# Policy versus Practice. Language variation and change in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dutch

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CHAPTER 5

# Orthographic variables (1)
## Syllable-final /xt/

Following the systematic methodological approach introduced in Section 6 of Chapter 4, the present chapter contains the first of eight linguistic case studies with the *Going Dutch Corpus*, which together form the empirical heart of this dissertation. First of all, Chapters 5–9 focus on five orthographic variables, covering both consonantal and vocalic features, in order to assess the effectiveness of Siegenbeek's (1804) spelling prescriptions. Furthermore, three morphosyntactic variables will be analysed in Chapters 10–12, examining the influence of Weiland's (1805) grammar.

## 1 Discussion in Siegenbeek (1804)

In his official orthography, Siegenbeek (1804: 160-165) elaborately commented on the differences between the consonants *g* and *ch*, addressing the orthographic representation of the voiceless velar fricative /x/ in syllable-final position as well as before *t* in the /xt/ cluster. Although both positions are interesting and suitable for an examination of the possible normative influence on language practice, only the latter, i.e. the consonant cluster /xt/, will be addressed in this chapter. This choice serves several purposes. First of all, it is my aim to examine a diverse selection of orthographic variables in this chapter and the following. Therefore, I prefer to focus on syllable-final /xt/ rather than to study two very closely related cases. Moreover, it is the orthographic representation of /xt/ that has often been regarded (and debated) as a typical Siegenbeek feature rather than syllable-final /x/.

Siegenbeek introduced a division into two categories of words containing the cluster /xt/, which had to be spelled with either <gt> or <cht>, mainly depending on etymological considerations. To begin with, Siegenbeek mentioned the fundamental phonetic differences of the two *verwantschapte Medeklinkers* 'related consonants' *g* and *ch*, the former of which being *zacht* 'soft' (i.e. voiced) and the latter being *scherp* 'sharp' (i.e. voiceless). Before proposing and illustrating his own spelling norm, Siegenbeek referred to *de Ouden* 'the Old', by which he meant Middle Dutch writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, who had supposedly based their spelling on pronunciation only. At the end of a syllable and more specifically in syllables ending in *-t*, 'the Old' had suggested <ch> and <cht>, respectively, due to final devoicing (*Auslautverhärtung*)[38] (Siegenbeek 1804: 162):

[38] In Dutch, voiced obstruents generally do not occur in syllable-final position. Consequently, phonologically voiced obstruents are devoiced in syllable-final position (e.g.

> En wat het gebruik der Ouden, die zich op het einde der lettergreep altijd van *ch* bedienden, aangaat, hetzelve steunt zeker op een' goeden grond, als voldoende de *ch*, vooral wanneer de lettergreep op *t* eindigt, beter aan den natuurlijken toon der uitspraak dan de zachtere *g*, gelijk hetzelve ook door den voorgang der Grieken, bij wie wij eene soortgelijke verwisseling der γ en χ zagen plaats grijpen, gewettigd wordt.
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> 'And with regard to the use of the Old, who always used *ch* at the end of a syllable, this is certainly grounded on good reasons, as the *ch*, especially when the syllable ends in *t*, meets the natural sound of the pronunciation better than the softer *g*. In the same way, this is also justified by the example of the Greek, where we saw a similar change of γ and χ taking place.'

Although Siegenbeek did not deny the fundamental necessity of a phonetic spelling and, in fact, established the rule *Schrijf, zoo als gij spreekt* 'Write as you speak' as his first principle of the Dutch spelling, he criticised 'the old' Middle Dutch writers for not taking into account the origin of words at all. For this reason, he referred to his second spelling principle, i.e. *Men volge in het schrijven de naaste en zekere Afleiding* 'One should write according to the closest and certain derivation' (Siegenbeek 1804: 28), taking into the account the supposedly historical form.

The conflict between the two principles of pronunciation and derivation is also central to the orthographic variable studied in this chapter. For the representation of the /xt/ cluster [39], Siegenbeek (1804: 163) prescribed the following rule:

> Op grond hiervan achten wij het best, overeenkomstig het tegenwoordige gebruik, dezen regel aan te nemen, dat in woorden, welke in het meervoud de *g* hebben, of dezelve om hunnen duidelijken oorsprong vereischen, de *g* altijd hare plaats moet behouden. Men schrijve dus […] *magt* van *mogen*, *klagt* van *klagen*, *bragt* van *brengen*, *pligt* van *plegen*, *vlugt* van *vliegen*, en desgelijks in de verdere hiertoe behoorende woorden, welker opgave wij voor onze Woordenlijst besparen. Doch, waar geene der gemelde redenen tot de plaatsing der *g* voorhanden is, gebruike men, ter meerdere voldoening aan de uitspraak, bestendig de *ch*, bij de sluiting op eenen harden medeklinker […], en schrijve dus […] *lucht, achten, pracht, kocht* van *koopen, zacht*, en zoo in meer anderen.
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> 'Due to this we consider it the best way, in accordance with contemporary usage, to adopt this rule, according to which the *g* must always maintain its place in words which have the *g* in the plural, or require the *g* due to their clear origin. One thus writes […] *magt* from *mogen*, *klagt* from *klagen*, *bragt* from *brengen*, *pligt* from *plegen*, *vlugt* from *vliegen*, and likewise in further words belonging to this type, whose listing we save for the word list. But, where none of the mentioned reasons for the

/ɣ/ becoming /x/). This process is commonly referred to as final devoicing (or *Auslautverhärtung*) (e.g. Booij 1995).

[39] The omissions in this quote deal with a different variable, which Siegenbeek addresses in the same paragraph as the /xt/ cluster, viz. the orthographic representation of syllable-final /x/ as either <g> or <ch> as in *oog* and *zich*. As mentioned before, this variable will not be discussed here.

> placing of the *g* is present, one must, in order to better meet the pronunciation, consistently use the *ch* when ending in a hard (voiceless) consonant […], and one thus writes […] *lucht, achten, pracht, kocht* from *koopen, zacht*, and in more others.'

In other words, Siegenbeek's prescriptive norm for the orthographic representation of /xt/ can be regarded as a hierarchy of two rules. First, the derivation or (clear) etymological origin of a word must be taken into account. Hence, the letter *g* in a root word such as *klagen* 'to complain' or *brengen* 'to bring' has to be maintained in derived words containing the syllable-final /xt/ cluster, for example *klagt* 'complaint' or *bragt* 'brought'. These words will henceforth be referred to as the category of *gt*-words. However, in cases in which Siegenbeek's derivation principle does not demand the maintenance of the letter *g*, /xt/ should be consistently spelled <cht> for phonetic reasons (i.e. final devoicing), for example in *lucht* 'air' or *kocht* 'bought' (< *koopen* 'to buy'). They form the category of *cht*-words.

While the categorisation into *cht*- and *gt*-words is seemingly clear-cut, Siegenbeek (1804: 165) did acknowledge a few ambiguous cases, in which the etymology of a word may not be entirely transparent to the language user. For instance, *kracht* 'strength, force' was sometimes interpreted as a derivation of the verb *krijgen* 'to get':

> Het laatstgenoemde woord, *kracht*, wordt door eenigen ook *kragt*, geschreven, als afkomstig van het werkwoord *krijgen*. Hoewel deze afleiding zeker niet onwaarschijnlijk is, heeft zij echter, mijns achtens, niet die blijkbaarheid, dat men, uit dien hoofd, van de gebruikelijkste en aan de uitspraak meest voldoende schrijfwijze met *ch* zou hebben af te gaan.
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> 'The latter word, *kracht*, is also spelled *kragt* by some, deriving from the verb *krijgen*. Although this derivation is certainly not unlikely, I think that it does not have that obviousness to abandon the spelling with *ch* for that reason, which is most commonly used and most closely meets the pronounciation.'

Therefore, Siegenbeek generally suggested that only obvious cases of derivation and etymology should serve as a guideline for spelling (1804: 164):

> Doch wij zijn van oordeel, dat […] de spelling zich niet met de uiterste naauwkeurigheid naar de afleiding behoeft te schikken, daar, gelijk, wij in onze eerste Afdeeling gezien hebben, alleen de duidelijke en naaste afleiding ten rigtsnoer der spelling kan verstrekken.
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> 'But we are of the opinion that […] the spelling does not have to go along with the derivation to the most extreme accuracy, because, as we have seen in the first part, only the obvious and close derivation can serve as a guideline for the spelling.'

An extensive word list (*Woordenlijst ter aanwijzing van de spelling*) with more cases of *cht*- and *gt*-words is provided in the appendix of his orthography.

In addition to <cht> and <gt> as the two prescribed variants, Siegenbeek also mentioned a third variant, viz. <ght>, which had been used by seventeenth-century literary authors like P.C. Hooft and Joost van den Vondel. Initially, the

insertion of *h* was an attempt to sharpen the *g* in syllable-final position, for instance in *maght* 'might, power'. Siegenbeek, however, commented that this historical variant had already been "te regt verworpen" (1804: 162), i.e. rightly rejected by his eighteenth-century predecessors as "ongepast en met den aard der tale geenszins overeenkomende", i.e. 'inappropriate and by no means in accordance with the nature of the language' (ibid.).

Moreover, Siegenbeek discussed the much-debated aspect of homonymy in his paragraph on *gelijkluidende, doch in beteekenis verschillende woorden* 'homonymous but semantically different words', where he also addressed two cases of /xt/ words, viz. *agt* 'eight' versus *acht* as in *acht geven* 'take care', and *jagt* 'hunt(ing)' versus *jacht* 'yacht' (1804: 56). At yet another point, he revisited the homonymy question (1804: 197-198):

> Verder verdient het onderscheid onze opmerking, 't welk, sedert eenigen tijd, door sommigen is ingevoerd in de spelling *agt* (*octo*) en *acht*, in *achtgeven*, door het eerste met eene *g*, het laatste met eene *ch* te schrijven. Dat ook dit onderscheid louter willekeurig is, valt van zelf in het oog. Immers doet de uitspraak ons geen het minste verschil tusschen beide deze woorden opmerken. En op de afleiding lettende, vinden wij althans gene reden, om het talwoord, 't welk men van het Latijnsche *octo* zou kunnen afleiden, met eene *g*, het andere *acht* met eene *ch* te schrijven.
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> 'Furthermore, the distinction deserves our comment, which, since some time ago, has been introduced by some in the spelling *agt* (*octo*) and *acht*, in *achtgeven*, by spelling the former with a *g*, the latter with a *ch*. It is obvious that this distinction is also sheerly arbitrary. After all, the pronuncation does not indicate the smallest difference between these two words. And by regarding the derivation, we find no reason to write the numeral, which one might derive from the Latin *octo*, with a *g*, and the other *acht* with a *ch*.'

Siegenbeek thus rejected earlier proposals (cf. Section 2) to apply different spellings in order to distinguish homonymous /x/ words as much as possible, i.e. irrespective of their pronunciation and derivation, which he criticised for being arbitrary. Interestingly, in his word list, Siegenbeek (1804: 199) did differentiate between homonymous *licht* 'light, bright' and *ligt* 'light, not heavy', referring to the principle of usage:

> Andere onderscheidingen zijn in het schrijfgebruik zoo algemeen aangenomen, dat het raadzaamst is dezelve te volgen. […] Hoewel deze onderscheidingen in den grond louter willekeurig zijn […] kan men echter en moet men het tegenwoordige gebruik, 't welk dezelve heeft ingevoerd, door derzelver inachtneming te wille zijn.
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> 'Other distinctions are so commonly accepted in the written usage, that it is most well-advised to follow them. […] Although these distinctions are at bottom sheerly arbitrary […], one can and must take account of the contemporary usage, which has introduced these distinctions.'

Siegenbeek also distinguished *dicht* 'poetry' from *digt* 'closed; dense' as well as *wicht* 'child' from *(ge)wigt* 'weight'. In these cases, the etymology of the words most

probably resulted in one form being spelled with <gt>, deriving from verbs with *g* (i.e. *wegen* 'to weigh' and *dij(g)en* 'to thrive'). Nevertheless, Siegenbeek's choice to exclude a very small group of words from his general homonymy rule (i.e. not to distinguish homonyms by spelling) is rather arbitrary. In fact, it does not seem entirely reasonable to refer to the principle of usage in the case of *licht/ligt*, whereas a more frequently used pair of homonyms such as *acht/acht* was not distinguished by spelling.

In sum, Siegenbeek's official rule for the purely orthographic *cht/gt* issue is remarkably complex, grounded on phonological (<cht>) and etymological (<gt>) considerations, and further touching upon the aspects of homonymy and common usage.

## 2 Eighteenth-century normative discussion

In eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse, many grammarians before Siegenbeek commented on the *g/ch* spelling question, also addressing the orthographic representation of the /xt/ cluster. Generally speaking, three recurring main arguments can be identified in the normative tradition.

First of all, the difference in pronunciation between *scherp* 'sharp' (voiceless) *ch* and *zacht* 'soft' (voiced) *g* is pointed out as a fundamental principle. The main argument is that syllable-final /x/ and more specifically /xt/ should be spelled <ch> and <cht>, respectively, due to final devoicing. The central question discussed in the normative works is whether the voiceless nature of /x/ in syllable-final position and the cluster before *t* should be reflected by spelling (i.e. <cht>) or not (i.e. <gt>).

The second main argument deals with what grammarians variably refer to as the *oorsprong*, *afleiding* or *afkomst* of a word, i.e. taking into account its derivation and/or etymology. As briefly mentioned in Section 1, pronunciation and derivation have often been regarded as two conflicting fundamental spelling principles, widely discussed in eighteenth-century normative works and in Siegenbeek's (1804) orthography.

The third frequently occurring argument concerns the spelling of homonyms with <cht> and/or <gt>, and the central question whether they should be orthographically distinguished in order to make their semantic differences clear and visible to the language user. Although these three arguments are repeatedly discussed throughout the eighteenth century, grammarians clearly had different opinions and preferences on this spelling issue.

Comparing eighteenth-century comments on the influence of derivation, particularly in relation to the phonological principle, striking differences become apparent. The importance of reflecting a word's origin by spelling was explicitly highlighted by Sewel (1708), van Belle (1748), van der Palm (1769), Stijl & van Bolhuis (1776), Kluit (1777), van Bolhuis (1793) and the *Rudimenta* (1799). The earliest eighteenth-century attestation of the idea to maintain the <g> in syllable-

final position and before *t* due to the derivation of a word is found in Sewel (1708: 88):

> G wil ik liever gebruyken in 't woord *magt* als *ch*, als komende van *mag*, welks onbepaalde wyze [Infinitivus] is *moogen*, en daarom schryf ik *mogt* en niet *mocht*; om dezelfde reden schryf ik *gewigtig* en niet *gewichtig*, zynde afkomstig van 't woord *weegen*; en daarom wil ik ook liefst spellen *gebragt*, *gezigt*, *voorzigtig*, vermids de G in de woorden *brengen*, ik *zag*, wy *zagen*, niet kan achtergelaaten worden.
>
> 'I will rather use G in the word *magt* than *ch*, deriving from *mag*, whose infinitive is *moogen*, and therefore I write *mogt* and not *mocht*. For the same reason I write *gewigtig* and not *gewichtig*, deriving from the word *weegen*. And therefore I also prefer to spell *gebragt*, *gezigt*, *voorzigtig*, as the G in the words *brengen*, ik *zag*, wy *zagen*, cannot be left behind.'

Van Belle (1748: 11) more critically pointed at the misspelling of those words, caused by neglecting their characteristics:

> Nóg erger is 't wanneer men spelt hy *bracht*, men *mocht*, het *deucht* niet […], van de Werkwoorden *brengen*, *mogen*, *deugen*, enz: want dusdoende raakt men de eigenschap der woorden zoverre uit het gezigt kwyt, dat nóch Vreemdeling noch Neederlander, die de gronden onzer Taale zoekt magtig te worden, dezelve eenigsins reegelmaatig kan nagaan.
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> 'It is even worse when one spells hy *bracht*, men *mocht*, het *deucht* niet […], from the verbs *brengen*, *mogen*, *deugen*, etc, because in doing so one loses the quality of the words to the extent that neither a foreigner nor a Dutchman, who seeks to command the grounds of our language, can reasonably follow it with regularity.'

Stijl & van Bolhuis (1776: 56), and also van Bolhuis (1793), went one step further by presenting a hierarchy of rules, taking into account both derivation (first rule) and pronunciation (second rule) as two conflicting principles:

> Hoe zal men spellen *magt* of *macht*? De uitspraak zou het laatste eischen naar den 2 regel; doch de afleiding van *mogen* strijdt er tegen; daarom verkiezen wij *magt* naar den 1 regel. Die reden van afleiding is zoo duidelijk niet in *kracht*, des mag hier *ch* boven de *g* naar den 2 regel gelden.
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> 'How should one spell *magt* or *macht*? The pronunciation would require the latter according to the second rule, but the derivation of *mogen* contradicts with it. This is why we prefer *magt* according to the first rule. That rule of derivation is not that obvious in *kracht*, which is why *ch* rather than *g* may apply here according to the second rule.'

A similar argumentation can be found in the *Rudimenta* (1799: 65), according to which the phonological principle is primary, although exceptions due to derivation have to be acknowledged:

> in het algemeen gebruikt men CH in alle woorden, die scherp uitgesprooken worden b. v. *gedacht*, *kracht*, *nacht*, *wacht* enz: mits, dat de afleiding daar niet tegen

> strijde: want al zijn sommige woorden dan eens scherp van uitspraak, men moet de afleiding niet verwaarloozen b. v. *magt* met *g*, want dat wordt afgeleid van *mogen*; *gebragt* van *brengen*; en meer anderen.
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> 'Generally, one uses CH in all words which are pronounced sharply, e.g. *gedacht*, *kracht*, *nacht*, *wacht* etc., if the derivation does not contradict it. Because even though some words are sharp in pronunciation, one must not neglect the derivation, e.g. *magt* with *g*, because that is derived from *mogen*, *gebragt* from *brengen*, and more others.'

This hierarchical approach is, in fact, similar to Siegenbeek's (1804) prescription (Section 1). Undoubtedly, another major source of inspiration for Siegenbeek must have been Kluit (1777), who elaborately discussed the importance of derivation with regard to <gt> and <cht>. Three decades before Siegenbeek, Kluit (1777: 23-24) already critised the spelling principles of *de Ouden* 'the Old' (i.e. Middle Dutch writers) for neglecting the origin of words and rather grounding their spelling on pronunciation only, which had led to syllable-final <ch> and <cht> as the only variant for /xt/:

> De oorsprong des woords namelijk deed bij de Ouden er niets toe […] maar zagen alleen daarna, of de G een sluitletter wierd: zoo ja, dan veranderde hy in CH, en men schreef *vlucht*, *mocht*, *noch*, niet omdat die woorden in zich een CH begrepen (dit doen zij niet; want *vlucht* komt van *vlie*G*en*, *mocht* van *mo*G*en*); maar omdat de G te zacht was, om een Lettergreep te eindigen, of om op een harde T te stuiten.
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> 'The origin of the word, in fact, did not matter to the Old […], but they only took into account whether the G became a closing letter. If so, then it changed to CH, and one wrote *vlucht*, *mocht*, *noch*, not because those words have a CH in them (which they do not have, as *vlucht* derives from *vlie*G*en*, *mocht* from *mo*G*en*), but because the G was too soft to close a syllable, or to precede a hard T.'

Several other grammarians took into account the impact of derivation as well, even though they presented it more implicitly as exceptions rather than a strict rule. Wester (1799: 29-31), for instance, only mentioned a few examples of <gt> words such as *vlugt*, *bragt* or *klagt*, justified by their "naauwe betrekking" 'close reference' to the words *vliegen*, *brengen* and *klaagen*.

The aspect of homonymy is discussed in most eighteenth-century normative works addressing the *cht*/*gt* issue. For many authors, most notably Sewel (1708), van Belle (1748/1755), van Rhyn (1758), van der Palm (1769), Zeydelaar (1774), van Bolhuis (1793), Wester (1799) and the *Rudimenta* (1799), the two variants <gt> and <cht> were regarded as useful in order to make a visible difference between homonyms. Most publications provided lists of homonyms, illustrating their semantic differences and suggested spellings, like Zeydelaar (1774: 67-69):

> Wijl ondertusschen de *ch* en de *g* zoo veel overeenkomst met malkander hebben, zoo verwekt het veeltijd een merkelijk onderscheid in de betekenis der woorden die met de eene of met de andere Letter geschreeven zijn, en om den Leerling van

> dat verschil niet onkundig te laaten, zal ik de woorden, met hunne onderscheidene betekenissen opgeeven.
> DICHT, vaers, maatgezang. Dat is een Bruilofs-*Dicht*.
> DIGT, geslooten. De deur is *digt*. *Digt*, niet ver. Hier *digt* bij.
> LICHT is het tegenovergestelde van duisternis.
> LIGT is 't tegengestelde van zwaar of van moeiëlijk.
> ACHT komt van 't werkwoord *achten*. Ik *acht* hem niet veel.
> AGT is in getale een meer dan *zeven* […]
> WICHT zegt men van een klein kind.
> WIGT is gewigt, zwaarte. *Wigtig* is iets dat zijn behoorlijke zwaarte of waarde heeft.

> 'While in the meantime the *ch* and the *g* have so much in common, it often creates a distinct difference in the meaning of the words which are spelled with either the one or the other letter. And in order not to keep the student unaware of that difference, I will list the word with their different meanings.
> DICHT, verse, metrical song. This is a wedding song (*Dicht*).
> DIGT, closed. The door is *digt* 'closed'. *Digt*, not far. Close (*digt*) by here.
> LICHT is the opposite of darkness.
> LIGT is the opposite of heavy or of difficult.
> ACHT comes from the verb *achten* 'respect'. I do not *acht* 'respect' him much.
> AGT, in numbers, is one more than *zeven* 'seven' […]
> WICHT, one says for a little child.
> WIGT is weight, heaviness. *Wigtig* 'important' is something that has a considerable weight or value.'

Similarly, Wester (1799: 29-31) highlighted the benefits of differently spelled homonyms:

> Eindelyk kan men, door eene oordeelkundige plaatsing van *g* of *ch*, veele woorden, die, of geheel, of byna gelykluidende zyn, doch zeer verschillende in betekenis, duidelyk van elkanderen onderscheiden.

> 'Finally, through a judicious placing of *g* or *ch*, one can clearly distinguish many words which are either completely or nearly homophonous, but very different in meaning. '

In contrast, Kluit (1777: 24-25) strictly rejected the idea of distinguishing homonyms by using different spellings, which he criticised as being arbitrary and thus uncertain:

> Zoo wordt hiermede ten eenemal de bodem ingeslagen aan dat gewaande en naderhand verzonnen onderscheid, om klaarheids halve de woorden *licht* (*levis* en *lux*); *wicht* (*pondus* en *infans*) […] door bijzondere spelling zoo te onderscheiden, dat in 't ene geval een G, in 't andere geval een CH, gebruikt worde. Want, om niet te reppen van 't klein getal der zoodanigen, de *Analogie* der tale verbiedt dit. Deze zegt, dat ook hier moet gelden: *Similum similis ratio*. Daarbij is zulk ene onderscheiding niet alleen willekeurig, en dus gansch onzeker; maar wordt ook zelf bij velen niet recht gevat, ja gansch verkeerd gebruikt; en blijft veeltijds ook duister, omdat de oorsprong des woords ons dikwils onbekend is.

> Wat mij belangt, zoolang het achtbaarste gebruik hieromtrent niet zekers besluit, zal ik mij bij de ouden houden, die tusschen *licht*, en *licht*; *wicht* en *wicht*; *lucht* en *lucht* enz. geen onderscheid gemaakt hebben, en nochtans genoeg te verstaan zijn.
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> 'Hereby, that alleged and afterwards invented distinction to differentiate the words *licht* (*levis* and *lux*), *wicht* (*pondus* and *infans*) for the sake of clarity […] by specific spellings, using a G in the one case, and CH in the other case, is completely abolished. Because, without mentioning the small number of such words, the *analogy* of the language prohibits this. It says, which must also apply here: *Similum similis ratio*. Such a distinction is not only arbitrary, and thus entirely uncertain, but it is also wrongly understood by many, even used entirely incorrectly, and mostly remains vague, because the origin of the word is often unknown to us.
>
> As for me, as long as the most respectable use concerning this matter does not clearly decide, I will adhere to the old, who made no distinction between *licht*, and *licht*, *wicht* and *wicht*, *lucht* and *lucht*, and are still sufficiently comprehensible.'

Kluit's general view on homonymy was later taken up by Siegenbeek (1804), although, unlike Kluit, he did distinguish between *wicht* and *wigt*, but not between *licht* and *licht* (due to the principle of usage).

A radical exception in eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse is Hakvoord (1746: 36-37), who argued that syllable-final /x/ (and /xt/) should never be spelled <ch(t)> but always <g(t)>:

> Om kort en gemakkelijk te gaan, spellen wy in 't einde der Lettergrepen, nooit met ch; maar gebruiken daar toe g
>
> 'To be concise and easy, we never spell with ch at the end of syllables, but use g for this.'

Additionally, he provided a list of twenty /xt/ words spelled with <gt>, including *Dagt*, *Wagt*, *Vlugt*, *Magt*, *Klagt* and also *Ligt* (without taking into account homonymy). Two years later, van Belle (1748: 10-11) took a similar, though less radical position as Hakvoord by arguing that <gt> was the only spelling variant needed:

> Sommigen spellen ik *zach*, ik *dacht*, van de Werkwoorden *zien*, *denken*, enz: met de CH, in plaats van de G, maar zonder nood: want wie zal iemant, die zelf gelds genoeg hebbende zonder noodzaaklykheid, by eenen anderen daarom te leen vraagt, niet voor dwaas houden? En moet men ze dan ook voor zodaanig niet achten, die, aan de G genoeg hebbende, zonder nood nógtans de CH te leen gebruiken; terwyl dezelve nóg in 't Neederduits aan het einde der woorden nooit behoeft óf behoort gebruikt te worden, dan om daardoor eenigsins de onderscheidene beteekenissen van sommige woorden te vertoonen.
>
> 'Some spell ik *zach*, ik *dacht*, from the verbs *zien*, *denken*, etc. with the CH, in place of the G, but needlessly. Because who would not make a fool of someone, who has enough money himself but asks somebody else for a loan without necessity? And do you not need to consider those (words) as such, in which the G is sufficient but which still needlessly use the CH as a loan, although it never needs

> nor ought to be used at the end of a word in Dutch, except for showing the different meanings of some words to some extent.'

In contrast to Hakvoord, van Belle thus approved <cht> in some cases, but only in order to highlight the semantic differences of specific homonyms like *Licht (dat schynt)* and *Ligt (in 't weegen)*.

Compared to the approaches of his contemporaries, Moonen's (1706) stance is rather exceptional, as it hardly fits any of the other normative tendencies. In fact, he suggested the use of three (co-existing) variants, viz. <cht>, <gt> and even the widely rejected <ght>, which he did not consider as redundant but necessary. Moonen generally based his choices on phonetic differences, which were orthographically represented by one of the three variants. Even in syllable-final position, Moonen[40] actually distinguished a sharper (more voiceless) *ch* and a softer (more voiced) *g*, the latter of which he compared to the French pronunciation *gue*:

> Deeze Ch, van de Grieken niet alleen door χ, maer eertyts ook door twee merken KH in KHRONOS, KHARON uitgedrukt, en scherper, dan de G, als blykt uit het onderscheit tusschen *lach* en *lag*, *echt*, *matrimonium*, en *egt*, *occat* […], wordt altyt in het midden en einde der lettergreepe gebruikt, achter de Klinkers in […] *Acht, zacht, recht, knecht, licht, sticht, klucht, lucht, zucht* […] (1706: 5)
>
> Wanneer zy [de G] eene Lettergreep na eenen Klinker besluit, of eene Lettergreep begint, die op eene G volgt, schynt zy een geluit te hebben, dat, zachter, dan het voorgaende, van de Franschen door *gue* wordt uitgedrukt; gelyk in *vlag*, *heg*, *rug* […] (1706: 7)
>
> 'This Ch, which is not only expressed as χ by the Greek, but formerly also as the two letters KH in KHRONOS, KHARDON, and which is sharper than the G, as appears from the distinction between *lach* and *lag*, *echt*, *matrimonium*, and *egt*, *occat* […], is always used in the middle and end of the syllable, after the vowels in […] *Acht, zacht, recht, knecht, licht, sticht, klucht, lucht, zucht* […]
>
> When it [the G] closes a syllable after a vowel, or starts a syllable which follows after a G, it appears to have a sound that is softer than the previous, and expressed by the French as *gue*, as in *vlag, heg, rug* […]'

According to Moonen (1706: 8-9), the third variant <ght> also serves the purpose to differentiate between pronunciations ("brengt den Woorden in den uitspraeke hulp toe"), mainly in (near-) homonymous nouns such as *weg* 'way' and *wegh* 'white bread'[41]:

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[40] Moonen was born in Zwolle and later worked as minister in Deventer, both in the eastern province of Overijssel. At least historically, there was less final devoicing in some northeastern dialects of Dutch, with voiced fricatives occurring even in auslaut position (cf. also De Wulf et al. 2005: 252), which probably influenced Moonen's choice of spelling variants.

[41] The exact phonetic nature of Moonen's <ght> spelling, however, remains blurry, especially in contrast to words spelled with <gt>. Gledhill (1973: 107-108) critically discusses Moonen's approach, pointing out that "[h]is fundamental system is to use 'gh' in

> De H wordt van zommigen achter de G in het einde des woorts, daer zy van outs plagh geschreeven te worden, verworpen onder het voorgeeven van overtolligheit. Maer zy is noodigh, en brengt den Woorden in de uitspraeke hulp toe, zal men den *wegh*, dien man reist, van eene *weg* (wittebroot) den *dagh*, dien wy beleeven, van eene *dag*, dat een wapentuig en een tou te scheepe betekent, […] behoorlyk onderscheiden.
>
> 'The H after the G at the end of the word, where it always used to be written, is neglected by some with reference to reduncancy. But it is necessary and aids the pronunciation of the words, in order to properly distinguish the *wegh*, which you travel, from a *weg* (white bread), the *dagh*, which we experience, from a *dag*, which means a weapon and a marine rope […]'

While Moonen discussed a variety of rules, a logical coherence between these rules and their actual application in the (gender-related) word lists is hard to find. Listing nouns ending in *-t*, for instance *zicht*, *vlucht* alongside *klagt* and *dragt*, Moonen obviously did not take into account the possible effect of derivation. The only more or less explicitly mentioned case of derivation is <ght> in *braght* and *gebraght* as derived from *brengen* (1706: 9), as mentioned in the quote above. At the same time, Moonen prescribed *maght* (1706: 9) alongside *magt* (1706: 76), and *Togt* (1706: 75) alongside *Toght* (1706: 90), which strongly implies that his system was anything but consistent.

Summing up the main preferences in eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse, it appears that most grammarians already acknowledged <cht> and <gt> as co-occurring variants. Consensus about the exact use of these forms was not yet reached, though. It was Siegenbeek (1804) who officialised a fairly complex rule for this spelling issue, categorising words with syllable-final /xt/ into phonologically motivated *cht*-words and etymologically motivated *gt*-words.

## 3 Previous research

Despite the controversial debate about the orthographic representation of /xt/ as either <cht> or <gt> throughout the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries, this feature has been hardly been addressed to date, particularly in the context of Siegenbeek's national spelling prescriptions. Apart from general attestations as one of Siegenbeek's typical features, for instance as part of Mathijsen's (1988: 134-135) comparison between Siegenbeek and his competitor Willem Bilderdijk, this orthographic variable has not been investigated from an empirical, let alone historical-sociolinguistic perspective yet.

---

final position only (never initially), to indicate the hard pronunciation of /ch/. But his rules are very complex, and seemingly arbitrary. […] In fact Moonen is not very explicit on why he uses 'gh' at all". Van de Bilt (2009: 168) argues that the fear of homonyms in these cases was a crucial point of departure for Moonen. With regard to the focus of this chapter on orthography, this issue will not be discussed in more detail here, though.

However, a comprehensive overview of the orthographic representation of /x/ before *-t* is provided by Gledhill (1973: 117–148) in his PhD thesis on Dutch consonantal spelling in the history of Dutch. In a detailed section on the variants <cht>, <gt> and <ght>, he outlines and critically comments on the main developments from the Middle Dutch period until the twentieth century. While looking at both Northern and Southern normative traditions as well as usage in texts (mainly) written by grammarians and literary figures, empirical evidence of actual language practices remains sparse. On the basis of the *Going Dutch Corpus*, Section 4 will shed more light on usage patterns in the Northern Netherlands, focusing on the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth century.

## 4 Corpus analysis

### 4.1 Method

In the following corpus analysis of the orthographic representation of the consonant cluster /xt/, three variants are considered, viz. <cht>, <gt> and <ght>, all of which occur in the *Going Dutch Corpus*. Both <cht> and <gt> were prescribed as national variants in Siegenbeek's (1804) orthography, introducing the categories of *cht-* and *gt*-words. The third variant <ght> was also mentioned by Siegenbeek, but disapproved as an 'inappropriate' and 'rightly rejected' form.

Following Siegenbeek's distinction, the corpus results in this section will be presented as two separate categories for *cht*-words (i.e. prescribed <cht>) and *gt*-words (i.e. prescribed <gt), respectively. For the sake of clarity and comparability, this type of presentation will be applied for both diachronic cross-sections of the corpus, although it has to be kept in mind that there was no (officialised) distinction into *cht-* and *gt*-words before 1804.

For the analysis of this orthographic variable, the ten most frequent words were selected for <cht> and <gt> each, based on their frequency in the entire *Going Dutch Corpus*. The categorisation into *cht-* and *gt*-words follows the official 1804 spelling as codified in Siegenbeek's orthography and particularly in the *Woordenlijst* 'word list' (in the appendix of his treatise). The following twenty items, comprising both *cht-* and *gt*-words[42], were selected for the corpus analysis (listed in order of decreasing frequency in the *Going Dutch Corpus*)[43]:

[42] The first form of each set represents the prescribed Siegenbeek spelling. For example, the ACHT/AGT set belongs to the category of *cht*-words, whereas REGT/RECHT belongs to the *gt*-category.

[43] Surprisingly, some of the most prominent and much-cited examples of the *cht*/*gt* discussion, such as *klagt* 'complain', *(ge)wigt* 'weight' and *vrucht* 'fruit', are relatively low in frequency in the *Going Dutch Corpus*. Therefore, they will be not taken into account in this analysis.

- ***cht*-words:**
  ACHT/AGT; WACHT/WAGT; ECHT/EGT; DACHT/DAGT; SLECHT/SLEGT; NACHT/NAGT; DOCHTER/DOGTER; NICHT/NIGT; ZOCHT/ZOGT; KOCHT/KOGT

- ***gt*-words:**
  REGT/RECHT; ZIGT/ZICHT; BRAGT/BRACHT; RIGT/RICHT; MOGT/MOCHT; MAGT/MACHT; JAGT/JACHT; PLIGT/PLICHT; TOGT/TOCHT; VLUGT/VLUCHT

These words are best regarded as search queries, covering various word forms as well as derivations and compounds with the same root. To give an example: WACHT/WAGT (from the category of *cht*-words) comprises forms of the verb *wachten* 'to wait', *verwachten* 'to expect' and *afwachten* 'to await', but also derivations like *verwachting* 'expectation' or *onverwachts* 'unexpected', and compounds like *wachthuis* 'guard house' or *erewacht* 'guard of honour'. Similarly, ZIGT/ZICHT (from the category of *gt*-words) comprises words such as *zigtbaar* 'visible', *gezigt* 'face; view', *uitzigt* 'view', *opzigt* 'regard, respect' and *bezigtigen* 'to visit'.

It should be noted that some of the above-mentioned queries actually comprise a range of semantically and etymologically different words. For instance, ACHT/AGT includes the numeral *acht* 'eight' as well as *acht* in *acht geven* 'take care', *achter* 'behind' and the adjectival suffix *-achtig* '-like'. As pointed out in Section 1, Siegenbeek did not differentiate between these homonyms by spelling, but prescribed <cht> in all cases, which is why they are treated as one item in this case study. A similar example is JAGT/JACHT, which contains tokens of two homonymous words, viz. *jagt* 'hunt(ing)' and *jagt* 'yacht'. In both cases, Siegenbeek prescribed <gt>.

The concordance results were thoroughly filtered, removing all instances of noise such as proper and place names (e.g. *Utrecht* and *Dordrecht* in the results of REGT/RECHT) as well as other undesirable tokens (e.g. *dagteekening* in the results of DACHT/DAGT).

## 4.2 Results

Investigating the entire *Going Dutch Corpus*, Tables 1a and 1b provide a first general overview of the distribution of variants across time, subdivided into Siegenbeek's categories of *cht*- and *gt*-words, respectively. The officially prescribed variants in the nineteenth-century period (i.e. <cht> in Table 1a, <gt> in Table 1b) are highlighted in light grey.

As noted before, there was no official categorisation into <cht> and <gt> words in the late eighteenth-century period, i.e. before Siegenbeek's orthography was introduced. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the distribution in both categories of words is very similar.

**Table 1a.** Distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words across time.

| ***cht*-words** | **Period 1: 1770–1790** | | | **Period 2: 1820–1840** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **<cht>** | **<gt>** | **<ght>** | **<cht>** | **<gt>** | **<ght>** |
| | **N (%)** | **N (%)** | **N (%)** | **N (%)** | **N (%)** | **N (%)** |
| Total | 241 (17.5) | 1,117 (80.9) | 23 (1.7) | 987 (75.7) | 316 (24.3) | 0 (0.0) |

**Table 1b.** Distribution of variants in the category of *gt*-words across time.

| ***gt*-words** | **Period 1: 1770–1790** | | | **Period 2: 1820–1840** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **<cht>** | **<gt>** | **<ght>** | **<cht>** | **<gt>** | **<ght>** |
| | **N (%)** | **N (%)** | **N (%)** | **N (%)** | **N (%)** | **N (%)** |
| Total | 217 (20.3) | 838 (78.5) | 13 (1.2) | 213 (17.7) | 992 (82.3) | 0 (0.0) |

Roughly 80% of all instances in the *Going Dutch Corpus* is spelled <gt>, which makes it the main variant in eighteenth-century usage. The <cht> spelling does occur in the data, but considerably less frequently than <gt>. The third variant <ght> only occurs in less than 2% of all instances. On closer inspection, it turned out that <ght> is a manuscript variant only occurring in ego-documents, whereas there is no single attestation of <ght> in printed texts in the corpus.

In the nineteenth-century period, the officialised spelling variants for both categories of words become the dominant variants in actual language use. In the category of *cht*-words (Table 1a) the share of <cht> increases from 17.5% to 75.7%. In other words, the less frequent variant in the first period becomes by far the predominant variant in the second period. In the category of *gt*-words (Table 1b), <gt> maintains its position as the dominant – and now officially prescribed – variant. The share of <gt> even slightly increases from 78.5% to 82.3%. Although the 'incorrect' representations in each category of words do not disappear completely from early nineteenth-century language practice, the remarkable shift in the direction of the prescribed variants, especially <cht>, strongly suggests the impact of Siegenbeek's official spelling rules.

The <ght> variant does not occur in the nineteenth-century data. With regard to the fact that this third variant plays a very marginal role in period 1 and is completely absent in period 2, I decided to present only the results for <cht> and <gt> in subsequent analyses, excluding the few occurrences of <ght>.

### *Genre variation*

Taking a multi-genre perspective on developments in language use, Figures 1a and 1b display the distribution of variants across the three genres of the *Going Dutch*

*Corpus*, viz. private letters (LET), diaries and travelogues (DIA), and newspapers (NEW).

**Figure 1a.** Distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words across genre and time.

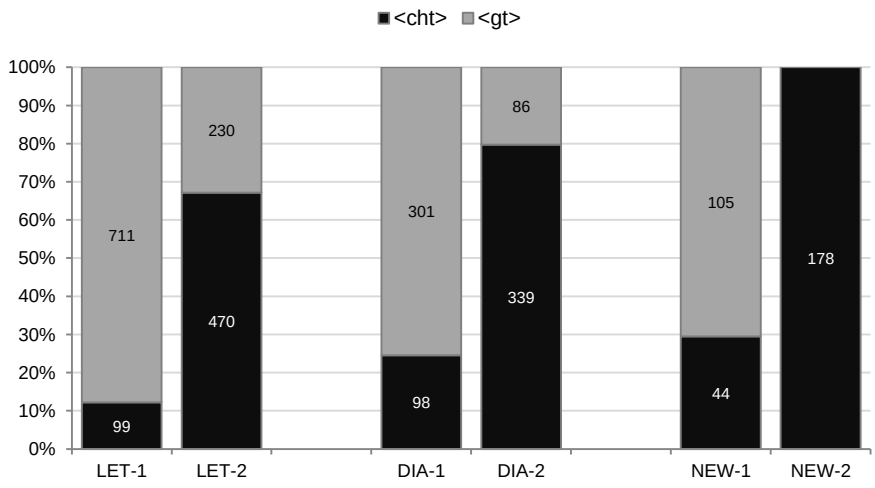
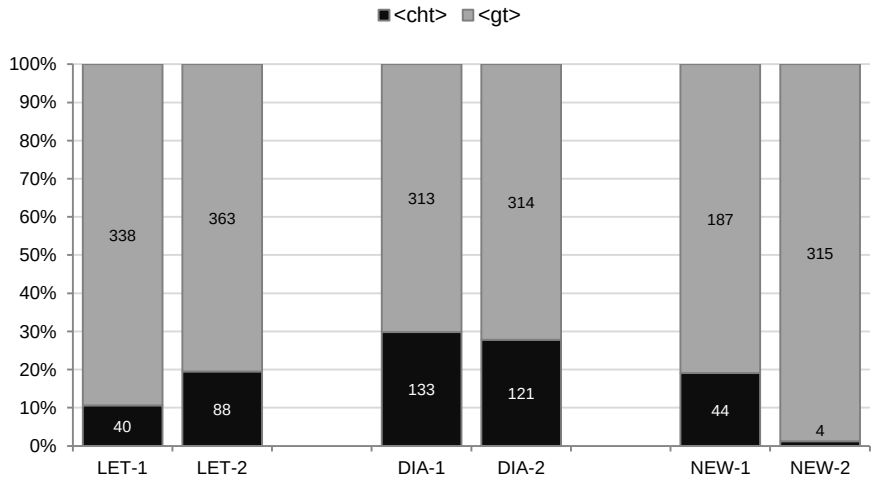



**Figure 1b.** Distribution of variants in the category of *gt*-words across genre and time.




Diachronically, the category of *cht*-words (Figure 1a) shows similar developments across all three sub-copora. In the late eighteenth century, <gt> is the main variant in private letters, diaries and travelogues as well as newspapers, all of which shift to <cht> as their main variant in the early nineteenth century. At the

same time, considerable differences between the genres become apparent. In the eighteenth-century period, private letters have the highest frequency of <gt> with a share of 87.8%. The same variant is considerably less frequent in diaries and travelogues (75.4%) and least frequent in newspapers (70.5%). In other words, <cht> is less common in private letters (12.2%) than in diaries and travelogues (24.6%) and newspapers (29.5%).

A similar genre gradation can be observed in the nineteenth-century data. Although the use of prescribed <cht> strikingly increases in both types of ego-documents, its share in private letters (67.1%) is still considerably lower than in diaries and travelogues (79.8%). It turns out that letter writers have the strongest preference for <gt> in the first period, and, at the same time, are the slowest in adopting <cht> in the second period. In the newspaper data, prescribed <cht> is used in 100% of all instances, completely replacing <gt>.

The results in the category of *gt*-words (Figure 1b) show that <gt> is the predominant variant across all three genres, both before and after Siegenbeek. From a diachronic perspective, however, some remarkable genre differences can be identified. Like in the category of *cht*-words, nineteenth-century newspapers adopt the prescribed <gt> in practically all instances (98.7%), with only four tokens of <cht>. In diaries and travelogues, the distribution of variants remains stable, with <gt> increasing only marginally from 70.2% to 72.2%. Most strikingly, private letters from the post-Siegenbeek period show an increase in the use of <cht> (for *gt*-words) from 10.6% to 19.5%. These developments testify that different genres follow orthographic norms to different extents. In line with the general expectations, printed and published texts (i.e. newspapers) show less variation in the use of different forms than handwritten ego-documents.

***Regional variation***

In addition to genre variation, the orthographic representation of syllable-final /xt/ was investigated across the seven regions of the *Going Dutch Corpus* (FR = Friesland, GR = Groningen, NB = North Brabant, NH = North Holland, SH = South Holland, UT = Utrecht, ZE = Zeeland).

Table 2a presents the distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words in the entire corpus. In the eighteenth-century period, <gt> is the dominant variant with a share of at least 75% in all seven regions, most notably in Groningen (87.8%) and South Holland (87.4%). On the other hand, the comparatively minor <cht> most frequently occurs in North Brabant, North Holland and Utrecht with a share of more than 20% each. Diachronically, all regions shift to prescribed <cht> as the main variant. Regional differences become apparent, though. Whereas the regions of Utrecht (87.3%) and South Holland (84.8%) apply <cht> most frequently, only in two-thirds of the North Brabant data (66.9%) the prescribed variant is followed.

**Table 2a.** Distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words across region and time.

| ***cht*-words** | **Period 1: 1770–1790** | | | | **Period 2: 1820–1840** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **<cht>** | | **<gt>** | | **<cht>** | | **<gt>** | |
| | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| FR | 32 | 15.0 | 182 | 85.0 | 141 | 72.7 | 53 | 27.3 |
| GR | 23 | 12.2 | 165 | 87.8 | 148 | 70.8 | 61 | 29.2 |
| NH | 40 | 22.1 | 141 | 77.9 | 105 | 66.9 | 52 | 33.1 |
| NH | 39 | 21.5 | 142 | 78.5 | 151 | 71.2 | 61 | 28.8 |
| SH | 25 | 12.6 | 174 | 87.4 | 184 | 84.8 | 33 | 15.2 |
| UT | 44 | 24.2 | 138 | 75.8 | 137 | 87.3 | 20 | 12.7 |
| ZE | 38 | 17.8 | 175 | 82.2 | 121 | 77.1 | 36 | 22.9 |

**Table 2b.** Distribution of variants in the category of *gt*-words across region and time.

| ***gt*-words** | **Period 1: 1770–1790** | | | | **Period 2: 1820–1840** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **<cht>** | | **<gt>** | | **<cht>** | | **<gt>** | |
| | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| FR | 8 | 7.0 | 106 | 93.0 | 28 | 17.5 | 132 | 82.5 |
| GR | 42 | 22.6 | 144 | 77.4 | 23 | 12.6 | 159 | 87.4 |
| NB | 29 | 21.5 | 106 | 78.5 | 40 | 29.0 | 98 | 71.0 |
| NH | 53 | 34.9 | 99 | 65.1 | 24 | 11.3 | 188 | 88.7 |
| SH | 13 | 9.6 | 123 | 90.4 | 40 | 21.5 | 146 | 78.5 |
| UT | 42 | 25.3 | 124 | 74.7 | 32 | 16.8 | 159 | 83.2 |
| ZE | 30 | 18.1 | 136 | 81.9 | 26 | 19.1 | 110 | 80.9 |

The distribution of variants across regions in the category of *gt*-words is shown in Table 2b. In the eighteenth century, <gt> is prevalent across all seven regions, particularly in South Holland (90.4%) and Friesland (93.0%). The share of <cht> is remarkably strong in the North Holland data, occurring in more than one-third of all instances. When it comes to the diachronic developments, however, two different tendencies can be witnessed. In the nineteenth-century period, the relative frequency of prescribed <gt> increases in Utrecht (from 74.7% to 83.2%), Groningen (from 77.4% to 87.4%) and most notably in North Holland (from 65.1% to 88.7%). In contrast, there are some regions, in which the use of (not

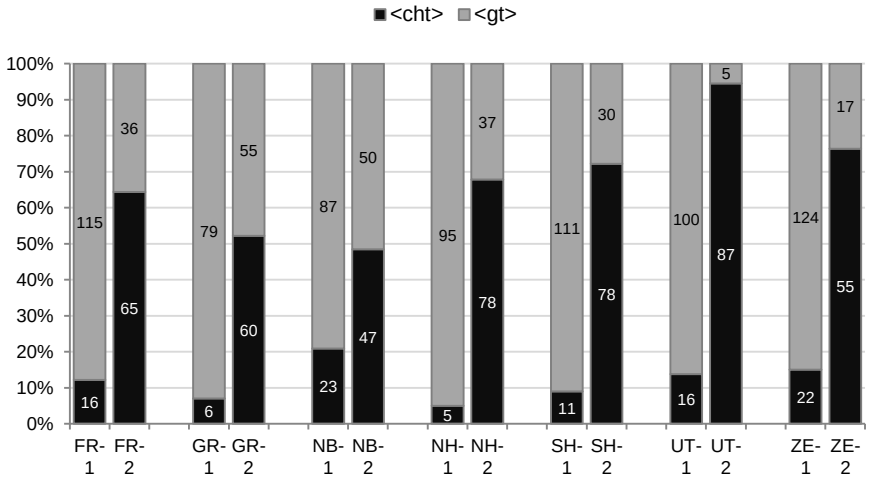
prescribed) <cht> increases, i.e. in Friesland (from 7.0% to 17.5%), South Holland (from 9.6% to 21.5%) and North Brabant (from 21.5% to 29.0%).

***Regional variation across genres***

The analysis of genre variation revealed that different genres have a considerable effect on the use of either <cht> or <gt>. Therefore, the three genres incorporated in the *Going Dutch Corpus* were analysed individually in order to zoom in on regional variation across genres.

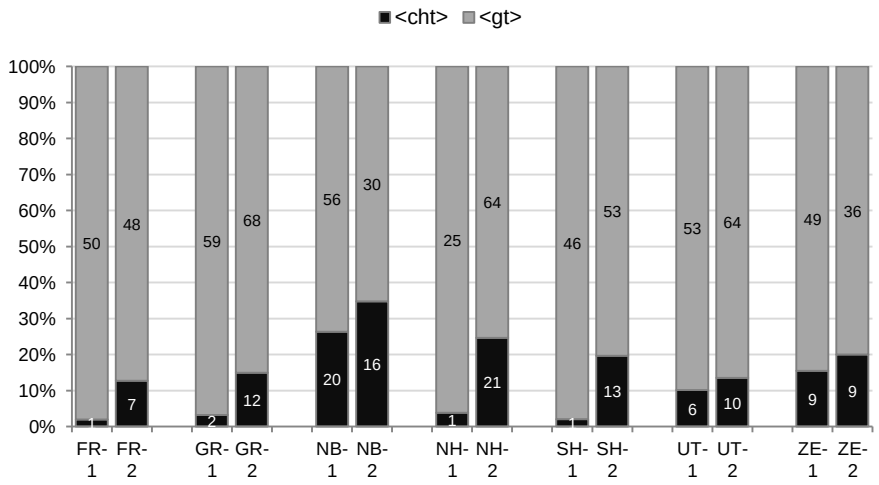
Focusing on the sub-corpus of private letters first, the *cht*-category in Figure 2a reveals some considerable regional differences, particularly in the second period. Whereas the prescribed variant <cht> occurs in 94.6% of the tokens in Utrecht, its share is considerably lower in North Brabant. In fact, North Brabant is the only region in which <gt> outnumbers the official variant <cht> with a share of 51.5%. Moreover, Groningen has a similarly high frequency of <gt> (47.8%), thus co-occurring with prescribed <cht>.

**Figure 2a.** Distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words across region and time (private letters).



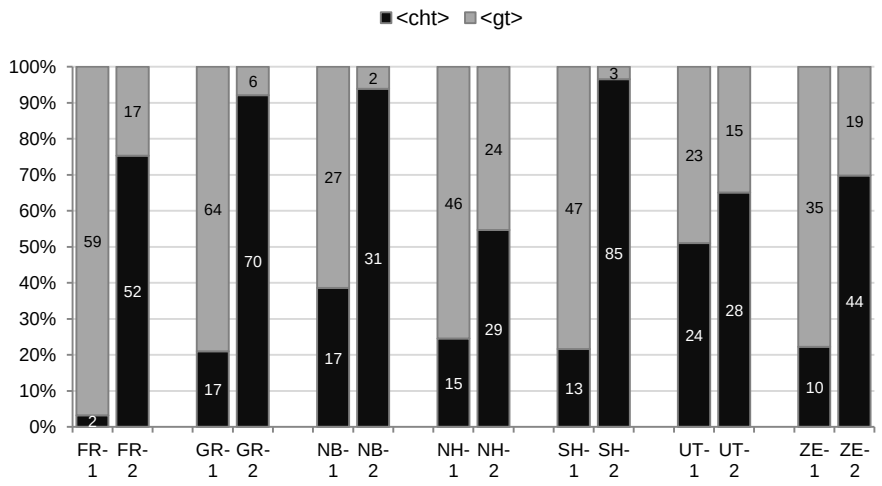

The distribution of words in the *gt*-category (Figure 2b) confirms the prevalence of <gt> across all regions. Diachronically, however, the results reveal that the use of <cht>, i.e. against Siegenbeek's spelling prescription, increases in private letters from all seven regions. The highest percentage of <cht> is found in nineteenth-century letters from North Brabant (34.8%). The lowest shares are attested in the data for Friesland, Groningen and Utrecht (less than 15% each).

**Figure 2b.** Distribution of variants in the category of *gt*-words across region and time (private letters).



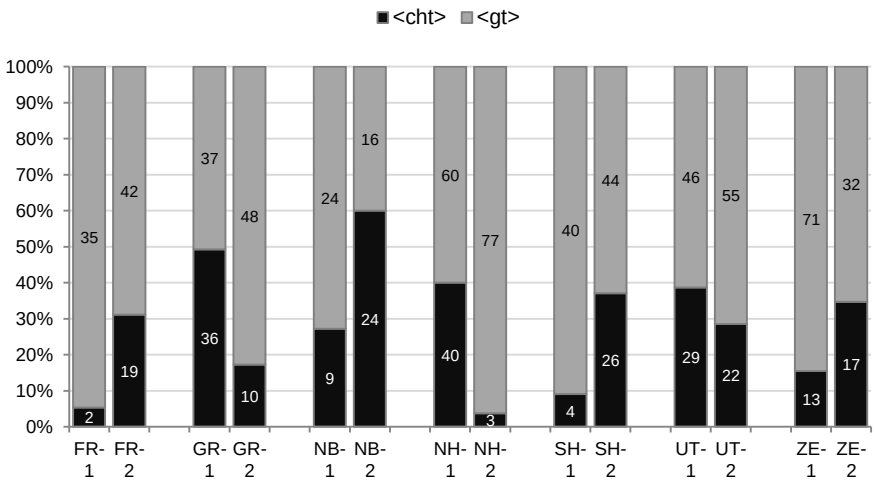

Secondly, the distribution across regions in the sub-corpus of diaries and travelogues was studied. In the category of *cht*-words (Figure 3a) there is a general shift from <gt> as the prevalent variant in period 1 to prescribed <cht> in period 2 in all seven regions, most notably in Groningen, North Brabant and South Holland with a share of more than 90% each.

**Figure 3a.** Distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words across region and time (diaries and travelogues).



In the category of *gt*-words (Figure 3b), two different regional developments can be witnessed. On the one hand, the use of prescribed <gt> increases in diaries and travelogues from Groningen, North Holland and Utrecht. On the other hand, in Friesland, North Brabant[44], South Holland and Zeeland, it is the <cht> spelling which increases in the category of *gt*-words. The variation revealed here helps to explain the surprising regional differences in the entire corpus as presented in Table 2b, viz. the increase of prescribed <cht> for *gt*-words in certain regions. These tendencies can, in fact, only be observed in diaries and travelogues.

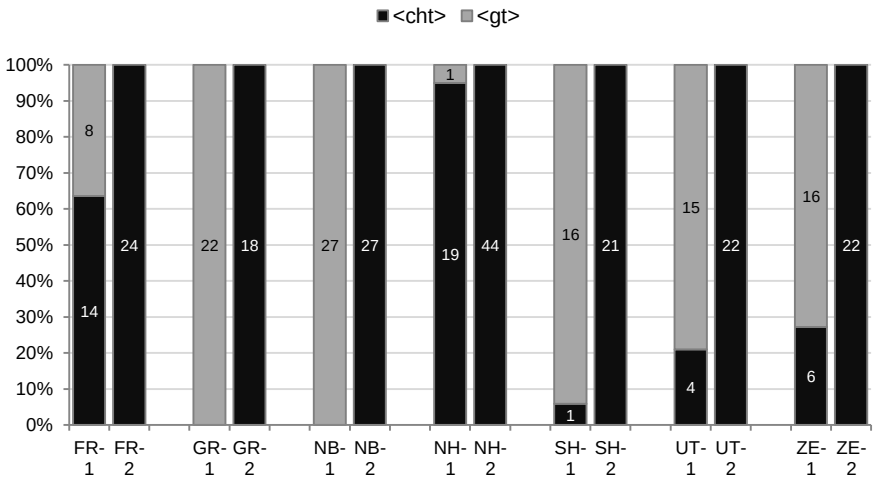
**Figure 3b.** Distribution of variants in the category of *gt*-words across region and time (diaries and travelogues).




Finally, focusing on regional variation in newspapers, the *cht*-category (Figure 4a) shows that different variants were preferred in the first period, depending on the region. Even though the number of tokens is relatively small, late eighteenth-century newspapers from North Holland clearly favour <cht> in practically all instances. In Friesland <cht> and <gt> are co-occurring variants, whereas <cht> is completely absent in newspapers from Groningen and North Brabant. In the nineteenth-century data, <cht> is the only variant found in newspapers from all regions.

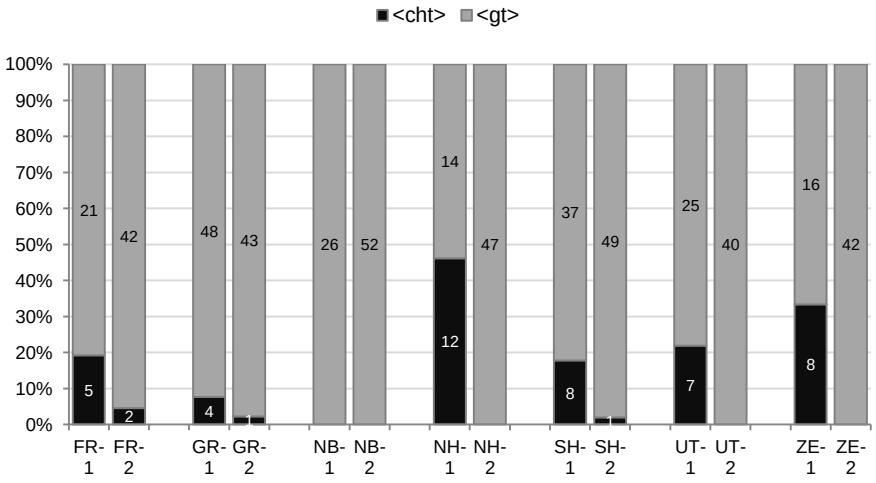
[44] It has to be noted, though, that the nineteenth-century data for North Brabant is based on one diary only. Therefore, the representativeness of one individual writer from this region has to be considered as limited.

**Figure 4a.** Distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words across region and time (newspapers).




In the *gt*-category (Figure 4b), eighteenth-century newspapers from North Holland have the highest share of <cht> (46.2%), which is in line with the distinct preference for <cht> in the *cht*-category in the same period. Other regions such as Zeeland and Utrecht use <cht> in 33.3% and 21.9%, respectively. Again, no single attestation of <cht> is found in the North Brabant data.

**Figure 4b.** Distribution of variants in the category of *gt*-words across region and time (newspapers).



Despite these regional differences in the first period, nineteenth-century newspapers from all seven regions use <gt> in conformity with the officialised categorisation, which indicates a strong normative influence of Siegenbeek's orthography on newspapers.

### *Variation across centre and periphery*

Building on the results of regional variation, Figures 5a (*cht*-words) and 5b (*gt*-words) take into account the second variable on the spatial dimension, viz. centre (CEN) versus periphery (PER).

**Figure 5a.** Distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words across centre–periphery and time.

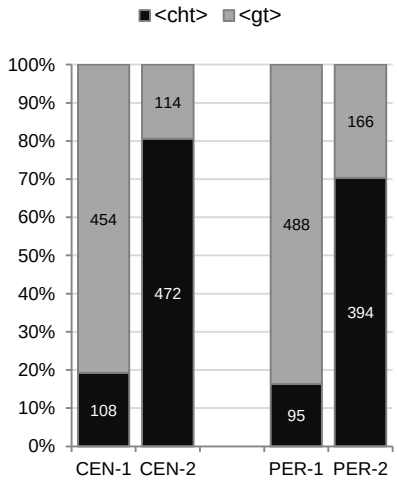



**Figure 5b.** Distribution of variants in the category of *gt*-words across centre–periphery and time.

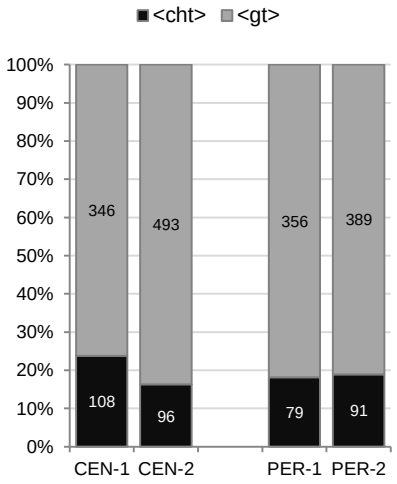



Figure 5a shows similar tendencies in the category of *cht*-words in both centre and periphery: <cht> as the marginal variant in period 1 becomes the dominant variant in period 2, but the prevalence of prescribed <cht> is more prevalent in the centre (80.5%) than in the periphery (70.4%). The category of *gt*-words in Figure 5b reveals a more remarkable difference in the diachronic development of the variants. Whereas the use of prescribed <gt> increases from 76.2% to 83.7% in the centre, there is hardly any change in the distribution of variants in the periphery. In fact, <cht> even increases marginally from 18.2% to 18.6%.

### *Gender variation*

In order to shed light on possible gender variation, the two sub-corpora of ego-documents, viz. private letters as well as diaries and travelogues, were analysed.

Figures 6a and 6b display the distribution of variants across men (M) and women (F) in the categories of *cht*- and *gt*-words, respectively.

Figure 6a below shows that eighteenth-century men and women predominantly use <gt> in the group of words which Siegenbeek later categorised as *cht*-words. In the results for both genders, <cht> only occurs marginally, particularly among women (11.3%). In the nineteenth-century period, the majority of both men and women adopts the prescribed variant <cht>. Women, however, appear to follow the officialised spelling considerably less frequently than men. In fact, almost 40% of the female writers still use <gt> for *cht*-words. In contrast, the vast majority of male writers (almost 80%) use <cht> in conformity with Siegenbeek's prescription.

**Figure 6a.** Distribution of variants in the category of *cht*-words across gender and time.

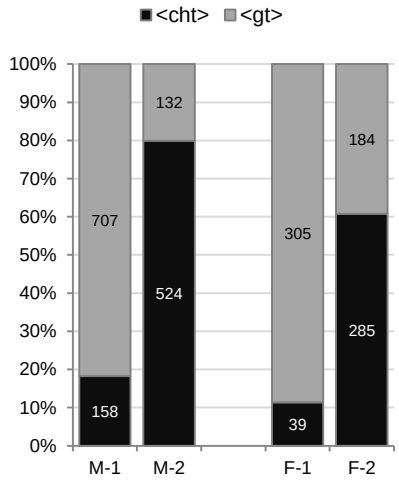



**Figure 6b.** Distribution of variants in the category of *gt*-words across gender and time.

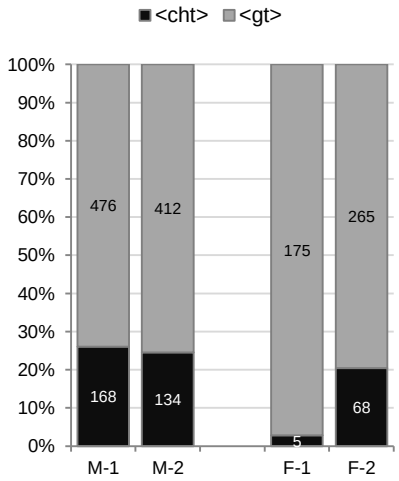



Figure 6b presents the results in the category of *gt*-words. The distribution of variants in the late eighteenth-century period is similar to that presented in Figure 6a. The <gt> spelling is by far the most dominant variant among men and women of the pre-Siegenbeek generation. Whereas male writers use <cht> in 26.1% of all instances, it is striking that <cht> is practically absent in texts by female writers (in both categories of words actually). Interestingly, in the period after Siegenbeek, the use of <cht> for *gt*-words among women increases from 2.8% to 20.4%. No such development is visible in the results for men: The distribution of the two variants is stable across time. Despite the striking increase of <cht> among nineteenth-century women, the relative frequency of <gt> (79.6%) is still slightly higher than in ego-documents written by men (75.5%).

## 5 Discussion

Taking into account both language norms and language usage, the orthographic representation of the consonant cluster /xt/ in syllable-final position can be considered a fairly complex variable. As discussed in Section 1, Siegenbeek (1804) officially introduced a division into two categories of words, viz. words prescribed to be spelled with either <cht> (e.g. *dacht* 'thought' in line with pronunciation, i.e. final devoicing) or <gt> (e.g. as *bragt* 'brought' < *brengen* 'to bring', due to their derivation and/or etymology). Furthermore, Section 2 outlined the eighteenth-century normative discussion, showing that despite the limited consensus regarding the spelling of individual words, both <cht> and <gt> were already acknowledged as (co-existing) variants before the official codification of the Dutch spelling. In that sense, Siegenbeek's selection of variants as such was not that innovative. Some of his choices, however, could be considered as progressive in relation to the eighteenth-century normative tradition. Especially his view on homonymy, according to which he rejected the widespread idea to distinguish homonyms by spelling (e.g. *agt* 'eight' versus *acht* as in *acht geven* 'take care'), deviated from most eighteenth-century normative works. The only exception was Kluit (1777), on which Siegenbeek heavily relied.

Analysing the corpus results of actual language usage in Section 4, it becomes apparent that the representation of /xt/ as <gt> is clearly prevalent among late eighteenth-century language users. Even though <cht> had already been an acknowledged and prescribed variant in many eighteenth-century normative works, this is hardly reflected in language practice, where <cht> only marginally occurs. In this respect, the increase of <cht> after Siegenbeek's prescription is even more striking. The successful shift from <gt> to <cht> as the dominant variant in the category of *cht*-words most probably indicates the top-down effect of Siegenbeek's orthography on language practices.

The expected genre differences between printed published texts and handwritten ego-documents were generally confirmed. It was observed that nineteenth-century newspapers adopted the prescribed variants in practically all instances, without any regional variation. The same analysis in the sub-corpus of private letters revealed considerably more variation, though. Here it was particularly striking that, in addition to the major shift from <gt> to <cht> in the category of *cht*-words, the relative frequency of <cht> in the *gt*-category also increased. This development, in fact, appeared to be a national phenomenon, as it was attested across all seven regions of the corpus. One might assume that the official 1804 spelling increased the awareness of the previously marginal <cht> variant among language users. On the one hand, it led to an increase of <cht> and ultimately its predominance in the category of *cht*-words – as envisaged in Siegenbeek's orthography. On the other hand, it could be argued that <cht> was also overgeneralised by language users to words which did not belong to the category of *cht*-words, possibly leading to cases of hypercorrection in the *gt*-category.

Especially with regard to the use of variants deviating from Siegenbeek's spelling rule, the results for North Brabant were particularly interesting. Of all

regions, nineteenth-century letters from North Brabant had the highest share of the <gt> spelling for *cht*-words (more than half of all instances), but also the highest share of <cht> for *gt*-words (more than two-thirds). Furthermore, <cht> was completely absent in eighteenth-century newspapers of this region, possibly indicating regional conventions favouring <gt>. On the contrary, newspapers from North Holland already used <cht> before 1804. With regard to the fact that Siegenbeek was a native of Amsterdam, it might even be suggested that (printed) language practices from the (North) Holland area had some influence on Siegenbeek's choice of variants.

The results on the centre–periphery level also supported these regional tendencies. The centre (including the Holland area) was generally more successful in adopting the prescribed variants for both *cht*- and *gt*-words than the periphery (including North Brabant).

With respect to gender variation, it was particularly noticeable that nineteenth-century women increasingly used <cht> for *gt*-words. The surprising development from almost non-existent <cht> before Siegenbeek to 20% after Siegenbeek can probably be interpreted as instances of hypercorrection as well.

To sum up, the normative effects of Siegenbeek's prescription for the *cht*/*gt* issue are certainly visible in early nineteenth-century language usage. Despite the complexity of the officialised rule, the categorization into *cht*- and *gt*-words was established across all genres, regions and genders. Both <cht> and <gt> became the most frequently used variants in their respective categories of words. Looking at the diachronic developments more generally, the striking increase of the previously marginal variant <cht> (in the category of *cht*-words) probably reflects an evolution in the relation between language norms and language usage. Even though <cht> had been an acknowledged and prescribed spelling (alongside <gt>) in metalinguistic comments before Siegenbeek, it only played a marginal role in eighteenth-century usage, whereas <gt> was clearly dominant in language usage. In principle, Siegenbeek's choice of variants did not deviate much from eighteenth-century grammarians, but, in contrast to those normative works, his 1804 orthography had such an impact that normative effects became visible in actual usage. One might argue that the official regulation of the Dutch orthography was the decisive step needed to 'reach' the language user.

Some questions about the remarkable success of the *cht*/*gt* categorisation remain, though. Which aspect(s) of Siegenbeek's norm actually reached the language users? Which part(s) of the official rule were they aware of? Two main scenarios are possible: First of all, language users were aware of the exact spelling rule prescribed by Siegenbeek, dividing words with syllable-final /xt/ into two categories and consequently spelled with either (phonologically motivated) <cht> or (etymologically motivated) <gt>. Secondly, and probably more realistically, language users were aware of the mere existence of <cht> as part of the official spelling norm, but probably independent of its exact rules, i.e. on how and when to apply either the phonological or etymological principle. In fact, the attested cases of hypercorrect <cht> in the category of *gt*-words support the second scenario. In private letters from all regions, an increase of probably overgeneralised <cht> for

*gt*-words was observed. Particularly striking were the developments among female letter writers, from a practically non-existent use of <cht> in the eighteenth-century data to around 20% in the early nineteenth century. For these language users, the <cht> spelling must have been perceived as the newly promoted 'Siegenbeekian' spelling, as it was considerably less common in language practice in the late eighteenth century and only began to be used more frequently (and more consciously) after Siegenbeek's orthography.