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Gewijd der jeugd voor taal en deugd. Het onderwijs in de Nederlandse taal op de lagere school, 1750-1850

Schoemaker, B.O.

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Summary

This thesis focuses on Dutch language education in primary schools in the period 1750-1850. Special attention is given to the implementation of official language norms in educational policies and practices. The instrumentality of education in the diffusion of language norms is generally acknowledged in the historical sociolinguistic literature, yet very little research has focused on the specifics of this relationship between schooling and norm diffusion. This thesis fills this gap by focusing on the means and methods of language teaching in the context of the standardization of Dutch in second half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. It does so by utilizing primary sources such as school inspection reports, school books and pedagogical literature, and through the reconstruction of the wider educational context in which new language norms were taught. Chapters 1 and 2 provide a further introduction of main research themes and questions, theoretical foundations and sources.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the historical context in which this research is situated, i.e. the codification of the Dutch language and the reform of the school system. Both the codification of norms for the Dutch language and the reform of the school system originated in pedagogical and societal discourses from the second half of the eighteenth century. Under the influence of the Enlightenment and the rise of national thought, new ideas about language and education developed. Education in the Dutch national language was increasingly seen as a necessary prerequisite for both individual growth and the development of a national civil society. It was argued that every child, regardless of social class or sex, should be able to use the national language in private, civil and professional life, and that language education had to teach children how to use the language as a means to express thoughts and to communicate with others. To facilitate mutual understanding and ease of learning, pedagogues called for the uniformization of language norms. The lack of consensus on precise norms

for the Dutch language, and normative variation in existing educational materials, were seen as impediments to language teaching. The belief in the importance of language education, and in the importance of uniform language norms for education, led to the publication of an official orthography by Mathijs Siegenbeek in 1804 and an official grammar by Petrus Weiland in 1805, and the reform of language education as part of the wider reform of the school system in the school laws of 1801, 1803 and 1806.

Chapter 5 outlines the specific language-in-education-policy that emanated from the codification of the Dutch language and the reform of the school system. The policy consisted of four pillars: 1) the school law of 1806; 2) the *Schrijftaalregeling* ('written language regulation'); 3) the training and examination of teachers and 4) the promotion of new school books. In the school law of 1806, Dutch language and grammar were mentioned as core subjects in the primary school curriculum, alongside reading, writing and arithmetic. This in itself was a major change, because prior to the nineteenth century, Dutch grammar was not taught in (primary) schools at all. At the same time, however, the school law was unspecific in regards to what exactly had to be taught or how. The same goes for the second pillar, the written language regulation. The publication of both Siegenbeek's orthography and Weiland's grammar was accompanied by a decree that stated that the language norms laid down in these works were to be used in government and education. The further elaboration of the language-in-education-policy was left to the school inspectors. They played a vital role in shaping Dutch language and grammar as school subjects. They formed a link between the school law and pedagogical principles on the one hand, and educational practice on the other. They had the authority to further specify the means and methods of education in local or regional regulations, which in some cases contained more prescriptions for language teaching. Common grammar exercises mentioned in these regulations were parsing, declension and conjugation of nouns and verbs, and the correction of erroneous

sentences. School inspectors also played an important role in shaping Dutch language education through school visits, in which they provided teachers with advice on how to implement new teaching methods and improve their teaching. The reports of these visits provide an excellent source for the reconstruction of everyday educational practices.

The third pillar of the language-in-education policy was the training and examination of teachers. Part of the school law of 1806 was a decree on the examination of teachers. Before the nineteenth century, teachers required no official qualification and were appointed based on arbitrary qualities such as reading voice or quality of handwriting. From 1806 onwards, every aspiring teacher had to take an official exam to demonstrate skills and knowledge in the different school subjects, the language, and basic principles of pedagogy. Language skills were a central part of the exam; parsing, declension and conjugation, the correction of erroneous sentences and different writing exercises were common exercises. In order to prepare candidates for the exam, multiple teacher training institutions were founded in the early nineteenth century, where aspiring teachers were trained in the theory and practice of education. These institutions played an important role in the professionalization of the teaching profession. Reports from these institutions show that Dutch language and grammar were a central part of the curriculum, and that the orthography and grammar by Siegenbeek and Weiland were regularly used. At the same time, however, the capacity of these training institutions was limited. School inspectors therefore sought other means to educate teachers. They initiated and supported the founding of teachers' societies; informal gatherings of teachers or aspiring teachers, whose members would educate each other in the different school subjects, the language and pedagogy. A majority of teachers were members of such societies, and reports show that Dutch language and grammar were among the main subjects in their gatherings. The founding of teacher training institutes and teachers' societies was effective; records show that by the

middle of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of teachers had successfully passed one or more exams, and had therefore shown sufficient knowledge of and proficiency in Dutch language and grammar.

The last pillar of the language-in-education-policy was the promotion of new school books. Up until the end of the eighteenth century the most popular school books were abstracts or adaptations from the bible that had been around for decades or even centuries. From the perspective of new pedagogical ideals, the language, style and contents of these books were deemed unsuitable for use in primary schools. New books had to be both understandable and enjoyable for children, and their language had to be both consistent and in line with the new language norms. The use of the old school books was actively discouraged by the school inspectors, and not without success; already in the early nineteenth century, their reports show that very few old books were still in use. In 1810 the government published an official book list in order to aid teachers in their choice for titles that were suitable for use in schools, but after 1815 the list was no longer updated. The publication of new school books was left to the market. The renewed interest in education and the reform of the school system led to a rapid growth of the market for school books, and many authors and publishers saw commercial opportunities. In this competitive market, commercial success depended to an extent on positive reviews in the pedagogical literature and endorsement from the school inspectors. In book reviews in popular pedagogical journals, conformity to the new language norms was an important criterion. In effect, an economic motive for adherence to the new language norms was created for authors and publishers. Added to the fact that most authors of school books were teachers themselves, who believed in the importance of normative uniformity for language teaching, the result was that most popular school books in the first half of the nineteenth century adhered to the new language norms.

Language education consisted of four subjects: reading, writing, grammar and speaking. These were not necessarily distinct subjects; grammar

was often taught as part of writing education, and speaking exercises could be integrated into any other subject. Reading and writing had been part of the primary school curriculum before the reform of the school system, but under the influence of new pedagogical principles both underwent significant changes. One of the main principles of the new pedagogy was that education had to focus on the development of cognitive skills rather than just mechanical skills or rote learning. In reading education (chapter 6), the understanding of the contents of what was read became just as important as the more mechanical translation of characters into sounds. In writing (chapter 7), focus shifted from the mechanical skill of drawing characters on paper using quill and ink, to the use of writing as a means to express thoughts and communicate with others. Before the nineteenth century, the most common writing exercise was the copying of handwritten examples. Now the main goal became autonomous writing; the writing of sentences, letters, essays and other text in which children expressed their own thoughts and ideas. Children still had to learn mechanical writing, but now they also had to learn how to find the right words, put them in the right grammatical form and order, and take into account issues of style and/or convention. It also meant that knowledge of grammar became a prerequisite for writing.

Chapter 8 focuses on grammar education. The extent to which grammar should be taught in primary schools was heavily debated in pedagogical discourse. Most pedagogues agreed that children had to be able to apply rules of grammar in their writing. Discussion focused on whether or not a more theoretical approach to grammar had to be part of primary education. Some pedagogues argued that metalinguistic knowledge of grammatical rules and terminology was too complex for young children, and that grammar education should be limited to practical exercises such as the declension and conjugation of nouns and verbs and the correction of erroneous sentences. Others argued that only a more systematic and theoretical approach to grammar could lead to its proper application in writing, and that education should include extensive

parsing and the use of a school grammar. In practice more theoretical and more practical grammatical exercises were often combined. Parsing, declension and conjugation, the correction of erroneous sentences and the use of grammar books were common in many schools.

For grammar education, teachers could use one of many grammars that were published specifically for use in schools. They ranged from very short abstracts containing only the most basic elements of grammar, such as rules of spelling and the parts of speech, to more extensive and complete works including exercises and examples. Most were traditional grammars, focusing on the parts of speech as a starting point, which was in line with Weiland's official grammar. There were, however, some authors who took a more innovative approach, in which the traditional case system was replaced by an approach based on syntactic functions such as subject, object, predicate, etc. In this approach, the influence of the school of general grammar became noticeable. That influence became stronger in the course of the first half of the nineteenth century with the introduction of sentence analysis as a primary school subject. It differed from more traditional parsing in that children had to point out the syntactic functions rather than the parts of speech in a sentence. Those who advocated the introduction of sentence analysis in education argued that the syntactic structure of the language reflected the logical structure of thought, and that therefore any exercise in sentence analysis was an exercise in logical thinking.

Even though the language-in-education-policy focused almost exclusively on the written language, some pedagogues and school inspectors emphasized the importance of the spoken language in education. Chapter 9 deals with the role of the spoken language in education. Before children had learned how to read and write, the spoken language was the only means of transferring new knowledge and skills. In the standard language ideology that motivated the uniformization of language norms and the reform of language education, dialects were characterized as uncivilized and corrupted. The spread of a civilized spoken

language was considered to be a prerequisite for a developing civil society. Teachers were advised to engage in frequent dialogue with their pupils in order to develop their speaking skills. The use of the right vocabulary, proper pronunciation and the avoidance of dialect features were points of focus. A problem encountered by many teachers, however, was that authoritative norms for the spoken language were nonexistent. In general, the language variety spoken by the socioeconomic elites in the province of Holland was considered to be the most civilized variety, but even within Holland there were regional and social differences. Furthermore, most teachers had little to no experience with the spoken Hollandic variety. The result was that many teachers adopted the spelling as a guideline for pronunciation. To the despair of linguists and pedagogues, spelling pronunciation remained a common occurrence in schools throughout the nineteenth century.

In the written language regulation the language norms codified by Siegenbeek and Weiland were prescribed for use in education. An important question therefore is to what extent popular school books and school grammars followed these norms. In regard to Siegenbeek's spelling the answer is clear: nearly all popular school books and grammars closely followed the new norms (chapter 10). Many books explicitly referred to Siegenbeek's orthography. As mentioned earlier, authors had both economic and ideological motives to adhere to the new norm. In regard to Weiland's grammar, adherence to the new norms was not always clear cut (chapter 11). When looking at variables such as relative pronouns and the genitive case, some school books and grammars show preferences that differ from the official grammar. In both cases, Weiland's choices reflect a more conservative approach to grammar and a more formal style, whereas many school books reflected a more common style. Also, the introduction of syntactic sentence analysis in education represents a move away from the more traditional approach of Weiland's grammar. In other respects,

however, such as the conjugation of verbs, most school books and grammars were in line with Weiland's prescriptions.

Chapter 12 presents some of the main conclusions of this thesis. Despite some limitations, such as limited school attendance and the persistence in some regions of conservative views on language and education, the language-in-education-policy of the first half of the nineteenth century was a success. School reports, figures relating to teacher training and exams, the use of school books and grammars and discussions in the pedagogical literature all point to the fact that new means and methods of language and grammar education were adopted in many schools throughout the country. School inspectors, pedagogues and teachers all contributed to shaping Dutch language and grammar as a primary school subject. The language as it was codified by Siegenbeek and Weiland became the language of education. As a result, by the mid-nineteenth century, a majority of children would have learned reading, writing and some grammar in accordance with those norms.