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Setting the standard: norms and usage in Early and Late Modern Dutch (1550-1850)

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Chapter 5 – Spelling of long /a/ in closed syllables

The first linguistic feature that is investigated in this dissertation is the orthographic representation of the long /a/ in closed syllables.⁵⁰ In this chapter, the spelling of the /a/-sound in words like *maan* ‘moon’, *vandaag* ‘today’, and *baard* ‘beard’ is thus scrutinised. This long /a/ can derive from two etymologically distinct vowels. The first one – and this is where most of the long *a*’s in closed syllables descent from – is the original long vowel, the West-Germanic *â*, which originates from the Germanic *ē* (Van Loon, 2014, p. 92). An example is the modern-Dutch word *maan* (ggm. *mēna* > got. *māno*) (ibid.). For the other possible origin of the long /a/, we move from the period of Germanic languages to Middle Dutch. In the twelfth century, the short *ã* – as in *dag* ‘day’ – could be stretched into a semi long vowel in an open syllable, as in *dage* (Van Loon, 2014, p. 208; Van Bree, 2016, p. 510). After the syncope of the unstressed vowel following on the open syllable, this semi long *a* settled in a closed syllable. This development is illustrated by the Middle Dutch word *van dage*, which evolved into the present-day *vandaag* (Van Bree, 2016, p. 366). So, from the Middle Dutch period onwards, the lengthened semi long *ã* in *vandaag* is merged with the primal long *â* in *maan*, and as these two originally distinct vowels were now represented by the same phoneme, they were also visualised by the same graphemes in orthography (Van Bree, 2016, p. 510).

As opposed to the modern-day standard language, the sound of the original long *â* and the lengthened *ã* does not always overlap in the Dutch dialects. Especially the West-Germanic long *â* tends to differ according to the dialectal region. In the Northwestern area (Zeeland) and (North-)Holland, for example, the long *â* is produced in a strong palatal manner, resulting in an /æ/-like sound, while the dialects of the (Southern) inland provinces have a more velar pronunciation of the vowel (Van Loon, 2014, pp. 93-94; De Wulf et al., 2005, map 109; Van Loey,

⁵⁰ Parts of this case study are also presented in Lismont, Rutten & Vosters (2023).

1976, p. 32).⁵¹ Despite these dialectal differences, highly localisable realisations of the long /a/ are rarely found in historical writings (Rutten & Van der Wal, 2014). Instead, a form like <a> was applied for representing the long /a/ in closed syllables in Middle Dutch, yet this single-grapheme spelling faded in the Early Modern period, where it was replaced by spellings like <ai>, <ae>, and <aa> (Van Loey, 1976, p. 32; Van Bree, 2016, p. 288). The form <ai> was particularly used in the fifteenth century, after which its use decreased (Van Loey, 1976, p. 32), and only the latter two spelling practices, <ae> and <aa>, thus made it as main variants to represent both the original long *â* and the lengthened *ā* in the period under investigation.

Important to mention, however, is that the linguistic context in which the /a/ appears right before an *-r*, followed by a dental consonant is generally not examined in research investigating the spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables (e.g. Vosters, 2011). In this linguistic context, the long *a* can etymologically derive from yet another vowel than the ones discussed above. This is illustrated by words like *paard* 'horse' and *waardig* 'worthy', in which the long /a/ derives from the short vowel *e*. This short vowel was first lengthened to a long *ē* in Middle Dutch before it was pronounced as a long /a/. Remnants of this transfer are found in many dialects of Dutch, where the palatal pronunciation /ɛ:/ from Middle Dutch is maintained. This implies that the pronunciation of the long /a/ deriving from the short *e* does not systematically coincide with the pronunciation of the long *a*'s that descend from the West-Germanic *â* or the lengthened *ā*. Moreover, this difference is not only visible at the level of speech, but also in writing. Before the existence of a standard spelling, *paard* and *waardig* were often written as *peerd* or *peird*, and *weerdig* or *weirdig*, due to the palatal pronunciation of the long vowel (Van Loon, 2014, pp. 225-226). As such, words in which the long *a* derives from the short *e* are not part of the analyses in this case study. This does not mean that all words containing a long /a/ before <-rd>, <-rt>, <-rs>, <-rz>, or <-rn> are automatically excluded from the results, though. Words like *baard* 'beard' and *gaard* 'yard', for example, are still included in the dataset since in these words, the long /a/ does not descend from the short *e* but from the lengthened *ā*.

⁵¹ An extreme velar pronunciation of the West-Germanic *â* could also be found in some dialects in the Eastern regions of the Southern Low Countries, where pronunciations as [jur] instead of [jar] for *jaar* were common (Van Loon, 2014, p. 96).

1 Previous research

The spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables has been investigated extensively in the normative discourse. The feature was scrutinised in the studies of Vosters, Rutten & Van der Wal (2010), Rutten (2011), and Vosters (2011). These scholars uncovered that mainly <ae> and <aa> were propagated by norm givers. Although other codifiers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries selected the variant <ae> in their prescriptions, the modern-day <aa> was already advocated in the sixteenth century, for example by Spiegel in the anonymously written *Twe-spraack* (1584) (Rutten, 2011, p. 187). Furthermore, these studies point to the discrepancy arising between the normative traditions of the Northern and the Southern Netherlands in the eighteenth century, with Southern grammarians prescribing <ae> and Northern codifiers generally favouring <aa> (Vosters, 2011, pp. 238-239; Rutten, 2011, pp. 186-189; Vosters, Rutten & Van der Wal, 2010). Although several authoritative figures in the North, such as Moonen (1706) and Ten Kate (1723), still preferred <ae>, the imposed spelling differences became a matter of identity expression in the Southern normative discourse. More specifically, Southern codifiers increasingly associated the variant <ae> as a marker of a Southern identity (ibid). However, a few decades before <aa> is established as the official spelling variant in the national language policy of the Northern Netherlands (1804) (Rutten, 2011, p. 187), Southern codifiers became more lenient in their prescriptions, by not solely prescribing <ae> anymore and allowing for <aa> in Southern usage as well (Vosters, 2011, p. 239). As Vosters (2011, pp. 238-239) indicates, most of the grammarians in the South subsequently shift their prescriptions from <ae> to <aa> in the early nineteenth century, which resulted in (almost) uniform norms in both parts of the language area (cf. also Rutten, 2011, pp. 186-189). After the Belgian independence of 1830, the spelling <aa> was rejected again in the Southern *commissiespelling* 'commission spelling' of 1844 because of the association of the variant with the Northern Netherlands. Yet twenty years later, <aa> was reinstated with the spelling of De Vries-Te Winkel (Couvreur, 1940, pp. 199-314).

Some of the abovementioned studies were not only concerned with normative developments for the spelling of the long /a/, and uncovered patterns of variation and change in actual usage as well. I now discuss these and other

studies in terms of observed trends in language use, first for the Northern Netherlands and then for the Southern part of the language area.

Rutten & Van der Wal (2014) investigated a collection of seventeenth-century private letters from the *Letters as Loot* corpus. They explored whether the phonology of the long /a/ in the North-Hollandic region, where the local dialect is characterised by a strong palatal pronunciation of the vowel, influences the orthography of the long *a* in writing practices. Both for open and closed syllables, the frequency of the localisable spelling <ee>, on the one hand, and of the supralocal <a>, <ae>, and <aa>, on the other hand, were extracted from the corpus. Since the palatal form <ee> was highly uncommon, and especially the variant <ae> prevailed as the spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables (89%), Rutten & Van der Wal (2014, pp. 61-62; 65) concluded that these letter writers did not consistently apply a phonological distinction in their spelling, but they rather adhered to a supralocal writing system. In another study, this time of a late eighteenth-century component of the *Letters as Loot* corpus, Vosters, Rutten, Van der Wal & Vandenbussche (2012) mapped out the orthographic representation of the long /a/ (and long /y/) in 100 personal letters and discovered quite consistent spelling practices in closed syllables. Contrary to the usage patterns in the seventeenth century (cf. Rutten & Van der Wal, 2014), the eighteenth-century letter writers in the North now opted for <aa> or <uu> spellings in 93% of the results (Vosters, Rutten, Van der Wal & Vandenbussche, 2012, pp. 152-153; cf. also Vosters, Rutten & Van der Wal, 2010, pp. 103-104).

For Southern usage, a recent study was carried out by Puttaert (2019), who took a language history 'from below' perspective by examining a collection of nineteenth-century soldiers' letters and pauper letters from the Western regions of the Low Countries, i.e. West-Vlaanderen and Zeeland. The findings of Puttaert (2019, pp. 144-145) revealed that the variant <ae> was almost uniformly used in the soldiers' letters (92.92%), while <aa> represented less than 2% of the results. In the pauper letters, Puttaert (2019, pp. 147-148) observed a slightly different picture. In these documents, <ae> also acts as the majority variant (58.91%), yet <aa> is already more established in this corpus (36.49%). The higher frequency of the present-day <aa> in the pauper letters is largely attributed to a regional difference in the spelling of the long /a/. After all, the spelling <aa> was dominant in the pauper letters from Zeeland (74.01%), while

<ae> prevailed as the majority form in the Flemish documents (70.37%) (Puttaert, 2019, pp. 149-151).

Apart from exploring the normative discourse in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Vosters (2011) investigated Southern language use at the time of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, and he therefore applied a corpus of judicial and administrative documents. For the case study of the long /a/ in closed syllables, Vosters (2011, pp. 297-298) extracted five different spelling practices, and learnt that the main variants <ae> and <aa> made up for respectively 19.6% and 79.8% of the results, leaving barely any room for minority spelling variants, such as <ai>, <a>, and <áá>. Such findings imply that the variant <ae>, which was iconised as ‘Southern’ in the eighteenth-century normative discourse, was not in the majority (anymore) in the early nineteenth-century documents. A strong decrease of the variant can be observed at the end of the period of reunification, where <ae> drops from 31% in 1823 to only 5% in 1829, indicating that <aa> firmly secured its position as the dominant variant in nineteenth-century usage (Vosters, 2011, p. 312; cf. also Vosters et al., 2014). Although the decline of the Southern <ae> was visible across all text types within the *UKN*-corpus, the most formal documents of indictment generally display the least <ae> spellings in the nineteenth century (Vosters, 2011, pp. 320-321). Moreover, when Vosters et al. (2014) compared the findings of Southern norms to the patterns in usage, an (ongoing) shift to <aa> was identified in the early nineteenth century. Since a growing tolerance towards Northern <aa> forms in norms preceded the increase of <aa> in Southern usage, Vosters et al. (2014, p. 94) argue that the chronology of change allows for an impact of prescriptions on usage in the nineteenth century, although a causal relationship between norms and usage is not unequivocal. In fact, the highly specific socio-historical context of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands may have equally facilitated norms and usage evolving in the same direction (Vosters et al., 2014, p. 96).

Previous research thus clearly sees an opposite pattern unfolding in the normative discourse of the eighteenth century, where Southern codifiers employed the two main spelling practices of the long /a/ in closed syllables as markers of a Northern (<aa>) or Southern (<ae>) identity (Vosters, 2011, p. 325). In the nineteenth century, and especially at the time of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, however, these Southern <ae> norms were increasingly suppressed by the dominance of the official language policy that was

being established in the Northern Netherlands (*ibid.*). Furthermore, in language use, a (progressing) shift from <ae> towards the modern-day <aa> is observed in both parts of the language area. Previous studies thereby indicate that this change occurs in the North first, where the <ae> forms of the seventeenth century are exchanged for a majority of <aa> spellings in eighteenth-century usage. Since <aa> is less widespread in the nineteenth-century South, the same change to the modern-day form seems to occur somewhat later in this part of the language area. Although the variant <aa> was already prominent in the formal text types of the early nineteenth century, the lower social classes in Vlaanderen predominantly used <ae>, which points to a change which was still in progress in the Southern Netherlands.

2 Hypotheses

Building on the work of Rutten (2011) and Vosters (2011), I presume <ae> will be the main prescribed variant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, although the first <aa> prescriptions may appear in these early periods as well. Prescriptions for other (minority) variants will probably be neglectable. For Northern language use, I am relying on the study of Rutten & Van der Wal (2014) in expecting that <ae> may also be the main variant in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century usage. This implies that part of the prescriptions as well as usage will adhere to <ae> at the same time, which would make a direct influence of norms on usage unlikely in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the eighteenth century, though, most of the Northern grammarians may shift their prescriptions to the incoming <aa>, and following Vosters, Rutten, Van der Wal & Vandenbussche (2012), I believe Northern usage may switch to <aa> as the dominant variant in the eighteenth century as well. As a result, the use of <ae> may decrease in usage, and although an explanation for this decline may be found in proscriptions for the outgoing <ae>, a prescriptive effect for the rise of the incoming <aa> is more likely (*cf.* hypothesis 2). As such, I do not predict a direct impact of norms on usage for the variant <ae> in the Northern Netherlands. On the contrary, as Vosters (2011) indicated, Southern codifiers will presumably prescribe <ae> until well into the eighteenth century. As the change towards <aa> was still ongoing in Vosters's (2011) study on early nineteenth-century usage in the South, I carefully suppose that <ae> will be applied as a dominant variant in eighteenth-century usage. When compared to the North, the outgoing

form <ae> may still be used in Southern usage in the nineteenth century, as Puttaert (2019) also observed. This prolonged use of <ae> in the South may have been caused by the ongoing prescriptions for the form in the eighteenth century, as well as by grammarians' stigmatisation of <ae> as a characteristic of Southern language use (**hypothesis 1**).

As mentioned above, the incoming form <aa> will possibly be prescribed in the sixteenth century already, but as Rutten (2011) also indicated, the variant may only break through in the eighteenth-century prescriptions, and especially in those of Northern grammarians. In line with Rutten & Van der Wal (2014) and Vosters, Rutten, Van der Wal & Vandebussche (2012), I expect that <aa> may be present in Northern language use as a minority variant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, although the form may only become a dominant variant in the eighteenth century. If the first <aa> prescriptions show up in the sixteenth century, the chronology of change would allow for an effect of prescriptivism, although the time lag between precept and usage would be quite large (i.e. two centuries) for any prescriptive impact to be likely. Possible <aa> prescriptions in the early eighteenth century, conversely, may have affected usage in speeding up the change to <aa> in Northern language use. Also in the Southern part of the language area, the modern-day variant may have been prescribed in the sixteenth century. However, as these individual prescriptions are presumably sequenced by uniform <ae> norms in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an impact of a single <aa> prescription in the sixteenth-century South is unlikely. Based on Vosters (2011) and Vosters et al. (2014), I believe Southern grammarians start tolerating and prescribing <aa> in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. As these prescriptions will most likely be followed by an increase of <aa> in Southern usage, which may be pronounced the strongest in the printed and formal genres, an influence of these <aa> prescriptions on Southern usage might be possible (**hypothesis 2**).

3 Methodology

In what follows in this section, I explain how the spelling of the long /a/ is operationalised in this case study. I first elaborate on the annotation of language norms, before I continue with the dataset that is applied for the analysis of language use.

3.1 Language norms

For the investigation of language norms, different types of prescriptions and other metalinguistic comments on the spelling of the long *a* were extracted from the corpus of normative works. As is the case for the other features investigated in this dissertation as well, I made the distinction between three types of norms. First, as **explicit prescriptions**, I selected metalinguistic comments which are entirely devoted to the spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables. An important determinant to categorise a norm as explicit is that the grammarian should thematise the topic of the spelling of the long /a/ in the commentary. This means that the context of both 'spelling', and 'long /a/' at least needs to be implied by the grammarian. However, the embedding of these elements can be done either explicitly (cf. Example 1) or implicitly by illustrating the prescription with examples in which the long *a* is used in closed syllables (cf. Example 2).

- (1) *Wat nu aangaat de Lettergreepen, waarinmen de A volko-men moet hooren, alshoon'er Médeklinkers naa vólgen, het gebruik heeft wel meest gewild, dat men dan de A verdubbele en AA schryve, als in Gaan, Slaan, Haat, Maagd, enz.*
(Van Belle, 1755, p. 3)

'As for the syllables, in which the *A* must be fully heard, and which are followed by consonants, usage has proven that the *A* should be doubled, so that one writes *AA*, as in *Gaan, Slaan, Haat, Maagd*, etc.'

- (2) *Grooter swarigheyt is'er, of men, volgens de nieuwe Spelling, gaan, slaan, staan, met twee AA. dan of men volgens de oude, gaen, slaen, staen enz. met AE. moet spellen; doch alsoo ons de AE. wat zachter, en de dubbel AA. te hoog-dravende schijnt te luyden, meynen wy dat wy het met de AE. nog al bequamelijk kon-nen afzien*
(E.C.P., 1713, p. 23)

'More weight is given to the question if one should write *gaan, slaan, staan*, with two *AA*, according to the new spelling, or whether one should spell according to the old, *gaen, slaen, staen*, etc. with *AE*. However, since *AE* sounds somewhat softer, and the double *AA* seems too pompous, we believe that we can still adeptly proceed with *AE*'

Second, language norms were classified as **implicit prescriptions** if the long /a/ is discussed without embedding the feature in the broader domain of orthography. An example of this kind is the discussion of the long /a/ in general, in which the grammarian does not clarify whether the prescription concerns pronunciation or orthography (Example 3), or in which the pronunciation of the long /a/ is contrasted to that of diphthongs, without considering the orthography of both (Example 4). Other prescriptions fitting into this category are words used as examples as part of another prescription (Example 5), and enumerations in glossaries or verbal paradigms. In the latter two cases, I always considered multiple – at least two – entries in which a long /a/ was used in a closed syllable.

- (3) *Een Klinker óft Klink-letter is een Letter die van zich zelf klinkt en ghe-luidt gheeft. De zelve zijn óft enkele; als/ a/e/i/o/u: óft dubbele/ als/ aa/ee/ii/oo/uu*
(Kók, 1649, p. 6)

‘A vowel is a letter which sounds by itself. The same are either single, as *a/e/i/o/u*, or double, as *aa/ee/ii/oo/uu*’

- (4) *De ae maakt geen lange a, gelyk dat by ge-woonte is op genoomen: maar een gemengeld geluid/ dat van beide de letteren iet meededeelt/ dat gehoort wordt in het blaeten der schaapen*
(Leupenius, 1661)

‘The *ae* does not make a long *a*, like is commonly accepted; it rather produces a mixed sound that communicates something from both letters, the sound which is also heard in the bleating of the sheep’

- (5) *De h [...] moet uytgesproken worden met het ophaelen des adems uyt de borst: en diend besonderlyk om het onderscheyd te maeken tusschen veéle woórden, die zonder deéze de zelve uytpraek zouden hebben. Zal hier van eenige voorbeél-den laeten volgen. [...] haes, wilde beest; aes, voedsel*
(Ballieu, 1792, p. 5)

‘The *h* must be pronounced with the breath drawn from the chest and serves to distinguish many words which would have the same pronunciation without it. I will give some examples of this. *haes*, wild animal; *aes*, food’

For **grammarians' usage**, ten randomly selected results of the spelling of a long /a/ in closed syllables were collected in each normative work. I allowed only for unique tokens in this selection. However, when the same token was written with different spellings for the long *a*, e.g. both the spelling *naem* and *naam* 'name' showed up in the codifier's usage, the token was included twice. For each codifier, I annotated the dominant variant based on these ten tokens. If the grammarian used the same variant in eight out of the ten observations, only one form was listed as the majority variant for that grammarian's language use. Since all codifiers in the corpus applied a consistent spelling with no or hardly any variation occurring for this feature, there was no need to annotate more than one dominant variant in grammarians' usage.

In the explicit and implicit prescriptions, grammarians did not always pronounce a clear preference for one form over the other. If codifiers were indifferent about the spelling of the long /a/, or if they simply prescribed multiple forms, all these spelling variants were listed as prescribed variants. Such mixed prescriptions for the spelling of the long /a/ are offered by six grammarians in the corpus of normative works (cf. section 4.1.3). For the analysis of language norms in this case study, the mixed prescriptions were split up as separate entries in the dataset. This way, each form mentioned in the mixed prescriptions counts for one individual prescription.

3.2 Language use

For the results in language use, I am grateful to be allowed working with the annotated dataset of Van de Voorde (2022), which was used in a study on historical pluricentricity in the Dutch language area. This dataset was ready to use, and I added only the corresponding lemmas to the corpus results for the purpose of statistical modelling.

Van de Voorde (2022) initially generated all attestations of the two main variants, i.e. <aa> and <ae>, as well as the medieval <ai> in the *HCD*. The regular expression is therefore limited to the occurrence of these three variants, which means that the form <a>, discussed as a minority variant earlier in this chapter, is not included in the regular expression. This decision has been made because the variant <a> is also the orthographic representation of the short *a* (as in *van*

'of'). Since the regular expression searching for <a> resulted in many false positives (type I errors) for the long /a/, this would lead to labour-intensive filtering of the yielded data. The variant will therefore not be considered in this case study (cf. Van de Voorde, 2022, pp. 101-102). Other minority spelling practices like <áá>, <ee>, and <aae>, are not retrieved from the corpus either, since the previous studies of Vosters (2011), Rutten & Van der Wal (2014), and Puttaert (2019) uncovered that these forms only rarely showed up in writing. Furthermore, the analyses of Van de Voorde (2022, p. 111-112) indicated that the variant <ai> occurred 182 times out of 25.373 valid hits in the corpus. With only 0.7% of the total number of results in the entire corpus, the form can also be considered a marginal form in the *HCD*, and as such, I decided to not consider the variant <ai> in this case study. I thus focus solely on the orthographic opposition of the main variants <ae> and <aa>.

Note that only the occurrences of <ae> and <aa> are investigated when they appear in closed syllables. Van de Voorde (2022) retrieved these results from the *HCD* by searching for the hits of the long /a/, followed by a word ending, or by two or more consonants. This implies that all hits of a long /a/ in open syllables, as in the verb *slapen* 'to sleep', for example, are not examined in this dissertation. Derivations of words with an /a/ in an open syllable, however, are included if the derivation contains a hit in a closed syllable, as in *ik slaap* 'I sleep'. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter as well, results of the long /a/ followed by a cluster of <-r-> and a dental consonant are only included in the corpus analysis if the long *a* derives from the lengthened short *a*.⁵²

4 Results

4.1 Language norms

The findings in language norms are the focus of this section. I first discuss the metalinguistic salience of the spelling variable, before I summarise the patterns

⁵² For more details about the cleaning and annotation of the results that are retrieved from the *HCD*, see Van de Voorde (2022, pp. 101-105).

in the prescriptions in section 4.1.2, and the treatment of alternative variants in section 4.1.3.

4.1.1 Metalinguistic salience

In determining the metalinguistic salience of this feature, I looked at the number of norm givers making an explicit prescription on spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables. These results are visualised per half century in Figure 5, where the relative frequencies are visualised on the *y*-axis, and the absolute numbers are printed on the bars.

It is immediately clear that the orthographic representation of the long /a/ has preoccupied grammarians since the sixteenth century and has continued to do so during subsequent periods in time. Already in 1550, the Flemish printer and norm giver Joas Lambrecht discussed the spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables, and the issue was still a hot topic in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although a temporary decrease of explicit metalinguistic remarks can be observed in the first half of the seventeenth century, it is noteworthy that all norm givers in the sixteenth century already commented explicitly on the feature. Normative publications at the time were mostly spelling guides, of course, which possibly clarifies the prominent metalinguistic salience for a spelling feature in the earliest century. Nonetheless, from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, metalinguistic commentary about the spelling feature grows again, and with the majority of codifiers formulating normative injunctions until the nineteenth century, grammarians' awareness on the spelling issue remained high. As explicit prescriptions were attested in 50 out of the 73 normative works in the corpus (68.5%), the spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables is a feature with a very high frequency of explicit prescriptions, and as such, it holds the highest overall metalinguistic salience across all linguistic features discussed in this dissertation.

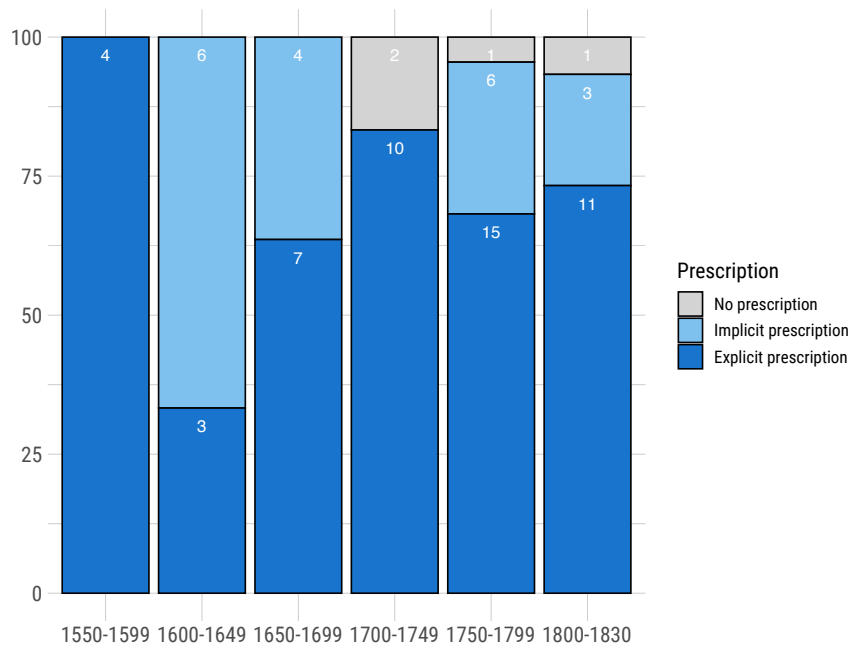


Figure 5: metalinguistic salience long /a/ in closed syllables

4.1.2 Prescriptions

In this section, I shift the focus to the variants that are prescribed by grammarians. The distinction is made between explicit and implicit prescriptions, on the one hand, and on the language practice of codifiers, on the other hand.

Norms per period

As Figure 6 shows, the general development of language norms does not present a convincing diachronic change from <ae> to <aa>. Whereas the explicit and implicit prescriptions are highly progressive in raising <aa> in the sixteenth century already, the uniform preference for the modern-day variant disappears in the following centuries, where also <ae> appears as a prescribed form. This development in language norms, moreover, indicates a slight growth of <ae> in the prescriptions – from 35% in the seventeenth century to 41.9% in the

eighteenth century – before an increase of <aa> is attested in the nineteenth century.

In the language use of grammarians, a similar pattern of variation persists across the four centuries. Alike in the explicit and implicit prescriptions, a modest increase of the older <ae> form can be noted from sixteenth- to eighteenth-century usage. When comparing grammarians' usage to the prescriptions, however, it seems that in the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, codifiers were more prone to prescribe <aa>, while at the same time, they were less eager to respond to these prescriptions in their own language practice, where a higher frequency of <ae> is observed in these two periods.

Note also that one seventeenth-century grammarian from the Southern Netherlands (i.e. Bolognino, 1657) chose not to correspond to the contemporary normative conventions, and for reasons of brevity in writing, he opted for the minority variant <á> in both his prescriptions and in writing practice. As this rare form is not picked up by other codifiers, and did also not gain ground in language use, the variant will not be discussed further in this chapter.

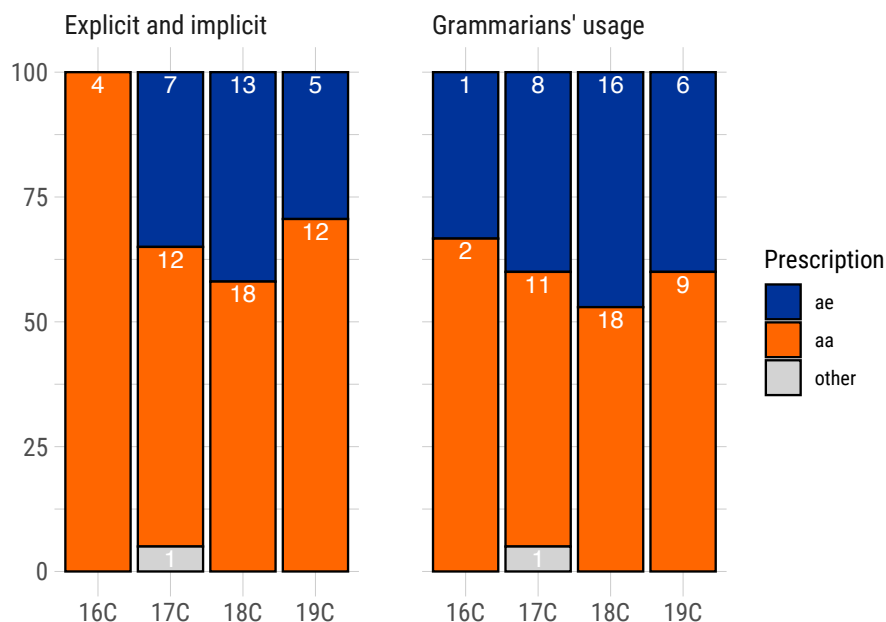


Figure 6: norms long /a/ in closed syllables per period

Norms per period and area

When the results in language norms are analysed for each part of the language area, it is clear that the lack of a compelling diachronic change towards <aa>, which was illustrated by Figure 6, is attributable to the normative evolution in the Southern Netherlands. As Figure 7 indicates, the prescriptions and language use of Northern grammarians display a complete change to <aa>, but only in the nineteenth century. Although the modern-day form is the dominant variant in Northern prescriptions across all periods, the shift to <aa> in nineteenth-century norms is preceded by a gradual increase of the variant.

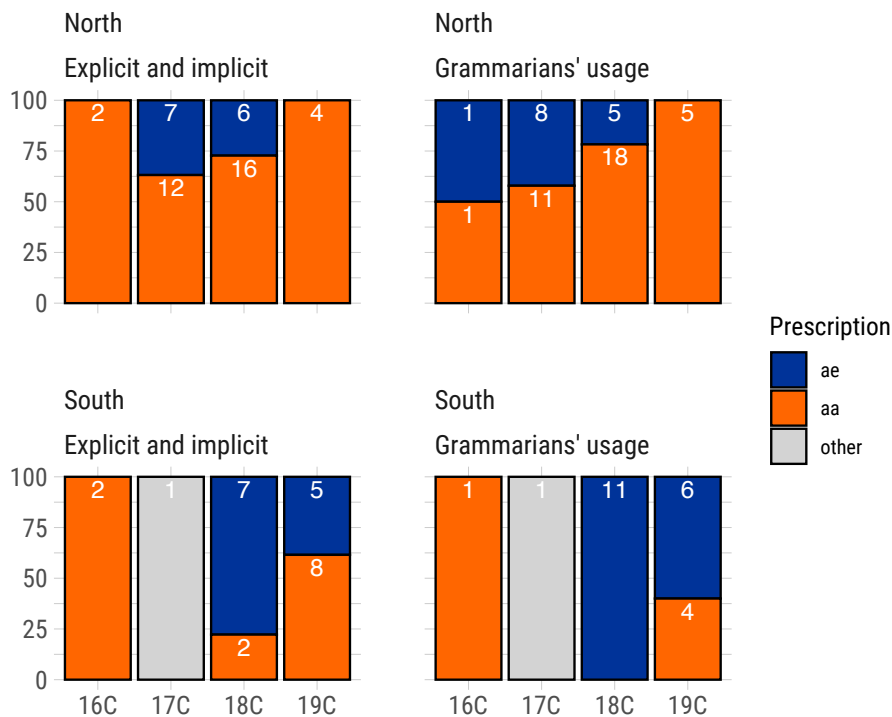


Figure 7: norms long /a/ in closed syllables per period and area

In the Southern prescriptions, on the contrary, the language norms favouring <aa> in the sixteenth century are exchanged for a majority of <ae> prescriptions in the eighteenth century (77.8%). In the nineteenth century, the proportion of <aa> in the prescriptions and in grammarians' usage increases, pointing to a

progressing normative change towards the modern-day variant in this part of the language area (cf. Vosters, 2011; Vosters et al., 2014). When the explicit and implicit prescriptions are compared to grammarians' own usage, however, it is striking that the implementation of <aa> in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century norms occurs slower in the writing practice of codifiers. For example, the proportion of <aa> in the usage of nineteenth-century Southern grammarians is 40%, while their prescriptions are already at 61.5% of <aa> forms. This difference in prescriptions and grammarians' usage can be explained by the intra-writer variation of a few codifiers in the South. After all, norm givers like De Neckere (1815), Behaegel (1817), and Cannaert (1823) prescribed both <ae> and <aa> explicitly, while in their own language use, they still opted uniformly for <ae>. This discrepancy is probably linked to the diverging patterns in the Northern and the Southern norms in the eighteenth century, where Northern grammarians generally preferred <aa> forms and Southerners mainly proposed <ae> spellings. Although Southern grammarians had started to switch to <aa> prescriptions in the nineteenth century, the variant <ae> had been employed as a marker of a Southern identity in the eighteenth-century normative discourse. As such, Southern grammarians may have been more reluctant in switching to the Northern <aa> in their own writing practice (Vosters, 2011, p. 238).

4.1.3 Treatment of alternative variants

In this section, I investigate whether grammarians commented on alternative variants that were applied in usage, and I look at how codifiers dealt with these competing variants. To what extent did norm givers allow for variation in language use, and how did they treat and evaluate the forms that they did not prescribe?

As was explained in section 4.1.1, the orthographic representation of the long /a/ in closed syllables is a feature that enjoyed a tremendous amount of metalinguistic attention from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Table 6 thereby shows that most of the grammarians formulating an explicit or implicit prescription on the spelling issue also discussed other variants that were applied in language use. In as many as 63% (n=46) of the normative works, an alternative variant is mentioned, in addition to a prescribed form. In this respect, it is

apparent that – except for one codifier (cf. Van Geesdalle, 1700) – only the two main variants, <ae> and <aa>, are addressed as alternative variants in these normative discussions, indicating that minority spellings, such as <a> and <ai>, did not make it into the injunctions about the spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables.

When it comes to the discussion of variation, grammarians started motivating their choice for the *superius scripta* <aa> over the older <ae> already in the sixteenth century (cf. Goemans, 1899-1900, p. 197). The arguments that were raised for rejecting the spelling <ae> often related to achieving grapheme-phoneme correspondence. In line with the contemporary belief that each sound should be represented by a distinct grapheme in writing, norm givers like Lambrecht (1550) and De Heuiter (1581) associated the variant <ae> with a stronger palatal pronunciation of /a/, as it was produced by speakers of Dutch in Holland and Zeeland. Other grammarians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries argued that <ae> rather reflected the mixed sound of a diphthong, in which both the sounds of /a/ and /e/ were heard (e.g. Spiegel, 1584; Leupenius, 1653). As such, these early grammarians did not simply reject the spelling <ae> that had been used by their ancestors (e.g. Spiegel, 1584, p. 22), but in the form of permissives (Moschonas, 2020), they reallocated the variant to linguistic contexts where the palatal sound of a diphthong was to be displayed. The most discussed scenario in which grammarians wanted the spelling <ae> to appear is right before the cluster of -r followed by a dental consonant, i.e. the contexts in which *ē* was still used in the period of Middle Dutch, which fall out of the scope of this case study (cf. supra). Even though these arguments about the correspondence between pronunciation and orthography were raised already by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century norm givers, the same arguments for the reallocation of <ae> continued to be used by grammarians until well into the eighteenth century. As Northern codifiers generally preferred the variant <aa>, it does not come as a surprise that particularly Northerners assigned the form <ae> to other linguistic contexts. A number of these grammarians, however, chose to dismiss the variant <ae>:

Met de AA. spelt men, Gaan, haat, maagd, waarvoor men ook schryft, Gaen, haet, maegt; maar hoewel dit van etlyken nóg met kracht voorgestaan wordt, evenwel meenen andere, op den voorgang der Tweespraake van de Nederduyt-sche Letterkonst, door de Kamer in Liefde bloeyende te Amsterdam, in den jaare 1584,

uytgegeeven, en op 't voorbeeld van veele andere aanzienlyke Opbouweren onzer taale, dat die woorden veel beter met AA. gespeld worden
(Séwel, 1708, p. 3)

'With AA one spells *gaan, haat, maagd*, for which one also writes *gaen, haet, maegt*; but although this spelling is still strongly advocated by some, others believe, based on the precedent of the *Tweespraake van de Nederduytsche Letterkonst* published by the Chamber of Rhetoric *In Liefde Bloeyende* in Amsterdam in the year 1584, and the example of many other significant works in our language, that these words are much better spelled with AA'

As a comparison, the form <ae> was never reallocated nor rejected by Southern grammarians in the eighteenth century. As section 4.1.2 also indicates, this implies that <ae> is the preferred variant of Southern grammarians, who also rely on pronunciation at first to underpin their arguments. According to early codifiers like Van der Schuere (1612) and Van Geesdalle (1700), Southerners have a less 'open' and a 'softer' pronunciation of the long vowel *a*, which endorses the use of the variant <ae>.

Although there are a few exceptions of Northerners prescribing <ae> (e.g. Moonen, 1706), and Southern grammarians allowing for <aa> (Van Geesdalle, 1700), a clear North-South divide emerges in the eighteenth-century normative discourse, as Vosters (2011, pp. 238-240) has demonstrated. This is also illustrated by a codifier like E.C.P. (1713), who was a Southerner operating in the Northern Netherlands. Because of the Southern target audience of his grammar, his normative work is one of the few Northern publications in which <ae> was prescribed. Consequently, the variant <aa> is increasingly portrayed as a feature of Northern language use by Southern codifiers. Ballieu (1792, p. 9), for example, clarifies:

De Hollanders gebruyken [...] in plaets van de e, nog eene a, en schryven aldus: daar, waar, gaan, klaar, vermaanen, enz.; maer dit is buyten onze tael, en zeg dit alleenlyk tot gemak der geéne, die somwylen hollandsche schriften, of boeken leézen

'The Hollandic use another <a> instead of <e>, and they thus write: *daar, waar, gaan, klaar, vermaanen* etc.; however, this is outside of our language, and I say this only for the ease of those who sometimes read Hollandic transcripts or books'

However, also in line with the findings of Vosters (2011), Table 6 shows a growing tolerance emerging in the norms from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, where Southern grammarians start allowing for <aa> (e.g. Van Boterdael, 1776, 1785; Stéven, 1784). Although Southern codifiers still considered the form ‘Hollandic’, and the variant was therefore opposed by a few conservative grammarians in the nineteenth century (e.g. Willems, 1824), most norm givers in the South now accepted – or even preferred – the spelling <aa>.

GRAMMARIAN	YEAR	AREA	PRESCR. EXPL.	PRESCR. IMPL.	PRESCR. USAGE	OTHER VARIANT	TREAT MENT
Lambrecht	1550	South	aa	--	aa	ae	reallocated
Sexagius	1576	South	aa	aa	--	ae	reallocated
De Heuiter	1581	North	aa	aa	ae	ae	reallocated
Spiegel	1584	North	aa	--	aa	ae	reallocated
Van der Schuere	1612	North	ae	--	ae	aa	rejected
De Hubert	1624	North	aa	--	aa	ae	reallocated
Van Heule	1625	North	--	ae	ae	aa	rejected
Dafforne	1627	North	--	aa	ae	ae	reallocated
Ampzing	1628	North	ae	--	ae	aa	rejected
Plemp	1632	North	--	ae	ae		
Van Heule	1633	North	--	ae	ae	aa	reallocated
Montanus	1635	North	--	ae/aa	ae	--	--
Kók	1649	North	--	aa	aa	--	--
Van der Weyden	1651	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	rejected
Leupenius	1653	North	aa	--	aa	ae	reallocated
Bolognino	1657	South	á	á	á	ae/aa	reallocated/ rejected
De Gelliers	1661 [± 1640]	North	aa	--	aa	ae	reallocated
Van Niervaart	1669 [± 1600]	North	--	ae	ae	--	--
Van Atteveld	1682	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	reallocated
Gosens van Helderer	1683	North	aa	--	aa	--	--
Winschooten	1683	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	reallocated
Vollenhove	1686	North	--	aa	aa	--	--
Duykerius	1696	North	--	aa	aa	--	--
Francius	1699	North	--	--	aa	--	--
Van Geesdalle	1700	South	ae/aa	ae	ae	â	tolerated
Nylöe	1703	North	aa	--	aa	ae	reallocated
Hilarides	1705	North	--	--	aa	--	--
Moonen	1706	North	ae	ae	ae	aa	rejected
Nylöe	1707	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	reallocated
Séwel	1708	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	rejected
Séwel	1712	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	rejected
E.C.P.	1713	North	ae	ae	ae	aa	rejected
Ten Kate	1723	North	ae/aa	--	aa	--	--

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Huydecoper	1730	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	reallocated
Hakvoord	1746 [1698]	North	aa	aa	aa	--	--
Van Belle	1748	North	--	--	aa	ae	reallocated
Verpoorten	1752	South	--	--	ae	--	--
Van Belle	1755	North	aa	--	aa	--	--
P.B.	1757	South	ae	ae	ae	aa	rejected
Verpoorten	1759	South	ae	ae	ae	aa	rejected
Des Roches	[1761]	South	ae		ae	--	--
Elzevier	1761	North	ae	ae	ae	aa	rejected
De Haes	1764	North	ae	ae	ae	aa	rejected
Van der Palm	1769	North	ae	ae	ae	aa	tolerated
Zeydelaar	1769	North	aa	--	aa	ae	rejected
Zeydelaar	1772	North	--	aa	aa	ae	reallocated
Van Belleghem & Waterschoot	[1773]	South	--	--	ae	--	--
Janssens	[1775]	South	--	--	ae	--	--
Van Boterdael	1776 [± 1774]	South	ae	--	ae	aa	tolerated
Cramer	1777 [± 1769]	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	reallocated
Zeydelaar	1781	North	aa	--	aa	ae	reallocated
Stéven	1784 [1714]	South	aa	--	ae	ae	tolerated
Van Boterdael	1785	South	ae	--	ae	aa	tolerated
Ballieu	1792 [1771]	South	ae	ae	ae	aa	rejected
Van Bolhuis	1793	North	aa	--	aa	ae	rejected
Wester	1797	North	--	aa	aa	--	--
Van Varik	1799	North	--	aa	aa	--	--
Weiland	1799	North	aa	--	aa	--	--
Siegenbeek	1804	North	aa	--	aa	ae	rejected
Weiland	1805	North	aa	--	aa	--	--
Schilperoort	1806	North	--	aa	aa	--	--
Anslin	1814	North	--	--	aa	--	--
Henckel	1815	South	--	aa	ae	ae	tolerated
De Neckere	1815	South	ae/aa	--	ae	--	--
Ter Bruggen	1817-1818 [1815]	South	ae	--	ae	aa	tolerated
Behaegel	1817	South	ae/aa	ae/aa	ae	--	--
Cannaert	1823	South	ae/aa	--	ae	--	--
Moke	1823	South	aa	--	aa	--	--
Willems	1824	South	ae	ae	ae	aa	rejected
Behaegel	[± 1825]	South	aa	aa	aa	--	--
Bilderdijk	1826	North	aa	aa	aa	ae	reallocated
De Simpel	[1827]	South	aa	aa	aa	ae	rejected
Behaegel	[± 1829]	South	--	aa	aa	ae	rejected

Table 6: norms and variants treatment long /a/ in closed syllables

Conclusion

The results in language norms revealed that the orthographic representation of the long /a/ in closed syllables was an extremely salient topic in the normative discourse of the entire Early and Late Modern period, with most grammarians commenting explicitly on the feature across the four centuries under investigation. The two main variants, <ae> and <aa>, take a dominant position in these normative discussions. Although the new <aa> is prescribed in the sixteenth century already by both Northern and Southern codifiers, a striking distinction emerges in the normative discourse of the eighteenth century, where the dominance of <aa> forms in the Northern prescriptions stands in sharp contrast to the preference for <ae> variants in the South. As Vosters (2011, pp. 238-240) clarified, these two spelling variants grew into a shibboleth of Northern (<aa>) or Southern (<ae>) language use in the Southern normative discourse of the eighteenth century.

Although Southern codifiers continued to stress the language-cultural and identity discrepancy that the different spelling practices expressed, in the decades leading up to the nineteenth century, and especially in the early nineteenth century, during the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, most grammarians in the South decided that both <ae> and <aa> could be applied in Southern usage (cf. also Vosters, 2011). Since all Northern grammarians prescribed <aa> at the time, the normative shift towards the modern-day variant was initiated later in the Southern part of the language area, where the mixed prescriptions of Southern grammarians point to a progressing change in language norms.

The observed patterns in language norms and the discussion of alternative variants thus indicate that both Northern and Southern codifiers were generally strict in banning variation for this spelling feature. Up until the second half of the eighteenth century, most codifiers prescribed and used only one of the two spelling variants, while they proscribed the other variant. As such, not only did the United Kingdom of the Netherlands play an important role in the normative shift to the Northern <aa> in the Southern normative discourse (Vosters, 2011, pp. 238-240; Rutten, 2011, pp. 186-189), the period right before and during the reunification also influenced the flexibility in the prescriptions of Southern grammarians. Although Northerners continued to prescribe only the

modern-day variant, in the normative change towards <aa>, most codifiers in the South became more lenient in allowing for variation between <ae> and <aa>. This flexibility of Southern grammarians is only of a temporary nature, since at the end of the period of reunification, codifiers started following the Northerners in strict <aa> prescriptions.⁵³

4.2 Language use

In this section, I investigate whether the developments and differences in Northern and Southern norms are also visible in language use. In interpreting the patterns in usage for this spelling feature, I analysed both the observed data from the *HCD*, as well as the results from a generalised mixed-effects logistic regression model that was generated in *R*.

For the inferential statistics, I started from a maximal logistic regression model using *glmer* (Bates et al., 2015), containing three fixed predictors and two random effects. This means that the independent variables *period*, *region*, and *genre*, as well as all possible three-way interactions of these individual factors were included in the model as fixed predictors, whereas the document (*id*) in which the attestation appeared, and the *lemma* corresponding to the hit in the usage corpus were involved as random predictors in the model. Due to convergence problems of the algorithm, however, I started over from a minimal model with an intercept only, and I carried out a bidirectional model selection process, first by manually adding predictors to check which fixed predictors contribute most to the model. Although significance-based testing with the function *anova* (Girden, 1992) indicated that none of the individual predictors made a significant contribution to the reference model (intercept only), I continued with all important independent variables, i.e. *period*, *region*, and *genre* as fixed predictors. Based on the AIC scores of both the intercept-only model, the one-predictor models, and the models with multiple predictors, the performance of the regression model enhanced best from an AIC of 33.027 in the reference model to an AIC of 12.975 in the model with *period*, *region*, and *genre* as fixed predictors. Correlations between the independent variables were eventually

⁵³ Although there are other works in the Southern Netherlands, which are not included in this corpus of normative works, written by more conservative, particularistic grammarians who were still prescribing <ae> at the time (Vosters, 2011, p. 239).

excluded from the model for different reasons: (1) the algorithm did not converge with three-way interactions; also, and related to the previous argument, (2) not all levels of the response variable were attested in each of the interactions, which led to a problem of complete separation, also when considering two-way interactions only (cf. Gries, 2021, pp. 338-339); and therefore (3) the inclusion of interactions did not result in a significantly better model. The random effects, *id* and *lemma*, on the contrary, improved the model, as both an AIC of 2668.4 and the Conditional R² score of 0.989 (as opposed to the Marginal R² score of 0.733) illustrate. A backwards significance-based selection process using *drop1* was ultimately applied to this maximal model, and the function made me remove the insignificant predictor *genre* from the model. This implies that the final regression model consists of two important independent variables – *period* and *region* – as fixed predictors, as well as *id* and *lemma* as random effects.

Both the Conditional R² score and the C-statistic of 0.99 suggest an excellent model fit, while a 98% model accuracy points to solid predictive performances. When checking the model-diagnostic plots, however, the residual test detected a significant deviation. These residuals were verified manually, to make sure no mistakes were made in the collection or processing of the data. It appeared that some extreme outliers, such as the only two <aa> results in the sixteenth century, strongly influenced the residuals in the model. The model diagnostics did not reveal any serious problems otherwise, allowing me to proceed with the interpretation of the final regression model.

The regression table of this mixed-effects logistic regression analysis is outlined in Figure 8, where the log odds of <aa> as an incoming variant are shown. The model predicts a significant effect for the two fixed predictors: *region* and *period*. These results are analysed in the remaining of this section, where they are interpreted together with the observed patterns in language use.

It is important to stress that the variance components of the random effects indicate that most variability within the random effects is described by the document (*id*), implying that language use differs more between the documents – or between the individual writers for that matter – in the corpus than it does between the different lemmas (*lemma*), where only little variance is attested. Such an outcome for the random effects proves the relevance of investigating

variation for this spelling feature at a sociolinguistic – rather than at a purely linguistic – level. In the next section, I continue with the discussion of the results in language use. Where applicable, I always interpret the effect plots of the regression analysis first before supplementing these statistical findings with the observed data from the usage corpus.

Main effects on the occurrence of <-aa-> as incoming form			
<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Log-Odds</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	-12.15	-16.55 – -7.75	<0.001
REGION - Zeeland	-0.95	-3.80 – 1.89	0.511
REGION - Brabant	-13.33	-20.16 – -6.50	<0.001
REGION - Vlaanderen	-22.19	-27.51 – -16.87	<0.001
PERIOD - 17th century	2.09	-2.58 – 6.76	0.380
PERIOD - 18th century	20.46	14.29 – 26.63	<0.001
PERIOD - 19th century	25.14	19.50 – 30.78	<0.001
Random Effects			
σ^2	3.29		
τ_{00} LEMMA	0.66		
τ_{00} ID	73.84		
ICC	0.96		
N_{ID}	209		
N_{LEMMA}	1366		
Observations	25181		
Marginal R^2 / Conditional R^2	0.733 / 0.989		

Figure 8: regression table of the main effects on the occurrence of <aa> as the incoming form in language use

General distribution

In total, 25.181 valid results in which the long /a/ was used in a closed syllable were obtained from the *HCD*. As Figure 9 shows, these results contain observations of the two main variants, <ae> and <aa>. The minority spelling variant <ai>, which only represented 0.7% (n=182) of the data in the study of Van de Voorde (2022), is not considered in this case study. Here, the general

distribution of the results shows that the traditional variant <ae> is clearly the dominant form in the corpus, as it makes up for 63.6% (n=16.010) of the observed data. The modern-day <aa> is used in 36.4% (n=9.171) of the results.

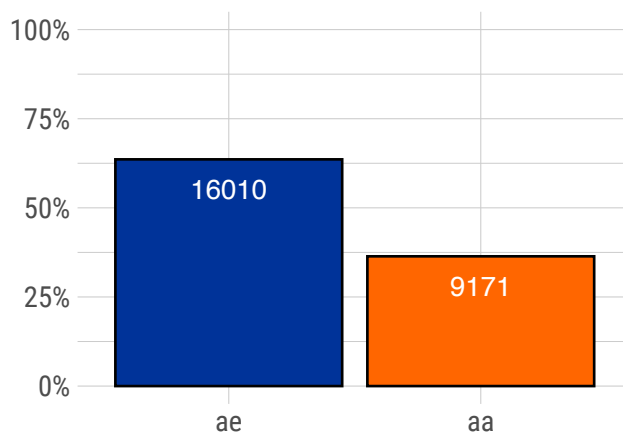
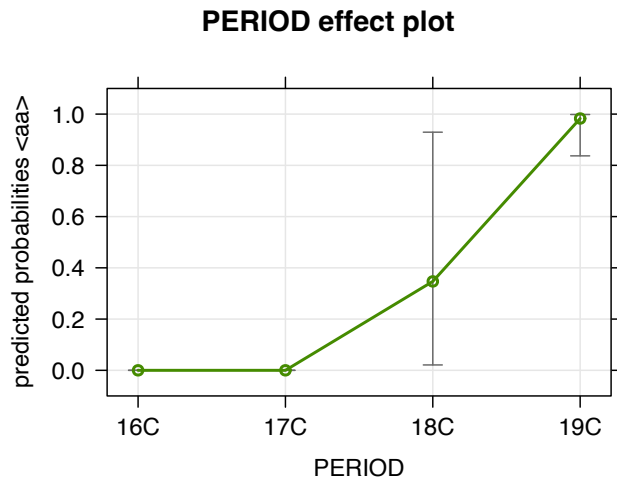


Figure 9: general distribution long /a/ in closed syllables

Per period

As the regression table already revealed, the predictor *period* is significant in the regression model. More specifically, when compared to the sixteenth century as the reference level, a highly significant effect is predicted in the eighteenth century ($p = < 0.001$) and the nineteenth century ($p = < 0.001$). This effect is also visualised in Figure 10, where the statistical model presumes a significant increase of the incoming variant <aa>, but only in the two most recent periods.

Figure 10: effect plot *period* – long /a/ in closed syllables

The same pattern is underpinned by the observed data, shown in Table 7 and Figure 11. Whereas the outgoing variant <ae> is used almost exclusively in the data of the sixteenth century (99.9%, $n=3.889$) and the seventeenth century (92.9%, $n=6.497$), the dominance of the form disappeared in the eighteenth century, where the proportion of <ae> suddenly decreased to 47.1% ($n=3.300$). As such, from the eighteenth century onwards, the modern-day <aa> occupied the dominant position. Although the statistical model envisages large confidence intervals in the eighteenth-century data (cf. Figure 10), which can be explained by underlying regional patterns in the results, both the model's predictions and the observed data suggest that the eighteenth century can be seen as the turning point in the change from <ae> to <aa> in language use.

	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	3.889 (99.9%)	2 (0.1%)
17 th century	6.497 (92.2%)	498 (7.1%)
18 th century	3.300 (47.1%)	3.704 (52.9%)
19 th century	2.324 (31.9%)	4.967 (68.1%)

Table 7: absolute and relative frequencies long /a/ in closed syllables per period

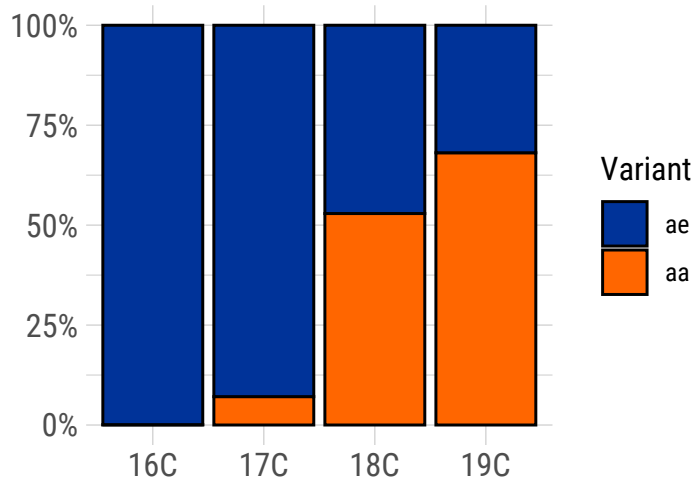


Figure 11: relative frequencies long /a/ in closed syllables per period

This is also evidenced when comparing usage data from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While an administrative text from Holland mainly applies the spelling <ae> in the seventeenth century (Example 6), in a similar text from the same region, the writing practice shifts to <aa> in the eighteenth century (Example 7).

- (6) *doch sullen alle de tarbrieven [...] byde voors[eide] vollers **aen haer** voors[eit] verdient arbeidsloon voor gelt moeten **aengenomen** werden ende **daeraen** cortinge laten strecken*
(ADM-1650-HO-7)

‘yet all the tar letters by the aforementioned fullers must be accepted as payment for their earned wagers in cash, and a deduction must be applied to them’

- (7) *Den meede Directeur [...] Sal direct of indirect eenig Part of Deel mogen hebben in eenige Leverantien, noch **Aannemer** mogen sijn van eenige werken die van Stadts weegen worden **aanbesteed** of **gedaan**, maken, noch eenig Deel **daar** inne hebben*
(ADM-1750-HO-5)

‘The co-director shall not, directly or indirectly, have any share or interest in any supplies, nor may he be a contractor for any works that are commissioned or carried out on behalf of the city, not have any part therein’

Per period and region

The regression model also pointed to a significant effect for the predictor *region*, where language use in two of the regions deviates significantly from the reference level (Holland). As Figure 12 shows, the strong significant effect is situated in Brabant ($p = < 0.001$) and Vlaanderen ($p = < 0.001$), where the model predicts for usage to strongly adhere to the outgoing variant <ae>.

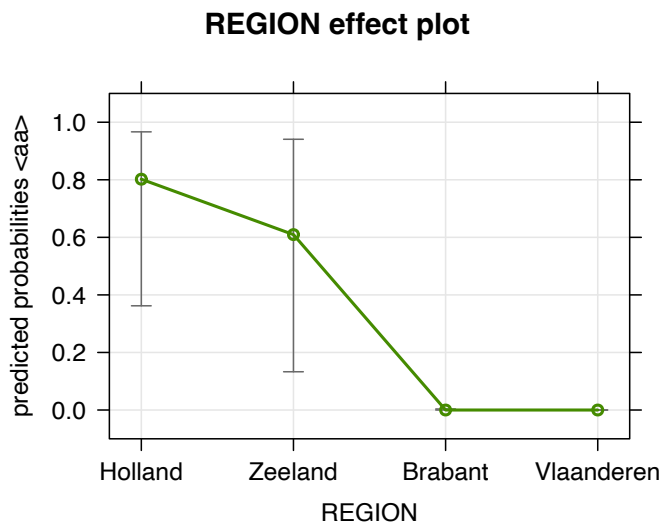


Figure 12: effect plot *region* - long /a/ in closed syllables

The significantly conservative usage in Brabant and Vlaanderen is also supported by the observed data in language use. In Figure 13, the observed results in usage are summarised per period and region (cf. also Table 8).

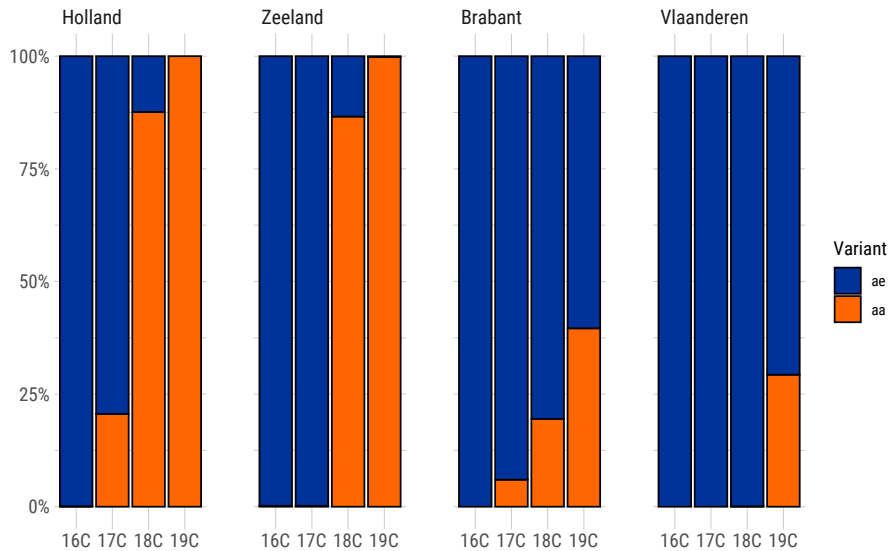


Figure 13: relative frequencies long /a/ in closed syllables per period and region

Although this particular interaction was not included in the regression model, and the significant effect for *region* thus solely applies to overall patterns in usage, the observed data signify that – besides a few individual occurrences in the sixteenth century – the incoming <aa> first showed up in seventeenth-century Holland (20.6%, n=403) and Brabant (6%, n=92), before the form convincingly spread to Zeeland in the eighteenth century (86.6%, n=1.660), and to Vlaanderen in the nineteenth century (29.3%, n=518). As Van de Voorde (2022, pp. 122-123) indicated, this dispersion of <aa>, with the form spreading from central to peripheral regions in the North and the South of the language area, points to a centre-periphery distinction in the early periods. However, from the eighteenth century onwards, the variant <aa> increases immensely in Northern usage, where it compellingly takes a majority position in Holland and Zeeland. In the Southern provinces, Brabant and Vlaanderen, the older <ae> remains the dominant form at the time, which suggests a North-South discrepancy in the two most recent periods, with Northerners using <aa> (cf. Example 8) and Southerners adhering to <ae> (cf. Example 9) (Van de Voorde, 2022, pp. 122-123).

- (8) *en des **anderendaags** redden wij na den Haag met de koets van Neef van de Linde over Delft **daar** de paarden mogten drin-ken*
(EGO-1750-ZE-3)

‘and the next day we traveled to Den Haag with the coach of cousin van de Linde via Delft, where the horses were allowed to drink’

- (9) *Den 29 Januarii 1767 zyn wy van Ipere vertrocken, wy hebben het **noenmael** genomen by den pastor van Hallewijn, **alwaer** wy gedronken hebben een excellent glaezetien rooden champagne, den selven dag zyn wy gearriveert tot Rijsse, **alwaer** wy zeer wel **onthaelt** zyn geweest*
(EGO-1750-VL-4)

‘On the 29th of January 1767, we departed from Ieper; we had lunch with the pastor of Halluin, where we drank an excellent glass of red champagne. That same day, we arrived in Rijsel, where we were received very well’

Although the disparate spelling conventions in the central and the peripheral regions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on the one hand, and in the Northern and the Southern part of the language area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, on the other hand, cannot be measured in terms of statistical significance due to the deletion of interactions in the regression model, a pairwise comparison of the different regions reveals that usage in Brabant and Vlaanderen not only differs significantly from Holland as the reference level, but also from Zeeland as the other Northern region ($p < 0.001$). When contrasting overall usage in Brabant to usage in Vlaanderen, on the contrary, the occurrence of <aa> does not deviate significantly between the Southern regions ($p = 0.007$).⁵⁴ These findings imply that variation for this spelling feature can generally be viewed from a North-South perspective, in which usage behaves similarly in Holland and Zeeland, but also in Brabant and Vlaanderen. This geographical discrepancy enables a discussion of variation in spelling for each part of the language area (instead of per region) in the remaining of this section. The nuances regarding region, with (1) early <aa> usage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries characterising only the central regions of the Northern and the Southern Netherlands, and (2) with Vlaanderen implementing the

⁵⁴ The different levels of the predictor region were statistically compared via the function *emmeans* in R (Lenth, 2022).

present-day form only in the nineteenth century, should not be neglected, though.

Holland

	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	991 (99.9%)	1 (0.1%)
17 th century	1.554 (79.4%)	403 (20.6%)
18 th century	244 (12.4%)	1.731 (87.6%)
19 th century	0 (0%)	1.958 (100%)

Zeeland

	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	439 (99.8%)	1 (0.2%)
17 th century	1.800 (99.8%)	3 (0.2%)
18 th century	257 (13.4%)	1.660 (86.6%)
19 th century	4 (0.2%)	1.791 (99.8%)

Brabant

	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	1.237 (100%)	0 (0%)
17 th century	1.446 (94.0%)	92 (6.0%)
18 th century	1.287 (80.5%)	312 (19.5%)
19 th century	1.069 (60.4%)	700 (39.6%)

Vlaanderen

	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	1.222 (100%)	0 (0%)
17 th century	1.697 (100%)	0 (0%)
18 th century	1.512 (99.9%)	1 (0.1%)
19 th century	1.251 (70.7%)	518 (29.3%)

Table 8: absolute and relative frequencies long /a/ in closed syllables per period and area

Per period and area

To illustrate the matter, let me transform the data, and visualise the results for each part of the language area now. As Figure 14 shows, this results in a comparable plot, in which the similarities between Northern and Southern usage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the divergence in Northern and Southern language practices in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is

apparent (cf. also Table 9). Although usage thus behaves similarly in the early periods, with <ae> being the dominant form in both parts of the language area, Northern language users switch abruptly to <aa> in the eighteenth century (from 10.8% <aa> in the seventeenth century to 87.1% <aa> in the eighteenth century), before the form is fully established in the nineteenth century. This pattern in Northern usage is entirely in line with the findings of Rutten & Van der Wal (2014), who also discovered a dominance of <ae> forms in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, the results also correspond to the outcome presented in Vosters, Rutten, Van der Wal & Vandenbussche (2012) and Vosters, Rutten & Van der Wal (2010), who observed a majority of <aa> forms in Northern usage of the eighteenth century.

As opposed to the developments in Northern usage, the older <ae> remains the dominant form across the four centuries in the Southern Netherlands. Although the modern-day <aa> rises considerably from 2.8% (n=92) in the seventeenth century to 34.4% (n=1.218) in the nineteenth century, the variant does not seem to break through like it did in the corpus of Vosters (2011), where <aa> settled as the majority variant in the nineteenth century. In Vosters's (2011) study, the modern-day <aa> even increasingly managed to reduce the use of <ae> to the point where the form was almost no longer applied. Although a decline of the older <ae> can be discerned in the *HCD* as well, with the variant still representing 65.6% (n=2.320) of the results in the nineteenth century, the change to <aa> in the South is clearly not as progressed as it was in the corpus study of Vosters (2011). This discrepancy may be explained by the official status of many of Vosters's administrative and judicial documents. Although the *HCD* also contains highly formal texts, the court clerks in the corpus of Vosters probably adhered to more stipulated (language) guidelines and regulations than the writers in the *HCD*, which might in turn explain the stronger presence of the spelling <aa> in Vosters's (2011) research.

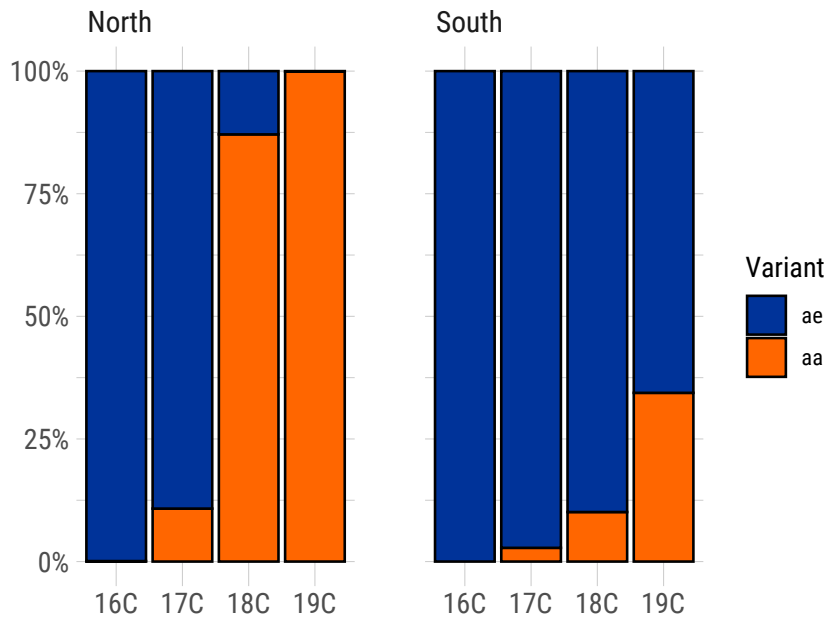


Figure 14: relative frequencies long /a/ in closed syllables per period and area

	NORTHERN NETHERLANDS		SOUTHERN NETHERLANDS	
	<ae>	<aa>	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	1.430 (99.9%)	2 (0.1%)	2.459 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
17 th century	3.354 (89.2%)	406 (10.8%)	3.143 (97.2%)	92 (2.8%)
18 th century	501 (12.9%)	3.391 (87.1%)	2.799 (89.9%)	313 (10.1%)
19 th century	4 (0.1%)	3.749 (99.9%)	2.320 (65.6%)	1.218 (34.4%)

Table 9: absolute and relative frequencies long /a/ in closed syllables per period and area

Per period, area, and genre

Although *genre* turned out to be an insignificant predictor and was therefore omitted from the regression model, I also discuss genre differences in the *HCD*, as they might shed light on discrepancies in usage related to period. After all, even if the predictor in general is not significant, it is relevant to examine whether and when certain genres behave differently in the use of outgoing or incoming variants.

The insignificance of *genre* as a predictor, which was already indicated by the regression model, is now also visible in the observed data summarised in Figure 15 and Table 10. The development of the spelling across the different genres displays a comparable pattern of change over time, in both the Northern and the Southern Netherlands. In the North, where a massive increase of the incoming <aa> is established in the eighteenth century, all genres represent the same rise of the modern-day variant, with relative frequencies ranging between 83% (n=1.132) in the administrative texts, and 89.4% in the ego-documents (n=1.084) and pamphlets (n=1.175). In the latter two genres, the form <aa> appears in respectively 23.8% and 11.2% of the seventeenth-century results already. This may indicate that the Northern ego-documents and pamphlets were progressive genres in implementing <aa> a century earlier. However, when considering that these seventeenth-century results of <aa> mainly derive from two Hollandic ego-documents, and from one Hollandic pamphlet, the early <aa> usage in these genres probably points to progressive individual writers rather than to genre tendencies in general.

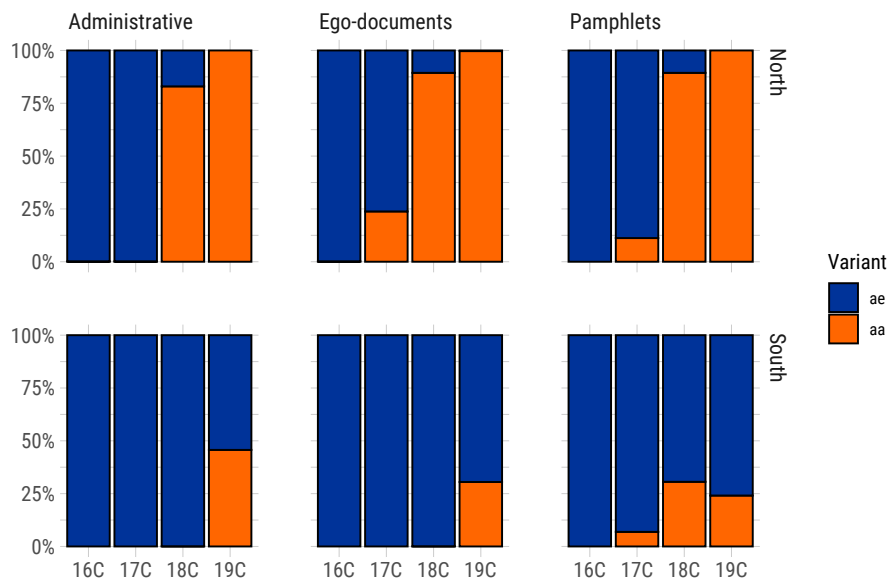


Figure 15: relative frequencies long /a/ in closed syllables per period, area, and genre

Administrative texts

	NORTHERN NETHERLANDS		SOUTHERN NETHERLANDS	
	<ae>	<aa>	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	550 (99.8%)	1 (0.2%)	555 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
17 th century	1.323 (99.8%)	2 (0.2%)	821 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
18 th century	232 (17.0%)	1.132 (83.0%)	951 (99.9%)	1 (0.1%)
19 th century	0 (0.0%)	1.236 (100%)	771 (54.3%)	648 (45.7%)

Ego-documents

	NORTHERN NETHERLANDS		SOUTHERN NETHERLANDS	
	<ae>	<aa>	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	638 (99.8%)	1 (0.2%)	1.060 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
17 th century	792 (76.2%)	247 (23.8%)	1.083 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
18 th century	129 (10.6%)	1.084 (89.4%)	1.142 (99.9%)	1 (0.1%)
19 th century	4 (0.3%)	1.186 (99.7%)	650 (69.5%)	285 (30.5%)

Pamphlets

	NORTHERN NETHERLANDS		SOUTHERN NETHERLANDS	
	<ae>	<aa>	<ae>	<aa>
16 th century	242 (100%)	0 (0.0%)	844 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
17 th century	1.239 (88.8%)	157 (11.2%)	1.239 (93.1%)	92 (6.9%)
18 th century	140 (10.6%)	1.175 (89.4%)	706 (69.4%)	311 (30.6%)
19 th century	0 (0.0%)	1.327 (100%)	899 (75.9%)	285 (24.1%)

Table 10: absolute and relative frequencies long /a/ in closed syllables per period, area, and genre

The usage patterns in the South deviate considerably from those in the North, as was already discussed. The disparate development from Northern usage is now also discernible across the different genres in the South. While the shift towards <aa> is complete across all genres in the nineteenth-century North, in none of the genres in the South, <aa> is the dominant variant at the time. The Southern usage data from the *HCD* illustrate only an initiating change towards <aa> in the administrative texts and the ego-documents of the nineteenth century. In the printed pamphlets, on the contrary, the spelling <aa> was attested in the seventeenth (6.9%, n=92) and eighteenth centuries already (30.6%, n=311). Although the majority of the <aa> forms in the seventeenth century can be attributed to one progressive pamphlet from Brabant, multiple pamphlets from the region of Brabant contributed to the <aa> forms in the eighteenth century, which suggests that the eighteenth-century pamphlets from Brabant have taken the lead in the change towards the modern-day variant in Southern usage. The printed genre, however, fails to hold this lead, since the relative proportion of

<aa> was in the nineteenth century lower in the Southern pamphlets than in the other genres of the *HCD*.

The importance of the individual

As was apparent in the previous section, some influential results were attributed to progressive spellings in specific documents. Since also the regression analysis indicated that large proportions of variation in usage are described by the random effect *id*, I briefly discuss variability in the individual documents of the *HCD*.

When it comes to variation in each of the documents in the usage corpus, an overall exploration of the data revealed an interesting finding. Without considering any of the independent variables (period, region, and genre), the proportion of <ae> versus <aa> in the individual documents indicated that writers were generally highly consistent in applying only one of the two spelling variants, with the preferred form being used in at least 90% of the results in each document. Only in 5% (n=11) of the documents more variation was attested. The consistent usage is illustrated by the progressive seventeenth-century writers in Holland and Brabant discussed above, who were all early <aa> spellers adopting the modern-day variant (almost) uniformly in their pamphlets or ego-documents. Yet, still in the nineteenth century, a few consistent writers from Brabant and Vlaanderen were largely responsible for the proportion of <aa> in Southern documents.

While the visualisation of usage in Figure 15 may thus suggest otherwise, the alleged variability that is shown in the graph points to a few individual writers with innovative – but uniform – spelling practices, whereas other writers uniformly employed the spelling <ae>, as is also illustrated in Example 10 and Example 11, which compare the spelling practice in two nineteenth-century pamphlets from Brabant. These results imply that the changes towards the modern-day <aa> were thus hardly initiated by an entire genre, but rather by one (or a few) contributor(s) to that genre.

- (10) *Wat willen wy, weldenkende Vlamingen? Onze regten en onze **tael** handhaven; doch niet in tegen-streving met de fransche **tael**, die even **nationael** in Belgie is en zyn moet als de **vlaemsche***
(PAM-1850-BR-4)

‘What do we, right-minded Flemings, want? To uphold our rights and our language; but not in opposition to the French language, which is just as national in Belgium and must be as the Flemish language’

- (11) *Toen immers wilde de Hollander, even als **vandaag** onze Liberalen, **aan den Staat** het monopolium of den alleenhandel van 't onderwijs toekennen*
(PAM-1850-BR-2)

‘At that time, the Dutch, just like our liberals today, wanted to grant the state the monopoly or exclusive control over education’

Such findings also add the necessary nuance to the genre differences discussed in the results in language use. With only one or two writers applying the variant <aa> at first, any convincing patterns in which specific genres lead changes are lacking. This is particularly apparent in the Southern Netherlands of the nineteenth century. After all, as was discussed above, the pamphlets appeared to take the lead in the change towards <aa> in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century South, yet the proportions of the modern-day variant shifted completely in the nineteenth century. The incoming variant then suddenly arose in disparate genres across Brabant and Vlaanderen, while the spelling <aa> decreased in the pamphlets (cf. Figure 15).⁵⁵ As expected, it is again the progressive usage of only a few writers that largely accounted for the use of <aa> in the nineteenth century. As such, in this case, the overarching independent variable genre appears subordinated to the spelling differences between the individual writers.

⁵⁵ In Brabant, the variant <aa> is used in administrative texts and pamphlets (not in the ego-documents), while in Vlaanderen, the modern-day form shows up in administrative texts and ego-documents only.

Conclusion

Now that the main results in language use are uncovered, let me string together the findings of usage in relation to the different independent variables. In doing so, I relate briefly to the results in language norms discussed in section 4.1.

A first and important pattern that emerged from the results in language use is that the period under scrutiny can be split into two larger time units, with in overall <ae> standing strong in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and <aa> taking over in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, the independent variable region also pointed to an important distinction. While the modern-day variant was first used in the central regions only, <aa> is implemented in the peripheral parts of the language area only from the eighteenth century onwards. Consequently, the spelling differences for this variable are, from the eighteenth century onwards, best interpreted from a North-South perspective, in which Northerners prefer <aa> and Southerners generally opt for <ae> (Van de Voorde, 2022, pp. 122-123).

This geographic distinction also signals that the resolute shift towards <aa> in the eighteenth century is particularly visible in the Northern Netherlands. This shift is entirely in line with the Northern norms, which mainly favoured <aa> from the eighteenth century onwards. It is hence no surprise that Southern grammarians in the eighteenth century framed the variant <aa> as a feature of Northern language use (cf. section 4.1.3). In the view of establishing a separate normative tradition and language culture in the South, the same codifiers deemed the variant <aa> unsuitable for usage by not considering it part of the Southern language (cf. erasure, Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). That the modern-day variant hardly appeared in Southern usage at the time therefore confirms the success of the association of <aa> and <ae> as shibboleths of respectively Northern and Southern language use from the eighteenth century onwards (cf. iconization, Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 37; Rutten, 2011; Vosters, 2011).

These results in Southern usage, where <ae> remained in use as the dominant variant, can also be interpreted within the process of nation building that emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century. As was explained above, the results discussed in this chapter indicate that the North-South divide in spelling not only arose in the metalinguistic discourse (cf. section 4.1.2), but also

in actual language use. With the social meaning of <aa> and <ae> also showing in usage, we at least get the impression that writers selected and deployed certain spelling variants deliberately for expressing a respectively Northern or Southern identity in language use (Rutten, 2011; Vosters 2011). However, since individual writers were possibly aware of the widespread social and political meanings ascribed to the spelling variants, it is likely that from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, the (almost) consistent choice for either <ae> or <aa> was often determined by the cultural and political stance of individual Southern writers. Especially the socio-historical context of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands may have triggered the linguistic expression of a writer's identity, in which (1) Southerners in favour of linguistic and political unity with the Northern Netherlands changed their spelling to <aa> (i.e. integrationism), and (2) those against adhered to the 'Southern' variant <ae> (i.e. particularism). These individual linguistic choices may eventually be the reason behind the slowly progressing change towards <aa> that is attested in Southern usage.

4.3 Prescriptive influence

After analysing the results in norms and usage separately, the two developments are now compared to investigate whether there is a relationship between both. In exploring whether and how norms and usage relate to each other, I compare the developments of the prescriptions to those in usage by means of scatter plots in which the observed data for the North and the South of the language area are visualised per year. This method enables me to map out the exact options in which the chronology of language change allows for a possible impact of prescriptivism. The options that derive from this comparison are subject to an in-depth assessment of the possibility of prescriptive influence in section 5.

Chronology of language change

In Figure 16, the explicit and implicit prescriptions for the spelling of the long *a* in closed syllables are visualised per year, while Figure 17 summarises the observed patterns in language use. For visualising, the results for the two variants are projected onto an underlying numeric scale (1-2) with equal distance between the variants <ae> and <aa>. The plotted dots represent the observed data, while the trendlines show the general evolution of the change in

norms and language use. Considering what was already discussed in the results of language norms and language use, I now focus primarily on the exact shifts in both patterns within each century to establish the chronology of language change.

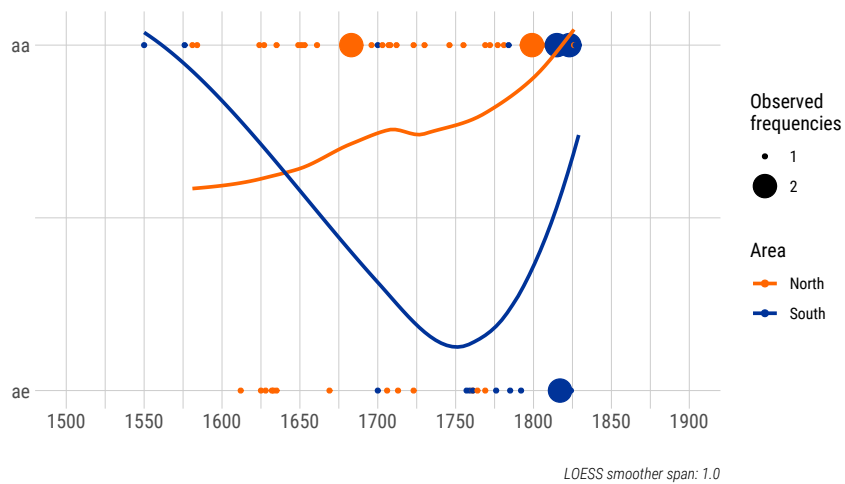


Figure 16: prescriptions long /a/ in closed syllables per year and area

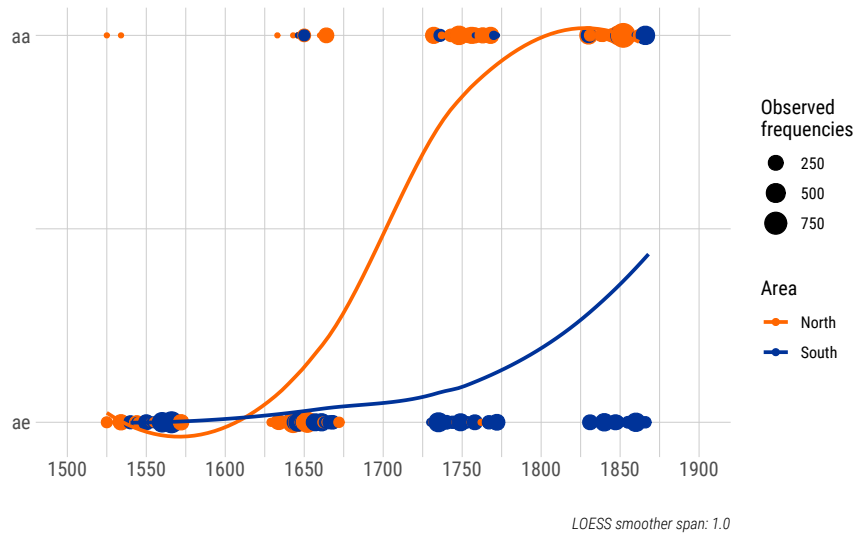


Figure 17: language use long /a/ in closed syllables per year and area

When inspecting the general development of the feature in norms and usage, the trendlines in the plots already indicate diverging patterns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whereas the same trendlines suggest a convergence of the developments in norms and usage by the middle of the nineteenth century. Before arriving at this point in the nineteenth century, the standardisation history of the feature commences with opposing developments in norms and usage in the sixteenth century, where both Northern and Southern norms favour <aa>, and – except for two individual <aa> occurrences – usage entirely applies the older variant <ae>. This pattern at least indicates a different starting point in norms and usage in the earliest period. In the seventeenth century, the normative tradition in the North continues with a lack of consistency in the prescriptions, with some grammarians prescribing <aa>, and others now favouring <ae>. As the latter was new in the prescriptions but was already highly frequent in sixteenth-century usage, it is possible that these Northern grammarians in the seventeenth century may have formulated their norms in accordance with what was common in language use. This situation excludes a triggering impact of prescriptivism on Northern usage. The slight increase of <aa> in seventeenth-century Northern usage, on the contrary, may be related to the individual <aa> prescriptions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century grammarians, as I will explain in section 5. In the Southern Netherlands, no prescriptions on the spelling issue appeared in the seventeenth century, and except for the first <aa> forms that showed up in Southern usage, language use in the seventeenth century did not deviate from usage in the sixteenth-century South. The chronology of change thus reveals that, although some potential correlations arise in these earliest periods, the patterns in norms and usage suggest largely independent developments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The disparate developments of norms and usage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries dissolve in the eighteenth century, where in terms of norms, an increase in the frequency of prescriptions is observed, with (1) Southern codifiers dealing with the feature in their normative works again, but also (2) most of the Northern grammarians commenting on the spelling. Although there still is some variation in the eighteenth-century prescriptions, which mainly derives from a few norm givers prescribing both <ae> and <aa>, the North-South distinction in norms that was discussed earlier in this chapter is particularly apparent in the second half of the eighteenth century. In both the

Northern and the Southern Netherlands, this normative discrepancy results in almost uniform prescriptions in each part of the language area. Strikingly, while Northern codifiers almost uniformly opt for <aa> around and after the middle of the eighteenth century, the major shift to <aa> takes place in Northern usage at the same time (cf. section 4.2). This convergence of the developments towards <aa> in the eighteenth-century North possibly points to a relationship between norms and usage. In the Southern Netherlands, uniformity within the eighteenth-century <ae> prescriptions is preceded by consistent <ae> usage in the previous centuries. Although the trendlines of norms and usage in the South thus evolve in the same direction, the chronology of change, where norms simply follow trends in usage, makes a direct impact of prescriptions unlikely in this part of the language area. Despite the increase of the spelling <aa> in Southern usage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the consistent <ae> prescriptions of the eighteenth century may still have had a more indirect effect on Southern usage, as I will explain later. Moreover, the change towards <aa> in the South, which is first visible in the norms of the nineteenth century, is another case of interest for prescriptive influence, as I will explain in section 5. In fact, all options in which a direct or indirect impact of prescriptivism is plausible are summed up below.

- (1) Although two Northern <aa> forms are attested in early sixteenth-century usage already, the variant increased in seventeenth-century usage, where it is preceded by the first <aa> prescriptions in the Northern Netherlands.
- (2) Also in the Northern Netherlands, the developments in language use point to a convincing change from <ae> to <aa> taking place in the period between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries. In the eighteenth century, the modern-day form takes up a majority position in Northern usage. This massive increase of <aa> in eighteenth-century usage post-dates the Northern <aa> prescriptions, which had been proposed since the sixteenth century.
- (3) After the large increase of <aa> in eighteenth-century Northern usage, Northern grammarians in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continued to prescribe <aa>. It is also in the latter period that the change towards the present-day variant was completed in Northern usage.

- (4) In the Southern part of the language area, the <aa> prescriptions in the sixteenth century were followed by the appearance of the present-day variant in seventeenth-century usage. Moreover, in the eighteenth century, an increase of these <aa> forms is observed in Southern usage as well.
- (5) Following on the (ongoing) change from <ae> to <aa> in the prescriptions of Southern grammarians in the early nineteenth century, an increase of the variant <aa> is established in Southern language use in the decades surrounding the 1850s.
- (6) Despite the ongoing shift in the prescriptions of nineteenth-century grammarians, the variant <ae> remained the dominant form in nineteenth-century Southern usage. Whereas <ae> was the most common form in Southern usage since the sixteenth century, the first prescriptions on the variant appeared only in (the second half of) the eighteenth century, suggesting that these Southern grammarians simply reflected forms that were already widespread in language practice. However, the fact that language use in the Southern provinces compellingly adhered to the variant <ae> in the nineteenth century may still be related to these prescriptions.

In the following discussion in section 5, these options of prescriptive interference are analysed individually in order to evaluate the impact of prescriptivism on changes in usage for the spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables.

5 Discussion

For determining whether and to what extent prescriptivism played a role in the changes discussed in section 4.3, both the chronology of language change, the target audience of the grammarians, the type of the prescription (cf. section 4.1), the genre differences, the individual writer (cf. section 4.2), and the accompanying socio-historical context are considered. I first investigate the different options for prescriptive influence in the Northern Netherlands (option 1-3), before I discuss the relationship between norms and usage in the Southern Netherlands (option 4-6).

Option 1 is situated in the Northern Netherlands of the seventeenth century, where an increase of the modern-day <aa> (from 0.1% in the sixteenth century to 10.8% in the seventeenth century) is observed after the first <aa> prescriptions in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These early prescriptions were not uniform in the first half of the seventeenth century, with some Northern grammarians prescribing the older <ae>. However, most of the latter norms are implicit in nature, whereas multiple explicit <aa> prescriptions are found at the time. This explicitness of the <aa> prescriptions makes an impact of norms on usage more probable. When investigating language use, I already discussed that the earliest <aa> forms in the North can be found in Holland only (cf. section 4.2). Thus, the increase of <aa> that is discussed in option 1 can be traced back to the central region of Holland, and even more specifically, the variant inclines only in one pamphlet that was printed in 1650, and in two ego-documents that were written around 1664. Since the Northern normative works propagating <aa> in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were all published in Holland, it may well be that several individual writers from Holland were influenced by the explicit prescriptions for <aa>. However, these early Northern codifiers did certainly not have a widespread impact on entire genres or other regions with their prescriptions.

The sudden change in mid-eighteenth-century usage, where the variant <ae> was immensely exchanged for <aa> in the North, is the subject of **option 2**. This option of prescriptive interference deals with an immense and abrupt change in usage, which is preceded by prescriptions for the modern-day form in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (cf. option 1), and by the explicit <aa> prescriptions of elitist codifiers in the first half of the eighteenth century. The large increase in usage unfolds in a broader geographical scope than was the case in option 1, with language users in Holland and Zeeland now making a compelling shift to the modern-day <aa> in both printed, formal, and informal texts. Although a comparable increase of <aa> across formal and informal genres at the same time makes an impact of prescriptivism unlikely, it is also important to acknowledge that different types of normative works prescribed these <aa> forms in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In fact, a detailed inspection of the prescriptions in the Northern Netherlands reveals that not only elitist grammarians, but also codifiers with a broader target audience made their preference for the spelling <aa> explicit in their normative works. Seventeenth-century normative works within the tradition of trivium grammars, and popular

schoolbooks of Hakvoord (1746) and De Gelliers (1661), for example, also prescribed <aa> explicitly. Since especially the latter type of work enjoyed many reprints across the entire language area, it is plausible that both the larger sales market of these books, as well as the broader target audience, aided the variant <aa> in being disseminated simultaneously across multiple genres in the Northern Netherlands in the eighteenth century. However, apart from (1) the diversity within the types of normative works, and (2) the geographical distribution of these works, also the coherence of the <aa> prescriptions created continuity in the Northern prescriptions. It may turn out that such a normative tradition, in which <aa> prescriptions were validated by different codifiers, were more influential than prescriptions of individual grammarians.

Option 1 and option 2 thus revealed that the actual change from <ae> to <aa> occurred in Northern language norms first, after which the form was most likely transmitted to individual language users in Holland in the seventeenth century (cf. option 1), before it was applied at a broader scale in the Northern Netherlands of the eighteenth century (cf. option 2). Prescriptivism thus possibly had a considerable role in the implementation and dissemination of the variant in the eighteenth century, where <aa> was established as the majority variant across all genres in Northern usage. Nonetheless, the change towards <aa> is fully accomplished only in the nineteenth century.

In **option 3**, I therefore examine whether the persistent prescriptions of Northern grammarians in the second half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century caused the completion of the change towards the modern-day variant. From that point of view, a first important result is that the culmination of the shift to <aa> in nineteenth-century usage is highly comparable across the two Northern regions, and the different genres in the *HCD*. The individual documents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, moreover, shed more light on the possible effect of prescriptivism in this change. Particularly the variability in the documents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries points to a relevant discrepancy in the two periods. Whereas in the eighteenth century, 62.5% (n=20) of the documents in the corpus showed signs of variation in the spelling of the long /a/, the proportion of writers still using both spelling variants diminished to 8% (n=2) in the nineteenth century. This means that usage of the individual writers was more variable in the eighteenth century than it was in the nineteenth century. The difference between variability

in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documents thus implies that the completion of the change to <aa> in the North does not involve individual writers still switching entirely from <ae> to <aa> spellings in the nineteenth century. Instead, the finalisation of the change simply includes more intentional use of one variant to achieve uniformity and standardisation in writing practice.

So, although the Northern grammarians who kept on prescribing <aa> from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards co-endorsed the existing tradition of the <aa> spelling (cf. option 2), and they thus kept the awareness of the preferred spelling variant running, the homogenisation of the spelling practices in nineteenth-century usage must also be interpreted within the broader perspective of nation building, and the emerging standard language ideology. In the overall cultural and political strive for a standard language for the Dutch nation, the corresponding idea of uniformity in language was probably disseminated across language users in the North. Due to that predominant standard language ideology, and the fact that <aa> was already strongly embedded in the Northern writing tradition (cf. option 2), both the actual prescriptions laid down in normative works of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the general spread of the standard language ideology as a societal phenomenon, which mode of dissemination extends beyond normative works, probably triggered the final push in the change to <aa> in Northern usage.

In **option 4**, I move to the Southern Netherlands, and I focus on the role of prescriptivism in the initial phase of the change towards <aa>. Here, the modern-day variant arose in seventeenth-century usage, and consequently increased in the eighteenth century. Since explicit prescriptions for <aa> were formulated by Southern grammarians in the sixteenth century already, these early norms may be related to the appearance of the form in Southern usage a century later. When investigating the appearance of <aa> in Southern usage, the form shows up only in the printed pamphlets that were published in Brabant. In the administrative texts and ego-documents, as well as in the pamphlets in Vlaanderen, the older variant <ae> is the only form that is used at the time. Also in the eighteenth century, the increase of <aa> is visible solely in the pamphlets from Brabant. This increase suggests that the spelling <aa> was not established at a larger scale in the Southern Netherlands before the nineteenth century. If Southern norms for <aa> were thus effective, they were able to exert an influence on the pamphlets

in Brabant only. However, considering that these early prescriptions in the sixteenth century derived from Lambrecht (1550) and Sexagius (1576), which are sparsely distributed, and hence not very accessible normative works, an influence of these Southern prescriptions on the pamphlets in Brabant is quite unlikely. Also the time lag of almost a century between the <aa> prescriptions and the change in usage makes an influence of these Southern norms less probable.

This does not mean that any impact from above is immediately ruled out in early Southern usage. As was discussed in option 1-3, Northern prescriptions for <aa> were also being formulated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These codifiers succeeded in establishing a persistent tradition of <aa> prescriptions, with a likely impact on individual language users in the seventeenth century. Given the fact that pamphlets are a printed and edited genre of texts, an influence of these Northern codifications on the Brabantine pamphlets may be a possibility as well. Especially when contemplating that a Northern grammarian like De Heuiter (1581) – who still published his work in the South whilst targeting a Northern readership – prescribed <aa> explicitly, the assumption that Northern prescriptions may have reached some writers or editors in the South is not terribly far-fetched. Also the <aa> prescriptions in other normative works in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North may have spread to the Southern provinces, of course.⁵⁶

The likelihood of Northern influence on Southern usage is thus anyhow suggested. This forces us to reflect on the reason behind this rather unexpected result of norms impacting usage in the other part of the language area. A possible explanation for Northern influence on Southern usage may be found in the absence of a Southern normative tradition. In fact, the lack of consistent language norms in the South may have prompted a group of writers or publishers of printed genres in Brabant in adopting the Hollandic <aa> norms. Particularly since these Northern prescriptions were part of a progressing normative

⁵⁶ To illustrate that the dispersion of Northern schoolbooks to the South was indeed a possibility at the time: for the famous schoolbook of Van Niervaart (1669), of which the first edition appeared around 1600, eighteenth-century reprints from Antwerpen and Brussel were discovered. Nonetheless, in these Brabantine versions of the book, the spelling of the long /a/ in closed syllables was adjusted to <ae>.

tradition, and they were therefore considered more legitimised than Southern norms at the time.

The impact of the early Northern <aa> prescriptions on Southern usage was thus restricted to individual writers within one genre, and the effect of these norms does not disseminate to other texts or regions in the South at first. It is only in the nineteenth century that the modern-day <aa> started gaining ground in a wider range of genres. This increase of <aa> in nineteenth-century usage happened right after Southern grammarians became more tolerant towards the Northern variant. Although not all norm givers were equally progressive at the time (e.g. Willems, 1824), most codifiers in the South started changing their prescriptions to <aa>. In **option 5**, I analyse whether this tolerance, and the <aa> prescriptions of Southern grammarians invoked the rise of the modern-day variant in nineteenth-century usage.

With Southern norms evolving from mixed prescriptions to only <aa> prescriptions towards the end of the of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, a development from tolerance for <aa> to a clear preference for the incoming variant is observed in the nineteenth-century prescriptions. This is also illustrated with Southern codifiers who reject the use of <ae> altogether in the form of proscriptions. When investigating the rise of <aa> in nineteenth-century usage, the incline of the modern-day variant is observed in the administrative texts in Brabant, on the one hand, and in the administrative texts and ego-documents in Vlaanderen, on the other hand. As was explained in section 4.2, this <aa> usage can be traced back to the uniform spelling in one or two individual documents, while the other texts were more conservative in applying <ae>. The emergence of the present-day variant in Southern usage can therefore be attributed only to individual writers in the nineteenth century. While it is thus unlikely that Southern prescriptions for <aa> influenced specific regions and genres as a whole, with a few writers applying the variant consistently in the nineteenth century, it is probable that codifiers favouring <aa> convinced these writers in adopting the spelling <aa>. However, also the salience of the social meaning attached to the spelling variants probably played a role in the broader implementation of the modern-day <aa> in Southern usage. As Vosters et al. (2014) argued, the specific socio-political context of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the intensified contact between the Northern and the Southern

Netherlands more generally, may have facilitated the increased use of <aa> in the Southern part of the language area.

Despite the compelling implementation of the modern-day <aa> by a few writers in the nineteenth century (cf. option 5), the older <ae> remains the dominant variant in the Southern Netherlands. Here, it should not be neglected that also in Southern norms, a solid tradition of <ae> prescriptions was established in the eighteenth century. In **option 6**, I therefore analyse whether these <ae> prescriptions in the South interfered with the conservation of the older variant in nineteenth-century usage.

When it comes to the steady normative tradition of <ae> prescriptions, Southern grammarians were strict in not allowing for variation in the second half of the eighteenth century, with most codifiers simply prescribing <ae> as only variant, and others even proscribing the Northern <aa> explicitly (e.g. P.B., 1757; Verpoorten, 1759). Furthermore, grammarians who did not make injunctions on the spelling issue, or who tolerated the Northern <aa> in their prescriptions, always used the variant <ae> in their own writing practice (e.g. Henckel, 1815; De Neckere, 1815; Behaegel, 1817). Such adherence to one prescribed variant reminds of the normative tradition that was established some decades earlier in the North and suggests that a similar status of validation was now attached to the Southern <ae> prescriptions. The uniform prescriptions of the tradition of school teachers from Antwerpen (P.B., 1757; Verpoorten, 1759; Des Roches, s.d. [1761]), for example, probably relished visibility of prescriptions among language users, and as such, this normative tradition may have strengthened the influence of Southern prescriptivism in the eighteenth century. While the exposure of the variant <ae> is probably more broadly carried (via other printed texts, for example), the Southern normative tradition thus aided in underpinning the use of the variant <ae> via (1) prescriptions, (2) the social evaluation of the variant, and (3) their own use of the form.

6 Conclusion

Before arriving at an overall conclusion on prescriptive influence for this spelling variable, the findings in norms and usage are compared to the expectations formulated in the beginning of this chapter. In doing so, I refer to the hypotheses set up for each of the spelling variants separately.

The outgoing variant <ae> was the subject of hypothesis 1. For the North, I expected a lacking influence of <ae> norms on usage, which is now also confirmed. As opposed to what I assumed, <ae> was not the main prescribed variant in the sixteenth century, and although the form still appeared in some individual prescriptions in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the modern-day <aa> immediately established as the dominant variant in the prescriptions. Since Northern usage adhered to <ae> in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the patterns in norms and usage diverged in the early periods, which made an influence of prescriptivism impossible for this variant. In the South, on the contrary, I presumed <ae> would be conserved in language use until the nineteenth century, possibly due to the impact of grammarians from the eighteenth century onwards. The exploration of prescriptive influence revealed that prescriptivism indeed may have helped in prolonging the use of the outgoing variant in nineteenth-century usage (cf. option 6), which also affirms hypothesis 1 for the Southern Netherlands.

Whether the emergence and the increase of the modern-day <aa> is related to an impact of codified norms was discussed in hypothesis 2. I expected a rise of the variant in Northern and Southern usage in respectively the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and I assumed that in both parts of the language area, the increase may be related to an impact of prescriptivism. The investigation of the relationship between norms and usage verified this hypothesis for the North and the South. In the North, it is both the continuity of the <aa> prescriptions, and the diversity of normative works prescribing the modern-day variant in the eighteenth century, which probably aided in accelerating the immense switch to <aa> in Northern usage (cf. option 2). For the South, a limited impact of (Northern) prescriptions was observed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, yet another influence of language norms is situated later in time. More specifically in the nineteenth century, where the incline of <aa> is attributed to

individual language users across different genres and regions. When compared to the influence in the North, the prescriptive effect is therefore more restricted here. It appears that not only the tolerance and the prescriptions for <aa> as such, but also the social meaning of the variant, and the socio-historical context in general may have enhanced the ongoing change towards <aa> in Southern usage.

In sum, this case study shows that the orthographic representation of the long /a/ in closed syllables is a feature that was susceptible to prescriptive influence. It suggests that Northern codifiers possibly succeeded in initiating the actual change towards <aa> in the seventeenth century, and in facilitating a further spread of the prescribed form in eighteenth-century usage. Also Southern grammarians seemingly managed to exert an impact on usage. Although Southern norm givers simply prescribed variants that were already common in usage, in doing so, these codifiers actually endorsed the Southern writing practice to establish a Southern normative tradition, which eventually helped impeding the change towards the Northern <aa> in the nineteenth century.

However, this case study also indicates that at least three conditions evidently needed to be fulfilled to enable such effects of prescriptivism. A first aspect to consider is that we are dealing with a spelling feature which enjoyed ample attention from norm givers, who frequently commented explicitly on the issue in the period under investigation. Such a high degree of metalinguistic salience possibly implies that the spelling feature was also prominent in the language community. Particularly from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, language users may have been well aware of the spelling variable and (the social meaning of) its variants. As such, the visibility of the spelling feature, both in normative works and in other documents that circulated in the language community, may have created an easy scenario for prescriptive interference. Apart from the high (metalinguistic) salience of the variable, the continuity of prescriptions for the same variant turned out to be a prerequisite for prescriptive influence as well. It is suggested that, only when a prescribed form got validated by multiple codifiers, and the prescriptions acquired a more institutionalised status, so to speak, an effect of prescriptions on usage was discernible. Yet, a large-scale effect of prescriptivism across different genres was only achieved when a wider variety of normative works with a broader readership was disseminated into society.