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Non-native communication in eighteenth-century maritime circles

Dutch letters written by economic migrants

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In this paper, I intend to analyze, from a historical sociolinguistic perspective, the characteristics of Dutch letters written by economic migrants in the late eighteenth century. These letters, which are part of the Leiden *Letters as Loot* corpora, were confiscated by the English during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War and the American War of Independence (1776–1784). After presenting the method of finding such non-native communication, the linguistic complexity of the letter writers' regions of origin will be discussed. Focusing on letter writers from the North Frisian islands and East Frisia, their command of Dutch will be determined by examining both deviating features and two Dutch phenomena, the epistolary forms of address and the first person singular object (or oblique) pronouns. Different levels of Dutch proficiency can be attributed to biographical details and may also lead to hypotheses for subsequent research of letter writers of German and Scandinavian origin.

Keywords: language contact, Low German, Frisian dialects, language choice, multilingualism, interference

1. Early and Late Modern migrants in the Dutch Republic

Reacting to the present-day discussion of migration in the media, historians have repeatedly argued that migration has been a common practice within Europe for centuries. Warfare, religious persecution, and poverty were familiar push factors, which encouraged people who were striving for a better life to move abroad. From the sixteenth until the late eighteenth centuries, the Dutch Republic was an attractive destination both for refugees, such as French Huguenots, and economic migrants, often from Germany and Scandinavia. Studies by economic historians have demonstrated the strong pull factor of the booming economy, which

attracted large-scale labor migration (e.g., Lucassen 1987; van Lottum 2007). The largest share of migrants came from countries in the North Sea region: Flanders, northern Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway (van Lottum 2007: 15). The foreigners represented a diversity of professions as shown by Kuijpers in her study of the *migrants' city* of Amsterdam in the seventeenth century (Kuijpers 2005: 213–226, 248, 407–410).¹ In the town of Leiden, it was the textile industry that furnished jobs for Flemish migrants. Generally, many female migrants found work as maidservants. The maritime sector provided job opportunities for a considerable number of male migrants until well into the late eighteenth century (van Lottum 2007: 126, 157–158). In this sector, foreigners were promoted to the higher ranks of second or first mate and ultimately captain just as natives were on account of their maritime experience (Bruijn 2008: 59–60, 90–92, 237).

Migrants had not only to survive, but also to communicate aboard ships and in other places of work, where the dominant language was Dutch. Even in the Lutheran churches, migrant churches of mainly Germans and Scandinavians, Dutch had been the language of the religious service since 1648 (Kuijpers 2005: 104–111). For daily life, an active or at least passive command of Dutch was required. At the same time, the extensive influx of migrants created a language contact situation among the various Dutch dialects and foreign languages or dialects. We may therefore wonder what the communicative practices of migrants were in the Early and Late Modern period and to what level they acquired their command of Dutch.

2. Communicative practices of migrants

For spoken language, we may assume that so-called receptive bi- or multilingualism, described by Braunmüller (1997; 2007; 2013) for the Scandinavian area during the Hanseatic league, must have played a role in the case of Low German speaking migrants from northern Germany and Scandinavian migrants with a fair command of Low German. In face-to-face communication, which is an essential characteristic of receptive multilingualism, Dutch-speaking and Low German-speaking people must have been able to communicate effectively in their closely related languages.² Receptive multilingualism overcomes communicative prob-

1. Kuijpers investigated the subsistence migration of Germans and Scandinavians to Amsterdam. How impressive the numbers of migrants were becomes clear from the considerably increasing population: from an estimated 30,000 in around 1585 to 200,000 in around 1660, when half of the population was born abroad.

2. For features of receptive multilingualism, see Braunmüller (2007: 29–32).

lems of speaking but does not leave any traces. This part of the past will thus remain mostly hidden. For linguistic traces we have to examine written language sources, research which can be conducted in at least two different ways.

Howell cum suis have published extensively on the effects of language contact in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch Republic (among others Hendriks 1998; Goss 2002; Howell 2006; Hendriks et al. 2018). In their research, they attribute particular diachronic changes in Dutch to the effects of migration, either from Germany or Flanders. For the present article in honor of Rob Howell, I have chosen to focus on migration in another period, the late eighteenth century, and on another aspect, that is the command of Dutch by migrants in a particular domain, the maritime sector. I wondered whether it would be feasible to get a glimpse of the migrants' written non-native communication and their level of Dutch competence. Generally, for written everyday communication geographical distance was a factor and, therefore, scores of letters must have been sent by migrants from the Dutch Republic to family members in Germany and Scandinavia, mainly along routes over land. These letters have not been preserved, but part of the letters sent by migrants with a maritime profession have survived: they were sent from destinations overseas to relatives or friends in the Dutch Republic. I found such ego-documents in the *Prize Papers*, the wonderful treasure trove which has been at the center of my historical sociolinguistic research program *Letters as Loot* (van der Wal 2006).

3. Confiscated papers: *Letters as Loot*

The so-called Prize Papers or sailing letters are a unique source of documents, which survived due to European warfare and privateering, the longstanding legitimate activity of conquering enemy ships. In the past this activity was performed by all seafaring European countries and regulated by strict rules. When a ship was taken, all papers on board were confiscated in order to demonstrate that the seized ship indeed belonged to the enemy and was a so-called *legal prize*. In England, after the legal procedure, the confiscated papers remained in the High Court of Admiralty's Archives (HCA), held today in the National Archives in London (Kew, UK). As a result of the frequent warfare between England and the Netherlands from the second half of the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, approximately 40,000 Dutch letters, both private and commercial, and a wide range of other material are currently stored in over a thousand boxes in the National Archives (van der Wal et al. 2012; Rutten & van der Wal 2014:1–2). The confiscated letters belonged to the ships' cargo, as ships sailing to and from the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and European ports often functioned as mail carriers.

As the confiscated letters preserve the written language of thousands of different writers, men and women from different social classes, age groups, and regions, they form an excellent basis for an investigation of everyday written communication in the past and its variation and change (cf. Elspaß 2012a; Schneider 2013). The first extensive sociolinguistic analysis of these Dutch letters was conducted in the *Letters as Loot* research program (2008–2013), funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research and directed by Marijke van der Wal at Leiden University (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 1–18; van der Wal & Rutten 2016).³ This research concentrated on a selection of about one thousand private Dutch letters from the late seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries, written by more than 700 different letter writers, and all transcribed from the manuscripts (the *Letters as Loot* (LAL) corpus). Filling blank spots in the history of Dutch, the ultimate results convincingly proved the great value of these letters for a monolingual history (for detailed results see the OA *Letters as Loot* volume, Rutten & van der Wal 2014). In the present article I would like to argue that at the same time this collection of confiscated papers allows us to trace linguistic practices and patterns of communication of multilingual migrants across Europe such as shown in the seventeenth-century case of the Heusch family, Flemish migrants who settled in the town of Hamburg (van der Wal 2018; 2019).

4. Ways of finding non-native communication

Non-native ego-documents were found in the Prize Papers by following two methods of selection: focusing on the name of the senders (1) and paying attention to characteristics of the letters themselves (2). I explored not only the tagged and lemmatized *Letters as Loot* (LAL) corpus, a balanced corpus of 1,033 mainly private letters, but also my additional LAL-2 collection of another 1,386 transcribed letters for letters which seemed to be written by non-natives. After a quick scan, I concentrated on the eighteenth-century letters, since the number of such seventeenth-century letters appeared to be low in my corpora.

The selection was based upon the first impression of non-nativeness, either by the family name of the sender or by the non-native linguistic characteristics of the letters. But how could one be sure that the letters found were indeed instances of non-native communication? I had to be careful with the names of senders and had to identify the letter writers, which usually is not part of our linguistic work. Names such as Heitzig, Lauterbach or Mölich seem to indicate a for-

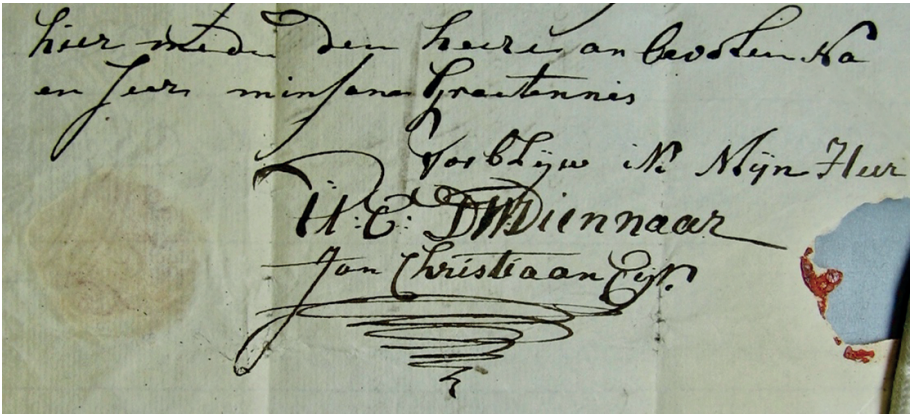
3. See also <http://www.brievenalsbuit.nl> for the *Brieven als Buit/Letters as Loot* website, both in Dutch and in English.

eign origin, but we have to take into account the presence of various generations of migrants. Hendrik Heitzig and Georg Gotlieb Lauterbach proved to be first-generation migrants, but Jan Mölich, son of a German father and a Dutch mother, did not belong to the category of non-natives and appeared to write Dutch letters with hardly any German trace. On the other hand, a name such as Jan Vogelaar seems to guarantee a Dutch origin, but this man, who married an Amsterdam woman, originated from Stralsund and apparently used a Dutchified name. His nephew, who sent a marriage proposal to the sister of Jan Vogelaar's wife, still used the German name *Vogler*.

Sometimes we find information about profession, network, and relatives in the letters, but often we have to conduct additional research. The background information on, for instance, Mölich and Vogelaar was not available in the letters themselves, which only provide the names of senders, addressees, and people occasionally mentioned. In order to identify particular individuals, we had to rely on interdisciplinary tools often used by historians: in this case marriage and baptismal registers. The marriage registers of many towns mention the origins of the bride and groom and thus allow us to establish whether the letter writers came from abroad and whether they married a local person or someone from their region of origin. An additional problem in these registers is the issue of the contemporary Dutchified geographical names, which may considerably deviate from the modern equivalents. It was possible to resolve this problem by consulting Damsteegt (2001) and archivist Hart's list of contemporary geographic names, available at present on the website of the Amsterdam City Archive. Furthermore, comparing the contents of letters with baptismal registers may help to disambiguate couples with identical names.

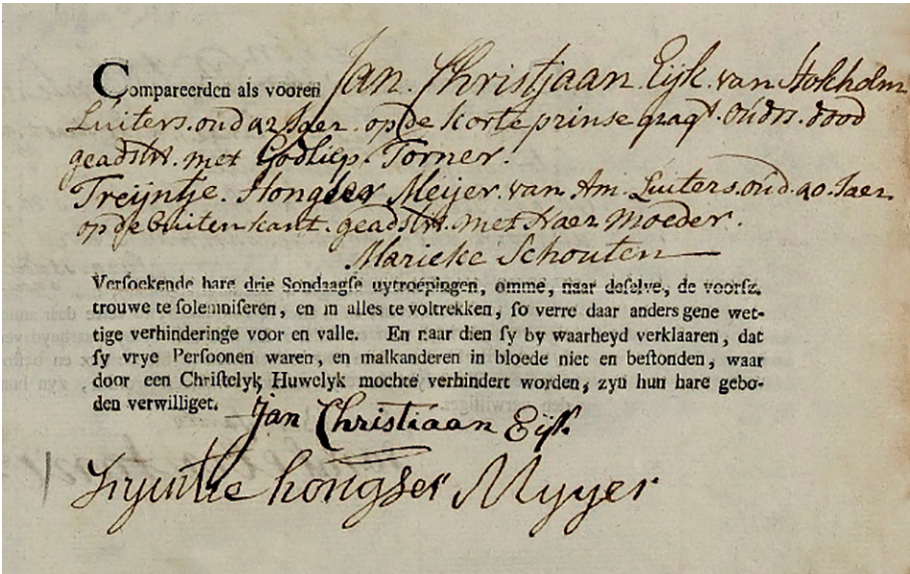
5. Checking identified individuals and their literacy

Apart from comparing the contents of a letter with information from marriage and baptismal registers, we have another opportunity to check whether specific letter writers were correctly identified. The Amsterdam marriage registers have a remarkable characteristic: they comprise the signatures of bride and groom, which were not mandatory in the marriage registers of most other towns. The example of letter writer Jan Christiaan Eijk, who wrote to a business relation from St. Eustatius on 18 November 1780, illustrates this point. According to the Amsterdam marriage registers, he appears to originate from Stockholm and married a local woman on 21 January 1774. The signatures in the letter (Figure 1) and the marriage register (Figure 2) are identical, which confirms the correct identification.



hier mede den heer van Oostenka
en jeen minne groetennis
Voorblijw in Nijn Huer
H. C. Eijk naar
Jan Christiaan Eijk

Figure 1. Signature of Jan Christiaan Eijk’s letter (LAL corpus)



Compareerden als vooren Jan Christiaan Eijk van Stolkdam
Luiters. oud 42 Jaer. op de korte prinse gragt. Oudts. dood
geadwt. met Godliep. Torner.
Treijntje. Hongers Meijer. van Am. Luiters. oud 40 Jaer.
op de Bliten kant. geadwt. met Kaer Moeder.
Marieke Schouten
Verloekende hare drie Sondaags uytroepingen, omme, naar deselve, de voorz.
trouwe te solemniseren, en in alles te voltrekken, so verre daar anders gene wet-
tige verhinderinge voor en valle. En naar dien sy by waarheyd verklaaren, dat
sy vrye Perfoonen waren, en malkanderen in bloede niet en bestonden, waar
door een Christelyk Huwelyk mochte verhindert worden, zyn hun hare gebo-
den verwilliget.
Jan Christiaan Eijk
Treijntje Hongers Meijer

Figure 2. Jan Christiaan Eijk’s signature in the marriage register (Amsterdam City Archive)

Such a comparison of signatures can also indicate a non-autograph status. An illustrative example is the letter sent by Andries Jansen, who originated from Waasper (= Varberg) in Sweden. Comparing the letter to his wife (Figure 3), written from St. Eustatius on 20 January 1781, with the registration in the marriage records (Figure 4), we notice his wife’s mark (she appears illiterate or semi-literate) and his own imperfect signature which differs from the signature in the letter.

K. K. Gode Regering
Sog og Boder alle De forrige Rjeds Kommando-
Beholdte med samme Grøtternes Anvendelse.
Nærsk. Luf. og med Hænder En den Jernstørste
Maat mag Andreffes Andre Vart vel —
Andres Jansen

6. Results of a quest for migrants and their backgrounds

6.1 The number of letter writers and their origin

Exploring the *LAL* and *LAL-2* corpora, I found 101 eighteenth-century migrant letters written by 64 different writers, all male. The letter writers mainly had a relationship with the city of Amsterdam; only 14 of them were related to other towns or regions.⁴ Nine letters were written by Jan Mölich, born in Amsterdam (§4). If we leave his letters and Andries Jansen's non-autograph aside (§5), the result is 91 letters written by 62 different writers. Almost all letters, which are dated 1780 and 1781, were sent from the Caribbean region: 47 from Curacao, 25 from St. Eustatius, five from Rio Demerary, eight from Surinam; six letters lacked a place name or were sent from a place in Europe. Apart from a few merchants and one plantation owner, the senders all had a maritime profession, although their actual rank could not be established in all cases.⁵ The addressees in the Dutch Republic were sometimes requested to forward an enclosed letter to relatives in German or Danish regions. This request clearly reveals the link with a particular region of origin. In order to establish a more detailed profile of the letter writers, I determined their origin and, if married, the origin of their wives, the date of marriage and, if married in Amsterdam, the literacy of both bride and groom on the basis of their signatures.

Roughly three regions of origin were distinguished: (North) Germany, Scandinavia and Frisian regions, that is the North Frisian islands Föhr, Sylt and Hooge, one of the Halligen islands, and East Frisia. Letter writers who originated from Germany appear to be most frequent as shown in Table 1.

I note that one North Frisian and one East Frisian letter writer also wrote a letter in German. These German letters will be taken into account in §§8 and 9. The more detailed origins of the letter writers are visualized on the map below (Figure 5).⁶

4. Nine of them (Bink, Duffeke, Niebauer, Rijman, Vedelaar, Voets, Roos, Ruberg, Jan Pieter Smit) sent their letters to Rotterdam, one (Christiaansen) to Dordrecht, one (Loos) to Vlaardingen, two to Zeeland (Nicolaus Pietersen and Noten), and one (Steur) to St. Eustatius.

5. I found 13 captains or mates (eight captains, four mates, one captain or mate), one ship's secretary and one ship's carpenter. The age of the letter writers could be retrieved from the marriage registers if migrants married in the Dutch Republic: 20 belonged to the age category of <30, 21 to the category of 30–50, and two to the category of >50; the age of 19 individuals could not be determined.

6. I would like to thank Brenda Assendelft (Leiden) for drawing Figure 5.

Table 1. The origin of the letter writers

Origin	Letter writers	Dutch letters
(North) Germany	34	42
North Frisian islands	6	12
East Frisia	3	6
Frisian areas total	9	18
Denmark	6	12
Norway	5	6
Sweden	6	10
Scandinavia total	17	28
Unclear	2	3
Total	62	91

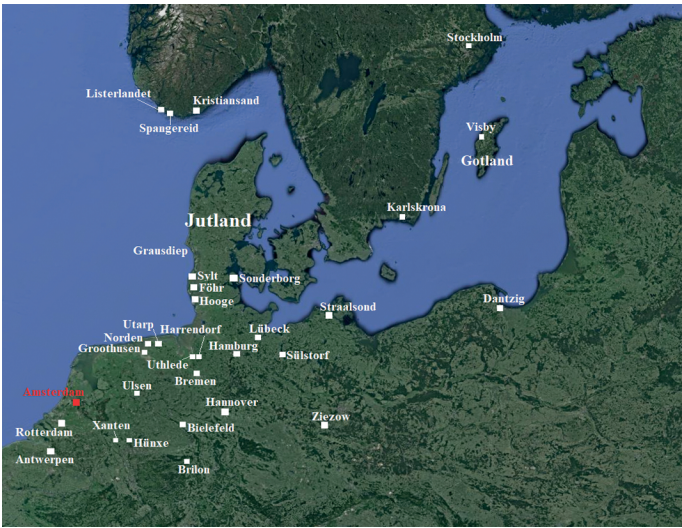


Figure 5. The established origins of the letter writers (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Antwerp excluded)

The established regions of origin are linguistically complex areas, a problem that will be discussed in §7.

6.2 Language choice and linguistic characteristics

From studies by historians we know that foreigners often married a local person, which appeared to be a fruitful strategy. Marriages with local women clearly dominate in our material: the 38 instances of available marriage information comprise 30 cases of migrants marrying a Dutch woman and only eight cases of migrants who married a bride from their own or another foreign region.⁷ At first sight, a striking phenomenon appears to be that, with one exception (Cornelis Pieterse), these letters to non-native spouses were written in Dutch or intended Dutch. There are two possible hypotheses that may explain this language choice: it could be a sign of striving for integration and accommodating to the Dutch environment *or* the letters had to be read by Dutch, native helpers for an illiterate addressee. In the case of the five Amsterdam marriages, the second hypothesis has to be rejected as all wives signed their marriage registration.⁸ Since in the teaching practice at schools, learning writing skills followed the acquisition of reading competence, it is highly unlikely that the women were not able to read (Graf 1987). However, this does not mean that we could immediately accept the first hypothesis. We also have to take into account the historical context of the regions of origin, which were linguistically rather complex as will be shown in §7.

Looking at the letters written by 62 writers, we notice a great diversity: some are written in perfect Dutch with no or very few foreign features, while others show a considerable number of deviating features. Individual skills will, undoubtedly, have had an influence on the command of Dutch, but other factors could also be relevant, such as whether the letter writer was a long-term or a short-term resident in the Dutch Republic. Another hypothesis may be that the linguistic background (Frisian, German or Scandinavian) or, more generally, a background of multilingualism or language contact played a role in the acquisition of Dutch. It is time to zoom in on the linguistic background of the letter writers.

7. *Gerrit Pieterse* and *Cornelis Pieterse* sent letters to their wives on the island of Föhr. In the city of Rotterdam, *Jan Voets* from Xanten married Margaretha Dietz (Grietje Diesen) from Hanau. The Amsterdam marriage registers comprise the other five cases: *Matthijs Hansen* from Grausdiep (Denmark) and Catharina Elisabeth Andre from Esens (East Frisia), *Jan Haver* from Dantzig and Beertje Schandorp from Orp (=Bad Orb, Germany), *George Gottlieb Lauterbach* from Dantzig and Janna Daalhof from Ulsen (Germany), *Dirk Meijer* from Gramke near Bremen and Margaretha Elizabeth Horeys from Midlum near Hannover, *Hendrik Otten Uvens* and Rebecka Elisabeth Uhlonius (Uylhoorn in the letter), who both originated from Norden (East Frisia).

8. The only Rotterdam marriage record does not contain signatures.

7. The complex regions of origin⁹

Northern Germany, East Frisia, the North Frisian islands (Föhr, Amrum, Sylt, and the Halligen), Denmark and the coastal areas of Norway and Sweden have been multilingual regions of language contact for centuries. In the context of trade, *Low German* played a crucial role in the medieval Hanseatic league as a spoken and written lingua franca (Braunmüller 1997; Jahr 1999). In the Early Modern period, its role as written language diminished across the region as Low German was replaced by High German in the formal domains, a switch that was completed by the end of the seventeenth century. How widespread a Low German private writing practice still was is a matter for further research. The Prize Papers comprise some late seventeenth-century letters written in Low German – evidence that, as Elspaß and Stolberg (2014) pointed out, calls into question the general textbook opinion that it had ceased being used in written communication at that time.

Although much is unknown about the detailed linguistic situation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we may assume that virtually all people on the North Frisian islands were native speakers of Frisian, with many also being fluent or competent in Low German. Significant numbers of Frisian-Low German bilinguals were also found on the mainland coastline, within 20 km from the coast. The Danish dialect (Sønderjysk) was spoken in Angeln (Anglia), and in the rural areas of the current border region, which had marked the linguistic border between Low German and South Jutish more or less accurately since the Reformation. Elsewhere Low German was the language of spoken discourse. High German was the language of writing in the domains of administration, church and education. Langer & Havinga (2015: 18) argue that the “native languages of the people, Low German (Plattdüütsch), South Jutish (Sønderjysk), and, on the west coast, North Frisian (Nordfriisk), were *invisible*” in language-policy discourses. These languages “were not used in formal writing or print, nor were they used in formal speaking, be that in church, at school, or in state administration”. For the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, German – Danish – Frisian multilingualism and High – Low German diglossia have often been ignored in linguistic and historical research (Langer 2013: 73–75). An additional problem for the 1700–1850 period is the lack of written Low German texts of any substance (Langer 2013: 75) and the absence of North Frisian sources before 1800 (Hoekstra 2004: 63–64). Moreover, all language histories end their discussion of Low German by the end of the seventeenth century at the latest.

9. When writing this section, I benefitted greatly from personal communication with Kurt Braunmüller (Hamburg), Jarich Hoekstra (Kiel), and Nils Langer (Flensburg).

The Frisian – Low German bilingualism is also referred to by Hoekstra (2004: 57–61), who, moreover, stressed the Dutch influence on the language of the North Frisian islands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The North Frisian dialects comprise a considerable number of Dutch loans, which can be explained by the historical context. At that time, the majority of the male population on the islands was employed in the maritime sector, and many of them sailed on Dutch vessels, not only as lower-rank sailors, but also as captains or commanders (*Kommandeure*) who wrote their ship journals and other formal maritime documents in Dutch (Menke 1997: 134). Dutch was the language on board, a language many of them had learnt beforehand at navigation schools on the North Frisian islands where Dutch and High German manuals were used (Menke 1997: 126–128, Kuijpers 2005: 43, 48–49).¹⁰ In sum, Dutch was a *lingua franca* during 150 to 200 years in the North Sea region (Menke 1997: 115) and Dutch – Frisian bilingualism has to be assumed for the higher ranks on board until the end of the eighteenth century (Menke 1997: 124).

All kinds of language contact phenomena are likely to have occurred in such complex regions of Dutch – Frisian – Low (and High) German language contact, including interferences from a native language and mistakes typical of second language learning. However, no direct sources for the spoken language are available and only quotes in diaries may reflect spoken practices. Menke (1997: 134) has argued that the High German language dominated in the *private* correspondence of sailors, which often showed a mixture of Dutch, Frisian and Low German interferences.

Interference is what we would expect for the Dutch letters written by non-natives from such regions of language contact. To examine these interferences, the letters written by individuals from a different origin need to be investigated separately. Taking all three regions of origin into account would go far beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I explore the letters by writers with a Frisian background or, in other words, a multilingual background including Frisian. The letter writers originate from the North Frisian islands (§8) and from East Frisia (§9). For each letter writer, I provide biographical details and discuss the main characteristics of their letters. I not only focus on foreign interferences, but also examine two linguistic phenomena frequent in letters: the epistolary forms of address *UE* ‘your honor’ and *UL* ‘your love’ (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 203–245) and the first person singular object or oblique pronouns *mij* and *mijn* ‘me’. In printed eighteenth-century texts only *mij*, the ultimate standard form, is found, but in

10. Kuijpers mentions that in the eighteenth century, experienced captains and mates organized navigation schools on all North Frisian islands during winter, which opened the opportunity for North Frisians to be promoted to the higher maritime ranks.

handwritten ego-documents the variant *mijn* occurs (cf. van der Wal 2007). In passing, I also note a few features that are remarkable for specific letter writers. When discussing various linguistic features, I refer only to their occurrence in the eighteenth-century part of the balanced *LAL* corpus, as *LAL-2* is compiled as a collection of additional letters, not as a balanced corpus. The general conclusions and a reflection on future research will be presented in §10.

8. Letter writers from the North Frisian islands

Six letter writers originate from the North Frisian islands: captain Bernardus Knuttel, his brother captain Daniel Knuttel, captain or mate Gerrit Pieterse and captain Cornelis Pietersz, all from the island of Föhr, captain Andries Hanssen from the island of Sylt, and Paul(us) Meijnders, whose rank aboard is not clear, from Hooge, one of the Halligen islands. In January 1781, they sent letters from the Caribbean region: Hanssen from the island of St. Eustatius and the others from the island of Curacao.¹¹

8.1 Bernardus and Daniel Knuttel: Interjections, *mijn* and a few German traces

Bernardus Knuttel wrote two letters to his wife, Anna van Son, a local woman he married about ten years previously in the city of Amsterdam. At the time of the correspondence, they had five daughters, and Anna was pregnant with their sixth daughter. Bernardus hoped that his letters would reach her before the forthcoming delivery; unfortunately, due to the English privateers, the letters did not arrive. The letter he wrote to Pieter Willem van Lankeren, his *patroon* ‘boss’ and the owner of the ship, also failed to reach its destination in Amsterdam.¹²

In his first letter to his wife, Bernardus describes the Great Hurricane of October 1780, which according to present-day estimations caused about 22,000 deaths. To express his emotional distress caused by the enormous disaster, he uses the

11. Hanssen’s two letters to his wife, the letter by Cornelis Pietersz. and the one by Meijnders are part of the original *LAL* corpus; the other letters belong to the *LAL-2* corpus.

12. See the registers of marriages and baptism in the Amsterdam City Archive. At the age of 36, Bernardus Knuttel married Anna van Son, aged 25 years, from Amsterdam, on 7 December 1770. Their children were Agatha (1772), Wijnanda Luberta (1774), Dorothea Cornelia (1776), Anna Christina (1778), Christina Carolina (1779) and Anna Catharina who was baptized on 22 April 1781. The letters to his wife date from 16 and 17 January 1781, and the business letter from 10 January 1781.

interjection *og* 'oh' in (1), (2) and (4), the syntactic pattern *wat* 'what' + verb in (1) and (2) and a combination of the *wat*-pattern plus *niet* 'not' in (3):

- (1) *og Waerde schat wat isser gepassert..*
oh dear darling what is-there occurred
'Oh, dear darling, what occurred...'
- (2) *og wat schikt de goede godt dog de weegen*
oh what rules the good God after all the ways
'Oh, the good God rules our destiny after all'
- (3) *Wat syn daar niet ongelukken geschiet. Wat syn daar niet scheepen en*
what are there not accidents happened what are there not ships and
Menschen weg gebleeven (...) en wat leggen hier niet Gehavereerde
people perished and what lie here not damaged
Scheepen (...)
ships
'How many accidents happened, how many ships and people perished, and
how many damaged ships are lying here'
- (4) *og Lieve vrouw...*
oh beloved wife
'Oh, beloved wife...'

Interjections feature in spoken, colloquial language. Searches for *og/och* and two other interjections resulted into only 34 occurrences of *og/och* 'oh', 15 of *ag/ach* 'ah/ alas' and 34 of *o/oh* 'o/oh' in the late eighteenth-century part of our original *LAL* corpus, which consists of 384 autographs, written by 292 letter writers. Just as in Bernardus Knuttel's case, the interjections combine with a noun phrase and with a sentence or verb phrase. Only 30 letter writers, or about 10%, use one or two of these interjections. Among these are 11 male and 19 female writers, a clear gender difference which appears to be even larger compared to the gender representation in the corpus: the interjections are used by 5% of the male and 27% of the female scribes. In his report on the hurricane, Bernardus thus shows a spoken language characteristic which is infrequent in written language and unusual in male correspondence.

In Bernardus' second letter to his wife, we find the exclamative pattern *wat* + verb again, but this time with the German interference *was* instead of *wat*:

- (5) *Lieve Vrouw was het Myn gyt Schoon melk de Gantsche Ryse gehat*
dear wife what has my goat nice milk the whole voyage had
'Dear wife, how well has my goat given milk during the whole voyage'

This is one of a limited number of German elements which occur for instance at the beginning of the same letter:

- (6) *Beminde en myn waerde huys vrouw Beneffens onse Lieve Kindern Gy Syt*
 beloved and my dear wife and our dear children you are
van Myn ge groet: en ik hoop dat gy deese wynige Lettern in vreugde
 by me greeted and I hope that you these few characters in joy
moogt ontfangen
 may receive
 ‘Beloved and dear wife and our dear children, you are greeted by me and I
 hope that you may receive these few lines in joy’

Examining the three letters, the final plural *-n* instead of *-en* is found in *Appeln* ‘apples’, *Goedern* ‘goods’, *Kindern* ‘children’ (six instances) and *Lettern* ‘characters’. Other German interferences are *bruder* ‘brother’ (two instances), *martz* ‘March’, *gluklig* ‘happy’ and *was* ‘what’. In sum, these are only a few instances of interference in letters totaling 1,885 words (14, which means seven per 1,000 words). In (6), the first-person singular oblique pronoun *mijn* (*Gy Syt van Myn ge groet*), a variant of the ‘regular’ form *mij*, occurs. Bernardus varies in his letters, but *mijn* dominates with five instances (71%) versus two instances of *mij* (29%).

Bernardus’ brother Daniel was a widower, aged ca. 34 years, when he married Anna Catherina Ankervliet, a bride from Amsterdam, aged 28 years, on 16 June 1780.¹³ Six months later, he wrote two letters to his beloved wife, in which he does not hide his longing for her, as clearly illustrated in (7), a quote from his first letter:

- (7) *wat verders myn angaet liefe. Schat; zo heb ik groot verlangst; van*
 what further me concerns beloved darling so have I great longing from
deze rys verlost te zyn; want ik heb nuw daer ik nae verlangen kan;
 this voyage delivered to be for I have now there I for long can
 ‘as for me, beloved darling, I have a great longing to be set free from this voy-
 age, for now I have someone to long for’

Daniel also uses the *mijn* variant in (7) and he does not vary elsewhere in his letters, where 100% ($N=6$) *mijn* is found. Daniel appears to be familiar with the eighteenth-century epistolary formulae that were found in the *LAL* corpus, such as the closing formula *ik breek hier meede af* and the contact formula, wishing to embrace each other in health, which close his second letter:¹⁴

13. The two letters to his wife are dated 5 and 17 January 1781.

14. In the original *LAL* corpus 63 hits of the closing formula and 53 hits of the contact formula are found for the eighteenth century.

- (8) *ik breek hier meede af; en wens't Geen, wat Een Man, an Een*
 I break here with off and wish that what a husband to a
liefhebbende Vrouw; kan wensen en begeeren; dat wy met Gezondheyd
 loving wife can wish and desire that we with health
maelkander omhelsen moegen; nae Gedaener Rijse
 each other embrace may after completed voyage
 'With this I end and wish what a husband may wish to a beloved wife and
 desire, that we may embrace each other in health after the completed voyage'

Daniel's letters also show the German feature of final plural *-n* instead of *-en* in *Appeln* 'apples' and *lettern* 'characters, lines' and *-n* instead of *-en* in *gistern* 'yesterday' (two instances), *verandern* 'change' (two instances) and *verzeekern* 'to insure'. Furthermore, the lexical items *an gelanget* 'arrived', *bevoor* 'before' (two instances), the spelling *Voorjahr* 'spring' and the case suffix *-er* (*nae Gedaener Rijse* in (8)) occur. In sum, these are only a few instances of interference: 12 in letters of 1,146 words in total, which means ten per 1,000 words.

8.2 Forms of address, *mijn* and deviating orthographical and phonological features

Writing from the Caribbean, captain Andries Hanssen stresses his craving for letters from his beloved wife Maria Booy, a local woman he married about eighteen months previously.¹⁵ He himself wrote two letters after he arrived, but so far received none from her. The longing for letters is a familiar and frequent phenomenon in our *LAL* and *LAL-2* corpora, but Andries elaborates on this theme by qualifying the mail exchange as the only way to converse, explicitly referring to his wife's reading skills. We have to realize that her skills allowed privacy, which would not be the case if the letter had to be read by someone else for her:

- (9) From Andries Hanssen's letter dated 14 January 1781:
 a. *hertie lief u weet genoegzaem, hoe waerd myn Een lettertie,*
 little heart beloved you know enough how dear me a little letter
van u lieve hand is
 from your dear hand is
 'beloved little heart, you know well how dear to me a little letter from your
 dear hand is'

15. Andries Hanssen married Maria Booy from Amsterdam on 25 May 1779. His wife is the addressee of two letters dated 14 and 19 January 1781; a third letter, dated 20 January 1781, is sent to a business relation in Rotterdam.

- b. *hertie lief ik schryf Zoo wat, terwyl ik weet dat UEl:*
little heart beloved I write so something while I know that your love
Zelfs leesen kent,
yourself to read can
‘Beloved little heart, I write all this, while I know that you yourself can
read’

From (9a), it is clear that Andries is familiar with the variant *mijn*, the only variant he uses (100%, 15 instances). When referring to his wife’s reading skills, Andries uses the epistolary form of address *UEl* (9b), which he repeats three times and which also occurs in the second letter to his wife and in his letter to Thomas Rocke, a business contact in the city of Rotterdam. In the late eighteenth century, the regular epistolary form of address was *UE* ‘your honor’ and its variants (*UEd*, *UEdt*), which had replaced the main seventeenth-century form of address *UL* ‘your love.’ In the late seventeenth century, the rising form *UE* had appeared in letters written by the Upper (UC) and Upper Middle Classes (UMC) at the expense of *UL*, and just a minor start began in the Lower Middle Class (LMC) (Figure 6).

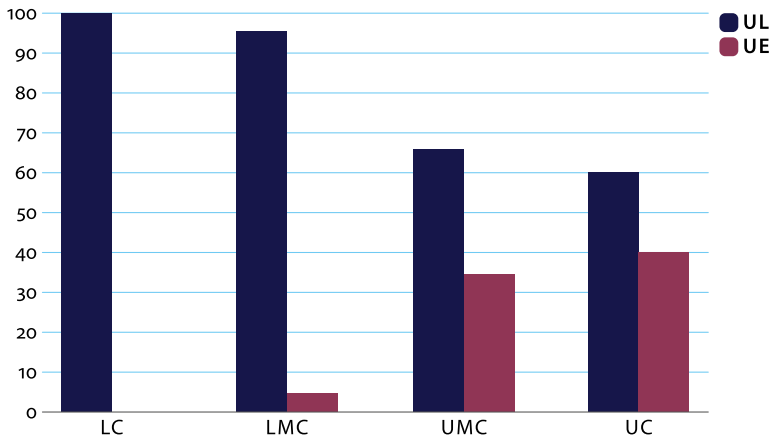


Figure 6. Epistolary forms of address *UL* and *UE* by social class in the seventeenth century (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 228)

One hundred years later the new *UE* is common in all social classes and the original *UL* is a minor variant in the Low (LC) and Lower Middle (LMC) classes (Figure 7).

We may conclude that the rise of *UE* was a convincing change from above, a change which began in the higher social classes, and the change was also gender determined, as it started in the language of men from the higher ranks (Rutten

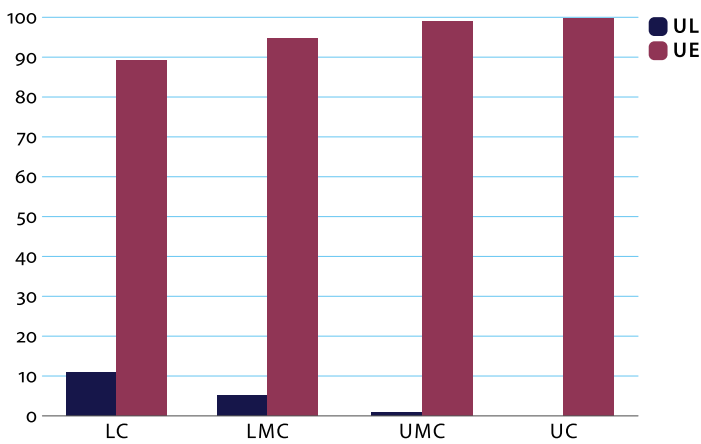


Figure 7. Epistolary forms of address *UL* and *UE* by social class in the eighteenth century (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 233)

& van der Wal 2014: 228–234). Although captain Hanssen belonged to the Upper Middle Class (see Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 9–10 for the class categories we distinguished), he does not use *UE*, but the old- fashioned *UEL*, which I interpret as the representation of spoken *UL*. In this respect, he clearly deviates from Bernardus and Daniel Knuttel, who both use *UE*, and from most of the other letter writers I will discuss below. On the other hand, Hanssen shows a fairly good command of Dutch with only a few German spellings (*Ehrbied* ‘respect’ (two instances), *Ehrbiedigste* ‘most respectful’, *Ehrwaerde* ‘venerable’ (two instances), *Jahr* ‘year’), the *-n* instead of *-en* in *gistern* ‘yesterday’, *vergaedern* ‘to collect’ and phonological variant *gennedige* ‘merciful’. These are only a few instances of interference in letters totaling 1,624 words: eight instances, or five per 1,000 words.

Another letter writer of North Frisian origin, Gerrit Pieterse, wrote a letter to his friend, shoemaker Theodorus Theloh in Amsterdam on 5 January 1781 and enclosed a letter for his wife Margaretha Gerrits in Nieblum on the island of Föhr. Gerrit’s rank as captain or mate is indicated by a few lines in the letter to his wife:

- (10) *Verders laet ik myn liefste Engel, Weete, als dat ik nu order gekregen heft,*
Further let I my dearest Angel know that I now order received have
om hier Baellaest, Jn tee neme en daer, met na de Eyland, Granadies, Too te
to here ballast load and there with to the Island Grenada to to
Zuyle Om daer Teelade, na Rotterdam
sail to there to load to Rotterdam
‘Furthermore, I let you know, my dearest Angel, that I have received the order
now to load ballast here and to sail to the island of Grenada with it, in order to
load there for the destination of Rotterdam.’

Gerrit hoped to receive a letter from his wife, just as Hanssen and Daniel Knuttel did, and he also expressed his wish to embrace his wife in health with a similar contact formula as found in Daniel's letter:

- (11) *dat Wuy maelkander Weer met gezonthuyden zeegen omarm maelkander*
 that we one another again with health and blessing embrace one another
om armen mogt, dat is myn wenssch dagen Nagt, al waer ik ben
 embrace may that is my wish day and night all where I am
 'that we may embrace one another again with health and blessing, that is my wish
 day and night, where-ever I am.'

What is striking is the almost consistent use of the graph <uy> for the diphthong /ei/ (usually <ey> or <y>) such as *zuyle* (*zeyle*) 'to sail' in (10), *gezonthuyd* (*gezontheyd*) 'health', *wuy* (*wy*) 'we' in (11) and *altuyd* (*altyd*) 'always', *buy* (*by*) 'by, with', *gelegenhuylt* (*gelegenheyt*) 'opportunity', *ingeluyde* (*ingeleyde*) 'enclosed', *luyd* (*leyd*) 'lays', *ruysse* (*reysse*) 'voyage', *vrendeluyk* (*vrendelyk*) 'friendly', *zuyn* (*zyn*) 'to be'. One of the deviating phonological features is the long /o:/ (<o>) instead of Dutch /oe/ (<oe>) in *gode* (*goede*) 'good', which also occurs in *moder* (*moeder*) 'mother', *broders* (*broeders*) 'brothers' and *grotenisse* (*groetenisse*) 'greeting' and which is a Low German phonological feature (Lasch 1974: 94–95, Hoekstra 2004: 69). Another phonological phenomenon is the /k/ instead of /x/ in *ekter* (*echter*) 'however', *dook* (*doch*) 'but' and *nook niet* (*noch niet*) 'not yet'.¹⁶

- (12) *Ekte* *laet ik UE:* *Weete als dat (...)*
 nevertheless let I your honor know that
 'Nevertheless, I let you know that...'

German lexical interferences are *Kiender* 'children' and *Stüek* 'part'. Gerrit Pieterse is familiar with *UE* as epistolary form of address as seen in (12), and *mijn*, as in (13), is the only variant in his letters (100%, nine instances).

- (13) *Vader heft myn geschrefen dat huy, myn Gelt die ik teehuys gestuert hade,*
 father has me written that he my money that I home sent had
weel entfangen hade
 well received had
 'Father wrote me that he had indeed received my money that I had sent home'

16. In our *LAL* corpus no hits for *ekter* are found, and *dook/dok/dock* and *nook/nok/nock* occur only in letters written by two scribes from Scandinavia, one from North Germany and two with an Amsterdam connection. This phenomenon needs to be examined more thoroughly in my present collection of migrant letters (see Table 1) before determining whether it could be a case of hypercorrection based on correspondences such as *breken* – *brechen* (suggested by Jarich Hoekstra).

Gerrit's letters comprise many more foreign features than the letters by the three previous scribes. A rough count results into 60 deviating features in a total of 736 words, which means at least 82 features per 1,000 words.¹⁷

On 6 January 1781, Paul(us) Meijnders wrote a letter to his wife, Lena Boumans, a bride from Amsterdam, whom he had married four years previously.¹⁸ Although his maritime rank is unknown, the reason for his changing ship (he did not get along with the captain) may indicate that he was one of the mates. His letter shows a few foreign features such as *Gluck* 'happiness', *verveelt heeft* (German *verfehlen*) 'has missed', the long /o:/, instead of Dutch /oe/ in *grootnis* 'greeting' and *moder* 'mother', a Low German feature also found in Gerrit Pieterse's letter, and the <e> spelling instead of <ie> in *koffe* 'coffee' and *de* 'which'. These six instances in a letter of 378 words result into 16 deviating features per 1,000 words. Furthermore, Meijnders uses the first person singular oblique pronoun *meijn* (four instances) and the pronouns of address *ghij* and *uw* instead of an epistolary form of address (either *UE* or *UL*). A striking feature is the occurrence of *nauw* 'now' (three instances) instead of the usual variant *nu* for instance in *nauw vaar ick met Captijn Jan Jansen* 'now I sail with captain Jan Jansen'.¹⁹ The lack of an epistolary form of address and the occurrence of the spoken language variant *nou* (in his spelling *nauw*) may indicate that Meijnders was less familiar with Dutch writing conventions.

The last North Frisian letter writer, Cornelis Pietersz, wrote a brief letter to his *patroon* 'boss' Jacob van Gheselsoon in Amsterdam on 9 January 1781. Just like most writers so far, he used *UE* as epistolary form of address and *mijn* is his first person singular oblique pronoun (100%, three instances). Furthermore, the letter shows only a few German interferences: *Gluklyk* 'happily', *Guedern* 'goods' and *Schlegt* 'bad' (three per 256 words, which means 12 per 1,000 words). What is more remarkable, however, is that Cornelis also sent a letter to his wife, Ingeborg Petersen on the island of Föhr, not in Dutch as Gerrit Pieterse did, but in German, and he signed the letter with his name Nieckels Peterss, not the Dutchified variant Cornelis Pietersz. This High German letter of only 186 words shows various Low German or Dutch interferences:

17. Other remarkable items are *mand* (*man*) 'man', *saa* (*so*) 'so', *krege* (*kryge*) 'to get', *giefe* (*geve*) 'to give'. The schwa is represented either by <ee> in for instance *tee* (*te*) 'to' (*tee latewete* 'to let know'), *dezee* (*deze*) 'this' and *dee* (*de*) 'the' or by <o>, <oo>, <ooe> in, for instance, *vortrekke* 'to leave', *too lade* 'to load', *tooe zuyle* 'to sail'. As these alternative orthographies (and pronunciations) occur both in Dutch and German, I did not count them as deviating features (see Nobels, Simons & van der Wal 2011).

18. At the age of 26, Paul Meijnders married Lena Boumans, aged 21 years, on 8 November 1776 (Amsterdam City Archive).

19. Apart from his three instances, only 6 *nouw/nou/nauw* variants are found in the eighteenth-century part of the LAL corpus versus 595 hits of *nu* (and spelling variants).

- (14) *ich bin Gott sei Danck den 3. Dezember 1780 alhier glücklich mit Schiff und*
 I am God be thanks the 3 December 1780 all-here happily with ship and
Vlot angekommen, ich habe 35 Tagen Reiss und bestendig guttes Wetter
 fleet arrived I have 35 days voyage and continuous good weather
gehabt, die Negotie ist ganz geslagt, und ich dencke in Aprill Monath wieder
 had the trade is fully successful and I think in April month again
von hier su vertrecken,
 from here to leave
 ‘Thank to God, on 3 December 1780 I have arrived happily here with ship and
 fleet, I had 35 voyage days and continuous good weather, the trade is very suc-
 cessful and I think in the month April to leave again from here’

The address is written in Dutch (*An de Huis vrouw van Capt. Cornelis Pietersz Wond op het Eijland Fohr Franco Husem* ‘To the wife of captain Cornelis Pietersz who lives on the island of Föhr, Franco Husem’) and Cornelis uses Low German or Dutch words such as Dutch *Vlot* ‘fleet’, *Negotie* ‘trade’, *geslagt* ‘successful’, *bewesten Aruba* ‘west of Aruba’ and Low German and Dutch *Reiss* ‘voyage’, *veele* ‘many’ and *vertrecken* ‘to leave’. The particle *su* in *su vertrecken* testifies a familiar North German pronunciation of affricate <z> (normally /ts/) as voiceless /s/ (Hoekstra personal communication). Furthermore, the case inflection in examples such as *Meinen von Hertzen Geliebte Frauw, bis in den Todt* and *in einen Brief* deviates from the High German system.

8.3 Preliminary conclusions

Our six letter writers of similar maritime rank must all have become familiar with Dutch in navigating schools on the North Frisian islands and in practice aboard Dutch ships. Four of them married a local woman and settled in the city of Amsterdam as long-term residents.²⁰ With the exception of Hanssen and Meijnders, all others use the current Dutch epistolary form of address *UE*. All appear to be familiar with *mijn* either as the only option for the first person singular oblique pronoun or, in the case of Bernardus Knuttel, as the most frequent option alongside *mij*. I would like to note that the nasal variant (*mijn*) does not occur in Low German or North Frisian dialects. A striking difference is found between the four Amsterdam residents and the fifth letter writer, Gerrit Pieterse, whose wife lived

20. The Knuttel brothers had lived in Amsterdam until their deaths. Bernardus Knuttel was buried in Amsterdam on 23 December 1786, leaving behind his wife and five young children (Amsterdam City Archive). Daniel Knuttel, who had three sons and a daughter (Amsterdam City Archive), died in Amsterdam on 25 November 1815 (Opregte Haarlemsche Courant 28 November 1815).

on the island of Föhr. Whereas the Knuttel brothers, Hanssen and Meijnders show deviating features, varying from five to 16 features per 1,000 words, Gerrit's letters show a considerable number of foreign characteristics, at least 82 per 1,000 words. Cornelis Pietersz's language choice for communicating with his wife differed, as he wrote in German with considerable Dutch or Low German interferences. In his Dutch letter to his boss, however, only 12 deviating features per 1,000 words are found, a similar number to the others with the exception of Gerrit Pieterse.

9. Letter writers from East Frisia

The letter writers originating from East Frisia were young sailors who had not started a family yet and often stayed with a so-called *slaapbaas* 'lodging-house keeper' when on shore. Two of them, Reemt Jacobs, from the island of St. Eustatius, and Jan Frederiks Keuper, from the island of Curacao, wrote to their landlord in the city of Amsterdam and asked him to forward an enclosed letter to their relatives in East Frisia. On the island of St. Eustatius, Hendrik Otten Uvens also addressed a letter to his parents in Norden, East Frisia.²¹

9.1 The reflexive: A Frisian characteristic

When Reemt Jacobs, whose rank aboard is not clear, sent a letter to his landlord Hendrik Garrels in Amsterdam on 20 November 1780, he asked him to forward an enclosed letter to his mother, widow of Jacob Adams, in Groot Husen, East Frisia. In the letter to his mother, Reemt mentions the Great Hurricane of October 1780 only in passing (*want ons de Groote mast door een orkaans weer is over boord gegaan* 'for our main mast went overboard by a hurricane'), while he describes the disaster in more detail in the letter addressed to Garrels:

- (15) *hier en overall langs de Cariebisje kust zyn Eyselyk veel ongelukken*
 here and everywhere along the Caribbean coast are terribly many accidents
geschied in de maand van Octobr door den Orkaan, in de Granades
 happened in the month of October by the hurricane, in the Grenadines
zyn 5 Hollansse schepen gebleven. 1 te Sanct Croix Kapteyn Jan H. de Groot.
 are 5 Dutch ships perished 1 at St. Croix captain Jan H. de Groot
En wat dan meer mag zien hier is zeer veel volk aan land van dieverse
 and what then more may be here is very many people at land from various

21. The two letters by Reemt Jacobs are part of the original *LAL* corpus; the other letters belong to the *LAL-2* collection.

plaatzen toe komen die all hun schepen verloren hebben. wy hebben onze
 places to come who all their ships lost have we have our
Groote ook verlooren en 10 weke in Sanct Croix gelegen alwaar wij
 main [mast] also lost and 10 weeks in St. Croix. lain all-where we
vermast hebben
 made-a-new-mast have
 'here and everywhere along the Caribbean coast terribly many accidents hap-
 pened in the month of October caused by the hurricane. In the Grenadines
 five Dutch ships perished, one at St. Croix (captain Jan H. de Groot) and many
 more. A great many people came ashore here from various places, who all lost
 their ships. We also lost our main mast and have lain for ten weeks in St. Croix
 where we made a new mast'

In both letters we find German orthographic conventions such as *Ohms*, *befehle*, *Zohn* and German interferences such as *Sanct Eustaties*, *Sanct Staties*, *Sanct Croix* (three instances) and *plaatzen*. Another striking feature is the <ie> in *welzien* (*welzijn*) 'welfare' and *zien* (*zijn*) 'to be' (two instances), which indicates the lack of a diphthong pronunciation.²² For some of these features, see (16):

- (16) From Reemt Jacobs' letter to his mother:

Naar minsame Grootenis aan UE, neffens Broer en Susters Ohms
 After friendly greeting to your honor and brother and sisters uncles
en muien en alle die myn gedagtig zyn befehle UE
 and aunts and all who me mindful are [I] recommend your honor
zamentlyk in den Bewaringe des aller Hoogsten en zal blyven altoos
 all in the protection the-GEN all-highest and will remain always
die hem noemt Zeer hertelyk geliefde moeder & UE altoos gehoorzame
 who himself calls very heartily beloved mother & your always obedient
Zohn & Broer Reemt Jacobs
 son & brother Reemt Jacobs
 'After friendly greeting to you, and brother and sisters, uncles and aunts and all
 who think of me, [I] recommend you all in the protection of the Highest and
 [I] will always remain who calls himself, very heartily beloved mother & your
 fully obedient son and brother,' Reemt Jacobs.

Reemt, who uses *UE* as epistolary form of address and *mijn* as the only first-person singular oblique pronoun (100%, three instances), ends his letter to his mother with greetings, a commendation formula, and a familiar closing formula. In the closing formula *die hem noemt* 'who calls himself', the personal pronoun

22. The monophthong *î* (*ie*) is found in Low German *sîn* 'to be'. The missing prefix *ge* in the past participle *toe komen* 'come to' may be either a Frisian or a Low German characteristic (Bremmer 2009: 37–38; Lasch 1974: 229). Variation occurs in *mand* – *maand* 'month' and *grootenis* – *groetenis* 'greeting'.

hem functions as a reflexive pronoun. In late eighteenth-century Dutch, the reflexive *hem/haar* hardly occurred (only 5% of the reflexive cases; Simons 2013:145–148). The reflexive *sich/zich* had become the dominant option, the option we find in the letters by Bernardus (17) and Daniel (18) Knuttel, who both used *sig* in the similar closing formula:

- (17) *Verblyve Met alle agting UE getrouwe Man die Sig Noemt So*
 [I] remain with all respect your faithful husband who himself calls as
Lange hy left (...) B. Knuttel
 long he lives (...) B. Knuttel
 ‘I remain with all respect your faithful husband who calls himself as long as he lives (...) B. Knuttel’
- (18) *dat wensd van harten U opregs, en liefhebbende Man, die zig*
 that wishes from heart Your sincere and affectionate husband who himself
noemt Dl Knuttel
 calls Dl Knuttel
 ‘this wishes heartily your sincere and affectionate husband, who calls himself Dl. Knuttel’

Reemt Jacobs, whose first name is Frisian, shows in his use of reflexive *hem* a typical Frisian feature (cf. Bremmer 2009:56; König 1989:155 map). Taking into account this and 15 other deviating instances in the total of 495 words, we find 32 deviating features in 1,000 words, more than we found in the letters by the Knuttel brothers, Hanssen and Meijnders, but far fewer than in those of Gerrit Pieterse.

9.2 Another language choice

Jan Frederiks Keuper, whose name Keuper (=Kuiper) ‘cooper’ may indicate his profession, also wrote to his landlord Samuel Lint in Amsterdam on 5 January 1781 and enclosed a letter for his father Frerich Hikken in Uтары, Eesenser amt, East Frisia. However, Jan’s language choice appears to differ from that of Reemt, as Jan’s letter to his father is written in (High) German and signed with the name Jan Frerichs. Comparing his Dutch and German letters, we find in both cases the epistolary health formula and the text structural formula ‘I let you know that’. These similarities illustrate the widespread European conventions of epistolary formulae (Elspaß 2012b).

The letter to Lint and his wife, who are addressed as *Erwaarde vaader en Mooder* ‘honorable father and mother’ (19), not only shows the epistolary formulae, but also the Low German feature of the long /o:/ (<o>) instead of Dutch /oe/ (<oe>) in *mooder* ‘mother’, *doon* ‘I do’ (three instances), *grootenis* ‘greeting’, *mooten* ‘must’ and *gooie* (*goeie*) ‘good’ and German interferences as *gesund*

‘healthy’, *leit* ‘pity’, *sein* ‘to be’ (two instances) and *meer* (=mir) in *het saude meer van herten leit sein* in (19).

- (19) *Erwaarde vaader en Mooder ik doon uw Eedelen too weeten als datiknog*
 honorable father and mother I do your honor to know that-I-yet
vris en gesund bin en dat hoope ik van uw Eedelen ook soo het anders
 fresh and healthy am and that hope I of your honor too if it different
saudesein het saude meer van herten leit sein verders doon ik uw Eedelen
 would-be it would me from heart pity be further do I your honor
too weeten dat Klaas ook nog wel in order is
 to know that Klaas also still well in order is
 ‘honorable father and mother, I am letting you know that I am still fresh and
 healthy and I hope that the same applies to you. If it were different, I would
 heartily regret that. Furthermore, I am letting you know that Klaas is also still
 well’.

Another remarkable feature is the /e:/ (<ee>) for /ei/ (<ij>) in *too schreven* (*te schrijven*) ‘to write’, *ik verblewe* (*ik verblijfve*) ‘I remain’, *wee heben* (*wij hebben*), ‘we have’, *see mooten* (*sij moeten*) ‘they must’ (see Lasch 1974: 213–217). The Dutch first person singular oblique pronouns *mijn* and *mij* are not present in the letter. *Uw Eedelen*, a variant of *UE*, is used as epistolary form of address. In the brief letter of 198 words, 23 deviating features are found which gives the high score of 116 features per 1,000 words.²³

9.3 Similar formulae, deviating orthographical and phonological features

Hendrik Otten Uvens, a ship’s carpenter, sent a letter to his parents in Norden (addressed to Gerdt Abben in Norden, East Frisia) on 16 January 1781 and two letters to Amsterdam on 20 January 1781, one to his sweetheart Rebecka Elisabeth Uylhoorn and another to his friend Jan Klasz de Boer.²⁴ The letters to his parents and his sweetheart do not differ from the one to his friend, apart from the use of *UE*, which only occurs in the letter to De Boer. Uvens and Rebecka, who both originated from Norden, married on 19 April 1782. They are one of the few cases of endogamy discussed in §6.2.

23. As deviating features I included *eut* (*uit*) ‘outward bound’, *noo* (*nu*) ‘now’, *schlaper* ‘sleeper’, [der] *um* (*om*) ‘for this’, *versuke* ‘I request’ and the deleted final syllables in *gekoom* (*gekomen*) ‘come’ and *koom* ‘we come’. The particle *too* in *too weten* ‘to know’ was excluded from the count (see footnote 17).

24. Uvens’ profession of ship’s carpenter is mentioned both in the baptism record of his son Hendrik Otto (21 December 1783) and in the marriage record of his son Otto Hendriks Uvens (1 August 1813) (Amsterdam City Archive).

All letters are written in Dutch and start with the familiar health formula which comprises four elements: (1) I hope that my little letter will reach you in good health [if it pleases God]; (2) I thank God for my good health; (3) I hope that it will be the same for you; (4) If not, I would regret it (cf. Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 114–121). In these starting lines the variants *mijn* and *mij* of the first person singular oblique pronoun occur: *wat mijn angaet, het sau mij bedruven/ het sau mijn bedruven/ het Sau mijn van harten leedt seen* ‘as for me, I would regret it’. Uvens appears to vary between *mij* (four instances; 40%), *mijn* (five instances; 50%) and Low German *meh* (one instance; 10%). He is the only letter writer who also varies in the use of the possessive pronoun with two instances of *mij* ‘my’ (5%), *mij lieve vaader* ‘my dear father’, *my lieve laam* ‘my dear lamb’, versus 35 instances of *mijn* ‘my’ (95%; including orthographic variants such as *muynne, muyne, myn*). Apart from Jan Frederiks Keuper whose brief letter contains no possessive pronouns, all other letter writers use 100% *mijn* as the possessive pronoun (see also §10, Table 2).

Furthermore, Uvens’ letters show a considerable number of deviating characteristics, some of which were also found in Jan Frederiks’ and Gerrit Pieterse’s letters, such as the long /o:/ (<oo>) corresponding to Dutch /oe/ (<oe>) in *goode* ‘good’ (13 instances), the verbs *doon/ doot* (six instances) and *mooten/ moot* (six instances), and *hoo* ‘how’, and the <u> in *muder* in (20) and 23 other instances such as *grutenies/ grutenis, bedruven/ bedruft* and <ue> in *suen* ‘kiss’.

(20) Uvens’ letter to his parents,

Ser hoog geachte lieve vaader En muder en Susie Jk hoop dat het
 very highly esteemed dear father and mother and little sister I hope that it
Godt mag behagen dat geh mijn kleene letter in Een Goode welstandt mogt
 God may please that you my little letter in a good wellbeing may
ont vangen En mijn Gesondheit dar Oiet verstaan Wat mijn angaet
 receive And my health there from understand Concerning me
dank ik God vor goode Gesondheit En ik hoop En wens dat het met U
 thank I God for good health And I hope and wish that it with you
het selfde mag weesen Sau het Anders weesen het Sau mij bedruven
 the same may be should it different be it would me regret
 ‘Very highly esteemed dear father and mother and little sister, I hope that it
 may please God that you may receive my little letter in a good wellbeing and
 that you may learn my health from it. Concerning me, I thank God for my
 good health and I hope and wish that the same may apply to you. If it were dif-
 ferent, I would regret this.’

The Dutch /ui/ diphthong is represented in various ways such as <oie> in *dar oiet* (= *daar uit*) ‘from this’ in (20) or <uie> in *uiet* (= *uit*) and <öe> *böeten* (= *buiten*) ‘outside’, *slöeten* (= *sluiten*) ‘to close’, *höes/ tehöes* (= *huis*) ‘house/at home’ and <ö>

in *brödegom* (= *bruidegom*) ‘groom’. In *doesend* the original non-palatized sound is represented. As in Frederiks’ letter, the Dutch /ei/ diphthong corresponds to a monophthong /e:/ (<ee>) such as *kleene letter* ‘little letter’, the infinitives *bleeven* ‘to remain’, *kregen* ‘to get’, *schreven* ‘to write’, and *teet* / *teeden* ‘time(s)’. Hypercorrections such as *twy* ‘two’ for *twee*, *Tyr* (for *Teer*) *beminde lief* ‘tenderly beloved darling’ and *ik hoop dat Godt har Doktoor wil wijsen* (= *weesen*) ‘I hope that God will be her physician’ indicate that Uvens was aware of the difference between Dutch and his vernacular. We also find the <ee> and <eh> in the personal pronouns *weh* ‘we’, *met meh* ‘with me’, *hee* ‘he’, *see* ‘she’ and *gee/geh/geeh/ge* ‘you’ (see Lasch 1974: 213–216).²⁵ In sum, Uvens’ letters show a considerable number of deviating features: about 130 instances in 1,339 words, or 97 per 1,000 words.²⁶

9.4 Preliminary conclusions

All three East Frisian letter writers use *UE* or a variant. In Frederiks’ letter *mij/mijn* does not occur (only German *meer*). Jacobs uses only *mijn* and Uvens varies both in the case of the personal as well as the possessive pronoun. The relatively young sailors show considerably more deviating features than the North Frisian sailors of higher rank: Frederiks and Uvens about 100 features or more per 1,000 words. Jacobs, however, shows a better command of Dutch with only 32 deviating features.

10. Conclusions, reflection and future research

Exploring the letters written by people originating from the North Frisian islands and East Frisia, I sought to establish their command of Dutch by taking stock of foreign features and examining two particular linguistic phenomena, the epistolary forms of address and the first person singular oblique pronouns. The foreign features and the language choice for communicating with relatives were considered against the background of the linguistically complex region of origin and the migration history of the individual letter writers. Furthermore, other phenomena such as epistolary formulae and interjections were discussed, when giving an impression of the language use of each individual writer.

25. The forms *ieh* (= *je*) and *ie* also occur, which correspond to the second person plural pronoun *je* and *i* in Low German (Lasch 1974: 213).

26. The deviating forms also include the word order *soo guet alsder maakt worden kan* ‘as good as it can be made’ with the past participle *maakt* without prefix *ge*.

All letter writers, one excepted, appear to be familiar with the Dutch epistolary forms of address: most of them use the current late eighteenth-century *UE* (one of them only in a business letter) and one uses a variant of the marginal *UL*. The epistolary form of address is a feature of written language which is easy to adopt by non-natives. The contemporary variation of the first-person singular oblique pronouns *mij* and *mijn* was not only a matter of printed versus hand written texts (van der Wal 2007), but also of two different norms, the standard norm *mij* and the second norm of *mijn* in the handwritten letters of the *LAL* corpus. In the eighteenth century, users of *mijn* were generally found in the lower ranks, and in any social rank in Amsterdam, as Rutten (2022) has demonstrated. The non-native letter writers showed a clear preference for *mijn* both as possessive pronoun and as first-person singular oblique pronoun as §§8, 9 and Table 2 show. Bernardus Knuttel varies in his usage of the personal pronoun; Uvens varies both in the case of the possessive and the personal pronoun with predominantly *mijn* alongside *mij* and one instance of Low German *meh*. Frederiks is the only letter writer who does not use a Dutch variant but shows German interference with *meer*. As the nasal variant (*mijn*) does not occur as a first-person singular oblique pronoun in Low German or Frisian dialects, the non-natives did not adopt a variant similar to their own vernacular, but the spoken and written variant of natives. In the light of Rutten’s (2002) findings, it is striking that all letter writers had a connection with Amsterdam, either by marriage or through a friend, landlord or boss.

Table 2. The usage of *mij/mijn*; between brackets the number of instances (N)

Name	poss. <i>mijn</i>	poss. <i>mij</i>	pers. <i>mij</i>	pers. <i>mijn</i>	pers. other
B. Knuttel	100%	-	29% (2)	71% (5)	-
D. Knuttel	100%	-	-	100% (6)	-
A. Hanssen	100%	-	-	100% (15)	-
G. Pieterse	100%	-	-	100% (9)	-
C. Pietersz	100%	-	-	100% (3)	-
R. Jacobs	100%	-	-	100% (3)	-
J. Frederiks	-	-	-	-	<i>meer=mir</i> (1)
H.O Uvens	95% (35)	5% (2)	40% (4)	50% (5)	10% <i>meh</i> (1)

For the four letter writers married to local women, the choice of Dutch in their letters to their spouses is self-evident. Gerrit Pieters and Cornelis Pietersz, however, differ in their language choice when writing to their wives on the island of Föhr. High German and Dutch were both written languages with which the

inhabitants of the North Frisian islands were familiar (see §7) and this situation is reflected in the different choices made. The same can be observed for the East Frisian letter writers: Jacobs and Uvens wrote to their parents in Dutch, Frederiks in German.

Interference of native Frisian, Low German, and acquired High German is an expected phenomenon in the Dutch letters as is a varying degree of interference. The higher rank sailors, who married a local woman and had a long maritime experience aboard Dutch ships (the Knuttel brothers, Hanssen and to a lesser extent Meijnders) show only a limited number of foreign interferences, varying from five to 16 features per 1,000 words. Cornelis Pietersz and Gerrit Pieterse differ not only in their language choice for letters to their wife, but also in their degree of foreign features. A degree of only 12 deviating features per 1,000 words is found in Cornelis Pietersz business letter, whereas Gerrit Pieterse's letters show at least 82 foreign characteristics per 1,000 words. Such differences also appear among the younger sailors from East Frisia who had less maritime experience and were only short-term residents in Amsterdam: Frederiks and Uvens show about 100 features per 1,000 words or even more versus Jacobs with only 32 deviating features. One phenomenon that was found neither in the Dutch nor the two German letters is code switching (Schendl 2012): elaborate phrases in the alternative language are lacking.

The linguistic practice of eighteenth-century economic migrants is not easily traced and revealed. By using interdisciplinary tools such as marriage and baptismal registers (§§4, 5 and 6.1), I traced non-native daily communication, which again shows the importance of going beyond one's own discipline (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2012). Once I had solved the identification problem, the letter writers were found to originate from linguistically complex regions. Concentrating on migrants with a Frisian link, I established different levels of Dutch proficiency which could be attributed to biographical details and may also lead to hypotheses for further, both qualitative and quantitative, research of letter writers of German and Scandinavian origin. In my present, small-scale exploration, a maritime career, a long-term stay in the Dutch Republic and marrying a local woman appear decisive factors for the command of Dutch. When comparing the letter writers from the three different regions of origin, these results could again function as hypotheses, combined with the additional hypothesis mentioned in §6.2, namely whether the region of origin influenced the command of Dutch. At present, we have gained a first impression of the linguistic competence of captains, mates, and other literates of a maritime profession and have become familiar with characteristics of their non-native communication. Their confiscated letters appear to be fascinating testimonies of how migrants dealt with a language contact situation in the past.

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