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

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Orthographic variables (4)

Long *e*'s in open syllable

1 Discussion in Siegenbeek (1804)

Comprising almost forty pages, the spelling of long vowels is undoubtedly one of the most extensively discussed features in Siegenbeek's (1804) national orthography of Dutch. Siegenbeek paid particular attention to the orthographic representation of long *e*'s and *o*'s, treating these etymologically distinct vowels as an exception to the general rule for long vowels, which had to be spelled with a single grapheme in open syllables. In this chapter, the special case of the long *e*'s will exemplify this spelling issue, although the orthographic representation of long *o*'s could have served as a possible case study, too (cf. also Rutten 2011: ch. 5; Rutten 2009b).

In Dutch historical linguistics, two long *e*'s are traditionally distinguished based on their etymologies (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 34-44). First, the so-called soft-long *ē* evolved through lengthening of the originally short vowels [e] and [i] in open syllables, as in *geven* 'to give' and *nemen* 'to take' (also compare German *geben*, *nehmen*). Secondly, the so-called sharp-long *ê* derives from the West Germanic diphthong **ai*, as in *steen* 'stone' and *deelen* 'to share' (German *Stein*, *teilen*).

In North Holland, particularly in the Amsterdam area, these two phonemes had merged into one long [e:] already by the end of the sixteenth century, which is also the situation in present-day Standard Dutch. However, the historical-phonological distinction between the rather monophthongal soft-long *ē* and the diphthongal sharp-long *ê* has been maintained in various dialect areas of the Northern Netherlands until today⁵⁵, for example in Groningen, Zeeland, as well as in parts of South Holland and North Brabant, primarily along the river Meuse (Goossens et al. 2000a, maps 21/128).

With respect to the orthographic representation of the two long *e*'s, it is generally assumed that supraregional (originally Southern) writing practices had developed, distinguishing between <*e*> for soft-long *ē* in open syllables, and <*ee*> for sharp-long *ê* in open syllables (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 36). In his spelling treatise, Siegenbeek's (1804: 134) rule for long *e*'s in open syllables was, in fact, mainly founded on this phonology-based system:

Bedien u in lettergrepen, niet op eenen medeklinker sluitende, ter aanwijzing van den langen klank, altijd van eenen enkelen klinker, met uitzondering slechts van die woorden, welke volgens hunne oorspronkelijke eigenschap, de harde lange *e* of

⁵⁵ With regard to the situation in Southern Dutch, the difference in pronunciation has also been maintained in most Flemish, Brabantian and Limburgish dialects (Rutten 2011: 85).

o, met de *ei* of *au* vermaagschapt, hebben, en dus eene verdubbeling der vokaal vereischen.

‘In syllables which do not end in a consonant, you should always use a single vowel to indicate the long sound, with the exception of those words, which, according to their original quality, have the hard long *e* or *o*, related to the *ei* or *au*, and thus require a doubling of the vowel.’

Summarised in this concise and clear rule, Siegenbeek (1804) thus prescribed the single grapheme <e> for soft-long (*zachte lange*) *e* in open syllables (i.e. in line with his general rule for long vowels), but the digraph <ee> for sharp-long (*harde lange*) *e* in open syllables.

Largely following his influential eighteenth-century predecessors ten Kate (1723) and Kluit (1763) (cf. Section 2), Siegenbeek (1804: 118f.) aimed to substantiate his decision by highlighting the differences between the long *e*'s:

ook de lange *e* en *o* [hebben] een' zachten, en een' harden, scherpen of hoogen klank [...], meer of min zwemende naar eenen tweeklank; welke laatste in *heelen* (heilen), *leenen* (*mutuo dare*) [...] enz. plaats vindt; terwijl de eerste, of zachte klank eigen is aan *belen* (verbergen), *lenen* (leunen) [...] en meer dergelijken.

‘the long *e* and *o* also have a soft, and a hard, sharp or high sound [...], more or less resembling a diphthong, the latter of which is found in *heelen* (heal), *leenen* (*mutuo dare*) [...] etc, whereas the former, or soft sound is characteristic of *belen* (hide), *lenen* (lean) [...] and the like.’

Siegenbeek (1804: 119) acknowledged that the differences between the two long *e*'s had been lost in the ‘corrupted’ (*verbasterd*) pronunciation of many Dutch speakers, especially of the *Amstellanderen* (i.e. Amsterdammers). On the other hand, he also emphasised that the difference in pronunciation had been preserved in the dialects found in the *Maaskant* (by which he meant Rotterdam and other places along the River Meuse), Zeeland, Groningen, and others:

Het is waar, dat hetzelfde [= onderscheid van klank in de lange *e*] thans in de uitspraak van vele Nederlanders, bijzonderlijk der Amstellanderen, is verloren gegaan; doch daarentegen laat het zich op de tong der Maaskanter, Zeeuwen, Groningers, en andere bewoners van ons Vaderland, duidelijk hooren. Ja, hoe verbasterd in dit opzigt de uitspraak der Amstellanderen ook zijn moge, heeft echter die van het lage gemeen het kenmerk der harde scherpe *e* nog bewaard, zeggende, volgens een Vriesch dialect, *ien* voor *één*, *bien* voor *béén*, *stien* voor *stéén*, *wiek* voor *week* (*mollis*), *gien* voor *geen* (*nullus*); terwijl de zachte *ee* in *week* (*hebdomas*), *geen* (*hic, ille*), bij de uitspraak nimmer in *ie* overgaat.

‘It is true that the difference has nowadays been lost in the pronunciation of many Dutch people, especially the Amsterdammers. But in contrast, it can clearly be heard in the dialects of the people in the Maaskant region, Zeeland, Groningen, and other inhabitants of our fatherland. Yes, however corrupted the pronunciation of the Amsterdammers may be in this respect, the pronunciation of the rabble has still preserved the feature of the hard sharp *e*, saying, according to a Frisian dialect, *ien* for *één*, *bien* for *béén*, *stien* for *stéén*, *wiek* for *week* (*mollis*), *gien* for *geen* (*nullus*),

whereas the soft *ee* in *week* (*hebdomas*), *geen* (*hic, ille*) never changes into *ie* in the pronunciation.⁵⁶

What follows is a demonstration of the etymological differences by presenting a number of cognate words in languages related with Dutch, such as Gothic, Old Saxon and Old Franconian. For instance, Siegenbeek (1804: 120-121) illustrated the (diphthongal) sharp-long *ē* by the verb *deelen* 'share', and the (monophthongal) soft-long *e* by *geven* 'give':

DEELEN, M-G.⁵⁶ *dailjan*, Al. *teilan*, *teilen*, A-S. *dalan*.

GEVEN, M-G. *giban*, Fr-D. *giban*, *geban*, A-S. *gifan*, *gyfan*, *gefan*. [...]

Bij dit bewijs, uit de oude, met ons Nederduitsch verwantschapte, talen ontleend, voegt zich een andere niet min klemmende bewijsgrond, welken het gebruik van velen onzer achtbaarste schrijveren en de uitspraak in verscheidene streken van Nederland ons aanbieden.

'In addition to this evidence derived from the old languages related to our Dutch language, there is another, not less convincing evidence, which the use of many of our most respectable writers and the pronunciation in various regions of the Netherlands suggest to us.'

In addition to the different etymologies illustrated by cognates, Siegenbeek mentioned the usage in the writing of many respectable authors as well as the pronunciation in various Dutch regions as convincing evidence. It is particularly the latter argument which was pointed out by Siegenbeek (1804: 130) as the most crucial factor, demonstrating that the difference between the two long *e*'s was neither 'whimsical' (*grillig*) nor 'imaginary' (*ingebeeld*), but grounded on the *gemeenlandsche*, i.e. common 'national' pronunciation:

Zie daar dan, op voorgang van TEN KATE en andere taalkenners, zoo wij meenen, onwederlegbaar betoogd, dat het onderscheid van klank tusschen de harde en zachte lange *e* en *o* niet grillig en ingebeeld, maar wezenlijk en op de gemeenlandsche uitspraak gegrond is. En zal men, dit erkennende, niet tevens moeten toestemmen, dat dit verschil van klank door een onderscheidende schrijfwijze dient aangeduid te worden? [...]

Het is derhalve volstrekt noodzakelijk in de spelling zorg te dragen, dat een zoo wezenlijk en belangrijk taaleigen, door de verbastering der uitspraak, niet eindelijk geheel onkenbaar worde en verloren ga.

'Following the example of TEN KATE and other language experts, which, as we think, irrefutably demonstrates that the distinction in sound between the hard and soft long *e* and *o* is not whimsical and imaginary, but essential and grounded on the common 'national' pronunciation. And, acknowledging this, should one not also agree that the difference in sound has to be indicated by distinct spellings? [...]

⁵⁶ The abbreviations of languages used in this quote refer to Moeso-Gothic (*Moesogothisch*, M-G.), Alemannic (*Alemanisch*, Al.), Anglo-Saxon (*Angelsaxisch*, A-S.), and Franconian (*Frankduitsch*, Fr-D.).

It is therefore completely necessary in spelling to take care that such an essential and important feature of the language does not become entirely unrecognisable and lost in the end, through the corruption of the pronunciation.’

Not only did Siegenbeek emphasise that such a phonological distinction had to be reflected in spelling, he also concluded that it was necessary to take this essential idiomatic feature of the Dutch language into account in order to prevent its decay and loss.

2 Eighteenth-century normative discussion

A comprehensive account of the orthographic representation of etymologically distinct long *e*'s in eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse is provided by Rutten (2011: ch. 5), also serving as the basis for this section. In general terms, he argues that the normative discussion in the Northern Netherlands from the late seventeenth century until Siegenbeek (1804) was divided into two camps (Rutten 2011: 94). On the one hand, there was an originally Southern tradition, often associated with the sixteenth-century lexicographer Cornelis Kiliaen and the *Statenbijbel* (1637), which was grounded on the historical-phonological difference between soft-long *ē* (spelled <e> in open syllable) and sharp-long *ê* (spelled <ee> in open syllable). On the other hand, there was a more morphologically oriented tradition with North Holland as its centre, which followed the linguistic practices of the influential poet and writer Joost van den Vondel. As opposed to the phonology-based system from the South, this Northern tradition had a strong focus on the principle of uniformity (*gelijkvormigheid*), according to which sharp-long *deelen* occurred alongside soft-long *weeten* (both spelled with <ee> by analogy with the root words *deel* and *weet*), but also sharp-long *hemel* alongside soft-long *beter* (no analogy involved) (Vosters 2011: 275).

Francius (1699) was one of the first grammarians to follow and codify Vondel's morphology-based system with regard to long vowels. Uniformity and analogy were the crucial factors for his spelling rule, arguing that the double vowel spelling <ee> should be derived either from the singular form or the root word:

De verdubbeling der klinkers is somtijds noodig, somtijds niet, en 't gaat mijns oordeels niet altijd door, dat de tweede niet noodzaakelijk is. Op een lettertje meer of min zal 't niet aankomen, als die verdubbeling maar meer klaarheids byzet, en uit het minder getal, of uit het wortelwoordt haren oorspronk heeft. (1699: 65)

‘Sometimes the doubling of the vowels is necessary, sometimes it is not, and in my opinion it does not always happen that the second is not necessary. It will not matter whether it is one letter more or less, as long as the doubling adds more clarity, and derives from the singular or from the root word.’

A more detailed discussion grounded on morphological considerations is found in Moonen (1706). He generally advocated the spelling with a single vowel in open syllables, as in *edel*, *even* and *hemel*. However, under specific morphological

conditions, primarily related to the root word, the spelling with a double vowel was required in open syllables. Moonen (1706: 27-29) listed three groups of words to be spelled with <ee>: (1) plural forms of nouns with a long vowel in the singular (e.g. *beer* – *beeren*), (2) verbs with a long vowel in their root or stem, i.e. the second person singular imperative (e.g. *leer* – *leere*, *leeren*), and (3) derivations of words with a long vowel (e.g. *eenigh*, *eenigzins*, *eenigheit* < *een*, also *leeraer* < *leere*):

Gelyk nu hier toe het verdubbelen of verlengen der Klinkeren niet noodigh is, zoo meene ik, dat deeze verdubbeling omtrent veele andere woorden noodigh en dienstigh is: te weeten, eerst in Naemwoorden, van alle de drie Geslachten, die in hun Eenvouwich Getal eenen verlengden Klinker hebben, dien zy, myns bedunkens, in het Meervouwich moeten behouden, gelyk te zien is in de volgende en diergelyke woorden, [...] *beer*, *beeren*, [...] *oor*, *ooren*, *spoor*, *spooren* [...]

Daer na in Werkwoorden, die in hun Wortelwoort, den tweeden persoon des Eenvouwichen Getals in de Gebiedende Wyze, eenen langen Klinker gebruiken; als in *Haet*, *leer*, *stier*, *hoor*, *schuur*, waer van afkoomen *Ik haete*, *leere*, *stiere*, *hoore*, *schuure*, *ny haeten*, *leeren*, *stieren*, *hooren*, *schuuren*.

In welke woorden de helfte van den langen Klinker alzoo weinigh magh uitgeworpen worden, en dus de Wortelletter verminkt, om te spellen, *bate*, *lere*, *bore*, *schure*, *haten*, *leren*, *boren*, *schuren*, als men spellen magh in den Onvolmaecten Tyt der Aentoonende Wyze, *Ik hatte*, *lerde*, *horde*, *schurde*, *ny hatten*, *lerden*, *horden*, *schurden*. [...]

Dus behoort men ook andere woorden te spellen, die afkoomen van andere, die eenen Langen Klinker in den oirsprong hebben; gelyk *eenigh*, *eenigzins*, *eenigheit*, die gesprooten zyn van *een*, en *eeuwigh* met *eeuwigheit*, die van *eeu* komen. Breng hier ook toe *leeraer* van *leere*, *groot* van *groot*, *booz* van *boos*, in de plaetse van *leraer*, *groter*, *bozer*.

‘While the doubling or lengthening of the vowels is not necessary here, I think that this doubling is necessary and useful in many other words, namely, first in nouns of all three genders, which have a lengthened vowel in their singular, which, in my opinion, they must maintain in the plural, as can be seen in the following and similar words, [...] *beer*, *beeren*, [...] *oor*, *ooren*, *spoor*, *spooren*.

Moreover, in verbs which use a long vowel in their root word of the second person singular imperative, as in *Haet*, *leer*, *stier*, *hoor*, *schuur*, from which *Ik haete*, *leere*, *stiere*, *hoore*, *schuure*, *ny haeten*, *leeren*, *stieren*, *hooren*, *schuuren* derive.

In these words, one half of the long vowel may be thrown out, thus mutilating the root letter, in order to spell *bate*, *lere*, *bore*, *schure*, *haten*, *leren*, *boren*, *schuren*, as little as one may spell in the imperfect tense of the indicative, *Ik hatte*, *lerde*, *horde*, *schurde*, *ny hatten*, *lerden*, *horden*, *schurden*. [...]

In such a way, one must also spell other words which derive from others, which originally have a long vowel; like *eenigh*, *eenigzins*, *eenigheit*, which derive from *een*, and *eeuwigh* with *eeuwigheit*, which derive from *eeu*. Furthermore, *leeraer* from *leere*, *groot* from *groot*, *booz* from *boos*, in place of *leraer*, *groter*, *bozer*.’

Although Moonen’s system is chiefly grounded on morphological considerations, he also mentioned the differences in pronunciation with regard to *e*'s and *o*'s at some point, referring to the poet Jeremias de Decker. However, in his grammar, oriented to the North Holland dialects, he seemed to have no idea about the historical-phonological distinction and its maintenance in other dialect regions,

as Rutten (2011: 96) remarks: “In zijn op het Noord-Hollands georiënteerde spraakkunst zijn scherp- en zachtlang niet alleen samengevallen, hij lijkt ook geen idee te hebben van het voormalige onderscheid ervan noch van het regionale voortbestaan”.

Sewel (1708: 12-13) did not comment on etymologically and phonologically distinct long *e*'s (Rutten 2011: 97). He advocated the spelling of single <e> in open syllable, for example in *ézel*, *hémel* and *lépel*, where the use of accent marks served the purpose to distinguish the long *e*'s [e:] and [ɛ] from [ə] (Rutten 2011: 96). Nevertheless, Sewel (1708: 12) prescribed *steen* rather than *stene* in order to retain the vowel spelling of the root word. In his discussion of long *a* (*AA*), Sewel (1708: 7) also highlighted the principle of uniformity:

men krenkt dan de eygenschap van 't woord, en zo doet men ook als men schryft *Zaken*, *benen*, *poten*, *raden* enz. Deze redenen, hoewel sommige zich daartegen verzetten, zyn by my nógtans van groot gewigt, hoewel ik anders tegen alle overtóllige letteren ben.

‘then one harms the quality of the word, and one also does so when one writes *Zaken*, *benen*, *poten*, *raden* etc. Although some offer resistance, these reasons are still of great importance to me, although I am against all redundant letters otherwise.’

Morphological aspects were also central to van Rhyn's (1758) choices, arguing that the spelling of vowels needs to take into account the *Oorspronkelykheid der Woorden* (1758: 6), by which he referred to the root word. The necessity to use the double vowel spelling is exemplified by *Steenen* (plural) and *Steen* (singular), illustrating that “wanneer de Woorden in 't Eenvoud twee Vocaalen hebben, zy dezelve in 't Meervoud moeten behouden” (van Rhyn 1758: 7)

During the last decades of the eighteenth century, the merger of sharp-long *ê* and soft-long *ē* in (North) Holland was addressed in the grammar by *Kunst wordt door arbeid verkreegen* (1770: 33), raising the question who could actually hear a difference by the mere pronunciation of *steen* ‘stones’ and *stene* ‘moan’: “Wie kan in het enkel uitspreken van *steen* (lapides) en *stene* (zuchten) onderscheid horen?”.

Just before the turn of the century, the *Rudimenta* (1799: 49-50) still followed Vondel, Moonen (1706) and Sewel (1707, 1708), summarising the morphology-based Northern tradition:

De letter E heeft drieërlei geluid of uitspraak; als 1. helder, 2. dof, of zacht, 3. lang of zwaar.

E is helder in *vel*, *melk*, *zelf*, *zet*, *net*, enz.

E is dof of zacht in *zadel*, *fabel*, *aarde*, *bedrijf*, enz.

E is lang of zwaar in *Eva*, *Lea*, *Eland*, enz. [...]

Dan moet men ook in het gebruik van één E of twee EE weder letten op de afleiding, of verschillende betekenis [...] b. v. men schrijft:

Smeeden, *smeeken*, *geeven*, *speelen*, [...] Als deeze woorden in het Enkelvoudige betekenen, of afgeleid worden van *smeed*, *smeek*, *geef*, *speel* [...] (1799: 49-50)

‘The letter E has three kinds of sound or pronunciation, as 1. clear, 2. dull, or soft, 3. long or heavy.

E is clear in *vel, melk, zelf, zet, net*, etc.
 E is dull or soft in *zadel, fabel, aarde, bedrijf*, etc.
 E is long or heavy in *Eva, Lea, Eland*, etc. [...]
 Then one must also consider the derivation, or different meaning in the use of one
 E or two EE [...] e.g. one writes:
Smeeden, smeecken, geeven, speelen, [...] When these words in the singular mean or
 derive from *smeed, smeeck, geef, speel* [...]

In opposition to the morphologically oriented system from North Holland, the alternative eighteenth-century tradition from South Holland was grounded on the phonological difference between sharp-long *è* and soft-long *ē*.

With regard to the spelling of long vowels, Verwer (1707) took the *Statenbijbel* as his main point of reference, making a strict distinction between soft <e> (*epsilon*) and sharp <ee> (*èta*) (Verwer 1707: 2). Terminologically, in fact, this was the first time that *zachtlange* en *scherplange e*'s appeared in the literature (cf. Rutten 2011: 98). Taking into account regional differences, Verwer (1707: 97) acknowledged that the phonological difference had been 'fatefully confused' (*rampzalig verward*) in Amsterdam and, more generally, in North Holland, whereas it had been preserved in South Holland:

Epsilon en *èta* [...], hebben bij ons een verschillende klank, gebaseerd op het onderscheid zelf der zaken en die met de juiste helderheid gehoord wordt in het genoemde zuidelijke gebied van Holland. Want leder (*leder*), "corium", is iets anders dan leeder (*lèder*), "scala" [...], ofschoon dit alles door het gepeupel en zijn nalopers in Amsterdam en Noord-Holland rampzalig wordt verward.

'*Epsilon* and *èta* [...] have a different sound in our language, based on the distinction itself and which can be heard with the right clarity in the mentioned southern part of Holland. Because leder (leather), "corium" is something different than leeder (ladder), "scala" [...], although this is all fatefully confused by the rabble and its followers in Amsterdam and North Holland.'

Verwer's comment on the lower-class people (*het gepeupel*) from Amsterdam and North Holland is particularly remarkable when compared to Siegenbeek's remark on the lower class (*het lage gemeen*) from the same area almost one century later (cf. Section 1), arguing that the phonological distinction had been preserved in their pronunciation.

In order to facilitate learning the difference between long *e*'s, Verwer (1707: 97) even provided mnemonics, referring to the German cognates spelled with <ei> or <ä> (for sharp-long *èta* <ee>): "Woorden die in het Duits geschreven worden met ei of met ä en door ons met e, worden uitgesproken als met *èta*, bijv. Theilen/deelen, geist/geest, steinen/steenen, gemein/gemeen; gelährter/geleerd" 'Words which are written with ei or with ä in German, and with e in our language, are pronounced as with *èta* [...].'

Verwer's (1707, 1708) observations with regard to the etymologically distinct long *e*'s were further systematised by ten Kate (1723; cf. also van der Wal 2002a). In his so-called critical orthography, which aimed at a one-to-one

correspondence between sign and sound, ten Kate (1723 I: 129) distinguished four *e*'s: (1) the sharp-short <é>, (2) the soft-short <e>, (3) the sharp-long <éé>, and (4) the soft-long <ee>. Ten Kate suggested accent marks (*bovenstreping*, cf. 1723 I: 163) to indicate sharp vowels, and argued that the phonological difference between sharp and soft vowels had to be represented by spelling. At the same time, ten Kate (1723 I: 118) also acknowledged that this distinction had no longer been perceived in the area between North Holland and the river Rhine, which not only violated the *Gemeene-lands Dialect* (common 'national' dialect), but also led to ambiguous homonyms:

Gelijk het onderscheid van Spelling tussen de Langklinkende EE en ÉÉ, OO en ÓÓ, veeltijds bij de teegenwoordige Schrijvers word naagelaaten, zo word zelf het onderscheid in de Uitspraak bij ons, en de geenen die tussen Noord-Holland en den Rijn woenen, niet waargenoomen, als gebruikende alleen de zagte lange EE en OO; waar door wij niet alleen zondigen teegens de Gemeene-lands Dialect, maar ook vervallen in een' Dubbelzinnigheid van woorden, van 't welke veele Zuid-Hollandsche Steeden, en andren van onze Nederduitsche Provinciën, die dit onderscheid in agt neemen, vrij zijn. De Volmaaktheid vereist onderscheid in de Klanken, en dit wederom onderscheidene Letter-Teekenen.

'Although the spelling difference between the long-sounding EE and ÉÉ, OO and ÓÓ is often neglected by contemporary writers, even the difference in pronunciation is not recognised by us and those who live between North Holland and the river Rhine, only using the soft-long EE and OO. In doing so we not only sin against the common 'national' dialect, but also fall into an ambiguity of words, of which many cities in South Holland, and others of our Dutch provinces, which consider this distinction, are free. Perfection requires a distinction in the sounds, and this, in turn, requires different letters.'

He further remarked that many places in South Holland and other provinces had been immune to the merger of the two long *e*'s. Later, ten Kate (1723 I: 157) returned to the aspect of regional variation, adding that inhabitants of Zeeland, Flanders, parts of Brabant and Friesland (*Landfriezen*), among others, had also maintained the difference in pronunciation:

Ten opzigte van 't behoorlijke Onderscheid van Uitspraak tussen EE en ÉÉ vond ik onder onze Nederlanders geen andere makkers in ons verzuim dan die van Over-Yssel; dog de Zuid-Hollanders, Stigtenaers, Zeeuwen, Vlamingen & eenige Brabanders staen 'er beter bij; zo ook onze overbueren de Zaanlanders: de Vriezen voornaemlijk de land-Friezen onderhouden 't desgelijks, hoewel op eene andere wijze; want voor de ÉÉ spreken zij een klank als IE

'With respect to the considerable difference in pronunciation between EE and ÉÉ, I found no other fellows in our carelessness among our Dutch people than those from Overijssel. But the people from South Holland, Utrecht, Zeeland, Flanders and some from Brabant are doing better, just like our neighbours from Zaanland. The Frisians, especially the rural Frisians, maintain it, too, though in a different way, because for the ÉÉ they pronounce a sound like IE'

While his critical orthography thus distinguished sharp-long <ée> and soft-long <ee>, ten Kate also admitted that the (desirable) use of accent marks for sharp vowels had not been established, which is why he followed the Southern writing practices (*het Agtbare gebruik*) in his common orthography, spelling double <ee> for sharp-long *ê* in open syllable, and single <e> for soft-long *ē* in open syllable.

Four decades later, Kluit (1763) largely continued ten Kate's system, regarding the distinction between sharp-long *ê* (<ee>) and soft-long *ē* (<e>) as a characteristic of the common 'national' language ("de gemeenelandsdialekt, die ons eenig richtsnoer weyzen moet", 1763: 343), as opposed to the 'corrupt Amsterdam dialect' ("de bedorven Amstellantsche Dialekt", 1763: 329):

alle onze Schrijvers [hebben] zich eenparig [...] toegeleit, om, den gemeenelantschen spraakvorm volgende, dit zo merklijk klankverschil der scherpe langklinker *ée* behoorelijk in acht te nemen, zodat zy alle die woorden, waaraan die scherpe klank verbonden was, naaukeurig van de *zachte e* onderscheidden door het dubbellaten dezer letter; schrijvende dus nooit anders dan *deelen, heelen, speenen, teeken, meenen, verkleenen*; behoudende voor het overige de *zachte lange e* in *leven, beven, steken, bevelen, gezwegen, verleden*. (1763: 328-329)

'all of our writers have unanimously focused on properly taking account of this considerable difference in the sound of the sharp-long vowel *ée*, following the common 'national' form of the language, so that they accurately distinguish all those words, to which the sharp sound was related, from the *soft e* by doubling of this letter. Thus never write other than *deelen, heelen, speenen, teeken, meenen, verkleenen*; for the rest maintaining the *soft long e* in *leven, beven, steken, bevelen, gezwegen, verleden*.'

Referring to the Alemannic, Franconian and (Moeso-)Gothic dialects, which had preserved the diphthong *ei/ai* (< West Germanic *ai), Kluit (1763: 328-329) emphasised that the distinction between the two long *e*'s is not arbitrary but grounded on the etymology of words:

in alle die woorden, waar de EE voor de EI gebezicht wordt, [wordt] meer dan een enkele klank gehoord [...] En dat deze EE waarlijk de kracht van een *Diphthong* bezitte, en dit dus geen willekeurig onderscheid zy; bewijzen ons de Alemanische, Franktheutsche en Moesogotische Dialekten; de eersten door alle die scherp- en langklinkende woorden [...] stantvastig met de *ei*, de laatste met de *ai* te schrijven

'in all those words, where the EE is used for the EI, more than a single sound is heard [...] And that this EE truly has the power of a diphthong, and that this is thus no arbitrary distinction, is proven by the Alemanic, Franconian and Moeso-Gothic dialects, writing the former in all those sharp and long-sounding words constantly with the *ei*, and the latter with the *ai*'

Like Kluit (1763) as well as de Haes ("De *e* verdubbelen wy niet dan waer zy gehoord word", 1764: 13) and van der Palm (<e> "voor den lagen klank" but <ee> "voor het hooge geluidt", 1769: 14-15), Stijl & van Bolhuis (1776) also followed the phonology-based tradition from South Holland, with ten Kate as "de beste leidsman" 'the best leader':

In lettergrepen, die op een medeklinker eindigen, zou men een bovenstreping gebruiken kunnen, en de harde *ee* in *wéék* (zacht) daar door onderscheiden van *week* (7 dagen). Dit zou echter wat veel moeite verwekken, en is nog weinig in gebruik. Wij zullen er daarom ook niet op aandringen, maar sterk aanprijzen, om in lettergrepen, die op een klinker eindigen, in het hooge geluid de *e* en *o* te verdubbelen, en in het zachte geluid één klinker te gebruiken [...] Dan zou *weeken* (zacht maken) van *weken* (7 dagen) zoo wel in spelling verschillen, als in klank en beteekenis (1776: 35-36)

‘In syllables which end in a consonant, one could use accent marks, and thereby distinguish the hard *ee* in *wéék* (soft) from *week* (7 days). However, this would require quite some effort, and it is still hardly in use. For syllables which end in a vowel, we will therefore not insist but strongly recommend to double the *e* and *o* in the high sound, and to use one vowel in the soft sound [...] Then *weeken* (make soft) would differentiate from *weken* (7 days) in spelling, as well as in sound and meaning’

The accent spelling, first and foremost proposed by ten Kate (1723), was presented as more or less nonobligatory, as it required some effort and had, in fact, hardly been adopted in language usage. This was also commented on by van der Palm (1769: 15) a few years earlier: “Sommigen hebben geoordeelt, dat het niet ondienstig zoude zyn de hooge of scherpe E telkens met een klankteeken van boven te merken; ’t welk echter van zeer weinigen nagevolgt wordt” ‘Some have argued that it would not be useless to mark the high or sharp E with accents, which, however, was followed by very few’.

In addition to the two opposing (main) traditions outlined in this section, there were a few alternative approaches in the eighteenth century. Nyløe (1703: 13-17), for instance, rigorously suggested that long vowels in open syllables should always be spelled with a single vowel.

ik zie geen reden ter werelt die die spelling met twe vocalen kan verdedigen; wat taal is ’er, van die in enige achtung zijn, daar een lange sillabe of lettergreep met twe klinkletteren wort geschreven? [...] Of zijn de Nederlanders minder bequaam dan andere volken om te kunnen onderscheiden wat sillaben in hunne tale lank of kort zijn, ten zy hun dit met twe vocalen worde aangewezen? Het is zeker dat de ene vocaal hier te veel is, naardienze niets ter werelt uitrecht, *va* in *vader*, *le* in *leven*, *ko* in *koning*, zijn met ene *a*, *e*, en *o*, zo lank, als ofze met tien vocalen geschreven waren, en die daar meer dan ene zijn, zijn overtollig. (1703: 14)

‘I see no reason in the world which can justify the spelling with two vowels. Which respectable language is there, in which a long syllable is written with two vowel letters? [...] Or are the Dutch people less competent than other people at distinguishing which syllables in their language are long or short, unless they are indicated to them by two vowels? It is certain that the one vowel is too much here, as it does nothing in the world. *Va* in *vader*, *le* in *leven*, *ko* in *koning* with one *a*, *e* and *o* are as long as if they were written with ten vowels, and those which are more than one, are redundant.’

Another dissident spelling system was suggested by Elzevier (1774: 13-33), who distinguished no less than six different *e*-like sounds. Their orthographic representations, however, were fairly inconsistently grounded on phonological and/or morphological considerations. As Rutten (2011: 103) remarks, Elzevier (1774) was probably not fully aware of the etymological difference between sharp-long *ê* and soft-long *ē*, as words like *eeten* 'eat' and *keelen* 'throats' (soft-long) were mentioned in the same list of <ee> spellings alongside *eeden* 'oaths' and *steen* 'stones' (sharp-long).

Against the background of two strong opposing eighteenth-century traditions as well as a few alternative approaches, Siegenbeek (1804) clearly followed the spelling choices of his predecessors ten Kate (1723) and Kluit (1763) in his official orthography of Dutch. In other words, he eventually codified the Southern system, grounded on the phonological distinction between sharp-long *ê* and soft-long *ē*, on a national level (cf. Section 1).

3 Previous research

The orthographic representation of etymologically distinct long *e*'s as discussed in metalinguistic discourse has been addressed in a number of publications. Rutten (2011: ch. 5; cf. also 2009b) dedicates an entire chapter to the spelling of long *e*'s (as well as long *o*'s), outlining the normative traditions of both the Northern and the Southern Netherlands with a particular focus on the eighteenth century. Section 2 of this chapter, in fact, summarises the main developments in the eighteenth-century normative discussion in the Northern Netherlands, viz. the division into a originally Southern tradition based on the phonological difference between sharp-long *ê* and soft-long *ē*, and a more morphologically-oriented Northern tradition following Vondel's practices.

Vosters (2011; cf. also Rutten & Vosters 2010) also builds on the results presented in Rutten (2011), shifting the focus to the situation in the Southern Netherlands, mainly in the previously understudied nineteenth century. He points out that the spelling of sharp- and soft-long *e*'s (and *o*'s) is closely linked to the typically Southern accent spelling. The latter, however, occurs only marginally in actual language usage in the nineteenth century, as is revealed in the quantitative analysis based on a corpus of handwritten judicial and administrative texts (Vosters 2011: 306-309). Instead, the official Northern norms codified in Siegenbeek's (1804) orthography appear to be widely adopted in the Southern Netherlands.

Focusing on eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse in the Northern Netherlands, van de Bilt (2009: 175-177) addresses the spelling of long *e*'s as one of the features discussed in the normative works by Verwer (1707) and Kluit (1763), also touching upon their relevance for the choices in Siegenbeek's (1804) national orthography.

From a historical-sociolinguistic perspective, Rutten & van der Wal (2014) present a corpus-based study of long *e*'s in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century private letters. Their analysis focuses on the region of Zeeland, where the

difference between soft-long *e* and sharp-long *é* had been preserved as a salient dialectal feature. For the seventeenth century, Rutten & van der Wal (2014: 36) observe that the phonological distinction is fairly well represented by spelling, and also in line with supraregional writing practices. In the eighteenth century, however, the phonological spelling in Zeeland is primarily replaced by a syllabic system, in which the grapheme is chosen based on syllable structure rather than on phonological differences. Generally referring to the *graphemisation* of the writing system, Rutten & van der Wal (2014: 67) conclude that phonology became a less important factor for spelling practices, giving way to orthographic choices grounded on syllabic or morphological aspects. In a comparable case study on letters linked to Amsterdam, where the two long *e*'s had merged, Rutten & van der Wal (2014: 67-72) show that in contrast to the phonology-based system used in seventeenth-century Zeeland, the Amsterdam results are chiefly variable, reflecting the merger of sharp- and soft-long *e*'s in spoken language. As the regional differences level out in the eighteenth century and the distribution in the Zeeland data converge to the Amsterdam results (despite the phonological distinction maintained in spoken dialects), Rutten & van der Wal (2014: 72) provide “solid evidence for the classic view of a supraregional variety that expands from Amsterdam into other regions”, i.e. replacing the previous writing practices grounded on the phonological difference.

In the corpus analysis presented in Section 4, I also build on these previous findings by examining whether and to what extent regional differences (i.e. merger or maintenance of etymologically distinct long *e*'s) can still be identified in the spelling practices in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Dutch.

4 Corpus analysis

4.1 Method

In the following corpus analysis of the orthographic representation of etymologically distinct long *e*'s in open syllables, I consider <ee> and <e> as the two main variants, which occur in the *Going Dutch Corpus* as well as in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century normative discussion. Rutten & van der Wal (2014: 36-40) note that <ej> is another grapheme used for sharp-long *é*, underscoring its realisation as a diphthong, although this variant rarely occurs in the *Letters as Loot* corpus. Given the fact that only three attestations of <ej> (<eÿ>, <ey>) for sharp-long *é* in open syllable can be found in the *Going Dutch Corpus* (e.g. *teÿken*), I will exclude this variant from the analysis. Similarly, the alternative spelling variants with accent marks, i.e. <éé> and <é>, as suggested in ten Kate's (1723) critical orthography, will not be taken into account here. Apart from the special case of stressed *ééne(n)*, there are, in fact, no relevant occurrences of these accent spellings in open syllable in the entire *Going Dutch Corpus*.

Following the officially codified phonology-based distinction in Siegenbeek's (1804) national orthography (cf. Section 1), all results in this case

study will be presented as two separate categories for sharp-long *ê* and soft-long *ē*, respectively. In order to assess the effectiveness of the official spelling norms of 1804, the categorisation of words, either spelled with <ee> for sharp-long *ê* or <e> for soft-long *ē* in open syllable, is first and foremost based on the unambiguous prescriptions in Siegenbeek's (1804) word list in the appendix of his spelling treatise. For the sake of clarity and comparability, this distinction will not only be applied for data from the post-Siegenbeek period, but for both diachronic cross-sections.

For the corpus analysis, I selected the fifteen most frequent words with sharp-long *ê* in open syllable, and the ten most frequent words with soft-long *ē* in open syllable⁵⁷. The selected words are listed below in order of decreasing frequency⁵⁸ in the *Going Dutch Corpus*:

▪ **Sharp-long *ê***

EENE*; EENIGE*; HEERE*⁵⁹; *HEELE*; GEENE*; *TEEKE*; *DEELE*;
MEENE; TWEEDE*; *KEERE*; *STEENE*; *KLEEDE*; *VREEZE*;
LEERE; *BEENE*

▪ **Soft-long *ē***

DEZE*; *WEDER*; *MEDE*; *GEVE*; TEGEN*; *NEME*; *ZEKER*; LEVE*;
VELE; *BETER*

These words are best regarded as search queries (e.g. used with *WordSmith Tools*), as they comprise different word forms, derivations and compounds with the same root or stem. For example, the query *DEELE* comprises *deelen*, *mededeelen*, *veroordeelen*, and so forth. Similarly, the query *ZEKER* includes words such as *verzekereren*, *zekerheid*, and *onzeker*. In the case of *WEDER*, two semantically unrelated homonyms were actually taken into account, viz. *we(d)er* 'again' and *we(d)er* 'weather', both of which have a soft-long *ē*, prescribed by Siegenbeek (1804) to be spelled with <e> in open syllables. All undesired occurrences were filtered out by hand.

⁵⁷ With regard to the generally higher token frequency of words with soft-long *ē* (compared to a more restricted amount of frequent words with sharp-long *ê*), I decided to limit the number of investigated words with soft-long *ē* to the ten (rather than fifteen) most frequent in the corpus. Regarding the treatment of specific homonyms with different spellings in Siegenbeek's (1804) word list, *reede(n)/rede(n)* 'roadstead'/'reason; speech' and *weezen/wezen* 'orphans'/'be; being' were excluded from the analysis.

⁵⁸ The (by far) most frequent word of each category comprises 1495 (i.e. EENE*) and 1583 tokens (i.e. DEZE*), respectively.

⁵⁹ In the case of HEERE* (plural of *beer* 'lord; (gentle)man'), Siegenbeek (1804) prescribed the spelling with <ee> in open syllable, which serves as the point of reference for the categorisation in this chapter. Rutten & van der Wal (2014: 39) categorise *beere* as a word with soft-long *ē*, though. In fact, various etymological explanations have been suggested, including a reconstruction possibly going back to the diphthong **ai* (Old High German *hēr* 'noble, sublime' might evolve from the meaning 'grey, grey-haired' < Proto-Germanic **haiza-* 'grey', cf. *EWN*).

Furthermore, spelling variation apart from the long *ê*'s was taken into account, for instance *s/z* in *zê(e)ker/se(e)ker* and *de(e)zê/de(e)se*, and so forth.

4.2 Results

First of all, the general distribution of variants was investigated in the entire *Going Dutch Corpus*. Table 1a displays the relative distribution in the category of words with sharp-long *ê* in open syllables, and Table 1b in the category of words with soft-long *ê* in open syllables. The variants prescribed by Siegenbeek (1804), i.e. <ee> for sharp-long *ê* and <e> for soft-long *ê*, are highlighted by light-grey shading in the nineteenth-century period.

Table 1a. Sharp-long *ê*: Distribution of variants across time.

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	<ee>		<e>		<ee>		<e>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	1,364	90.1	150	9.9	1,806	91.5	167	8.5

Table 1b. Soft-long *ê*: Distribution of variants across time.

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	<ee>		<e>		<ee>		<e>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	1,133	40.5	1,664	59.5	246	7.5	3,043	92.5

With regard to the orthographic representation of sharp-long *ê* in open syllables, the results in Table 1a show that <ee> is by far the most frequently used variant in the late eighteenth century, occurring in 90.1% (as opposed to only 9.9% spelled <e>). This distribution remains stable in the early nineteenth century, with the officially prescribed <ee> spelling increasing slightly from 90.1% to 91.5%. In this case, it seems that Siegenbeek (1804) followed the widespread eighteenth-century writing practices for sharp-long *ê*, strongly favouring <ee>, rather than vice versa.

As presented in Table 1b, there is much more variation with regard to the spelling of soft-long *ê* in open syllables. In fact, <ee> and <e> turn out to be co-existing variants in eighteenth-century usage, with <e> being somewhat more frequent with a share of 59.5%. The <ee> spelling also occurs fairly frequently in 40.5%, though. This means that, in sharp contrast to the results for sharp-long *ê*, no clear preference for one specific variant had been established by the late eighteenth century. Only after Siegenbeek (1804) had officialised the <e> spelling for soft-

long *e* in open syllables, one can witness a steep increase of <e> from 59.5% to 92.5%, clearly becoming the predominant variant in usage. The <ee> spelling loses considerable ground, from 40.5% in the first period to a comparatively marginal 7.5% in the second period.

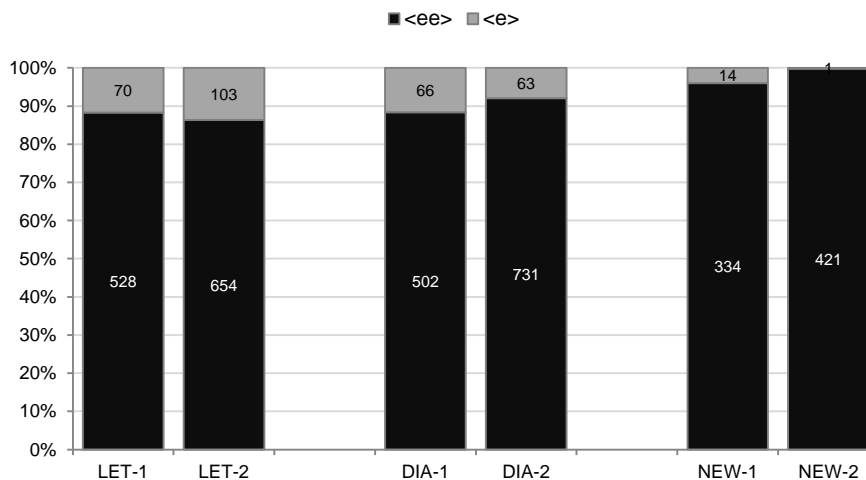
Summing up the general results for sharp-long *e* and soft-long *e* in open syllables, the two etymologically distinct long *e*'s reveal strong differences, both synchronically and diachronically. While the preference in favour of <ee> for sharp-long *e* is already established in the eighteenth century and remains stable in the nineteenth century, we can see striking diachronic changes with respect to the spelling of soft-long *e*. Here, <e> is widely established as the prevalent variant after the introduction of Siegenbeek's orthography. In fact, the prescribed variants have a share of more than 90 per cent in both categories, strongly suggesting that the officialised distinction of sharp-long *e* and soft-long *e* by two different spellings (i.e. <ee> and <e>, respectively) was successfully adopted in early nineteenth-century language practice.

Genre variation

Variation and change was also examined across the three genres of the *Going Dutch Corpus*, viz. private letters (LET), diaries and travelogues (DIA), and newspapers (NEW). The results for sharp-long *e* and soft-long *e* (in open syllables) are displayed in Figures 1a and 1b, respectively.

As already indicated by the general results for sharp-long *e* in open syllables (Figure 1a), <ee> is by far the prevalent variant in eighteenth-century usage. Therefore, it is not surprising that the degree of genre variation is also relatively limited. In the first period, the <ee> spelling has a share of around 88% in both types of (handwritten) ego-documents, whereas it is even stronger in (printed) newspapers, occurring in 96.0%.

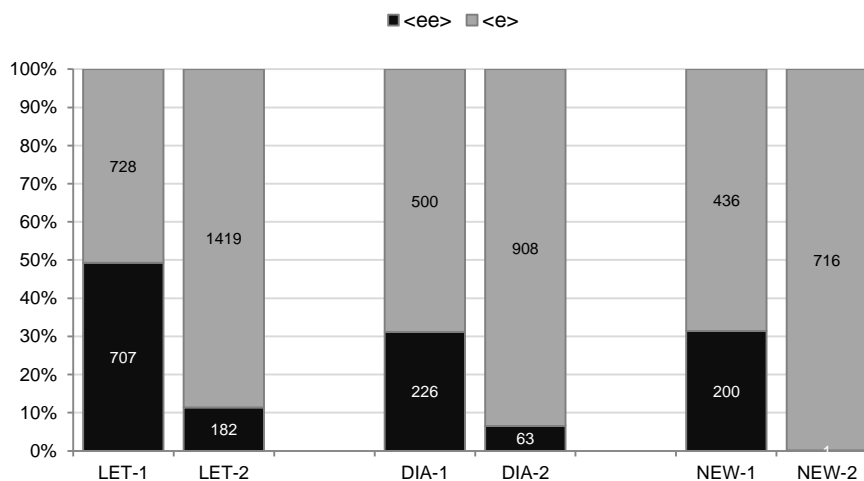
Figure 1a. Sharp-long *e*. Distribution of variants across genre and time.



Following Siegenbeek's prescription, nineteenth-century newspapers fully adopt <ee> as the only spelling variant for sharp-long \acute{e} . In diaries and travelogues from the same period, the use of <ee> also increases from 88.4% to 92.1%. Interestingly, the share of prescribed <ee> in private letters loses some ground from 88.3% to 86.4%, whereas <e> increases slightly from 11.7% to 13.6%.

There is considerably more genre variation in Figure 1b, showing the results for the spelling of soft-long \bar{e} in open syllables. In the eighteenth-century period, <e> turns out to be the preferred variant in newspapers (68.6%) as well as in diaries and travelogues (68.9%). Although the <ee> spelling occurs in almost one third of the instances, it is a considerably less common option in these two genres. In private letters, however, no such preference in favour of <e> is visible, with <e> (50.7%) and <ee> (49.3%) occurring as equally frequent competing variants. In line with the observations from previous orthographic case studies, the most 'oral' genre of the *Going Dutch Corpus* shows the highest degree of spelling variation, certainly in the eighteenth century.

Figure 1b. Soft-long \bar{e} : Distribution of variants across genre and time.



In the nineteenth century, after Siegenbeek (1804) had prescribed <e> for soft-long \bar{e} in open syllables, <e> becomes the prevalent spelling across all three genres. In the newspaper data, like in the case of sharp-long \acute{e} , the use of the prescribed variant for soft-long \bar{e} (i.e. <e>) increases to practically 100%. Furthermore, there is a strong increase of <e> in diaries and travelogues, from 68.9% to 93.5%. Again, the highest proportion of variation is attested in private letters. Although the rise of <e> from 50.7% in period 1 to 88.6% is undoubtedly striking, the <ee> spelling for soft-long \bar{e} can be attested in 11.4%.

What is interesting about the nineteenth-century results across genres is the almost perfectly mirrored distribution of variants for both sharp-long \acute{e} and soft-long \bar{e} . The share of the prescribed variants is the highest in newspapers (\acute{e}

99.8%; *e*: 99.9%), and the lowest in private letters (*e*: 86.4%; *e*: 88.6%), whereas diaries and travelogues once again take an intermediate position (*e*: 92.1%; *e*: 93.5%) between the two other genres.

Regional variation

The analysis of regional variation is particularly interesting with respect to the historical-phonological distinction between sharp-long *e* and soft-long *e*. As outlined in Section 1, this difference in pronunciation had disappeared in regions such as North Holland and particularly Amsterdam, while it had been preserved in most dialects of, for instance, Groningen, Zeeland, and parts of South Holland (Rotterdam, *Maaskant*) and North Brabant. The situation in Friesland is more complex, with *Stadsfries* in towns (like Leeuwarden, Franeker, Harlingen, Dokkum, Bolsward, Sneek⁶⁰), as opposed to Frisian or *Landfries* in the countryside, which neither show an unambiguous merger nor an unambiguous maintenance of the phonological distinction (cf. also van Bree & Versloot 2008: 108-112). In fact, the categories of 'merger' or 'non-merger' regions discussed in this section are best treated as tentative generalisations, as we have to take into account more dialectal variation as well as specific phonological conditions even in seemingly 'clear-cut' regions like Zeeland and North Holland (cf. Goossens et al. 2000a, maps 21/128; Weijnen 1966: 216).

The relative distribution of variants across region for sharp-long *e* and soft-long *e* is presented in Tables 2a and 2b, respectively (FR = Friesland, GR = Groningen, NB = North Brabant, NH = North Holland, SH = South Holland, UT = Utrecht, ZE = Zeeland).

Table 2a. Sharp-long *e*: Distribution of variants across region and time.

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	<ee>		<e>		<ee>		<e>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
FR	162	86.2	26	13.8	256	91.4	24	8.6
GR	236	87.1	35	12.9	286	84.4	53	15.6
NB	161	97.6	4	2.4	226	92.2	19	7.8
NH	190	94.1	12	5.9	314	96.6	11	3.4
SH	210	94.2	13	5.8	282	91.3	27	8.7
UT	249	87.1	37	12.9	231	90.6	24	9.4
ZE	156	87.2	23	12.9	211	95.9	9	4.1

⁶⁰ The vast majority of texts from the region of Friesland in the *Going Dutch Corpus* is, in fact, linked to writers from these towns, in which *Stadsfries* was the dominant dialect.

Table 2a shows that regional variation in the orthographic representation of sharp-long \acute{e} in open syllables is fairly limited. In fact, <ee> is the prevalent eighteenth-century spelling across all seven regions, ranging from 86.2% in Friesland to 97.6% in North Brabant. In the nineteenth century, <ee> is used in more than 90% in practically all regions. Only Groningen lags somewhat behind with a comparatively low share of 84.4%. The share of <e> even increases from 12.9% in period 1 to 15.6% in period 2.

With regard to the orthographic representation of soft-long \bar{e} in open syllables, Table 2b shows that there are regional differences in the eighteenth-century period.

Table 2b. Soft-long \bar{e} . Distribution of variants across region and time.

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	<ee>		<e>		<ee>		<e>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
FR	192	50.8	186	49.2	14	3.2	422	96.8
GR	118	30.3	271	69.7	19	4.0	461	96.0
NB	149	43.3	195	56.7	64	14.5	377	85.5
NH	209	50.5	205	49.5	45	8.7	474	91.3
SH	186	46.3	216	53.7	68	12.2	489	87.8
UT	149	33.6	295	66.4	17	4.1	398	95.9
ZE	130	30.5	296	69.5	19	4.3	422	95.7

It is remarkable that the <e> spelling is most prevalent in Zeeland (69.5%) and Groningen (69.7%). These two regions, in fact, have maintained the difference between sharp-long \acute{e} and soft-long \bar{e} in their dialects until the present day, and it is possible that this dialectic distinction is, at least to some extent, still reflected in eighteenth-century writing practices. In contrast, North Holland, where the long \acute{e} 's had merged in most parts, as well as in Friesland, the share of <e> is some 20% lower. In these regions, the distribution of variants is at chance level.

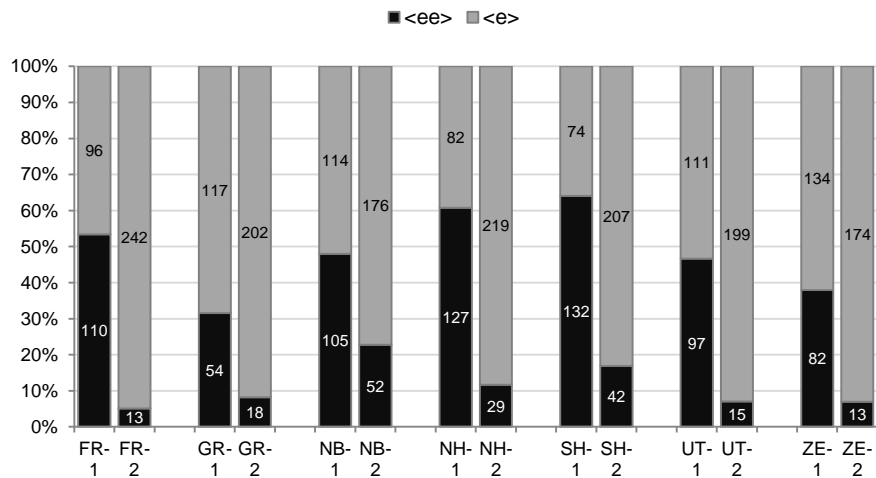
In the nineteenth-century period, all regions shift to <e> as the predominant variant in up to more than 95% in Zeeland, Utrecht, Groningen and Friesland. The highest proportions of <ee> for soft-long \bar{e} are attested in South Holland (12.2%) and especially North Brabant (14.5%).

Regional variation across genres

As Table 2a has shown, the distributional patterns of sharp-long \acute{e} is fairly homogeneous across regions and diachronically stable, whereas Table 2b has attested a considerable amount of variation and change for soft-long \bar{e} . This is

actually in line with earlier observations for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch based on the *Letters as Loot* corpus (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 42). Therefore, only the case of soft-long \bar{e} will be examined in more detail by zooming in on regional variation across the three genres. Figure 2a presents the relative distribution across regions in the sub-corpus of private letters.

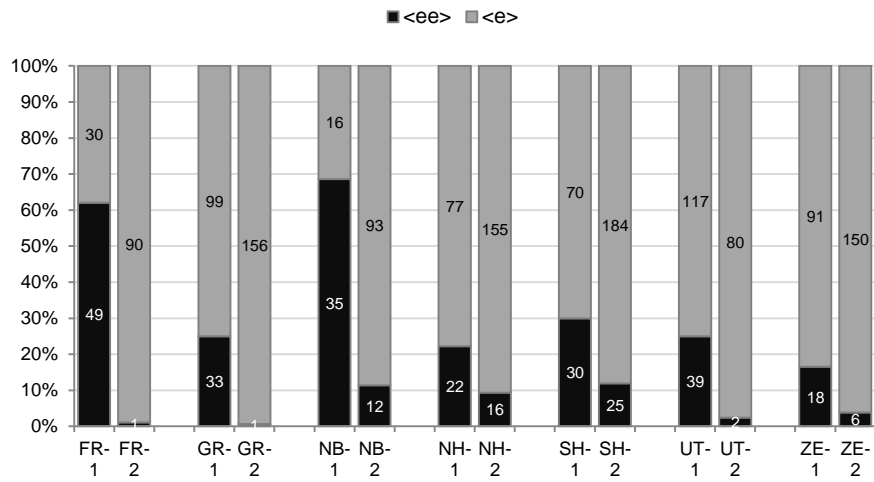
Figure 2a. Soft-long \bar{e} : Distribution of variants across region and time (private letters).



In the eighteenth-century period, one can see that <e> is most frequently used in Zeeland (62.0%) and Groningen (68.4%), both of which had preserved the phonological distinction, whereas the <ee> is particularly prevalent in the Holland area (around 60%). In the nineteenth-century period, the rise of the prescribed <e> can be witnessed in all seven regions. However, <ee> remains a fairly common option in North Brabant (22.8%) and, to a lesser extent, South Holland (16.9%).

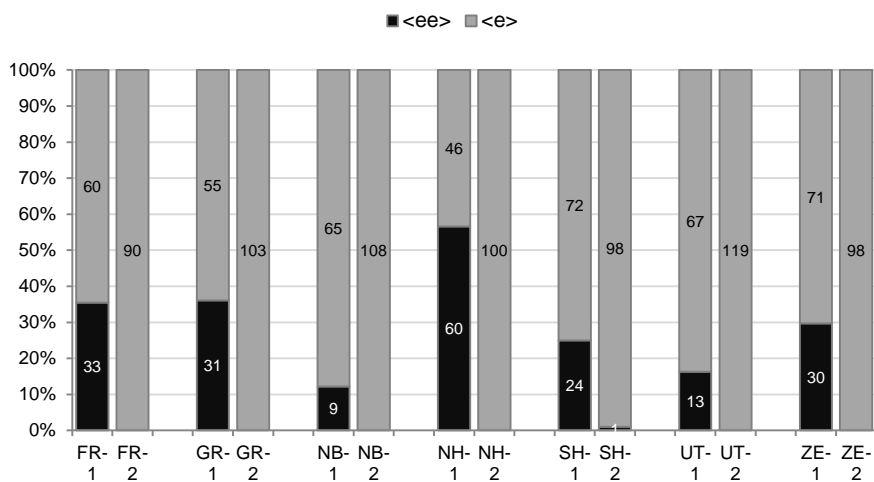
Figure 2b presents the results in the sub-corpus of diaries and travelogues. Again, the regional differences are limited to the eighteenth century. Friesland and North Brabant stand out with a strikingly high share of <ee>, occurring in 62.0% and 68.6%, respectively. In sharp contrast, the <e> spelling is the most frequently used variant in Zeeland, occurring in 83.5%. However, it is unlikely that this can solely be linked to the phonological distinction maintained in Zeeland, as North Holland, where the two long *e*'s had already merged, also has a high share of <e> (77.8%). In nineteenth-century diaries and travelogues, regional variation largely levels out, as prescribed <e> becomes the (only) dominant variant, ranging from around 88% in North Brabant and South Holland up to practically 100% in Friesland and Groningen.

Figure 2b. Soft-long \bar{e} : Distribution of variants across region and time (diaries and travelogues).



Finally, Figure 2c shows that some regional variation can also be attested in the newspaper data, at least in the eighteenth century. Whereas <e> is the prevalent variant in most regions, particularly in Utrecht (83.8%) and North Brabant (87.8%), <ee> is remarkably strong in North Holland (56.6%). However, with the introduction of Siegenbeek's (1804) official spelling rule for soft-long \bar{e} in open syllables, variation completely disappears in nineteenth-century newspapers, as prescribed <ee> becomes the only spelling variant used in these printed sources.

Figure 2c. Soft-long \bar{e} : Distribution of variants across regions and time (newspapers).



Variation across centre and periphery

The results in Figures 3a and 3b give evidence that there is hardly any variation between the centre (CEN) and the periphery (PER).

Figure 3a. Sharp-long *ê*: Distribution of variants across centre–periphery and time.

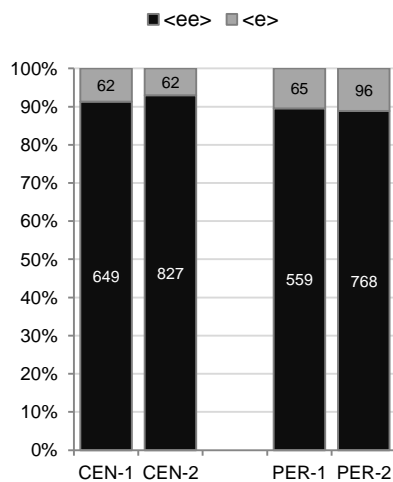
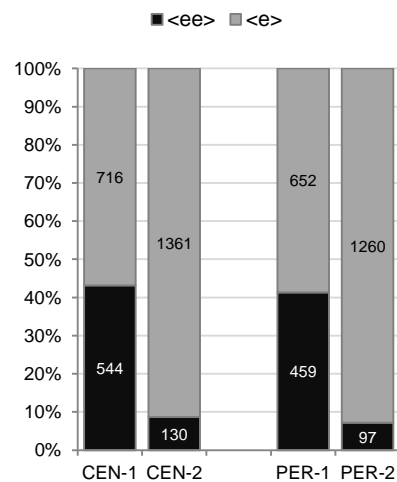


Figure 3b. Soft-long *ē*: Distribution of variants across centre–periphery and time.



In the case of sharp-long *ê* in open syllables (Figure 3a), the proportion of <ee> in the eighteenth century is approximately 90% in both the centre and the periphery. Diachronically, the distribution for both categories remain stable in the nineteenth-century data.

With respect to soft-long *ē* in open syllables (Figure 3b), the distribution of variants is almost identical in both periods. In the eighteenth century, <e> is slightly more frequent (56.8% centre; 58.7% periphery) than <ee>. In nineteenth-century usage, the prescribed <e> spelling clearly dominates in the centre (91.3%) as well as in the periphery (92.9%).

Gender variation

Possible gender variation was investigated with the two sub-corpora of handwritten ego-documents (i.e. private letters, diaries and travelogues), produced by male (M) and female (F) writers. The results for sharp-long *ê* and soft-long *ē* in open syllables are displayed in Figures 4a and 4b, respectively.

With regard to the spelling of sharp-long *ê* in open syllables (Figure 4a), there is no considerable gender variation. In the eighteenth century, <ee> is by far the most frequently used variant among both men (88.1%) and women (89.3%). Apart from minimal fluctuations, this distribution remains stable in the early nineteenth century, with a share of 89.7% among men, and 88.4% among women.

Figure 4a. Sharp-long \acute{e} : Distribution of variants across gender and time.

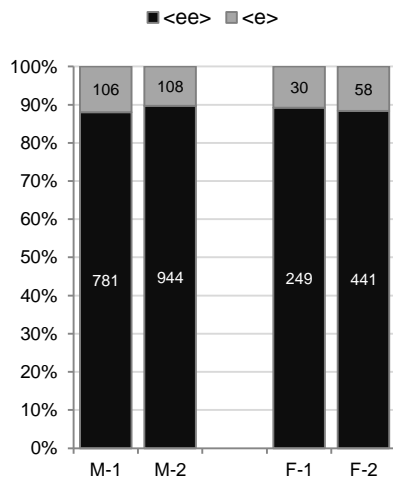
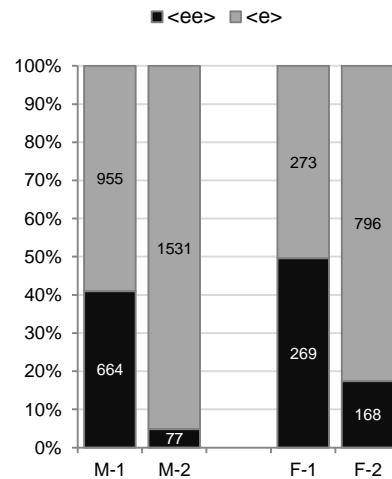


Figure 4b. Soft-long \bar{e} : Distribution of variants across gender and time.



More interesting patterns emerge in the spelling of soft-long \bar{e} (Figure 4b). In the eighteenth-century period, male writers appear to use <e> slightly more often, occurring in 59.0%. In the texts by female writers, however, the two variants are evenly distributed (49.6% <ee> vs. 50.4% <e>). These differences are also reflected in the nineteenth-century data. While the prescribed <e> spelling increases drastically in texts written by men (from 59.0% to 95.2%), the rise of <e> somewhat lags behind in texts written by women. Although the share of <e> increases from 50.4% to 82.6%, a comparatively high proportion of the rejected <ee> spelling remains (17.4%).

In the following, these distributional patterns are examined on a more detailed level, cross-tabulating gender and genre. As the results for sharp-long \acute{e} in Figure 4a do not reveal any interesting patterns, only the spelling of soft-long \bar{e} will be considered here. Table 3a displays the genre-specific distribution of variants in private letters.

Table 3a. Soft-long \bar{e} : Distribution of variants across gender and time (private letters).

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	<ee>		<e>		<ee>		<e>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	454	46.9	514	53.1	33	4.1	778	95.9
Female	253	54.2	214	45.8	149	18.9	641	81.1

Roughly speaking, the two spelling variants are co-occurring options in eighteenth-century letters by both men and women. Nevertheless, male letter writers tend to use <e> somewhat more often (53.1%), whereas female writers have a slight preference for <ee> (54.2%). In nineteenth-century letters, men adopt the prescribed <e> spelling in 95.9% of all instances. Although the use of <e> also increases considerably up to 81.1% among women, <ee> still occurs in 18.9%. In other words, a fair amount of gender variation can be attested in private letters, even after the Dutch orthography had been regulated by Siegenbeek (1804).

Table 3b shows that the genre-specific distribution in diaries and travelogues differs from that in the letter data.

Table 3b. Soft-long *e*: Distribution of variants across gender and time (diaries and travelogues).

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	<ee>		<e>		<ee>		<e>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	210	32.3	441	67.7	44	5.5	753	94.5
Female	16	21.3	59	78.7	19	10.9	155	89.1

First and foremost, the share of <e> among eighteenth-century female diarists (78.7%) is higher than among their male contemporaries (67.7%). After Siegenbeek's (1804) prescription, however, the increase of <e> in diaries by men (from 67.7% to 94.5%) is more pronounced than in diaries by women (from 78.7% to 89.1%). Diachronically, both types of ego-documents attest the same genre-related tendencies, namely that male writers adopt the prescribed spelling more often than female writers.

5 Discussion

This chapter investigated variation and change in the orthographic representation of etymologically distinct long *e*'s in open syllable, traditionally referred to as sharp-long *e* and soft-long *e*.

To begin with, eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse in the Northern Netherlands was dominated by two opposing traditions (cf. Section 2 and Rutten 2011 for a detailed outline). On the one hand, the originally Southern tradition, referring back to the *Statenbijbel* and based on the historical-phonological difference between sharp-long *e* and soft-long *e*, was promoted by influential figures such as Verwer (1707, 1708), ten Kate (1723), Kluit (1763), van der Palm (1769) and Stijl & van Bolhuis (1776). On the other hand, early language commentators like Francius (1699), Moonen (1706), but also van Rhyn (1758) and the *Rudimenta* (1799)

followed Vondel's morphologically oriented system, which was largely grounded on the principles of uniformity and analogy.

In the national orthography of Dutch, Siegenbeek (1804) officialised the orthographic distinction between soft-long \bar{e} and sharp-long \acute{e} in open syllables (cf. Section 1) by following the phonology-based Southern tradition of his eighteenth-century predecessors ten Kate (1723) and Kluit (1763). Arguing that the difference between two long e 's was an essential characteristic of the Dutch language, which had, in fact, been maintained in various dialect regions, Siegenbeek (1804) prescribed the single grapheme <e> for soft-long \bar{e} in open syllables, and the digraph <ee> for sharp-long \acute{e} in open syllables.

The corpus analysis, presented in Section 4, revealed that <ee> must have been established as the main spelling variant for sharp-long \acute{e} in open syllables by the late eighteenth century, occurring in more than 90%. Considerably more variation was attested for soft-long \bar{e} in open syllables. In the eighteenth-century period, both <e> and <ee> were commonly used variants, although <e> turned out to be more frequent in the overall corpus data.

After Siegenbeek's (1804) phonology-based distinction had been introduced, the distribution of variants for sharp-long \acute{e} remained stable. It seemed that Siegenbeek followed the established eighteenth-century writing practices for sharp-long \acute{e} (i.e. <ee>), which is why no visible effect on the distribution of variants was attested. With respect to the spelling of soft-long \bar{e} , however, one could observe a drastic change. In contrast to the competition between <e> and <ee> in eighteenth-century usage, the officially prescribed <e> spelling was adopted for soft-long \bar{e} in more than 90% after 1804. Given the clear predominance of both <ee> for sharp-long \acute{e} (91.5%) and <e> for soft-long \bar{e} (92.5%), it can be concluded that Siegenbeek's (1804) phonology-based distinction was successfully diffused in early nineteenth-century usage.

Examining possible genre variation, it was shown that the corpus results for sharp-long \acute{e} did not involve interesting patterns. For soft-long \bar{e} , however, the distribution in eighteenth-century newspapers but also diaries and travelogues indicated a preference for the <e> spelling, occurring in more than two-thirds of the instances. In private letters from the same period, there was a strong competition between the equally frequent variants <e> and <ee>. In line with Siegenbeek's (1804) prescription, all three genres adapted <e> as the (only) nineteenth-century main variant for soft-long \bar{e} . This also includes private letters, even though the amount of variation was still most marked in this conceptually 'oral' genre.

With regard to regional variation, the results for sharp-long \acute{e} did not reveal striking patterns. There was more variation in the results for soft-long \bar{e} , though. Against the background that the historical-phonological distinction between the two long e 's had been preserved in most dialects of, for instance, Zeeland and Groningen, while they had merged in other regions like North Holland and Amsterdam in particular, it might be assumed that these differences in spoken language were, at least partly, also reflected in the writing practices.

Comparing eighteenth-century letters from Zeeland (maintenance) and Amsterdam (merger), Rutten & van der Wal (2014) no longer observe a striking influence of this distinction in pronunciation on the writing practices. Instead, they witness a so-called *graphemisation* of the writing system, i.e. “the reduction of phonological considerations and the increase in choices directly linked to the written code” (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 41). For the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century period under investigation, the results based on data from the *Going Dutch Corpus* at least indicate some tendencies. Two regions, in which the distinction had been maintained, i.e. Zeeland and Groningen, showed a considerably higher share of the <e> spelling for soft-long *e* (as opposed to <ee> for sharp-long *e*) than, for instance, North Holland, where the phonemes had merged. While it is difficult to establish a direct link between these distributional preferences in writing and the preserved phonological distinction in dialectal pronunciation, the relative tendencies in the corpus data are certainly noticeable.

Investigating gender variation in handwritten ego-documents, it was once again shown that sharp-long *e* did not involve much variation in either of the two periods. Some interesting patterns were revealed for soft-long *e*, though. Eighteenth-century men appeared to use <e> more often than their female contemporaries. This pattern was also attested for the nineteenth-century period, in which the rise of the prescribed <e> spelling was considerably more marked among male writers than among females, the latter of which still used a fairly high proportion of <ee> for soft-long *e*. Especially in private letters, the dominance of <e> in texts written by men was some 15% higher than in texts by women.

In general, however, the officialised orthographic distinction between <e> and <ee> for etymologically distinct long *e*'s in open syllables can certainly be assessed as an effective spelling norm in the context of the Dutch *schrijfaafregeling*. Despite the ongoing graphemisation of the writing system, according to which localisable phonological features became less important for spelling practices (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: ch. 2), Siegenbeek's (1804) phonology-based system for sharp-long *e* and soft-long *e* was widely adopted in early-nineteenth century practice, across all genres, regions and genders.

