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Verfransing onder de loep: Nederlands-Frans taalcontact (1500-1900) vanuit historisch-sociolinguïstisch perspectief

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Summary

Frenchification under scrutiny. Dutch-French language contact (1500–1900) from a historical-sociolinguistic perspective

This thesis focuses on the historical language contact situation between Dutch and French. The aim is to provide insight into the influence that French had on the Dutch language between 1500 and 1900. Despite the fact that the Early and Late Modern periods are often described as times of strong *verfransing* ‘Frenchification’ in histories of Dutch, hardly any empirical research has been carried out so far on the changes that Dutch underwent as a result of contact with French. The current thesis is the first large-scale empirical study of the actual influence of French on Dutch. The study is carried out by means of quantitative corpus research with the newly-built *Language of Leiden* corpus (LOL corpus) and comprises analyses of three language levels: morphology, lexicon, and morphosyntax. With my thesis, I aim to contribute to a better understanding of the historical language contact between Dutch and French.

Chapter 1 introduces the main aims of the thesis and gives a brief outline of the research design employed to answer the main research question of the thesis: What was the actual influence of French on the Dutch language between 1500 and 1900? The corpus used to answer this question, comprises Leiden texts from four centuries and seven social domains. On the basis of this corpus, the main research question will be addressed by means of analyses of loan suffixes (morphology), loanwords (lexicon) and the relative pronouns *develke* and *hetwelke* (morphosyntax).

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical embedding of the research. First of all, the research tradition in the field of historical sociolinguistics, and especially the corpus research within this field, is described. Discussing the concepts ‘social domain’ and ‘genre’, I explain my preference for ‘domain’ rather than ‘genre’ in this study. I furthermore distinguish between administrative and non-administrative texts. In Chapter 2, I also give a brief overview of language contact theory. This overview includes a discussion of borrowing hierarchies, which describe limitations on the order in which elements can be borrowed from one contact language into another – an important effect of language contact

that is crucial in the current study. In addition, the specific language contact situation between Dutch and French is discussed. I explain in which social domains Dutch and French were in contact from the Middle Ages until 1900, and the consequences this contact had in terms of multilingualism and contact-induced change. Finally, the research questions that are addressed in the study are outlined.

Chapter 3 describes the historical context of the contact situation with a focus on the city of Leiden. The *Language of Leiden* corpus comprises texts from Leiden. Hence, the history of Leiden will be briefly described, from the very beginnings in the Middle Ages until 1900, the end date of the corpus. In addition to this overview, which focuses on population growth and decrease, the history of Leiden will be presented on the basis of the seven social domains selected for the corpus. These social domains are: Academia, Charity, Economy, Literature, Private Life, Public Opinion, and Religion. The importance of each domain in the history of Leiden is explained.

In Chapter 4, I explain the corpus design and methodology. The design of the LOL corpus is based on two variables: period and social domain. The total span of the corpus of four hundred years is divided into eight periods of fifty years (1500–1549, 1550–1599, etc.) in order to facilitate diachronic comparisons. The following text types were chosen for each of the seven social domains: minutes of the university board for Academia; wills with bequests to charity organizations for Charity; ordinances of the city council aimed at the Leiden industries and requests from those industries to the city council for Economy; theater plays for Literature; letters to friends and family for Private Life; newspaper articles for Public Opinion; and minutes of church council meetings for Religion. For each combination of a period and a social domain, I aimed for a word count of 5,000 words, which would come down to a total of 280,000 words for eight periods and seven social domains. However, the corpus overview in chapter 4 shows that the final corpus has a total word count of 251,417 words, which deviates from the planned number of 280,000 words due to the lacking of suitable texts for specific periods and domains. The chapter concludes with a preview of the corpus analyses which have been carried out with this corpus.

Chapter 5 comprises the first empirical chapter out of a total of six. In Chapters 5 and 6, I present the results of the morphological variable under investigation: French-origin loan suffixes. About thirty to forty French suffixes entered Dutch via loanwords and could eventually be used to create new words in Dutch, such as *lekkage* 'leakage'. These

suffixes thus became part of the Dutch morphological system. In Chapter 5, I investigate the use of these loan suffixes in the LOL corpus across time and social domain. A stable diachronic increase in the use of loan suffixes can be observed from the sixteenth century until the first half of the eighteenth century, after which the normalized suffix frequency decreases again in the three following periods. This pattern is visible for both the token frequencies, in which all occurrences of the suffixes are taken into account, as well as the type frequencies, for which each lexical item with a loan suffix is counted only once for every period. An overview of the token frequency for each individual loan suffix per period, however, shows that the general diachronic results are highly influenced by only a small number of loan suffixes: some suffixes are very infrequent, attested only once or twice in the corpus, while other suffixes, and especially the verbal suffix *-eren*, are in fact responsible for most of the tokens in the dataset. With regard to the social domains, a division can be made between the so-called administrative domains on the one hand – Academy, Charity, Economy, and Religion – with higher numbers of tokens, and the non-administrative domains Public Opinion, Private Life and Literature on the other hand with a lower token frequency, implying that administrative domains have been influenced by French to a larger extent. When the variables period and social domain are cross-tabulated, it appears that the frequency of French loan suffixes diachronically remains rather stable in most of the domains, except for Academy and Charity, which both have higher token frequencies in nearly every period of the corpus than the other domains, and which show a diachronic increase and decrease comparable to the overall diachronic pattern. However, when the type frequency is considered instead of the token frequency, it appears that Charity is similar to the other domains, with a rather stable diachronic pattern and low numbers of loan suffixes, while Academy stands out from the rest with high numbers of type frequencies in each period. Academy has thus the highest number of different word types with a loan suffix, and has in that respect been influenced by French more strongly than the other domains. However, especially the administrative domains have some very frequent words with a loan suffix that are specific for that domain: they are very frequent in that domain but are (nearly) non-existent in other domains. From both the results per period and per domain it can thus be concluded that the loan suffixes differ from each other in the extent to which they have influenced Dutch language use.

Chapter 6 provides a further analysis of the loan suffixes on two aspects: first, the division between terminology and more general vocabulary, and second, the integration of the loan suffixes in Dutch morphology. Since the results per period and per domain show that some words with a loan suffix appear to be specific to certain administrative domains, the question is whether the words with a loan suffix would mostly be used in words that can be defined as terminological/domain-specific words, or whether these words could also be used more generally. The results show that a considerable number of words can be labeled as terminology, mostly referring to administrative or juridical acts, but more than half of the word types with a French loan suffix can be considered common vocabulary. This analysis thus shows that the influence of French on Dutch does not seem to be restricted to certain social domains; rather, French had an influence on the language use of society as a whole.

To measure the integration of the loan suffixes in Dutch, in Chapter 6, each lexical item with a loan suffix is categorized either as a loanword, or as a word which was productively formed in Dutch. For about eleven percent of all lexical items with a loan suffix in the LOL corpus it is very probable that they are productively formed in Dutch; two-thirds of all loan suffixes have at least one lexical item that is productively formed in Dutch. These loan suffixes have thus become part of the morphological system of Dutch, because they can be used in Dutch to form new words. This shows that French influenced the Dutch morphological system to some extent. However, since the majority of the loan suffixes is part of a lexical item that is a loanword, the influence on the morphological system was only limited.

In Chapters 7, 8, and 9, the focus is on French loanwords. In this way, the influence of French on the Dutch lexicon can be measured. In Chapter 7, I present the number of French loanwords in the LOL corpus per period and social domain. The outcomes are also compared to the loan suffix results from Chapter 5. The diachronic patterns for both loan suffixes and loanwords appear to be remarkably comparable: for loanwords, an increase can be observed until the first half of the eighteenth century, after which the number of loanwords decreases again in the last three periods of the corpus. The results for social domain and for the cross-tabulation of period and social domain are similar to the results for the loan suffixes as well. The domain of Religion is an exception, since this domain has, compared to the other social domains, many loan suffixes but few loanwords, and the diachronic patterns are

also not comparable. However, because of the overall similarity of the diachronic patterns and the frequency differences between the social domains, it is clear that the peak of French influence on Dutch can be found in the first half of the eighteenth century, and that the degree of French influence depends on the social domain, with the administrative domains Academy and Charity as the most strongly influenced domains, and Literature and Private Life as the least strongly affected.

While Chapter 7 gives the overall picture of the use of French loanwords per period and social domain in the LOL corpus, Chapter 8 and 9 analyze the loanword dataset on other aspects. In Chapter 8, the parts of speech the loanwords belong to and the year in which Dutch borrowed the loanwords from French are discussed. The majority of loanwords taken from French appear to be nouns, with verbs and adjectives/adverbs amounting to a much smaller share. Some examples of other parts of speech – interjections, prepositions and numerals – occur in the data as well. According to the language contact literature, nouns are more easily borrowed than other parts of speech; a large proportion of nouns as loanwords, as is the case in this study, would then point to superficial language contact. On the other hand, some prepositions have been borrowed from French as well, which would point to a more intensive language contact situation.

With respect to the year in which each loanword was borrowed from French, Chapter 8 shows that the sixteenth century is the period in which most new loanwords were attested for the first time in a Dutch text, while only very few new loanwords were attested in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This sheds a slightly different light on the findings from the previous chapter: when considering the loan year instead of the frequency of loanwords in each period, the sixteenth rather than the eighteenth century should be considered as the period in which French had the most influence on Dutch.

In Chapter 9, three other aspects of the French loanwords are analyzed: the individual frequency of the lexical items in the corpus, the proportion of terminology versus more general vocabulary, and the integration of the loanwords. With respect to the frequency of the lexical items, I investigated the frequency of each specific word type in the LOL corpus for each loanword type, both in general and per period. The results show that there are considerable differences between the loanwords in terms of frequency, and that there is no specific period in which all or most of the loanwords have the most attestations: each loanword has its own history, with loanwords appearing, disappearing,

increasing and declining in frequency in all periods of the corpus. This further refines the findings from Chapter 7: although for all words together the peak can be found in the eighteenth century, this does certainly not apply to all or most individual loanwords.

As for the terminology, the results are similar to those in Chapter 6 for the loan suffixes: more than half of the words can be considered as more general vocabulary. For the lexicon as well, French influenced not only specific social domains, but also language use in general.

To investigate the integration of the loanwords in the Dutch lexicon, in Chapter 9 I furthermore analyze if and which morphological endings are attached to French loanwords borrowed between 1500 and 1900. The findings show that in all words appearing in a context where Dutch grammar requires a morphological ending, a morphological ending is used. Moreover, words that are attested for the first time in the same period as they are used for the first time in the corpus are already integrated into Dutch morphology. This is in accordance with the claim by Poplack & Dion (2012) that loanwords are integrated in the receiving language immediately upon borrowing, and contradicts the graduality assumption, which states that loanwords are integrated only gradually into the receiving language.

Chapter 10 focuses on the morphosyntactic influence of French on Dutch by investigating the use of a morphosyntactic pattern that is said to have been influenced by French: the relativizers *dewelke* and *betwelk* ‘the which’. The use of these relativizers is compared to the use of other relative pronouns, in particular *die*, *wie* and *welke* for male, female and plural referents, and *dat*, *wat*, *welk* and *betgeen* for neuter singular referents. The proportion of *dewelke* and *betwelk* in the total set of relativizers in subject and direct object position is analyzed per period, per social domain and per period and social domain in the LOL corpus. It is hypothesized that, if the use of *dewelke* and *betwelk* is indeed a result of a contact-induced change from French, the diachronic patterns and the frequency differences between the social domains should resemble the patterns found for the loan suffixes and loanwords in Chapters 5 and 7. However, while the differences between the social domains are replicated – administrative domains show a greater use of *dewelke* and *betwelk* than the other domains – the diachronic pattern is not: instead of a peak in the early eighteenth century, the use of the relatives already peaked in the sixteenth century, and shows an ongoing decline in the following centuries. From this study, it can thus not be concluded that *dewelke* and *betwelk* are influenced by French.

Chapter 11 provides the main results and the conclusions to be drawn from the research. The results show that it cannot be claimed that French had either a strong or a small influence on Dutch; rather, the intensity of influence depends on the perspective taken. In certain respects, it can be said that French had a large influence on Dutch, for example when considering the fact that various French suffixes are used in Dutch to form new words, or the fact that most loan suffixes and loanwords from French are found in the eighteenth century, the period in which the heyday of French influence is traditionally situated. However, in other respects it can be argued that French influence on Dutch was limited, for example because each loanword has its own history, with loanwords appearing, disappearing and changing frequencies in every period, and because the relativizers *denwelke* and *hetwelke* cannot be shown to have developed under French influence. This historical-sociolinguistic study has therefore yielded a new, nuanced picture of French influence on Dutch.