



One nation, one spelling, one school: writing education and the nationalisation of orthography in the Netherlands (1750–1850)

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One nation, one spelling, one school: writing education and the nationalisation of orthography in the Netherlands (1750–1850)

Bob Schoemaker and Gijsbert Rutten 

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ABSTRACT

In 1804, the first official spelling of Dutch was published as part of a national language policy that had been argued for since the middle of the eighteenth century, and in 1805, an official grammar was published. The orthography and the grammar constituted regulations for the written language (*schrijftaalregeling*), which were part of a broader effort at nationalisation. Other societal domains affected by this attempt at nationalisation included education. The first decade of the nineteenth century also produced a series of educational reform. In this paper, we first discuss the ideological aspects of the nationalisation of language and education. Focusing on writing education, we then discuss eighteenth-century teaching practices, and the criticism these gave rise to, particularly for the strong focus on technical skills. We argue that writing education became increasingly important in the new school system, in which writing was conceptualised as a grammatical and intellectual practice as well. As a result, new teaching practices were developed. Adopting the officialised spelling of 1804 was part of the grammatical aspect of writing education. We show how grammar books and reading materials pre-dating and postdating the official Dutch language policy shifted from a situation of variable orthographical practices towards orthographical homogeneity through a strict adoption of official prescriptions.

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Introduction

The Dutch constitution of 1798 is often considered seminal for the foundation of the modern Dutch nation state.¹ The constitution introduced eight ministries (*agentschap-pen*). One of the new ministers, the Minister of National Education (*Agent van Nationale Opvoeding*), became responsible for public health, national morals, and the advancement of public education, the arts, and the sciences. The newly founded Ministry of National Education was a prime example of contemporary efforts on behalf of the national government to take control over social and cultural issues. As such, it constituted a key moment in the establishment of the then still new ideology of

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¹N.C.F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar nieuwe moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 41.

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nationalism. Within this ideology, education was considered a crucial social domain through which unity could be promoted.²

The national parliament created a document outlining the main tasks of the Minister of National Education.³ Many of these tasks targeted the field of primary education. For example, the Minister had to establish teacher-training colleges, teacher exams and a school inspection system, and he also had to regulate school attendance in order to advance the “enlightenment” of all members of society. With respect to language, the document stated that the Minister had to take all possible measures to “purify and cultivate the Dutch language, [and] to regulate its spelling”.

In 1801, 1803, and 1806, three laws for national primary education were issued following the tasks set by the parliament. In 1801, for example, a national system of school inspection was established, overseeing the local implementation of policy measures taken at the national level.⁴ In the same period, the Minister, J.H. van der Palm, decided to invite two well-known language experts to design a national orthography and a national grammar of Dutch. In 1804, the national spelling was published, written by Matthijs Siegenbeek, professor of Dutch at Leiden University. In 1805, the national grammar followed, written by the Rotterdam-based minister Pieter Weiland. Both works were subsidised by and published in the name of the government. The government decided to follow the rules for spelling and grammar laid down by Siegenbeek and Weiland in all its publications, to encourage the administration to do so as well, to prescribe their use in school books, and to ask school inspectors to implement their use in the educational system.⁵

Language policy, educational policy and language-in-education policy thus became entangled in top-down nationalisation of the language and its envisaged spread through the community in the interests of the linguistic homogenisation of the nation. In socio-linguistic terminology, the societal *implementation* and *diffusion* of the language officially *codified* in the spelling of 1804 and the grammar of 1805 were a prime responsibility of actors in the field of education.⁶ The language ideological background to this is the rise of the so-called standard language ideology (SLI) in the eighteenth century as the linguistic expression of the wider phenomenon of cultural nationalism.⁷

In this paper, we discuss how educational reforms and language policies affected writing education. We will first delve deeper into the nationalisation of language and education. Then, we focus on changes in writing education, discussing major transitions from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century that reflect the increasing importance of writing. Focusing on the implementation of the official spelling of 1804, we then move on to discuss its influence on educational materials.

²Nelleke Bakker, Jan Noordman and Marjoke Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland. Idee en praktijk: 1500–2000* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 455; Sue Wright, “Language Policy, the Nation and Nationalism,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*, ed. Bernard Spolsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 71.

³*Instructie voor den agent van nationale opvoeding* (The Hague: S.n., 1799); P.Th.F.M. Boekholt and E.P. de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen and : Van Gorcum, 1987), 97.

⁴Bob Schoemaker and Gijsbert Rutten, “Standard Language Ideology and Dutch School Inspection Reports (1801–1854),” *Sociolinguistica* 31 (2017): 101–16.

⁵Matthijs Siegenbeek, *Verhandeling over de Nederduitsche spelling* (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1804); Pieter Weiland, *Nederduitsche spraakkunst* (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1805).

⁶Einar Haugen, “Dialect, Language, Nation,” *American Anthropologist* 68 (1966): 922–35; James Milroy and Lesley Milroy, *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁷Schoemaker and Rutten “Standard Language Ideology,” 100–5.

The nationalisation of language and education

The political unification of the 1790s and early 1800s signalling the creation of the Dutch nation state comprised foundational events such as the establishment of a national parliament, a relatively democratic form of suffrage, a constitution and a national tax system. Characteristic of this increasing nationalisation of policies and regulations was its extension to domains that were previously not subject to intervention by the government at all, or only at a local level, such as education and language. The political Unitarianism of this period, resulting in so many new laws and regulations within such a short time span, depended on a process of cultural unification, which had developed from c. 1750 onwards, and which was the dominant manifestation of the Dutch Enlightenment.⁸ Cultural nation-building thus preceded the actual state formation process around 1800.

Dutch Enlightenment discourse discussed new ways of organising the field of education so that children would grow up to become responsible members of the Dutch nation. In the 1760s and 1780s, semi-public societies organised essay competitions on topics such as the physical, emotional, and intellectual education of children, and the improvement of schools in the interest of the “greater cultivation of the nation”. In the essays, it was repeatedly argued that in the envisaged new school system, language should play a crucial role.⁹ In a truly Herderian spirit, language was increasingly conceptualised as a symbol of the Dutch nation, and therefore as a valuable tool in the homogenisation of the community, while education was considered the main social field in which this homogenisation could be implemented.¹⁰ Three decades of lively discussions resulted in a report with “general ideas about national education”, published in 1798 by the highly active Society for Public Advancement. This report strongly influenced the decision-making process in the national parliament in the following years, and would in fact lay the foundation for the educational reforms of the following decades.¹¹

Dutch eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse displayed a similar tendency toward nationalisation. In the early 1700s, many grammar books and other metalinguistic texts were still oriented towards an elite audience of poets, ministers, and other experts interested in so-called cultivated forms of language. In the course of the eighteenth century, however, metalinguistic discourse underwent what we could call a social turn.¹² Around 1750, most language commentators had a broader target audience in mind than, say, upper-rank males who had visited the Latin school. They expanded their attention to also include the middle ranks and women. Towards the end of the century, this socially broader focus became “nationalised”, in that grammar books and spelling guides were now often addressed to the whole population. The contemporary educational concern, and the conviction that the field of education constituted the ideal

⁸Van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland*, 42.

⁹Willeke Los, *Opvoeding tot mens en burger. Pedagogiek als cultuurkritiek in Nederland in de 18e eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005); Gijsbert Rutten, “Standardization and the Myth of Neutrality in Language History,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 24 (2016): 25–57.

¹⁰Rutten, “Standardization and the Myth of Neutrality”.

¹¹*Algemeene Denkbelden Over Het Nationaal Onderwijs* (Amsterdam: s.n., 1798); Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *1800: Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (The Hague: Sdu, 2001), 287; Gijsbert Rutten, *Language Planning as Nation Building. Ideology, Policy and Implementation in the Netherlands (1750–1850)* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2019), 25–30.

¹²Jan Noordegraaf, “A Matter of Time: Dutch Philosophy of Language in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Janus at the Millennium: Perspectives on Time in the Culture of the Netherlands*, ed. Thomas F. Shannon and Johan P. Snapper (Dallas: University Press of America, 2004), 211–25; Rutten, “Standardization and the Myth of Neutrality.”

testing ground for nationalisation and homogenisation, led to a specific concern with children, and to grammar and spelling books specifically meant for use in schools. The gradual widening of the target audience was inspired by the belief that every member of the Dutch nation had to be trained in the spelling and grammar of the national language. Linguistically, this implied a modest simplification of the contents of grammar books, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹³

Meanwhile, the Dutch language itself, also in its written form, still displayed an impressive range of variation by the end of the eighteenth century. Recent research has contested the traditional view that Dutch had been standardised by the middle of the seventeenth century.¹⁴ The top-down effort to spread a uniform, codified variety across the language community around 1800 was not only a cultural tool in the hands of nationalist policymakers. It was also a conscious intervention in the inherently variable state of the language aimed at terminating this state, and introducing homogeneity instead. This intervention encompassed the language as well as educational policies developed in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

The policies targeted both the spelling and the grammar of Dutch, while educational discourse had argued for changes in the teaching of reading and writing. In the remainder of this paper, we focus on writing education and orthographical reform as important instruments of cultural nation-building.

Writing education in the eighteenth century

Writing education in the eighteenth century signalled a social division, much more than reading skills and reading education did. Children from the upper and upper-middle ranks of society often developed extensive writing skills necessary for a successful career, for example in the trade business, whereas children with less privileged backgrounds often only learnt to write separate letters, isolated words, and some fixed phrases, if they learnt to write at all. After all, reading and writing were taught successively, implying that writing education was only offered when some reading fluency had been attained. Writing education often only began at the age of eight or nine, while it was quite common for children to quit education by the age of ten. This means that many people only experienced one or two years of writing education, particularly among the lower and lower-middle ranks. Contemporary experts, however, claimed that learning to write took three to four years.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the Dutch literacy rates were relatively high by 1800, with estimates of 80% literacy among the male and 60% among the female population. Literacy, however, is in part a technical skill, often measured by counting signatures, which does not tell us much about the actual writing experience of historical actors.¹⁶

In fact, the technical aspect predominated in eighteenth-century writing education. Writing was first and foremost considered to be a mechanical skill (see also [Figure 1](#)). A

¹³Gijsbert Rutten, "'Lowthian' Linguistics across the North Sea," *Historiographia Linguistica* 39 (2012): 43–59.

¹⁴Gijsbert Rutten and Marijke van der Wal, *Letters as Loot: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Dutch* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2014).

¹⁵Hendrik Wester, *Prijsverhandeling over de gebreken in de burgerscholen* (Amsterdam: Keizer, de Vries & van Munster, 1799), 29.

¹⁶Rutten and van der Wal, *Letters as Loot*, 14.

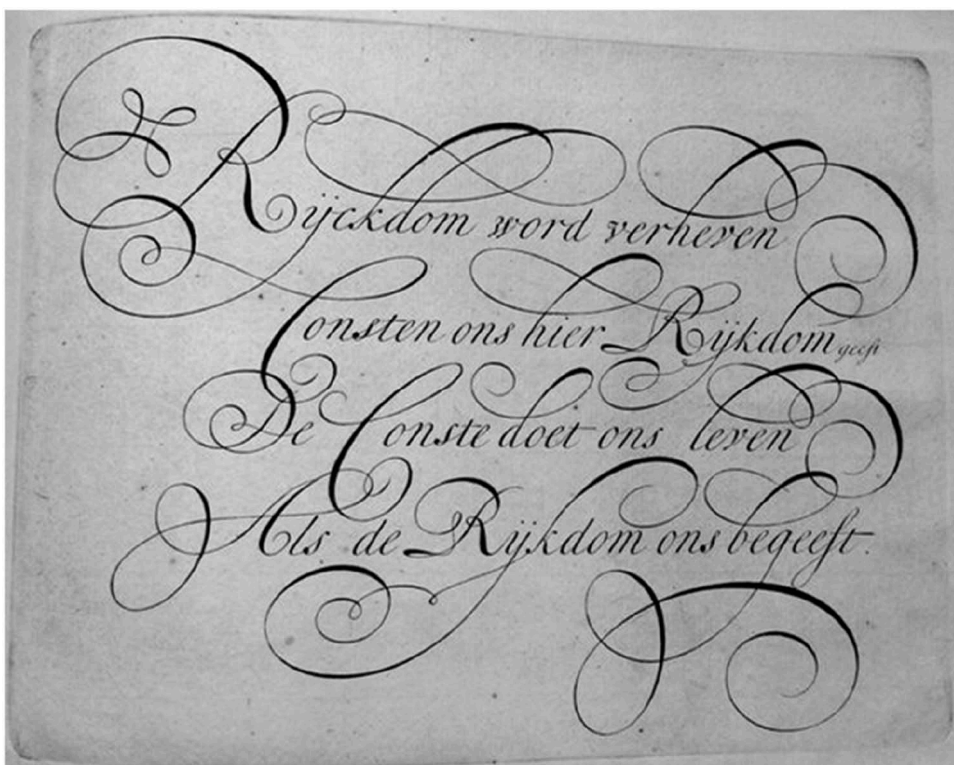


Figure 1. Writing examples from the eighteenth century attest to the importance of the calligraphic aspect in writing.

widely used schoolbook such as *Trap der Jeugd* (“Staircase of the young”) by C. de Gelliers drew attention to technicalities such as cutting the quill and mixing variously coloured ink types.¹⁷ Apart from these preparatory skills, writing itself was also treated mechanically. Learning to write consisted of diligently copying letters, syllables, words, and phrases in a variety of scripts. To this end, numerous schoolbooks were on the market offering examples that pupils could imitate. Even an advocate of educational reform such as Hendrik Wester still argued in 1795 that pupils should copy examples precisely and down to the smallest detail.¹⁸

Eighteenth-century commentators increasingly criticised contemporary writing education. While many maintained that technical skills constituted one of the main goals of writing education, criticism targeted various aspects of current practices, including the competence of schoolteachers, the contents of the examples, and the strong focus on mechanical skills, thereby neglecting language skills.

The success of writing education depended to a considerable extent on the competence and effort of individual schoolteachers. They had to choose suitable examples, and adopt effective pedagogical means when providing feedback on the results of the pupils. However, the pedagogical competence of the teachers was severely criticised. Some

¹⁷Carel de Gelliers, *Trap der Jeugd* (Amsterdam: Joannes Kannewet, 1776), 53.

¹⁸Wester, *Gebreken burgerscholen*, 30.

teachers were said to focus solely on calligraphy, renouncing the cognitive and linguistic aspects of verbal expression in writing. Others were said to lack the pedagogical ability to provide pupils with useful feedback.¹⁹ Such criticism functioned as an impetus for the establishment of teacher exams and teacher-training institutes. Similarly, the contents of the writing examples used in schools too often comprised old-fashioned devotional sayings and Bible quotes, which were considered difficult to comprehend for children. Instead, Enlightenment pedagogues argued, writing examples had to be child-friendly and easily understandable, and should teach children useful lessons advancing the development of reason and good morals.²⁰

Finally, Enlightenment criticism targeted the near absence of language and linguistics in writing education. With its focus on technical skills, which were also embraced by Enlightenment pedagogues for that matter, eighteenth-century writing education displaced linguistic skills. Morphology, syntax, and even orthography were not given sufficient attention so that it should not surprise anyone, as Wester commented, that even relatively educated people could barely write intelligible Dutch due to their horrible spelling and serious language errors.²¹ Such complaints about the language skills of schoolteachers, whether justified or not, led commentators to urge the necessity of “a short, yet good and clear Dutch grammar, implemented by public authority everywhere in schools in the Netherlands”.²² As discussed above, language and education policies would soon start to tackle these issues.

Writing education in the new nation state

Educational discourse of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century stressed the importance of writing education. Writing was increasingly conceptualised as a competence that was not only needed for certain professions and occupations, but also as a prerequisite for successfully exercising civil rights and duties, irrespective of social rank, gender, and religious background. One commentator argued that there was no need for “children of the lower social orders” to develop a noteworthy writing style, yet being able to write “with some correctness and order” was highly recommended.²³ Such progressive ideals were dominant in contemporary discourse. Nonetheless, some commentators still doubted the relevance of writing for those who would hardly need to write in their professional lives, and parents were often of the same opinion. For them, important considerations will also have been the higher costs of writing education, and the fact that it was often still taught after reading. More expensive materials, and a longer schooling period implying non-availability at the job market or at home could not outweigh the more indirect advantage of being able to write.²⁴

¹⁹Anonymous, “De toestand der meeste dorpscholen,” *De Menschenvriend* 1 (1788), 100; Wester, *Gebreken burgerscholen*, 10.

²⁰Wester, *Gebreken burgerscholen*, 39–40.

²¹*Ibid.*, 18.

²²H.J. Krom, “Prijsverhandeling over de verbetering der scholen,” *Verhandelingen uitgegeven door het Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen te Vlissingen* (1782), 85.

²³*Bijdragen betreffende den staat en de verbetering van het schoolwezen* (1809), no. X, 40; cf. *Algemeene denkbeelden over het Nationaal Onderwijs* (1798), 5.

²⁴*Bijdragen* (1811), no. II, 74; Dolly Verhoeven, *Ter vorming van verstand en hart. Lager onderwijs in oostelijk Noord-Brabant ca. 1770–1920* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994), 160–1.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the technical aspects of writing still dominated educational practices. Writing continued to be perceived as the ability to copy beautiful letters from examples.²⁵ The examples used started to change, however. Pedagogues and schoolteachers developed new sets of examples, which they considered to be more child-friendly than those formerly in use. Publications with new examples became very popular, going through several prints within short time spans. School inspectors were also involved in the development of writing examples. The head of the national school inspection system sent the example book by the inspector P.J. Prinsen and the well-known educationalist and schoolbook author Nicolaas Anslin, published in 1809, to all regional school committees throughout the country. Similarly, school inspectors sometimes developed handwritten examples, which they distributed among schoolteachers.²⁶

Gradually, a new concept of writing education came into existence. Criticism had targeted the strong focus on technical aspects, and while the importance of the sheer ability to form letters was never doubted, two additional aspects of writing education became increasingly important. First, attention was given to so-called grammatical writing (*taalkundig schrijven*), that is writing in accordance with the orthographical and grammatical rules of the supralocal writing tradition. Second, rational, intellectual writing (*verstandelijk schrijven*) became the ultimate goal of writing education. When the technical skills, and grammatical and orthographical competence had been acquired, pupils should learn to express their thoughts in writing.²⁷

Grammatical writing and intellectual writing were intimately connected as the interdependence of language and thought was a common idea in European Enlightenment. Thus, “mistakes against the rules of language” were considered to be the “cause of uncertainties, ambiguities and misunderstanding”.²⁸ Apart from orthographical, morphological, and syntactic errors, such mistakes also included obsolete words and so-called *provincialisms*: “words and ways of saying that are only used in one region, particularly among the less civilized, lower ranks.”²⁹ Typical strategies to teach grammatical writing comprised dictation and answering questions in written form. In fact, any writing assignment that did not use examples, and in which children therefore had to actively apply the rules of the language was considered an exercise in grammatical writing. The most widely used exercise to advance linguistic skills, however, was to correct language errors in written form. Children would be given sentences with numerous mistakes at all linguistic levels mentioned above, and then had to correct the sentence. A prime example of this approach was Nicolaas Anslin’s *Aanleiding ter vervaardiging van schriftelijke opstellen* (“Introduction to creating written essays”), inspired by J.C. Dolz’s *Praktische Anleitung zu schriftlichen Aufsätzen über Gegenstände des gemeinen Lebens* (1798). A first edition of Anslin’s *Aanleiding* came out in 1809, an addendum was published in 1810, and a second edition in 1826.

²⁵ *Bijdragen* (1806), no. XI, 58; *Algemeene denkbeelden*, 58–9.

²⁶ Verhoeven, *Ter vorming van verstand en hart*, 74.

²⁷ *Bijdragen* (1801), no. V, 93–4; Berend Brugsma, *Kort overzicht van de opvoeding door het onderwijs in de lagere scholen*, 6th ed. (Groningen: A.L. Scholtens, 1857), 202–3.

²⁸ *Voorschriften tot brieven en schriftelijke opstellen* (1806), 11.

²⁹ N. Anslin, *Aanleiding ter vervaardiging van schriftelijke opstellen, over onderwerpen, welke in het dagelijksche leven voorkomen, inzonderheid geschikt ten dienste van Schoolonderwijzers, gevolgd naar de derde hoogduitsche uitgave van J.C. Dolz* (Leiden: D. du Mortier, 1826), 124–5.

Anslijn's work revealed the close connections between grammatical and intellectual writing. It focused primarily on linguistic issues, often based on the official language regulations, while also preparing children for more extensive writing assignments characteristic of the highest form of writing education. Clearly, the higher goal of thought verbalisation implied a shift in teaching practices. Whereas technical skills and linguistic principles could in principle still be acquired through imitation, expressing one's thoughts in writing required a different approach. In this context, the didactic tool *par excellence* was the essay assignment.

Developing the ability to think independently was one of the central ideas of European Enlightenment. Feeding on the rationalist axiom of the interdependence of language and thought, Dutch Enlightenment pedagogues advocated the essay assignment as the best means to develop both. The term *essay assignment* is a cover term in this context, referring to the composition of individual sentences, letters as well as short essays.³⁰ In line with recent criticism of educational practices, the assignments ideally comprised themes related to everyday life or to the natural environment and interests of children. In the first half of the nineteenth century, school inspectors such as van Swinderen and Rutgers, who were responsible for school districts in the province of Groningen, happily signalled that children were assigned topics such as the hare, the whale, and moonlight.³¹ As the essay assignment was a new element in the new school system, numerous schoolbooks were published with instructions and examples, some of them going through many editions within a few decades.³²

The risk of good examples, of course, was that pupils would stick to copying examples instead of writing creatively.³³ In addition, not all schoolteachers were equally prepared to devote much attention to essay assignments. School inspector van Swinderen, travelling through his Groningen district in 1819, was surprised that so many young children were able to write such good essays, except in the town of Letterbert, where children did not learn to write essays, presumably because parents were opposed to it.³⁴ Writing was often still the end point of years of training, which still meant that many children quit school before this end point was reached.

In the slipstream of the new interest in writing education, many other didactic innovations were introduced in the early nineteenth century. Following the works of pedagogues such as the Swiss Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and the American Joseph Carstairs, new methods were developed to teach writing, focused more strongly on the relationship between drawing and writing and/or on the ability to write neatly, but also fast. Crucial innovations were also the introduction of chalkboards and, for pupils, of slates and pencils (Figure 2). In the eighteenth century, slates and pencils were only used in maths teaching, as writing was conceptualised as an art, to be performed with quills. The shift towards the use

³⁰*Bijdragen* (1805), no. V, 35–6.

³¹Report from school inspector Th. van Swinderen, October 1817, *Groninger Archieven*, nr. 889/40; report from school inspector J. Rutgers, June 1819, *Groninger Archieven*, nr 889/41.

³²E.g. Willem Goede, *Brieven voor min en meer gevorderde Jonge Lieden* (Leiden: D. du Mortier, 1800); *Verzameling van schetsen, ten dienste van kinderen en jonge lieden, om zich te oefenen in het maken van schriftelijke opstellen* (Haarlem: A. Loosjes, 1803); *Voorschriften tot het opstellen en schrijven van brieven en andere schriftelijke opstellen* (Leiden: D. du Mortier, 1806). Letter-writing manuals were also published in the eighteenth century and even earlier, but their influence appears to have been limited: Rutten and van der Wal, *Letters as Loot*, 187–202.

³³Brugsma, *Kort overzicht*, 202.

³⁴Report from school inspector Th. van Swinderen, *Groninger Archieven*, nrs. 889/42, 889/47; *Bijdragen* (1803), no. XII, 8–9.

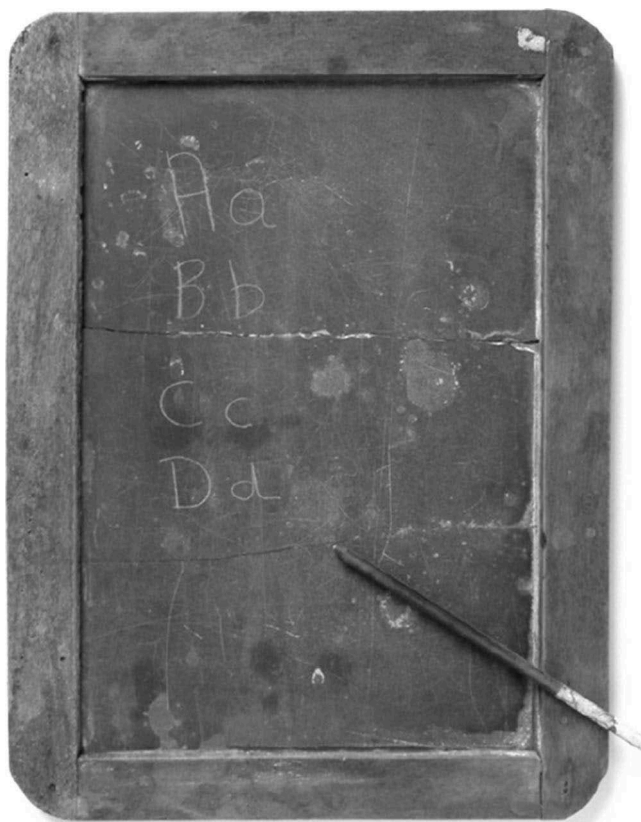


Figure 2. The introduction of slates for writing signalled a move away from writing as a technical skill towards a more language-oriented exercise.

of slates and pencils in writing education indicates that writing was reconceptualised as a communicative skill for the whole population.³⁵ Contrary to quills and paper, slates and pencils could be handled by younger pupils, which even fostered writing practise at a younger age.³⁶ Another new element was the introduction of so-called writing books (*schrijfboeken*). Such exercise books comprised weekly or monthly writing assignments by pupils so that their progression could be monitored, and useful feedback could be provided.³⁷ Finally, so-called battle writings (*kampschriften*) constituted a didactic tool to advance writing competence among pupils in the context of writing contests. In 1810, a Frisian schoolteacher commented that writing contests were a good means to prevent sloppy writing.³⁸

Educational discourse had argued that language skills, including writing skills, were important to all members of the nation. In the early nineteenth century, many changes were implemented in writing education in line with the importance attached to writing

³⁵Bob Schoemaker, "Gewijd der jeugd, voor taal en deugd. Het onderwijs in de Nederlandse taal op de lagere school, 1750–1850" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2018), 208–11.

³⁶Report from school inspector M.J. Adriani, Juli 1817, *Groninger Archieven*, nr. 889/40.

³⁷Report from school inspector J. Rutgers, *Groninger Archieven*, nr. 889/41; cf. *Bijdragen* (1809), no. II, 7.

³⁸*Bijdragen* (1810), no. I, 156–7.

skills, which were seen as key for responsible citizenship. In the same period, an official spelling was introduced, homogenising the orthographical form of the language used in the new school system. This is the topic of the next sections.

Siegenbeek's national orthography

As argued above, educational and language policies converged in the 1790s and early 1800s. Both education and the language became important sites of nationalisation – education primarily as the domain in which socialisation and homogenisation should take place, language as a unifying symbol of the nation. Language-in-education policy targeted linguistic homogenisation, and with the increasing importance of writing, great value was attached to a uniform written code. In other words, the national spelling of 1804, designed by Siegenbeek, was supposed to play a crucial role in the new school system.

Formally, schoolteachers were not obliged to stick to the official orthographical rules. They were encouraged to adopt the new language regulations in their teaching practices, but there was no means of enforcement. Nonetheless, one important task of the new school inspectors was to examine whether individual schoolteachers used the new spelling and grammar, and if not, to persuade them into doing so. Inspection reports kept in the archives of the school inspection clearly show that school inspectors behaved in accordance with this task, frequently and explicitly mentioning the use of the officialised rules.³⁹

Similarly, authors and printers of schoolbooks were not in any way obliged to follow the codified norms (Figure 3). The new spelling diverged in some ways from what had become usual in the eighteenth century. Moreover, in many respects, orthographical variation was quite common in the eighteenth century. This implied that authors and printers would often have to respell their publications, that is produce whole new editions of their works. Schoolbooks were often reviewed in educational magazines and “correct” language use was frequently part of these reviews, so that economic motives may have prompted authors and printers to adopt the newly codified rules.⁴⁰ In view of all this, an important question is to what extent schoolbook authors and printers complied with the new spelling. To investigate this, we decided to focus on three spelling variables characteristic of the 1804 Siegenbeek spelling.

The Siegenbeek spelling accomplished two things. On the one hand, Siegenbeek decided heavily debated issues in eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse, which often also showed quite some variation in actual language use. Sometimes, a consensus had already been reached before Siegenbeek. This applies, for example, to the use of <ae> or <aa> in words with long *a*, such as *maan* (“moon”). By 1800, the spelling *maen* had largely disappeared both in language use and in metalinguistic discourse. Siegenbeek opted for <aa>, which was in line with this development, yet devoted considerable attention to the issue, as it had been central to metalinguistic discussions for a long time. In other cases, a consensus had not been reached by 1804, and Siegenbeek's choice thus constituted a clear preference for one particular option. This applied, for example, to the representation of long *e* in open syllable. For etymological reasons, Siegenbeek chose to distinguish words such as *leven* (“live”) with <e> from words such as *leeren* (“learn”) with <ee> in the first

³⁹Schoemaker and Rutten, “Standard Language Ideology.”

⁴⁰Schoemaker, *Gewijd der jeugd, voor taal en deugd*, 162.

LETTERKUNST
VOOR DE
J E U G D,
O F
H A N D L E I D I N G
OM DE
KINDEREN IN DE SCHOLEN
TE OEFENEN
IN DE
NEDERDUITSCH E S P E L L I N G

VAN DEN HEER
MATTHYS SIEGENBEEK,

*Hoogleraar in de Nederduitsche Letterkunde
te Leyden:*

**BIJ HET STAATS-BEWIND DER BATAAF-
SCHE REPUBLIEK AANGENOMEN EN
BEKRACHTIGD.**



Te L E Y D E N bij
D. DU MORTIER EN ZOON,
M D C C C V.

Figure 3. The early nineteenth century saw the publication of numerous school books aimed at the diffusion of the new language norms. A prime example was this *Grammar for the Youth, or Guide to Teaching School Children the Dutch Spelling of Matthijs Siegenbeek*, published in 1805.

syllable. In this case, many different systems had been in use, and Siegenbeek's preference for this particular system was in fact a marked choice.⁴¹

On the other hand, Siegenbeek also prescribed forms that have become strongly associated with him and the official written language regulations in later times, on the assumption that Siegenbeek introduced these previously marginal, and therefore marked forms, or in any case was responsible for their spread. This applies, for example, to the grapheme <gch> in words such as *kagchel* ("heater"), representing a velar fricative, as well as to the grapheme <ij> in words such as *gooijen* ("throw"), which represents a postvocalic glide.⁴²

The three spelling variables central to our analysis are from both categories. That is, we focus on one variable that was heavily debated, and undecided by 1800, and on two variables that have developed into supposedly typically Siegenbeekian features afterwards.

The first orthographical feature concerns the representation of West Germanic long *i. Traditionally, this was often spelled <i>, but also <y> and <ij> came into use. By the eighteenth century, <y> and <ij> had become the two main variants, for example *blyven* ("stay") and *tijd* ("time"). The choice between <y> and <ij> was a core issue in eighteenth-century metalinguistic discourse. Various arguments were used, such as that the element <j> in <ij> indicated a consonant, and therefore could not be used for vowels. Others claimed that <y> was a foreign letter, viz. of Greek origin, and not an indigenously Dutch letter, and should be avoided. The latter argument was also used by Siegenbeek, who opted for <ij>. In addition, some commentators opted for <y> in open syllables and <ij> in closed syllables.

Throughout history, Dutch writing traditions have often preferred consonant doubling if the preceding vowel was short. For example, the plural of *man* ("man") is *mannen*, where <nn> indicates that <a> in the first syllable is short *a*, not long *a*. This general spelling convention was however not systematically applied to all consonant clusters. In *lachen* ("laugh"), for example, <ch> represents one velar consonant, while <a> in the first syllable is short. Siegenbeek extended the spelling principle to such velar contexts, implying that *lachen* should be rendered *lachchen*. However, since <ch> is already a digraph, Siegenbeek opted for <gch>, resulting in *lagchen*. Other examples are *kaghel* ("heater") and *ligchaam* ("body"). Despite the fact that <gch> has become strongly associated with the Siegenbeek spelling, Siegenbeek himself clearly suggests that this grapheme was already widely used.⁴³

The third feature that we focus on concerns the glide that can be heard between long vowels/diphthongs and the verbal suffix *-en*. According to Siegenbeek, both *gooien* and *gooijen* ("throw"), *vleien* and *vleijen* ("flatter") were in use by established authors, so that the authority of specific authors could not be used to take a decision. Instead, he argued that orthography should follow pronunciation as closely as possible, which in

⁴¹cf. Rutten and van der Wal, *Letters as Loot*, 70–1.

⁴²D.M. Bakker, "De grammatica in de negentiende eeuw," in *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse taalkunde*, ed. D.M. Bakker and G.R.W. Dobbets (Den Bosch: Malmberg, 1977), 145; Nicoline van der Sijs and Roland Willemyns, *Het verhaal van het Nederlands* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009), 304; Marijke van der Wal and Cor van Bree, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlands* (Houten: Spectrum, 2014), 289.

⁴³Matthijs Siegenbeek, *Verhandeling over de Nederduitsche Spelling* (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1804), 188–9.

this case implied insertion of <j>. Thus, it is again clear that the supposedly Siegenbeek variant was already used before 1804.⁴⁴

The national orthography in schoolbooks

We will now investigate to what extent Siegenbeek's choices were implemented in schoolbooks by comparing schoolbooks predating the official spelling regulation of 1804 with schoolbooks postdating the Siegenbeek spelling. This will provide insight into the extent to which authors and printers complied with the newly designed official orthography.

From the first period, stretching from the middle of the eighteenth century to 1804, we selected 20 books that were used in schools and/or had schoolteachers as their target audience. Many of these books went through several reprints, suggesting widespread use. The selection, which can be found in the Appendix, comprises reading materials as well as grammar books. With respect to the reading materials, we included both older books, which were first published in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, and more recent books, published for the first time in the second half of the eighteenth century, often in connection with contemporary educational reforms. This balanced selection should provide a representative picture of writing practices in late eighteenth-century educational materials.

Table 1 shows that there was a lot of variation in the case of reflexes of West Germanic *i. Some authors preferred <ij>, others <y>, and still others opted for both depending on the syllable structure. The latter system was mostly used in reprints of older books (e.g. *Spiegel der jeugd* 1752; Niervaart 1758; Hakvoord 1761; *Historie van David* 1770: see Appendix). Towards the end of the century, this system disappeared, but the variation of <ij> and <y> remained. The next variable clearly shows that Siegenbeek's option <gch> was already in use in schoolbooks well before 1804. Other options such as <ch> and <gh> were also in use, and some books comprise various options. Such variation also occurs in the case of the glide, where three variants were in competition, viz. <i>, <ij>, and <y>, although the latter variant appears to have been a convention used in older books, disappearing in the second half of the century.

Thus, we find considerable orthographical variation in schoolbooks from the mid-eighteenth century until Siegenbeek's officialised spelling regulations of 1804. Since there was still so much variation in printed materials, a possible shift towards the Siegenbeek variants in the following period would be strong evidence of authors and printers adopting the officialised prescriptions. For the second period, postdating Siegenbeek's 1804 spelling, many more books are available. In the wake of the strong educational discourse of the late eighteenth century and the concomitant educational reforms at the beginning of the nineteenth century, new teaching materials flooded the schoolbook market so that it is possible to make two selections of books. The first selection comprises 20 grammar and spelling books published between 1805 and the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition, we selected 18 popular books used in reading education from the same period. The Appendix lists all books taken into account for this analysis.

Not all authors of language books give explicit rules for the three orthographical variables. The velar consonant and the glide after long vowels and diphthongs, in

⁴⁴Siegenbeek, *Verhandeling*, 187–8.

Table 1. Preferred spelling variants in 20 schoolbooks (1750–1804).

		West Germanic long *i (tijd)	Velar consonant (kagchel)	Glide after long vowels /diphthongs (gooijen)
<i>Spiegel der jeugd</i>	1752	ij/y	gh	y
van Belle	1755	y	gch	ij
Niervaat	1758	ij/y	-	y
Hakvoord	1761	ij/y	gh	y
van der Palm	1769	y	gch	i
<i>Historie van David</i>	1770	ij/y	gh	-
van Bolhuis/Stijl	1776	ij	chch/ch	i
van Alphen	1778	ij	gch	i
Cramer	1780	ij/y	gch	ij
<i>Spreuken van Salomon</i>	1784	ij/y	gch	-
de Gelliers	1788	ij/y	gch	ij
<i>Trap der jeugd</i> (Nut)	1791	ij	ch	i
van Bolhuis	1793	ij	-	-
van Oosterwijk Hulshoff	1797	ij	ch	i
van Varik	1799	ij	gch	i
Wester	1799	y	ch	ij/i
Buis	1800	ij	gch	ij/i
Nyland	1800	y	gch	ij
<i>Levensschetsen</i> (Nut)	1803	ij	gch/ch	ij/i
van Heijningen Bosch	1804	y	ch	i

particular, are sometimes not discussed at all, probably due to the low frequency of the sounds and graphemes involved. Explicit prescriptions for these two variables are given in 13 grammar and spelling books. The results are entirely consistent: all authors prescribe <gch> and <ij>. Similarly, West Germanic *i is discussed in 18 out of 20 publications. Without any exception, <ij> is prescribed.

The results for the 18 books used in reading education are highly similar. As these works do not comprise explicit norms, we looked at which variants were used. With hardly any exceptions, <ij> is used for West Germanic *i, <gch> is used for the velar consonants, and <ij> is used for the glide. The velar consonant does not occur in three publications, and one publication has only one token, which is spelt <ch>, viz. van Bemmelen's *Nieuw Vermakelijk Spel- en Leesboek* ("New easy spelling and reading book") from 1810. This means that 14 books have <gch>. There is one publication with both <ij> and <y> for reflexes of West Germanic *i, viz. Prinsen's *Gemakkelijk Leesboekje voor Kinderen* ("Easy reading booklet for children"). The remaining 17 use <ij>.

While the decades predating Siegenbeek offer a varied picture with respect to the spelling features investigated here, the first half of the nineteenth century is remarkably uniform. With hardly any exceptions, authors and printers of schoolbooks switch to the prescribed variants. Interestingly, this also applies, therefore, to authors who are part of both the pre- and the post-Siegenbeek selection. For these three variables, for example, the aforementioned educationalist Wester prescribed <y>, and <ch>, while oscillating between <i> and <ij> in the case of the glides in his *Bevatlyk Onderwys in de Spel- en Taalkunde* ("Comprehensible education in spelling and grammar") of 1799. Similarly, van Oosterwijk Hulshoff in *De Geschiedenis van Jozef* ("The history of Joseph") of 1797 adopted <y>, <ch> and <i>, as did van Heijningen Bosch in *De Kleine Kindervriend* ("The little friend of children") of 1804. In the 1810 edition of his language book,

Wester changed to the Siegenbeek variants. Likewise, van Oosterwijk Hulshoff in the 1806 edition of his schoolbook, and van Heijningen Bosch in the 1809 edition of *De Kleine Kindervriend* switched to the officialised norms. This clearly shows the high awareness of the new language policy among schoolbook authors and printers as well as their willingness to act accordingly.

Conclusions

In the context of nation building and state formation in the Netherlands around 1800, language policy, educational policy, and language-in-education policy became strongly interconnected. The Dutch case offers an intriguing attempt at top-down nationalisation of the language as a result of the rise of the standard language ideology in the second half of the eighteenth century. Official spelling and grammar regulations were published in 1804 and 1805. The government sought to spread the newly codified standard language through the community in the interest of linguistic homogenisation. Educational reforms in the first decade of the nineteenth century, in particular the school acts of 1801, 1803, and 1806 restructured the school system in the interest of cultural homogenisation. In this paper, we discussed how educational reforms and language policies affected writing education.

Writing education constituted an increasingly important part of the reforms. Eighteenth-century writing education was criticised for various reasons, especially for its strong focus on the mechanical aspects of writing. In the new nation state, children were supposed to develop not only the technical ability to form letters. They were also expected to adopt the supralocal form of written language laid down in the officialised language regulations (“grammatical writing”), and to be able to express their ideas and feelings in writing (“intellectual writing”). Many new teaching materials and practices were developed. Two important innovations in writing education were the increased focus on correcting erroneous sentences, and the essay assignment. Composition was seen as the fruitful combination of grammatical and intellectual writing. Many changes in the educational system, including the introduction of slates and pencils, implied a greater emphasis on writing, and a more intensive confrontation with written language.

When writing, children were expected to adopt the newly created spelling regulations, first published by Siegenbeek in 1804. Similarly, schoolteachers were expected to teach these regulations. Nevertheless, there were no formal obligations, and the implementation of the newly codified variety of Dutch in education was left to the persuasiveness of individual school inspectors, who had to encourage schoolteachers to use the official spelling and grammar. Likewise, authors and publishers of schoolbooks were not obliged to implement the new orthography in their publications. As argued elsewhere, on the basis of school inspection reports, the standard language ideology was slowly but steadily spreading through the community.⁴⁵ In the present paper, we analysed schoolbooks from before and after the official writing regulations of 1804/1805, focusing on the orthographical representation of West Germanic long **i* as in *tijd* as opposed to *tyd*, of intervocalic velar fricatives as in *kagchel* (“heater”)

⁴⁵Schoemaker and Rutten, “Standard Language Ideology.”

instead of *kachel*, for example, and on postvocalic glides as in *gooijen* (“throw”) instead of *gooien* or *goojen*. Whereas schoolbooks published between 1752 and 1804 displayed considerable variation with respect to these three orthographical variables, both grammars books and reading materials from the period between 1805 and 1852 show a uniform picture entirely in line with the official prescriptions established by Siegenbeek in 1804. There was, in other words, a complete shift to a homogeneous written code. It should be noted that this also applies to authors and publishers who were active both before and after 1804/1805: they republished their schoolbooks in the new spelling.

In the decades around 1800, the new ideology of cultural nationalism inspired policymakers to reform language and education policies in the Netherlands. In the new school system, more attention was given to writing education as reading and writing skills were deemed necessary for responsible members of the Dutch nation state. Linguistically, the new school was supposed to disseminate the new spelling and grammar rules across the population. Various educational and linguistic changes thus contributed to the envisaged trinity of nation, spelling, and school.

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Appendix

Selection of schoolbooks, both reading materials and grammar books (1752–1804)

Nieuwe Spiegel der Jeugd of Franse Tirrany (Amsterdam: Kannewet, 1752).

- J. van Belle, *Korte Schets der Nederduitsche Spraakkunst* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1755).
 C.D. van Niervaart, *Opregt Onderwijs van de Letter-Kunst* (Alkmaar: Maagh, 1758).
 B. Hakvoord, *Opregt Onderwijs van de Letter-Kunst* (Amsterdam: Kannevet, 1761).
 K. van der Palm, *Nederduitsche Spraakkunst voor de Jeugd* (Rotterdam: Arrenberg, 1769).
De Historie van den Koninklijke Propheete David (Amsterdam: Kannevet, 1770).
 K. Stijl and L. van Bolhuis, *Beknopte aanleiding tot de kennis der Spelling, Spraakdeelen, en Zinteeiken van de Nederduitsche taal* (Groningen: Oomkens, 1776).
 H. van Alphen, *Proeve van Kleine Gedichten voor Kinderen* (Utrecht: Terveen, 1778).
 B. Cramer, *De Geldersche Trap der Jeugd* (Amsterdam: Salembien, 1780).
De Proverbia ofte Spreuken der Alderwysten Konings Salomon (Deventer: De Lange, 1784).
 C. de Gelliers, *Trap der Jeugd* (Deventer: De Lange, 1788).
 M. Nieuwenhuijzen, *Trap der Jeugd* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1791).
 L. van Bolhuis, *Beknopte Nederduitsche Spraakkunst* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1793).
 W. van Oosterwijk Hulshoff, *De Geschiedenis van Jozef, voor kinderen* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1797).
 G. van Varik, *Rudimenta of Gronden der Nederduitsche Spraake* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1799).
 H. Wester, *Bevatlyk Onderwys in de Nederlandsche Spel- en Taalkunde, voor de schooljeugd* (Groningen: Oomkens, 1799).
 J. Buis, *Natuurkundig Schoolboek* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1800).
 D. Nyland and C. de Gelliers, *Nieuw verbeterde Trap der Jeugd* (Groningen: Groenewolt and zn., 1800).
Levensschetsen van Vaderlandsche mannen en vrouwen (Haarlem: Loosjes, 1803).
 M. van Heijningen Bosch, *De Kleine Kindervriend* (Groningen: Schierbeek, 1804).

Selection of grammar books for schools (1805–1852)

- M. Siegenbeek, *Kort Begrip der Verhandeling over de Nederduitsche Spelling* (Amsterdam: Allart, 1805).
 D. du Mortier, *Letterkunst voor de Jeugd of handleiding om de kinderen in de scholen te oefenen in de Nederduitsche Spelling* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1805).
 C. Wertz, *Rudimenta of Gronden der Nederduitsche Taal* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1805).
 P. Weiland, *Beginnelsen der Nederduitsche Spraakkunst* (Amsterdam: Allart, 1805).
 P. Weiland, *Nederduitsche Spraakkunst ten dienste der Scholen* (Amsterdam: Allart, 1806).
 H. Wester, *Bevatlyk Onderwijs in de Nederlandsche Spel- en Taalkunde, voor de schooljeugd* (Groningen: Oomkens, 1810 [6th ed.]).
 A. Vermey, *Eerste Beginselen der Hollandsche Spraakkunst* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1818 [4th ed.]).
 M. Siegenbeek, *Grammatica of Nederduitsche Spraakkunst* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1814).
 N. Callegoed, *Iets over de Nederduitsche Taalkunde, ten dienste der scholen* (Amsterdam: Brave 1836 [9th ed.]).
 J. Laukens, *Eerste beginselen der Nederduitsche spraakkunst* (Maaseik: Titeux, 1824 [2nd ed.]).
 N. Anslin, *Rudimenta of Gronden der Nederduitsche Taal* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1817).
 J.S. Kirchdorffer, *Nederduitsche Spraakkunst ten dienste der Scholen* (Amsterdam: Schalekamp, van de Grampel and Hanssen 1825 [2nd ed.]).
 H. Kremer, *Bevatlyk Onderwijs in de Nederlandsche Spel- en Taalkunde* (Groningen: Oomkens, 1822).
 R.G. Rijkens, *De Leermeeester in de Spelkunde* (Groningen: Oomkens, 1829).
 A.C. Oudemans, *Eerste Beginselen der Nederduitsche Taal, ter dienst der scholen* (Amsterdam: Schalekamp and van de Grampel, 1830).
 J.C. de Wilde, *Beginnelsen der Nederduitsche Spraakkunst, voor de Scholen* (Dordrecht: Blussé and van Braam, 1836 [2nd ed.]).
 P.J. Prinsen, *Beginnend Onderwijs in de Nederduitsche taal* (Haarlem: Goteling Vinnis, 1837).
 A. Hagoort, *Eerste gronden der Nederduitsche taal, ten dienste der scholen* (Amsterdam: Borleffs, 1845 [6th ed.]).

G. Kuijper, *Beginnelsen der Nederlandsche Spraakleer voor schoolgebruik* (Breda: Broese and comp., 1844).

G.C. Mulder, *Nederlandsche Spraakkunst voor schoolgebruik* (Nijmegen: Thieme, 1852 [4th ed.]).

Selection of reading materials for schools (1806–1836)

W. van Oosterwijk Hulshoff, *De Geschiedenis van Jozef, voor kinderen* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1806 [5th ed.]).

M. Nieuwenhuijzen, *Leeslesjes behorende bij de Verhandeling over het kunstmatig lezen* (Deventer: De Lange, 1807 [7th ed.]).

Levensschetsen van Vaderlandsche mannen en vrouwen (Haarlem: Loosjes, 1809 [7th ed.]).

J. Buis, *Natuurkundig Schoolboek* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1809).

M. van Heijningen Bosch, *De Kleine Kindervriend* (Groningen: Schierbeek, 1809).

J. van Bemmelen, *Het nieuw vermakelijk Nederduitsch Spel- en Leesboek* (Den Bosch: Lion, 1810 [10th ed.]).

H. Wester, *Schoolboek der geschiedenissen van ons Vaderland* (Den Bosch: Lion, 1810 [6th ed.]).

B. Verweij, *Kort Begrip der Bijbelsche Geschiedenis. Een schoolboek voor de jeugd* (Groningen: Oomkens, 1813 [4th ed.]).

J. van Dobben, *Zedekundig Leesboekje* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1816).

H. Kremer, *Bijbelsche geschiedenissen voor eerstbeginnende leerlingen* (Groningen: Oomkens, 1817).

H. van Alphen, *Proeve van Kleine Gedichten voor Kinderen* (Utrecht: Terveen, 1820).

N. Anslin, *De Brave Hendrik, een leesboekje voor jonge kinderen* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1822 [7th ed.]).

P.J. Prinsen, *Gemakkelijk leesboekje voor kinderen van de laagste klasse eener goed ingerigte school* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1824).

M. Nieuwenhuijzen, *Trap der Jeugd* (Leiden: Du Mortier, 1827 [11th ed.]).

J. Kuipers, *Vader Gerhard onder zijne kinderen; een schoolboek* (Groningen: Zuidema, 1833).

Godsdienstig onderwijs voor jonge kinderen (Haarlem: Loosjes Pz., 1835 [13th ed.]).

R.G. Rijkens, *De kleine buffon of natuurlijke historie voor kinderen* (Groningen: Oomkens, 1835).

J.H. Nieuwold, *Het is toch goed, dat er vele Menschen in de wereld zijn* (Zaltbommel: Noman en zoon, 1836 [18th ed.]).