its entirety is coded as a type III area, in which the presence of [n] depends on phonological and grammatical variables. And although a large part of North Holland is now coded as a type II area, an area in which final [n] is almost always lost, in the most northern part of the



province (known as *de kop van Noord-Holland* ‘the head of North Holland’) a type III area can be seen. This is an area in which the presence of final [n] in present-day Dutch depends on phonological and grammatical variables. In the seventeenth century, this area might still have been larger, extending farther to the south and taking in cities like Enkhuizen and Hoorn, which would explain the higher rate of <n> spellings in the data from this region.

For an examination of the distribution of <n> in diminutive suffixes across the variables social class and gender, again only autograph letters are suitable. Just as in §8.5 of this chapter, due to the distribution of the different occurrences across the different classes in different regions, only the combined data for Amsterdam and North Holland will be used. Table 8.10 below shows how final <n> in diminutive suffixes is distributed across social class in the entire province of North Holland. The data show that the level of diminutive suffixes containing the grapheme <n> rises together with the social status of writers. While the lower- and upper-middle-class writers use diminutive suffixes with <n> in less than half of the cases (in 38% and in 42% of the cases respectively), writers from the upper class use it in 64% of the cases.

	<i>with &lt;n&gt;</i>	<i>without &lt;n&gt;</i>	N
<b>LMC</b>	38%	63%	16
<b>UMC</b>	42%	58%	60
<b>UC</b>	64%	36%	11

**Table 8.10: The distribution of diminutive suffixes with and without <n> across social class in private letters linked to North Holland.**

Table 8.11 below shows the distribution of the same two types of suffixes across gender for letter writers from North Holland. Again we see a clear difference: women use the suffixes containing <n> less often than men do (in 32% of the cases vs. in 51% of the cases respectively).

	<i>with &lt;n&gt;</i>	<i>without &lt;n&gt;</i>	N
<b>Men</b>	51%	49%	69
<b>Women</b>	32%	68%	38

**Table 8.11: The distribution of diminutive suffixes with and without <n> across gender in private letters linked to North Holland.**

The specific distribution of <n> in diminutive suffixes across social class and gender could be explained in two ways. A first explanation for the results would simply be that the groups with the highest share of <n> spellings in the diminutive suffixes are also the groups of speakers who pronounce [n] most often.

However, the fact that the upper social class on the one hand and men on the other hand are the groups with the highest level of <n> spellings in diminutives also allows for another type of explanation. It is just these two groups, men in general and upper social classes in general, that usually have more writing experience in the seventeenth century. Independently of whether they pronounced [n] in diminutives, men and members of the upper social classes could have spelled <n> more often in diminutives because they knew it could or should be there in written Dutch. Good knowledge of the parallel with the pronunciation of verb forms and plural nouns ending in <en> – in which [n] was not always pronounced but always had to be written – could have influenced their spelling as well.

## 8.8. Diminutives in proper names

So far, I have left out of consideration proper names, having focused solely on diminutive forms of words that are not proper names (mostly nouns, such as *vatie* ‘barrel’, and an occasional adverb, such as *sleghties* ‘poorly’), while there is a vast quantity of proper names with diminutive suffixes to be found in the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus (805 occurrences, mostly in first names for women). I did not take these proper names into account in the examinations described above since there is reason to assume that diminutives in proper names differ from diminutives in other types of words. This is because it is probable that diminutives in proper names are not productive, but that they are a fixed part of this proper name. Moreover, since names are passed from generation to generation, we can suspect that proper names are more conservative than other types of words with regards to diminutive suffixes.

In this section, I will examine whether the frequency of different diminutive suffixes in proper names indeed differs from the frequency in other words. Table 8.12 below shows the frequencies of each spelling variant of the diminutive suffixes in proper names on the one hand and in nouns and adverbs on the other in the private letters of the *Letters as Loot* corpus (545 letters written by 408 different writers). The most conspicuously differing percentages have been marked in bold.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Proper names</i>		<i>Nouns and adverbs</i>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>ie</b>	346	43%	155	44%
<b>ke</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>je</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>ge</b>	67	8%	37	10%
<b>ije</b>	65	8%	37	10%
<b>en</b>	49	6%	6	2%
<b>ye</b>	16	2%	8	2%
<b>i</b>	5	1%	4	1%
<b>gie</b>	5	1%	2	1%
<b>y</b>	3	0%	0	0%
<b>kie</b>	2	0%	0	0%
<b>che</b>	2	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>805</b>		<b>353</b>	

**Table 8.12: The distribution of the different spelling variants of the diminutive suffixes in the entire corpus for proper names on the one hand and nouns and adverbs on the other.**

First of all, the table shows that the distribution of the different diminutive suffixes for proper names is not overwhelmingly different from the distribution for nouns and adverbs. The different suffixes occur in more or less the same order of frequency and the same three suffixes (<ie>, <ke>, and <je>) are responsible for more than 70% of the diminutives for proper names as well as for other words. However, the proper names and other words do clearly differ from each other regarding the frequency of the two diminutive suffixes <ke> and <je>. The former suffix occurs in 21% of the cases in proper names and in 14% of the cases in other words. The latter suffix, <je> occurs in 10% of the cases in proper names and in 15% of the cases in other words. Without much doubt these two spellings can be seen as the representations of the phonological variants [kə] and [jə] (see §8.3 for the interpretation of <ke> and the results in §8.6 for the interpretation of <je>).

Although the differences in distribution are not spectacular, they are nevertheless remarkable due to the fact that they show an older suffix behaving differently from a younger one. The [kə] suffix had already been around for quite a while in Dutch by the seventeenth century, while [jə] was a younger suffix. It is clear from the table that this younger variant occurred more often with nouns and adverbs than with proper names, while the older diminutive form [kə] occurred more often with proper names than with other words. This difference in frequencies is exactly what we would expect based on the assumption that diminutive suffixes in proper names are some sort of

fixed parts of the proper names; parts which may not be simply identified or understood as being diminutive suffixes by language users. While the older suffixes slowly made way for the newer diminutive suffix [jə] in nouns and adverbs, the older suffix [kə] was more easily retained in proper names, probably because it was felt to be a fixed part of a name.

The fact that the frequencies of the different diminutive suffixes in proper names are roughly similar to the frequencies of these suffixes in other types of words might give rise to second thoughts about keeping diminutives in proper names separate from the other data. However, one must keep in mind that even when certain types of diminutive suffixes are as popular in proper names as they are in other word types, this does not mean that they are used in the same way. When writing down a proper name, writers do not necessarily actively form a diminutive. They may be writing down a person's name as a whole as it is used by a community, irrespective of whether the diminutive suffix present in this proper name fits with the diminutive suffix the writers themselves would use when actively forming a diminutive. Therefore, the diminutive suffixes commonly used by a certain writer may differ from the diminutive suffixes which are part of proper names also used by the writer.

Examples are the following: take for instance the letter written by Maria Walravens to her son.<sup>113</sup> She uses palatal diminutive suffixes to form the diminutives *praetije* 'small talk' and *moetties* 'auntie's', but refers to her daughter as *Sanneken*. The same goes for Elisabeth Emerij writing to her mother.<sup>114</sup> She writes that she is in the possession of a guenon, *een meere catge*, but she spells the two proper names which contain diminutives with <k>: *neelken* and *maeijken*. A similar phenomenon can also be discovered in the letter written on behalf of Janneken Aengenendt.<sup>115</sup> The letter contains the two diminutives *morgenhappien* 'breakfast' and *landtien* 'country', but the proper name of the sender is reproduced as *Janneken*. A last example is the letter of Adam Erckelens.<sup>116</sup> Adam uses <ke> suffixes to form diminutives of two nouns: *briefken* 'letter' and *pacxken* 'parcel'. However, he refers to a family member as *Catharijntie Nicht* 'niece/cousin Catherine' with the suffix <ie>. Adam seems to be using a name created and used by family members who are more innovative in their use of diminutive suffixes than he is.

To conclude, even though diminutive suffixes in proper names have proved to be only slightly more conservative than diminutive suffixes in

<sup>113</sup> Letter Vliet-94 in the corpus (HCA 30-226-1).

<sup>114</sup> Letters 17-06-2009 099-100 and 17-06-2009 209-210 in the corpus (HCA 30-223).

<sup>115</sup> Letter 17-06-2009 316-319 in the corpus (HCA 32-1822-1).

<sup>116</sup> Letter 06-01-2010 128-129 in the corpus (HCA 30-644).

other types of words, the examples given above are warnings against putting diminutive suffixes in proper names and in other words on a par. I have decided to focus on diminutive suffixes in words that are not proper names, but an examination into the spread of diminutive suffixes in proper names would be interesting in its own right. Some questions that arise are: Are proper names with certain types of suffixes more popular in certain social circles than others? Do different people refer to one and the same person using a name with exactly the same type of diminutive suffix? But to find an answer to these questions, an extensive analysis would be needed: every name with a diminutive suffix should be linked to the specific individual who is called by it and the social class to which he or she belongs should be identified. And to find one man or woman whose name contains a diminutive suffix and who is named by different letter writers would require the letters to be examined one by one until this person is found; if he or she exists at all. These extensive analyses fall beyond the scope of this chapter.

## 8.9. Conclusions

An examination of the different types of diminutive suffixes in the seventeenth-century corpus has shown that there was a lot of variation in the written and probably also the spoken language in the Low Countries during the second half of the seventeenth century. At first sight, this variety and the ambiguity of <i> and <j> in spelling make it difficult to make sense of the data. However, a careful analysis of the spelling habits of each letter writer allowed us to get past the spelling and examine the distribution of the different phonological types of suffixes. Although the data could not prove the theory that the suffix [jə] spread from North Holland to the rest of the Republic, some other interesting findings have come up.

The use of the different types of diminutive suffixes in writing has proved to be influenced by the variables region, social class, gender and age. Region is an important factor given the fact that dialects present in certain regions influenced the diminutive suffixes used in writing. As has been shown in previous chapters too, social class and gender are two influential variables that can be analysed against the background of writing practice. Women and members of the lower social classes, groups which in general have less writing practice than men and members of the upper social classes, showed to behave similarly in the use of diminutive suffixes. People with less writing practice in general used fewer diminutive suffixes that fitted in with an old ([kə]) or a new ([jə]) convention in writing and instead seemed to prefer suffixes typically associated with spoken language ([i]). The variable age could be linked to innovations and old conventions: while the

younger letter writers were keener to use [i], a diminutive suffix which is said to have just started to be used in the seventeenth century, the older letter writers were more likely to stick to the older writing convention of using [kə] as a diminutive suffix.

The careful spelling analysis that was carried out in order to shed some light on the relation between the different types of suffixes and the regional and social variables turned out to be interesting in its own right. Most of the palatal diminutive suffixes that could not be identified as either [i] or [jə] stemmed from letters written by women or letters from the lower classes. This suggests that these two groups of writers were less consistent in spelling than men and writers from the upper classes in general. This can again be related to writing practice and education: the groups with most writing practice and education (men and members of the upper classes in general) seem to be more liable to stick to certain spelling conventions.

The presence or absence of an <n> in the spelling of the diminutive suffixes was treated separately from the examination of the different phonological type of suffixes. This feature as well could be shown to be related to the variables region, social class and gender. The data showed that the <n> occurred more often in the written Dutch of the seventeenth century in regions in which the present-day spoken Dutch has preserved the final <n> in certain phonological and grammatical contexts. Again the presence or absence of this feature seemed to be related to conventions of written Dutch as well, since men and writers from the upper classes – typically writers with more writing practice and a more extensive education – were shown to use this final <n> more often in writing than women and members of the lower class.

Lastly the spelling of proper names, which were expected to behave differently from other types of words concerning the presence of different types of diminutive suffixes, were put to the test. Are there good reasons to keep them apart from the other types of words? An examination of the spelling of the different types of suffixes showed that proper names are slightly more conservative than other types of words: the old writing convention [kə] occurred more often in proper names than in other types of diminutives, while the newer writing convention in development [jə] occurred more often in non-proper names. Furthermore, some individual letter writers can be shown to differ in their active use of diminutives (diminutives of nouns, for instance) and their use of diminutives in proper names. The diminutive suffixes in proper names thus seem to behave more like fixed elements of proper names rather than as suffixes used by a certain letter writer out of free choice.