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

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Chapter 7 – Comparative marker

In one of his songs in the 1970s, the Belgian singer Louis Neefs sung: *nooit had ik een beter vriend **als** Benjamin* ‘I never had a better friend as Benjamin’. In this comparative construction, the singer used the comparative marker *als* while, if he wanted to express himself in Standard Dutch, he should have sung: *nooit had ik een beter vriend **dan** Benjamin*. In fact, this is a frequently quoted example for illustrating how the comparative is commonly formed in spoken varieties of Dutch. In almost all local speech today, the complementiser *als* shows up when formulating a comparative in which unequal parts are compared (cf. Barbiers et al., 2005, map 15b; cf. Figure 32). In Standard Dutch, however, the codified norm is to use the marker *als* ‘as’ only in a comparative of equality, whereas the particle *dan* ‘than’ must be applied in a comparison of inequality, as Examples 1-2 show.

Comparative of equality

- (1) *Ze is even slim **als** hij (is)*
‘She is as smart as he (is)’

Comparative of inequality

- (2) *Ze is slimmer **dan** hij (is)* **Ze is slimmer **als** hij (is)* ⁶¹
‘She is smarter than he (is)’ ‘She is smarter as he (is)’

Apart from the discussed variation between the complementisers *als* and *dan* in comparatives of inequality, the complementisers in comparatives of equality are also prone to variability. An example is the hypercorrect use of the participle *dan*, as in *ze is even slim **dan** hij* ‘she is as smart than he’. Although such utterances are

⁶¹ Although the contemporary norm, codified in the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst (ANS)* ‘General Dutch Grammar’, argues that there is no objection in using *als* in comparatives of inequality, it also signals that the variant is not accepted by all language users. The work therefore advises to refrain from the use of *als* in these comparative constructions. Original citation: *Het voegwoord als is in deze functie niet voor alle taalgebruikers aanvaardbaar. Voor velen is dan zelfs een sjibbolet voor correct Nederlands. Wie moeilijkheden op dit gebied wil vermijden, kan zich daarom beter van het gebruik van ongelijkheid-aanduidend als – waar op zichzelf beschouwd geen enkel bezwaar tegen bestaat – onthouden* (e-ANS, section 10.3.14.5)

also found in Early and Late Modern writings (Van der Horst, 2008, II, p. 1543), the focus of this case study is solely on the participle use in comparative constructions of inequality.

The prescriptions for the complementiser, in which *dan* is considered the only correct marker in comparatives of inequality, are not bound to modern-day Standard Dutch. With Huydecoper (1730) as one of the first codifiers commenting on the incorrect use of the marker *als* in comparatives of inequality, the normative tradition in the eighteenth century already considered *dan* the preferred variant for these comparative constructions (Van der Horst, 2008, II, pp. 1542-1543). However, Huydecoper also suggests that variability had emerged in written language use, with *als* showing up in linguistic contexts where it did not belong. This is also indicated by Van der Horst (1997, p. 428) and Van der Horst (2008, II, p. 1272), who illustrate that some authors in the seventeenth century, such as Bredero and Vondel, wrote *dan* and *als* interchangeably, or even preferred *als* as a marker in these comparatives of inequality (cf. also Van der Sijs, 2021, p. 469). Such findings of course confirm that the marker *als* was applied as an alternative variant in comparative constructions of inequality well before it became common in modern-day Dutch. Moreover, while the marker *als* mainly characterises the spoken varieties today, in Early and Late Modern times, the form was (also) used in writing, which makes it an interesting feature to investigate in the context of language standardisation and prescriptive influence.

1 Previous research

The use of the complementiser in comparatives of inequality is a prominent topic in normative discussions of Dutch today, and in fact, the feature is the favourite pet peeve of many language enthusiasts. It is therefore not surprising that multiple studies on the grammatical issue have been carried out on contemporary usage data, in which mainly the spoken variety is scrutinised. However, little is known about the historical development of *als* and *dan* as markers in comparatives of inequality in the written code, and especially the sociolinguistic angle remains understudied. For the literature review of this variable, I therefore rely on what is discussed in reference works of Dutch, as well as in language-historical and dialectal studies, some of which date back to

the middle of the twentieth century (cf. Paardekooper, 1950; Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, 1963; De Rooij, 1972). I also refer to a synchronic study on the influential factors in the use of the comparative markers in modern-day spoken Dutch (cf. Hubers & De Hoop, 2013).

Multiple reference works and studies that raise the topic of variation in the comparative markers assert that *als* arose as an alternative form in comparatives of inequality in the sixteenth century, while the complementiser *dan* was the common form in written usage (Van der Sijs, 2021, p. 468; cf. also Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, 1963, p. 265; De Rooij, 1972, p. 199; Postma, 2006, pp. 2-3). From a comparative perspective, it is explained that the emergence of the form *als* as a marker in comparatives of inequality is not restricted to Dutch. The rise of the variant is also observed in written German, where a medieval comparative like *dümmer denn* changed into *dümmer als* ‘dumber than’ in the period of Renaissance (Van der Sijs, 2021, p. 469). According to Schenkeveld-van der Dussen (1963, pp. 261-262), who approached the matter from a structuralist perspective, the appearance of *als* in these German comparatives may be explained by the syntactic overuse of the variant *denn*. Since the Dutch equivalent *dan* was also employed for various functions in the sixteenth century, it is argued that the argument of syntactic overuse may also be at the root of the rise of the marker *als* in Dutch (ibid.). Schenkeveld-van der Dussen’s (1963) explanation also faces opposition (e.g. Stroop, 2014, p. 456), yet the investigated change at least suggests that the emergence of *als* as a comparative marker took place in German and in Dutch at the same time (Van der Sijs, 2021, p. 469). Since *als* eventually became the codified form in High German, it is assumed that the further dissemination of the variant in sixteenth-century writings of Dutch was possibly influenced by these processes of standardisation in the German language (Paardekooper, 1950, pp. 163-164; Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, 1963, p. 262; Van der Sijs, 2021, p. 469).

Paardekooper (1950, pp. 161-163), however, also turns to dialectology to find an explanation for the historical rise of the marker *als*. Since the difference between *als* and *dan* as markers in comparatives of equality and inequality is hardly ever made in the spoken language of the twentieth century, he argues that the distinction was also never part of the spoken repertoire of many language users in the past. According to Paardekooper (1950), historical language users often knew only one comparative marker in their dialect, and they thus used *als*

or the typically southwestern *of* for both comparative constructions of equality and inequality. Due to the general lack of *dan* in multiple dialects, he assumes the form eventually disappeared from written Middle Dutch. Although Paardekooper (1950) is right in believing that *als* and the highly local *of* characterise the comparative constructions of inequality in the spoken language today (cf. Figure 32), De Rooij (1972, p. 201) affirms that the dialect system which Paardekooper (1950) refers to probably emerged only after the Middle Ages. As De Rooij (1972, p. 203) asserts, in earlier stages of Dutch, the variant *dan* was not only a feature of the written language, but it was also used in different spoken varieties, which in turn refutes Paardekooper's (1950) hypothesis.

More recently, Van der Horst (2008, II, p. 1272) discussed the historical dissemination of *als* in comparatives of inequality, and he indicates that the use of *als* became frequent in religious (i.e. the official Bible translation) and literary writings in the seventeenth century. The norm-giving author Vondel, for example, applied *als* as a majority variant in his poetry in the beginning of the seventeenth century, although in reworked versions of the same work a few decades later, almost all these *als* forms in comparatives of inequality were exchanged for the marker *dan*. This alone is an interesting finding, since Vondel's switch from *als* to *dan* at least points to an awareness about the competing variant emerging in the course of the seventeenth century. Van der Horst (2008, II, pp. 1542-1543) also mentions that *als* still shows up in the eighteenth century as a marker in comparatives of inequality, with even a grammarian like Huydecoper (1730, p. 129) admitting he used the variant in his writings until 1720 (cf. section 4.1). The discussion of Van der Horst (2008, II) thus suggests that norm givers' awareness about variation, and the normative preference for *dan* must have arisen somewhere between the second half of the seventeenth century and the middle of the eighteenth century, with some authoritative language users at the time also shifting to *dan* in their language practice.⁶² However, based on these data, it is not clear whether this change to *dan* in writing practice was already happening at a larger scale, comprising different social classes, genres, regions, etc.

⁶² For research into the further development of prescriptions on the comparative marker, particularly in the twentieth century, see Van der Meulen (2018).

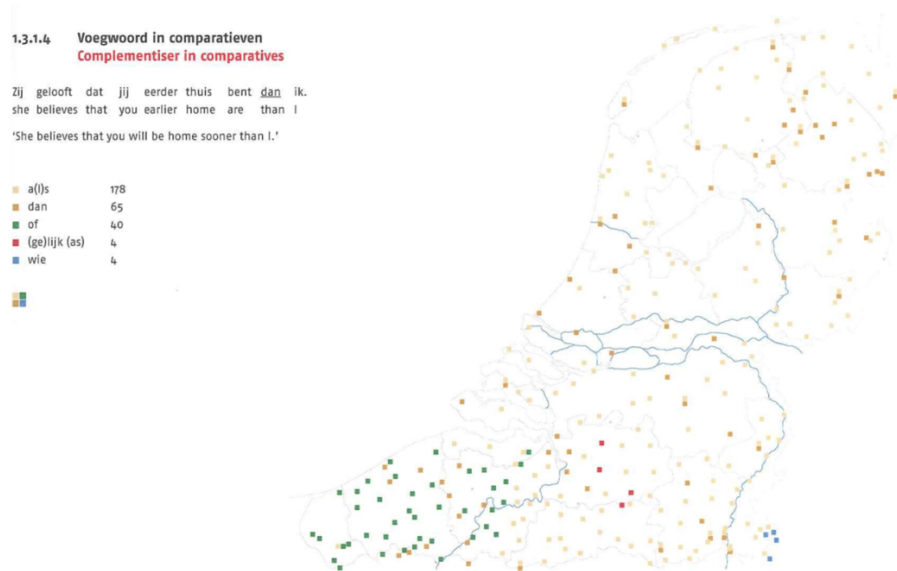


Figure 32: dialect map on the use of the marker in comparatives in modern-day spoken Dutch. Map retrieved from Barbiers et al. (2005)

As mentioned earlier, other scholars analysed the markers in comparatives of inequality in present-day Dutch (e.g. Postma, 2006; Stroop, 2011; 2014). From a sociolinguistic perspective, Hubers & De Hoop (2013) investigate the influence of language-internal and language-external factors on the use of the comparative marker in spoken Dutch. Transcribed spoken data from different regions in the Netherlands and the Dutch-speaking parts of Belgium, as part of the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands (CGN)* 'Corpus of Spoken Dutch', were analysed in this study. The data revealed that the involved intra-linguistic factors, i.e. (1) the type of comparative, (2) the distance between the comparative and the comparative marker, and (3) the grammatical context in which the comparative was used, were not influential in the choice for *dan* or *als*, nor were the language-external factors (1) genre, (2) the age of the speaker, and (3) the speaker's region of birth. Two other sociolinguistic factors – the level of education and region – on the contrary, did explain patterns of variation in usage (ibid., pp. 98-99). More specifically, it turned out that highly educated speakers were more likely to use the marker *dan*, which leads the authors to the conclusion that the present-day prescribed form *dan* is part of the grammatical repertoire of these speakers, whereas this is less the case for lower-educated speakers of Dutch (Hubers & De Hoop, 2013, pp. 98-100). For the impact of region, the authors argue that,

although the comparative marker *dan* is still the majority variant in all provinces, speakers from the Southern provinces of what are the Netherlands today (i.e. Limburg, Noord-Brabant, and Zeeland) use more *als* compared to the more Northern parts of the country (e.g. Holland) and the entire Dutch-speaking area in Belgium (ibid.).

Despite the limited amount of diachronic and (historical-)sociolinguistic corpus studies, some relevant conclusions can be drawn from previous research on the marker in comparatives of inequality. Research has shown that the comparative marker *dan* was the common complementiser in sixteenth-century writings, although variation with *als* also emerged at the time. The use of this new complementiser increased in the seventeenth century and disappeared again in the writings of some authoritative figures in the eighteenth century. Since *dan* is the most common form in modern-day written Dutch, the form *als* must have undergone a widespread decline in writing at a later stage. How long the variant remained in use, whether regional differences can also be discerned in the past, and whether the upcoming prescriptions for *dan* in the eighteenth century, and general processes of language standardisation, are related to these developments in written usage is not known yet and will be investigated in the present study.

2 Hypotheses

Although the historical-sociolinguistic development of the comparative markers *als* and *dan* remains largely uncharted territory, some general expectations for the change from *dan* to *als*, and back to *dan*, can be formulated based on previous research.

First, multiple reference works established that the variant *als* initially showed up as a comparative marker in sixteenth-century writings, from where its use increased in the seventeenth century (Van der Horst, 2008; Van der Sijs, 2021). Although previous research was carried out on literary and religious documents, a similar development can probably be expected in the *HCD*. As such, based on the work of Van der Horst (2008), I presume *als* will stand the strongest in the seventeenth century, whereas the variant may already be on decline in the eighteenth century. Since it is unclear whether *als* was ever prescribed in the

sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, it cannot be defined yet whether the expected increase of the variant could have been caused by an effect of prescriptivism. However, with Van der Horst (2008) summarising that authoritative writers had switched to *dan* in their late seventeenth-century usage, and grammarians started prescribing *dan* – and proscribing *als* – in the beginning of the eighteenth century, it may well be that these top-down attempts to regularise the use of the comparative markers caused a decline of *als* in eighteenth-century language use (**hypothesis 1**).

Hypothesis 1, comprising the rise and the fall of the variant *als*, also has implications for *dan* as a comparative marker, of course. In line with Van der Sijs (2021), I expect *dan* will be the majority variant in sixteenth-century usage, although the marker will probably decrease in the seventeenth century, in favour of the variant *als* (cf. hypothesis 1). Following Van der Horst (2008), who discusses a revival of *dan* in the language practice of literary writers and grammarians in the second half of the seventeenth century and in the beginning of the eighteenth century, I also hypothesise to observe an increase of *dan* taking place in eighteenth-century usage, although variation with *als* will probably remain. Since Van der Horst (2008) indicates that explicit prescriptions for *dan* arise in the early eighteenth century, the expected revival of *dan* in eighteenth-century usage may be related to these prescriptions. Due to the upcoming standard language ideology, and the institutionalisation of prescriptivism in the course of the eighteenth century (Rutten, 2019), I moreover suppose the prescribed marker *dan* will see a further increase in nineteenth-century usage.

As explained before, given the lack of historical-sociolinguistic studies, it is difficult to formulate highly detailed hypotheses in terms of genre and regional differences in the development of this feature. When it comes to region, however, modern-day dialect data indicate that the use of the comparative marker differs depending on the region where the speaker is from (cf. Barbiers et al., 2005; Hubers & De Hoop, 2013). As such, it is important to acknowledge that regional differences in the spoken variety may have influenced written usage in the past (Paardekooper, 1950; Barbiers et al., 2005). Since especially the most spoken-like genres are susceptible to that kind of dialectal influence (e.g. Rutten & Van der Wal, 2011; Elspaß, 2012, p. 156), I particularly expect to observe regional variation in the least formal genre of the *HCD*, i.e. ego-documents. Compared to the other genres in the corpus, these ego-documents may also be less influenced

by prescriptive injunctions, which is why I anticipate for the printed pamphlets and the formal administrative texts to show a stronger adherence to the codified norms; that means that these genres will probably display a higher proportion of *dan* markers from the eighteenth century onwards (**hypothesis 2**).

3 Methodology

The method for analysing the comparative markers, that is the classification of language norms, and the search expression and data annotation for language use, are explained in this section.

3.1 Language norms

As is the case for all case studies in this dissertation, different types of language norms are uncovered for the normative component of the analysis. The classification of these prescriptions into a category of explicit prescriptions and implicit prescriptions is on a par with the other case studies, of course. In this section, I explain what kind of metalinguistic commentaries are considered as explicit and implicit prescriptions for this feature. This is illustrated with a few examples from the normative data.

Explicit prescriptions discuss the matter in an explicit way, obviously. This means the metalinguistic comment should be devoted to the use of the marker in comparative constructions of inequality. The codifier should contextualise the topic of the comparative marker, either directly as Huydecoper (1730, pp. 128-131) does when commenting on Vondel's language use in Example 1, or more concealed as is shown by De Haes (1764, p. 122) when he discusses different kinds of adverbs in Example 2.

- (1) *.560. *Die meer bemint was van Diane als deze alleen*) Merk hier aan meer als – voor meer dan. Het verwondert my zeer dat Vondel deezen misslag niet ontdekt heeft. [...] want, gelyk Als eene gelykheid stelt tusschen persoonen en zaaken, zo moet Dan altyd gebruikt worden wanneer 'er enig onderscheid en ongelykheid tusschen beide betekend wordt. als vooreerst achter den vergrootenden trap, *Gradus Comparativus* (Huydecoper, 1730, pp. 128-131)

*.560. '*Die meer bemint was van Diane als deze alleen*' 'He who was loved more by Diane as this one alone'. Note here *meer als* 'more as' – for *meer dan* 'more than'. It surprises me that Vondel did not discover this mistake. While *als* states similarity between persons and things, *dan* should always be used when there is distinction and difference between the two, first and foremost after the comparative, *Gradus Comparativus*'

- (2) *De Bywoorden van verkiezing zyn, eer, veel eer, veel liever, meer, veel meer, enz., op welke men doorgaens laet volgen dan, in 't Latyn quam; mogende in dezen zin het bywoord als, in de bywoorden van gelykenisse alleen te pas komende, geenszins gebruikt worden. Dus mag men in den eersten trap der vergelykinge wel schryven: zoo groot als, doch in den tweeden moet men dan schryven* (De Haes, 1764, p. 122)

'The adverbs of preference are, *eer* 'sooner', *veel eer* 'much sooner', *veel liever* 'much rather', *meer* 'more', *veel meer* 'much more', etc., after which usually *dan* follows, in Latin *quam*; in this sentence the adverb *als*, which is applied only in adverbs of equality, should not be used. So one may write *zoo groot als* in the positive, in the comparative, one should write *dan*'

Unlike the explicit prescriptions, **implicit prescriptions** do not need to be embedded in the broader context of markers in comparative constructions. A normative comment about adverbs in which a grammarian gives an example of a comparative of inequality (e.g. Leupenius, 1653, p. 72; Séwel, 1708, p. 183), as Example 3, or a discussion on the different degrees of comparison (i.e. positive, comparative, superlative) in which the focus is not on the comparative marker, both count as implicit prescriptions. A codifier who simply sums up examples of (each type of) a comparison (e.g. E.C.P., 1713, p. 42; cf. Example 4), or a grammarian who focuses on the declination of the adjectives in his discussion on

comparative constructions (e.g. Des Roches, s.d. [1761], p. 25) are also examples of implicit prescriptions.

- (3) *Verkiezende, welke toonen dat het voorgaande beter te achten is, als, Dan, als, gelyk men zegt, Beter is een gerust gemoed dan rykdom. Ik had die liever als 't ander*
(Séwel, 1708, p. 183)

‘[adverbs of] preference, which indicate that the preceding is better, like *dan, als*, as one says, *Beter is een gerust gemoed dan rykdom. Ik had die liever als 't ander*’

- (4) *Dewijl'er niet gemeynder is als de eene zaeke by de andere te vergelijken; zoo hebben de byvoegelijke woorden dry trappen van vergelykking [...]. Volgens den leegsten trap zegt men: Jan is zoo geleerd als Pieter. Volgens den middelsten: Jan is geleerder als Pieter. Volgens den hoogsten: Jan is den geleersten, ofte den aldergeleersten, onder alle sijne mede-gezellen*
(E.C.P., 1713, p. 42)

‘Although there is nothing more common than comparing things to one another, the adjectives have three degrees of comparison. In the lowest [i.e. positive] level one says: *Jan is zoo geleerd als Pieter* ‘Jan is as learned as Pieter’. In the middle [i.e. comparative] level: *Jan is geleerder als Pieter* ‘Jan is more learned as Pieter’. In the highest [i.e. superlative] level: *Jan is den geleersten, ofte den aldergeleersten, onder alle sijne mede-gezellen* ‘Jan is the most learned or the very most learned, among all his companions’

As opposed to other case studies in this dissertation, in which I determined grammarians’ usage by annotating the dominant form out of ten tokens of the feature, analysing the language practice of the codifiers is subjected to limitations in this case study. As can be expected, comparative constructions of inequality are not very common in usage. This is also the case in **grammarians’ usage**. Many norm givers did not even use the feature ten times in their entire normative work. This forced me to analyse fewer than ten tokens of comparative markers in grammarians’ usage in 27 out of the 73 normative works in the corpus. These limitations in the normative material led to a few variations on which grammarians’ usage was determined. Apart from the general rule, in which only the majority variant is annotated when the form is used in eight out of the ten tokens, I also annotated only one variant when fewer than ten tokens

were found in the grammarian's language practice. The form then needed to be used consistently with no variation occurring in the comparative markers (e.g. Vollenhove, 1686). If fewer than ten tokens could be extracted from the normative work, and variation was thereby attested as well, both *als* and *dan* were annotated for that grammarian's usage (e.g. Van der Weyden, 1651). As a norm giver like De Hubert (1624) illustrates, this implies that the variant(s) annotated for grammarians' usage are sometimes only based on two tokens. In the 27 instances in which fewer than ten tokens are considered, the actual number of tokens that could be included is mentioned in between brackets in Table 15 in section 4.1.3.

3.2 Language use

For the results in language use, a regular expression searched the *HCD* for comparative constructions of inequality. I particularly extracted hits in which words ending in *-er* (e.g. *meer* 'more' or *beter* 'better'), *-ere* (e.g. *andere* 'other'), *-eren* (e.g. *hoogere* 'higher'), or *-ers* (e.g. *elders* 'elsewhere') were followed by a comparative marker. This regular expression led to results as *langer als [twee ellen]* 'longer than [two ells]' (ADM-1650-HO-10) or *elders dan [bij de abten]* 'elsewhere than [with the abbots]' (EGO-1550-BR-1). Apart from observations in which the comparative was immediately followed by the comparative marker, I also allowed for constructions where one to four words could be positioned in between the comparative and the comparative marker. The latter search expression yielded results like *beter geexerceert werdende als [op een andere plaats]* 'better exercised than [in another place]' (ADM-1750-HO-3), and *andere dingen dan* 'other things than' (PAM-1650-HO-6).

In addition to searching for constructions in which the main comparative markers *als* and *dan* were used, the usage corpus was also checked for constructions in which the oral *as* (for *als*), and the contemporary dialectal variants *of* and *wie* were used as comparative markers (cf. Figure 32). The search expressions for all these variants resulted in 1.178 data entries, which were filtered for false positives. No valid results were eventually obtained for the spoken and the dialectal variants – *as*, *of*, and *wie* – which implies that only *als* and *dan* were applied as markers in comparatives of inequality in the *HCD*. The

retrieved results were subsequently annotated for the lemma of the comparative.

As is clear from the search expression above, the corpus was explored for all adjectives and adverbs in which the declination possibly pointed to a comparative element. It is important to note, however, that also sentences with the adverbs *anders* or *ander(e)* ‘other’ followed by a comparative marker were captured in this search expression. As Example 5 illustrates, these specific adverbs do not express a clear comparative relationship but indicate the exemptive meaning of *behalve* ‘except for’ (cf. also Stroop, 2011, p. 140). Since such comparatives are grammatically constructed like the other comparatives of inequality in the dataset, the data entries with *anders* and *ander(e)* are also considered in the results of this case study. In the discussion of the results in language use, I will reflect on possible differences between these, and true comparatives formed with other adjectives and adverbs.

- (5) *het schynt dat alle onze dichters trachten te bewyzen, dat de vlaamsche taal voor niets anders deugt dan om de Franschen uitteschelden*
(EGO-1850-VL-4)

‘It appears that all our poets aim to prove that the Flemish language virtues for nothing but scolding the French’

4 Results

4.1 Language norms

The findings in language norms are presented in this part of the chapter. In section 4.1.1, I discuss the metalinguistic salience of the feature, and in the following sections, the focus shifts to the prescriptions (section 4.1.2), and to the codifiers’ discussion of alternative variants (section 4.1.3).

4.1.1 Metalinguistic salience

In Figure 33, the frequency of explicit normative injunctions on the comparative marker are visualised per half centuries. The absolute numbers on the graph indicate the frequency of normative works in which an explicit prescription on the feature occurred.

Figure 33 shows that the comparative markers of inequality contained very low metalinguistic salience in the period under investigation, with the feature being prescribed implicitly by only two grammarians in the seventeenth century, before the comparative markers captured the attention of norm givers from the first half of the eighteenth century onwards. At that time, Huydecoper (1730) was the first codifier to formulate an elaborate prescription on the use of the comparative markers *als* and *dan*, after he noticed the mistake made by the literary author Vondel. In fact, it is only after the prescription of Huydecoper that other grammarians felt the need of commenting on the comparative markers. However, even in the feature's high-profile periods, the metalinguistic salience never soared above a minority of grammarians making an explicit prescription on the issue, with only 6 normative works in the second half of the eighteenth century (27%), and another 6 in the first half of the nineteenth century (40%) discussing the comparative markers explicitly.

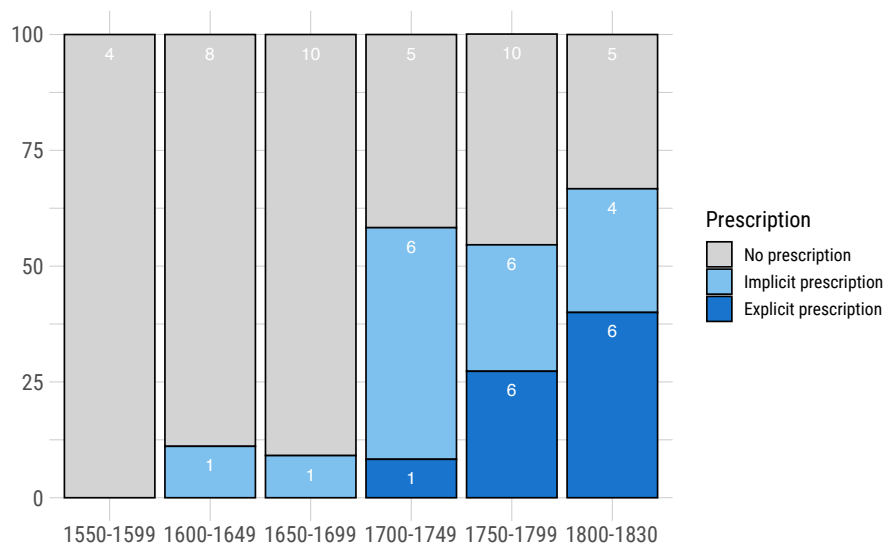


Figure 33: metalinguistic salience comparative marker

4.1.2 Prescriptions

Norms per period and area

In Figure 34, the language norms on the comparative marker are visualised per period, and for each part of the language area, which gives a general impression of the diachronic development of language norms.

In both the Northern and the Southern Netherlands, an evolution from variation between *als* and *dan* to a clear preference for the marker *dan* is observed in the normative discourse. This development happens slightly different in the North and the South. Northern norms display variability in the sixteenth century, which continues in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, most grammarians in the North put the marker *dan* forward as the preferred form, with variation largely disappearing from Northern norms. A similar pattern of change is discerned in the Southern Netherlands, although Southern norms seem to lag a century behind on their Northern pedants. Variable norms in the South start in the seventeenth century, and persist in the eighteenth century, whereas the strong decline of *als* in the norms is visible only in the nineteenth century.

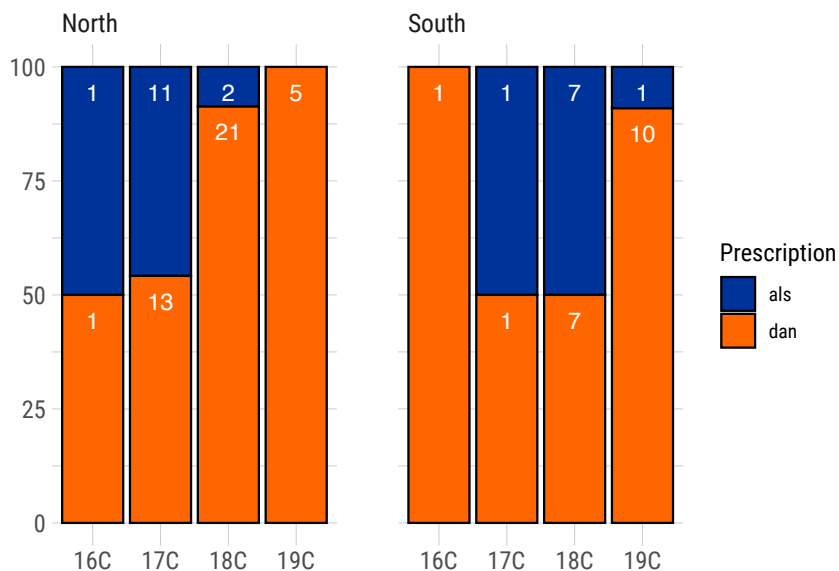


Figure 34: norms comparative marker per period and area

Norms per period, area, and type of prescription

In order to discern any underlying patterns related to the type of the prescription, the same results in language norms are now visualised in Figure 35, in which the distinction is made between explicit prescriptions, implicit prescriptions, and grammarians' usage.

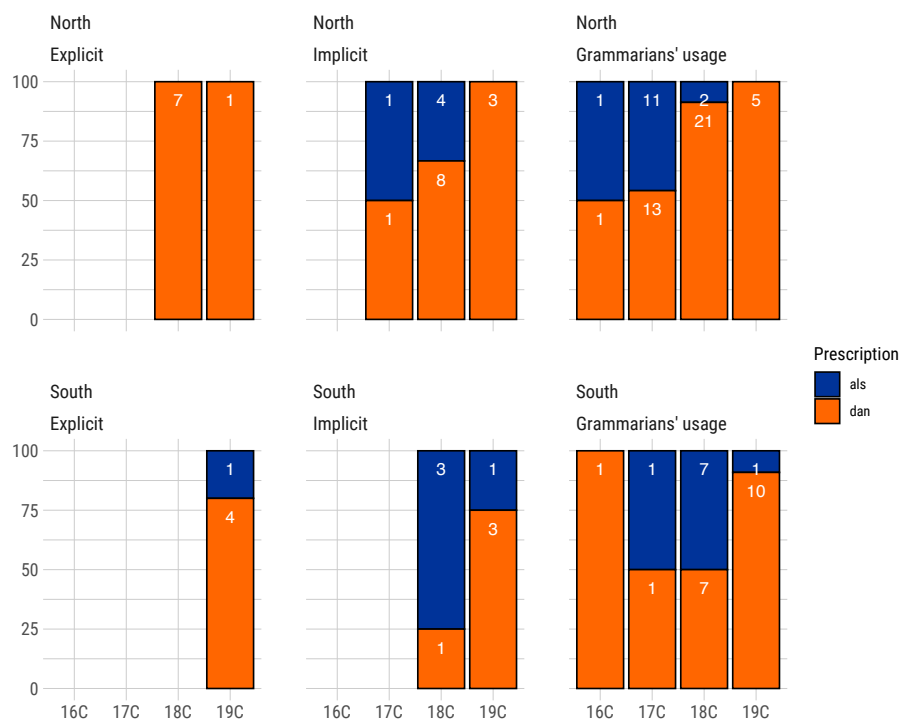


Figure 35: norms comparative marker per period, area, and type of prescription

A first difference between the types of language norms is unveiled when considering the emergence of prescriptions. As was also mentioned in section 4.1.1, Figure 35 illustrates that explicit prescriptions are found from the eighteenth century onwards. The results also show that these explicit prescriptions were formulated only by Northern grammarians. Almost all the explicit prescriptions in the nineteenth century, on the contrary, derive from Southern codifiers. Furthermore, while grammarians only started commenting explicitly on the matter from the eighteenth century onwards, implicit prescriptions appear somewhat sooner in the North and the South. To be precise,

these implicit prescriptions emerge a century earlier than the explicit prescriptions, i.e. respectively in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Interestingly, also the degree of variation differs between the types of prescriptions. This is particularly pronounced in Northern norms, where variability is completely lacking in the explicit prescriptions, while both *als* and *dan* arise as implicitly prescribed variants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A similar degree of variation is observed in the language use of Northern grammarians, where variation characterises grammarians' usage in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and to a lesser extent also the eighteenth centuries. The period of actual consolidation in Northern norms takes place in the nineteenth century, with grammarians uniformly choosing for the marker *dan* in the different types of prescriptions and in their own language practice.

Although explicit and implicit prescriptions on the comparative markers emerge a century later in the Southern Netherlands, a similar pattern of variation and change is observed in this part of the language area. The comparative marker *dan* is clearly the preferred – but not the only prescribed – form in the explicit prescriptions. Variability in norms characterises the implicit prescriptions and grammarians' usage in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Although an increase of *dan* is visible in the nineteenth century, language norms do not become entirely uniform in the South yet. Nonetheless, also in this part of the language area, the comparative marker *dan* succeeds in securing its position as the preferred variant in nineteenth-century norms.

4.1.3 Treatment of alternative variants

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that the Hollandic grammarian Huydecoper (1730) was one of the first norm givers formulating an explicit prescription on the use of the marker in comparatives. The summary of the prescriptions and proscriptions in Table 15 now also shows that, at least in this corpus of normative works, Huydecoper was indeed the first codifier to claim that the use of *als* in comparatives of inequality is a mistake that is frequently made since the Spanish rule in the sixteenth century. He explains:

dat de Spaansche geessel der Nederlanden, de Hertog van Alva, niet alleen de land-en Kerk-, maar ook ('t welk een noodzaakelyk gevolg was) de taal-wetten 't onderste boven smeed en verwarde, en met geen voorbeeld klarer aangetoond worden, dan met dit woord dan, in tegenstelling van als. Voor dien tyd, is nie-mand in staat my eene enkele plaats aan te toonen, daar als voor dan gezeid wordt, daar het integendeel onmiddelyk na dien tyd in een algemeen gebruik kwam (Huydecoper, 1730, p. 130)

‘the Spanish scourge of the Netherlands, the Duke of Alba, not only overturned and confused the civil and church laws, but also (which was a necessary consequence) the language laws. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the confusion between the words *dan* and *als*. Before that time, no one can show me a single instance where *als* was used in place of *dan*. On the contrary, immediately after that time, it became common practice’

In his argument, Huydecoper continues asserting that this specific mistake was also made by Vondel and other literary writers, and especially by the older ones of the seventeenth century. The codifier even confesses to using the marker *als* wrongly in comparatives himself up until the 1720s. Huydecoper’s strong proscription to the use of *als* as a marker in comparatives of inequality precept most likely triggered later codifiers in following Huydecoper’s example. This is illustrated by the rise of explicit prescriptions for *dan* and proscriptions for *als* in the 1760s, on the one hand, and by the sudden uniform use of *dan* in the language practice of Northern codifiers, on the other hand. Furthermore, after 1769, a remarkable development took place in Northern norms. While Northern grammarians still prescribed *dan* explicitly, and their own language use also remained consistent in applying *dan*, the proscriptions for *als* as a marker in comparatives of inequality disappeared from the Northern injunctions. Only Weiland (1805) still made a proscription for *als* in his national grammar. This development in the second half of the eighteenth century possibly indicates that *dan* had settled as the codified norm in the North, and normative discussions on the erroneous character of *als* as a marker in comparatives of inequality were perhaps no longer necessary in the Northern part of the language area.

This is certainly not the case for Southern norms. As was explained in section 4.1.2, the topic of the comparative markers only appeared on the radar of Southern grammarians in the nineteenth century. Table 15 also illustrates that the feature is particularly involved in normative discussions from 1815 onwards,

where some important changes in norms are discerned. In fact, most of the Southern grammarians, who first prescribed the alternative *als* in an implicit way, and who used *als* and *dan* interchangeably in their own language use, started commenting explicitly on the feature at the advent of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815. These codifiers suddenly prescribed *dan* and proscribed *als*, while also changing to *dan* in their own usage. Only the West-Flemish particularist Henckel (1815) still prescribed *als*, and proscribed the dialectal variant *of*, as he elaborates:

Men gebruikt ook altijd als in de vergelijking (niet of, gelijk 'er nu bij duizende spreken, zeggende: hij is wijzer of ik)
(Henckel, 1815, p. 91)

'One always uses *als* in comparisons (not *of*, as is now said by thousands, saying: *hij is wijzer of ik*)'

The development towards *dan* in Southern language norms, taking place exactly at the time of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, at least gives the impression that (the period leading up to the) the political reunification of the Northern and the Southern Netherlands influenced this abrupt shift in the normative practices of Southern codifiers. The fact that a grammarian like the Flemish De Neckere (1815) literally referred to the injunction of the Northern Weiland (1805) in his own grammar is telling, to say the least, and this reinforces the idea that the political context of the early nineteenth century, and the accompanying increase in contact between Northern and Southern grammarians, caused such an accelerated change to *dan* as the only prescribed and used variant.

Voorts merk hy [Weiland] aen dat de misstelling van Als in plaets van Dan agter een vergrootenden trap der byvoeglyke naemwoorden, gelyk ook agter Niet, Niets, Niemand, Geen, Nergens, Noyt, Andere, te véel ens : maer nae 1568 in gebruyk is gekomen. Vinde dese aenmerking van groot belang voor ons (Vlaemingen).
(De Neckere, 1815, p. 145)

'Furthermore, Weiland notes that the incorrect use of *als* instead of *dan* after a comparative adjective, as well as after words like *niet* 'not', *niets* 'nothing', *niemand* 'nobody', *geen* 'no', *nergens* 'nowhere', *nooit* 'never', *andere* 'other',

te veel ‘too much’, etc., only came into use after 1568. I find this comment of great importance for us Flemings.’

Apart from the possible influence of Huydecoper (1730) on fellow codifiers in the eighteenth-century North, and of the Northern normative tradition on Southern grammarians in the nineteenth century, this section mainly deals with the treatment of alternative variants. When explicit prescriptions started to appear in the eighteenth century, almost every prescription for *dan* had a corresponding proscription for *als*. In all these cases, the alternative marker *als* was simply rejected for usage. This means that, from the moment that explicit prescriptions for *dan* were formulated in each part of the language area, variability disappeared entirely from these grammarians’ metalinguistic discussions. With these codifiers also explicitly proscribing *als*, they were strict in stating that only *dan* could be used as a marker in a comparative of inequality, and as such, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onwards, these grammarians did not allow for variation in the use of comparative markers anymore.

GRAMMARIAN	YEAR	AREA	PRESCR. EXPL.	PRESCR. IMPL.	PRESCR. USAGE	OTHER VARIANT	TREAT MENT
Lambrecht	1550	South	--	--	dan (6)	--	--
Sexagius	1576	South	--	--	--	--	--
De Heuter	1581	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Spiegel	1584	North	--	--	als	--	--
Van der Schuere	1612	North	--	--	dan	--	--
De Hubert	1624	North	--	--	als (1)/ dan (1)	--	--
Van Heule	1625	North	--	--	als (1)/ dan (1)	--	--
Dafforne	1627	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Ampzing	1628	North	--	--	als (7)/ dan (8)	--	--
Plemp	1632	North	--	--	dan (7)	--	--
Van Heule	1633	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Montanus	1635	North	--	--	als	--	--
Kók	1649	North	--	als	als (1)	--	--
Van der Weyden	1651	North	--	--	als (3)/dan (3)	--	--
Leupenius	1653	North	--	dan	dan	--	--
Bolognino	1657	South	--	--	als (3)/dan (2)	--	--
De Gelliers	1661 [± 1640]	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Van Niervaart	1669 [± 1600]	North	--	--	als (1)	--	--
Van Atteveld	1682	North	--	--	als (2)	--	--
Gosens van Helderen	1683	North	--	--	als (7)/ dan (3)	--	--
Winschooten	1683	North	--	--	als	--	--
Vollenhove	1686	North	--	--	dan (5)	--	--
Duykerius	1696	North	--	--	als	--	--
Francius	1699	North	--	--	dan	--	--

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Van Geesdalle	1700	South	--	--	als	--	--
Nyløe	1703	North	--	dan	dan	--	--
Hilarides	1705	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Moonen	1706	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Nyløe	1707	North	--	dan	dan	--	--
Séwel	1708	North	--	als/dan	dan	--	--
Séwel	1712	North	--	als/dan	dan	--	--
E.C.P.	1713	North	--	als	als	--	--
Ten Kate	1723	North	--	als/dan	dan	--	--
Huydecoper	1730	North	dan	--	dan	als	rejected
Hakvoord	1746 [1698]	North	--	--	als (5)	--	--
Van Belle	1748	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Verpoorten	1752	South	--	--	dan (1)	--	--
Van Belle	1755	North	--	--	dan (7)	--	--
P.B.	1757	South	--	--	dan	--	--
Verpoorten	1759	South	--	--	als	--	--
Des Roches	[1761]	South	--	als	als (1)	--	--
Elzevier	1761	North	dan	--	dan (8)	als	rejected
De Haes	1764	North	dan	dan	dan	als	rejected
Van der Palm	1769	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Zeydelaar	1769	North	dan	--	dan	als	rejected
Zeydelaar	1772	North	--	dan	dan	--	--
Van Belleghem & Waterschoot	[1773]	South	--	--	dan	--	--
Janssens	[1775]	South	--	--	als	--	--
Van Boterdael	1776 [± 1774]	South	--	--	als (9)/ dan (5)	--	--
Cramer	1777 [± 1769]	North	--	--	dan (6)	--	--
Zeydelaar	1781	North	dan	--	dan	--	--
Stéven	1784 [1714]	South	--	--	als (1)/ dan (2)	--	--
Van Boterdael	1785	South	--	--	als (7)/ dan (3)	--	--
Ballieu	1792 [1771]	South	--	dan	dan	--	--
Van Bolhuis	1793	North	dan	--	dan (5)	--	--
Wester	1797	North	--	--	dan (2)	--	--
Van Varik	1799	North	dan	--	dan (2)	--	--
Weiland	1799	North	--	dan	dan	--	--
Siegenbeek	1804	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Weiland	1805	North	dan	dan	dan	als	rejected
Schilperoort	1806	North	--	--	dan	--	--
Anslijn	1814	North	--	dan	dan	--	--
Henckel	1815	South	als	als	als (4)/ dan (4)	of	rejected
De Neckere	1815	South	dan	--	dan	als	rejected
Ter Bruggen	1817-1818 [1815]	South	dan	--	dan	--	--
Behaegel	1817	South	--	dan	dan	--	--
Cannaert	1823	South	--	--	dan (6)	--	--
Moke	1823	South	dan	dan	dan (9)	als	rejected
Willems	1824	South	--	--	dan	--	--
Behaegel	[± 1825]	South	--	--	dan	--	--
Bilderdijk	1826	North	--	dan	dan	--	--
De Simpel	[1827]	South	--	dan	dan	--	--
Behaegel	[± 1829]	South	dan	--	dan	als	rejected

Table 15: norms and variant treatment comparative marker

Conclusion

The analysis of language norms revealed that the comparative markers were below the radar of norm givers for a long time, with grammarians only capturing and commenting on variation in usage from the first half of the eighteenth century onwards. Before codifiers were concerned about the increase of *als* as a comparative marker in usage, variability between *als* and *dan* was attested in the implicit prescriptions and in the language use of grammarians. After the appearance of the first explicit prescriptions, both prescriptions and grammarians' usage uniformly changed to *dan*. Such patterns in norms suggest that the rise in the normative awareness of the feature immediately resulted in consistency, with *dan* becoming the only prescribed and used variant in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century language norms.

Since Northern grammarians formulated explicit prescriptions on the comparative markers in the eighteenth century, while Southern norm givers still had variable (implicit) prescriptions and usage, the results in language norms indicate that the choice for *dan* as the prescribed marker was made by Northern grammarians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who probably succeeded in spreading the norm to other codifiers in the North. Consequently, Southern norms were lagging on Northern prescriptions, and by the time Southern codifiers started discussing the comparative markers in the nineteenth century, Northern norm givers had practically settled on the matter. Moreover, with explicit prescriptions in the South emerging exactly at the time of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, it is highly probable that this specific socio-historical context made Southern norm givers draw closer to the Northern norms, which had just acquired an official status in the early nineteenth century, and which may therefore have influenced Southern grammarians in commenting on the feature, and in adopting the comparative marker *dan* in their language norms.

4.2 Language use

Apart from interpreting patterns in the observed data in the *HCD*, a generalised mixed-effects logistic regression analysis was used to shed light on the results in language use. To build this logistic regression model, I started from an intercept-only model, and I compared its AIC to those of multiple one-predictor logistic regression models, each including one of the main sociolinguistic variables in this study, i.e. *period*, *region*, and *genre*. Based on the AIC of the intercept-only model (AIC: 427.72), and of the one-predictor regression models, the regression model with *period* as a fixed effect turned out to be the best fit for the investigated data (AIC: 332.43).⁶³ Although the difference between the intercept-only model and the one-predictor model with *period* was not statistically significant, an exploratory conditional inference tree pointed to the importance of *period* as a predictor in this dataset. As such, I continued building the model based on the regression model with *period* as a fixed predictor. As adding the predictors *region* and *genre* as other sociolinguistic variables did not further improve the regression model significantly, these predictors – as well as possible interaction effects – were excluded from the final model. I did, however, consider two random effects for inclusion in the model. While *lemma* alone made the model's goodness-of-fit worse (AIC: 334.4), the random predictor individual writer (*id*) yielded a regression model with an AIC of 283.4, which was the best model obtained in the building procedure.⁶⁴ The mixed-effects logistic regression model with *period* as a fixed predictor, and the individual writer (*id*) as a random intercept, thus represents the final model applied in this case study. The final model is summarised in Figure 36, where the log-odds show the estimates of the marker *dan* as incoming form.

The applied logistic regression model has a C-statistic of 0.98 and a 92% classification accuracy, which shows that the regression model discriminates well and makes solid predictions. Nonetheless, when I consider the R^2 -scores which are summarised in Figure 36, a comparison of the Marginal R^2 and the

⁶³ The AIC of the other one-predictor regression models were 428.3 for the model with *region* as a fixed predictor, and 429.17 for the model with *genre* as a fixed predictor.

⁶⁴ Including both *lemma* and *id* as random intercepts in the regression model made the model needlessly complex and did not lead to a significantly better model. The model with two random effects had an AIC of 285.4, which is even slightly higher compared the AIC of the final model with only *id* as a random effect.

Conditional R^2 indicates that the random predictor *id* explains large proportions of variability in the dataset. Together with the standard deviation and the variance components of the random effect, the discrepancy between the R^2 -scores could suggest that the use of either *als* or *dan* as comparative markers should primarily be explained at the level of the individual rather than trying to encapsulate variation within overarching factors. In what follows in this section, the patterns in the observed usage data, and where applicable, also the effect plots from the regression analysis are discussed.

Main effects on the occurrence of 'dan' as incoming form			
Predictors	Log-Odds	CI	p
(Intercept)	5.29	2.21 – 8.37	0.001
PERIOD - 17th century	-7.29	-11.94 – -2.64	0.002
PERIOD - 18th century	-7.50	-12.49 – -2.51	0.003
PERIOD - 19th century	-0.87	-3.44 – 1.71	0.508
Random Effects			
σ^2	3.29		
$\tau_{00 \text{ ID}}$	13.20		
ICC	0.80		
N_{ID}	126		
Observations	311		
Marginal R^2 / Conditional R^2	0.420 / 0.884		

Figure 36: regression table of the main effects on the occurrence of *dan* as the incoming form in language use

General distribution

As was mentioned before, comparatives of inequality do not occur frequently in language use. Also in the *HCD*, only 311 valid results of comparative markers were retrieved from the corpus. As Figure 37 indicates, two main variants were applied in this usage corpus, i.e. *als* and *dan*. Both forms take up a strong position in the *HCD*, with *als* being used in 43.4% of the results ($n=135$), and *dan* settling as the dominant variant in this corpus. The modern-day *dan* makes up for 56.6% of the investigated usage data ($n=176$).

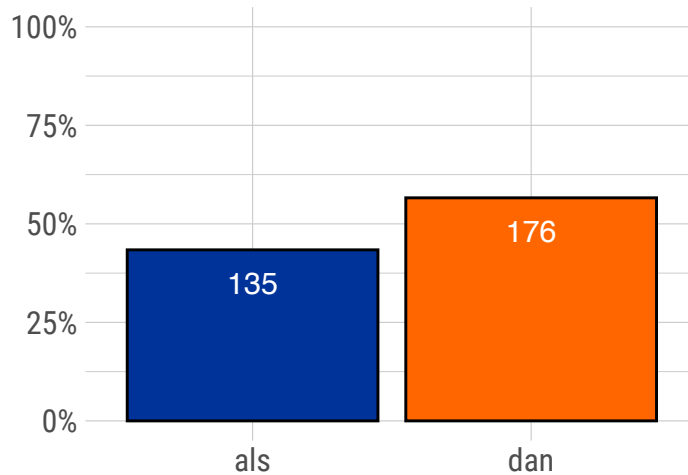


Figure 37: general distribution comparative marker

Furthermore, as was mentioned in section 3.2, not all the comparative markers included in the results of the current case study express a clear comparative relationship. This is the case with constructions in which the adverbs *ander(e)* and *anders* ‘other’ are used. These adverbs are also applied in combination with a comparative marker, and the sentences are grammatically constructed as a true comparative, as an expression like *het volk [...] Zongen niet anders dan lieden* ‘the people sang nothing but folks’ (EGO-1850-HO-1) illustrates.⁶⁵ For modern-day written Dutch, Stroop (2011, p. 140) discovered that constructions lacking a true comparative meaning have a stronger preference for the marker *als*. For the results in the *HCD*, I therefore distinguish between contexts in which the comparative markers are used in an actual comparative, and the constructions with *ander(e)* and *anders*, in which the marker does not denote a clear comparative aspect between given elements.

Figure 38 shows that, when compared to the true comparative constructions (i.e. the category *other*) where the marker *als* is used in 41.8% of the results (n=104), the proportion of the variant is indeed slightly higher in constructions of the category *ander(e)/anders* (n=31; 50%). Although this finding underpins the

⁶⁵ In these constructions, the adverb *anders* is often preceded by an indefinite pronoun, such as *iemand* ‘anybody’, *niemand* ‘nobody’, *iets* ‘something’, *niets* ‘nothing’ (cf. Stroop, 2011).

suggestion of Stroop (2011), the difference in the use of the marker between the types of constructions is neglectable in the *HCD*. Since no clear distinction can be discerned between the two categories, in the further analyses in this chapter, I decided not to split up the results in language use according to the presence of a clear comparative aspect.

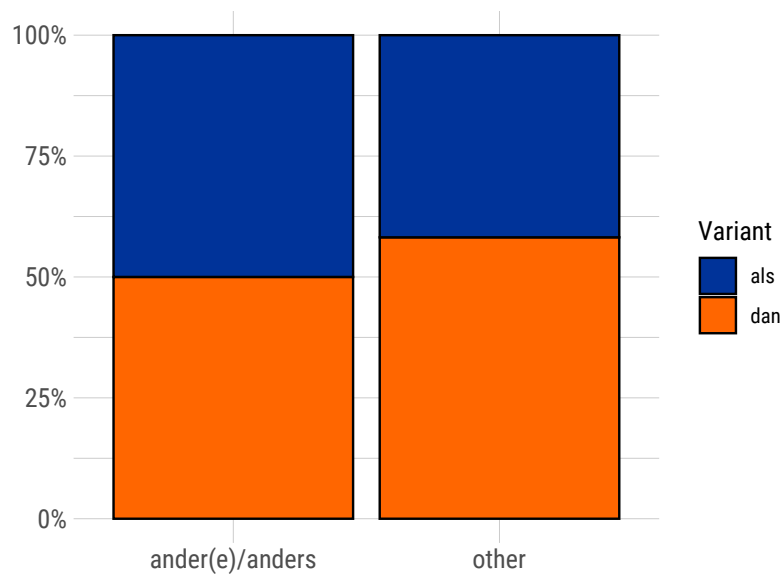
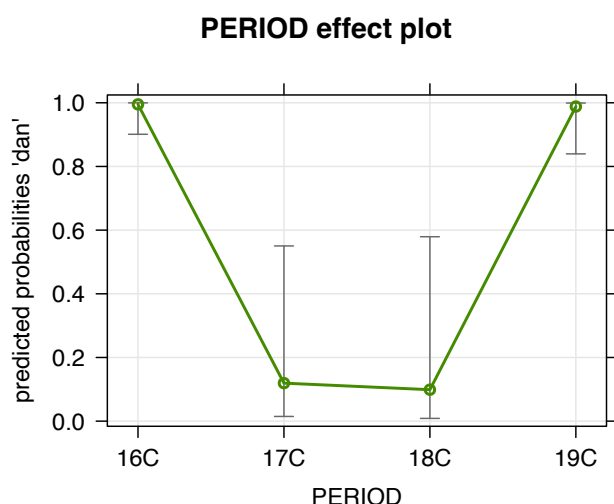


Figure 38: general distribution comparative marker by comparative relationship

Per period

Turning to the sociolinguistic predictors now, the regression table indicates that *period* was significant in explaining variation in language use. Together with the regression table, the effect plot for *period* in Figure 39 shows that the regression model predicts a significant difference when comparing the comparative markers in the seventeenth ($p = 0.002$) and eighteenth centuries ($p = 0.003$) to the sixteenth century as the reference level. More specifically, the regression model foresees a significant decline of the variant *dan* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which implies that the alternative variant *als* was prevalent in these two periods.

Figure 39: effect plot *period* - comparative marker

The strong rise of the variant *als* is also visible in the observed data, visualised in Figure 40 (cf. also Table 16), where the proportions of *als* increase enormously from 8.6% (n=6) in the sixteenth century to 70.3% (n=71) in the seventeenth century. Written utterances as Example 6 are thus rarely found in sixteenth-century usage but become significantly more common in the seventeenth century:

- (6) *Alle redelijke verstanden weten ook wel dat vrede in de groote beter is als oorlog*
(PAM-1650-HO-5)

'All reasonable minds also know well that peace, in the larger sense, is better as war'

In the eighteenth century, the form *als* was still dominant but gradually started losing ground (59.8%; n=49), and a further decline of the form to 15.5% (n=9) is observed in the nineteenth century. This decrease of *als* occurred in favour of the variant *dan*, which convincingly became the majority variant in the nineteenth century again, where it nearly reached the same proportion as in the sixteenth century. In overall, these findings indicate that the comparative marker *als* was a temporary innovation in written language use, which particularly characterises usage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

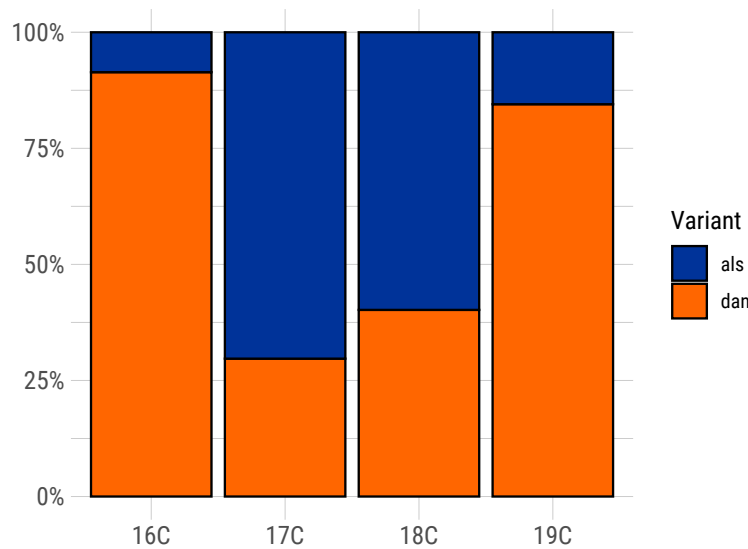


Figure 40: relative frequencies comparative marker per period

	<i>als</i>	<i>dan</i>
<i>16th century</i>	6 (8.6%)	64 (91.4%)
<i>17th century</i>	71 (70.3%)	30 (29.7%)
<i>18th century</i>	49 (59.8%)	33 (40.2%)
<i>19th century</i>	9 (15.5%)	49 (84.5%)

Table 16: absolute and relative frequencies comparative marker per period

Per period and region

In Figure 41, the results for the comparative markers are summarised per period and region. Since the predictor *region* was not included in the regression model, and the interaction between period and region can thus not be discussed in terms of statistical significance, it is important to interpret the results with the necessary precaution, especially since the relative proportions in Figure 41 are often represented only by a low number of absolute frequencies.

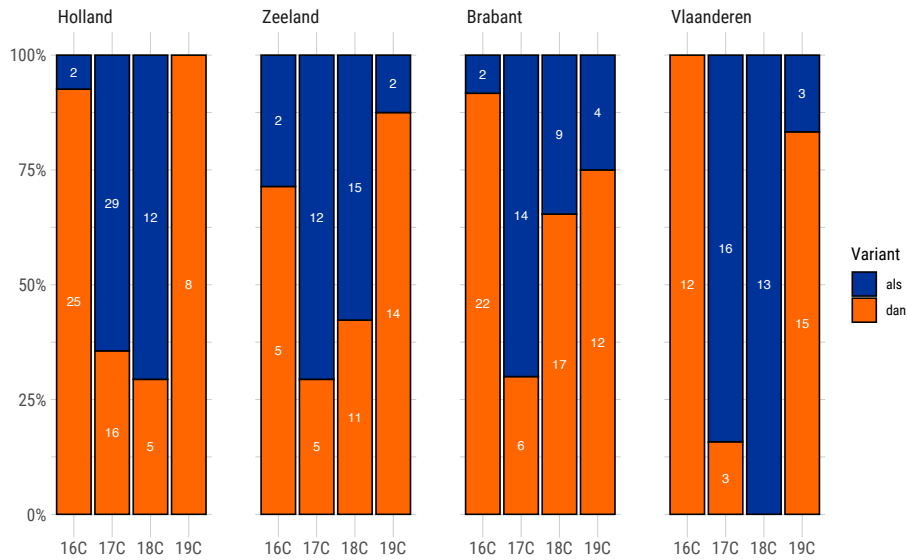


Figure 41: relative frequencies comparative marker per period and region

The diachronic development of the comparative markers in usage, in which *als* strongly represents usage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is manifested in all regions of the Northern and the Southern Netherlands. In three of the regions, i.e. Holland, Zeeland, and Brabant, the variant *als* is used by an individual writer in the sixteenth century before the actual rise of the form takes place in the seventeenth century.

Figure 41 also shows that *als* increases to the same extent in every region at the same time, which suggests that none of the investigated regions took the lead in the change to *als*. However, a regional discrepancy can be discerned in the eighteenth century. While *als* still rises in Holland (from 64.4% to 70.6%), and in Vlaanderen, where the form is the only applied marker at the time, in Zeeland and Brabant, the variant *als* declined again, and in doing so, it started giving way to the resurrection of the marker *dan*. Brabant as the central region in the Southern Netherlands even seems to be pulling this change to *dan*. Here, the observed proportions of the marker more than doubled, since the form inclined from 30.0% (n=6) in the seventeenth century to 65.4% (n=17) in the eighteenth century.

The actual revival of the variant is situated in the nineteenth century, where *dan* convincingly becomes the dominant variant across all regions. As a result, the alternative *als* strongly diminishes in the nineteenth century, and shows up only sporadically in the language practice of a few individual writers. This is also shown in the language practice of a writer of a Flemish pamphlet, for example (cf. Example 7).

- (7) *ik zeyd hun ronduyt [...] dat ik wel wist dat het meestedeel der kiezers hun voor die reden alleen, hunne stem zouden geweygerd hebben, want dat inderdaed niets verachtelyker is als een mensch zonder Godsdiens en voor al een afgevalen Christen.*
(PAM-1850-VL-1)

'I told them plainly that I knew well that the majority of voters would have refused to give them their vote for that reason alone, because indeed nothing is more contemptible as a person without religion, and especially an apostate Christian.'

Splitting up the results per period and per region thus reveals that the same development of the comparative markers, with *als* strongly increasing in seventeenth-century usage, and *dan* reviving in the nineteenth century, characterises all investigated regions.

Per period and area

As is clear by now, the development of the comparative markers occurs similarly in each of the regions, which suggests that the feature's diachronic evolution can also be considered from a North-South perspective (and possibly even for the entire language area together) without losing important nuances in the results. As such, in Figure 42, the same results are now visualised per period and for each part of the language area (cf. also Table 17). Given the low number of absolute data points, and the lack of statistical predictions for the genre differences, the four regions are merged into two language areas in the further course of this chapter in order to rely on slightly larger absolute frequencies when interpreting the usage data.

As could be expected, almost identical patterns emerge when comparing Northern and Southern usage diachronically, with the strong increase of *als* in

the seventeenth century, and a return to *dan* in the nineteenth century, unfolding in the North and the South of the language area. The Southern lead to the incoming variant in the eighteenth century is also pronounced in Figure 42, although we already know that this increase of *dan* can be attributed only to language users from Brabant. Writers from Vlaanderen strongly adhered to *als* at the time.

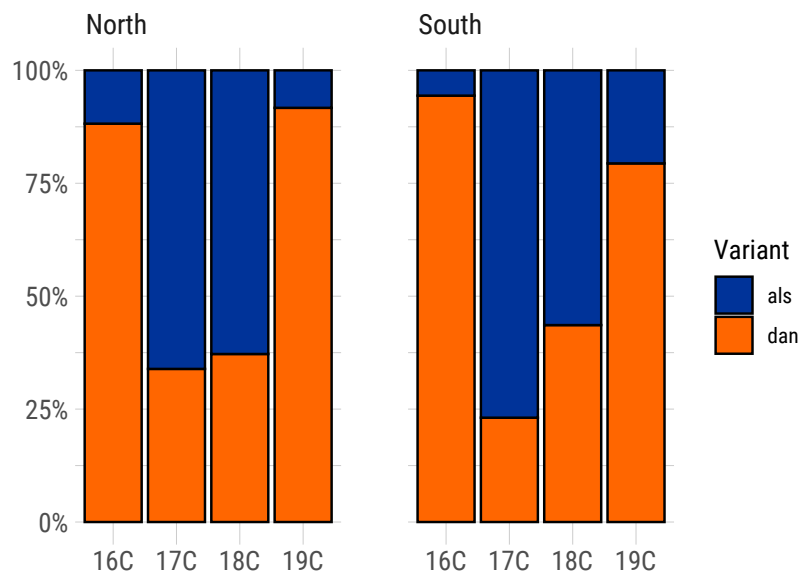


Figure 42: relative frequencies comparative marker per period and area

	NORTHERN NETHERLANDS		SOUTHERN NETHERLANDS	
	<i>als</i>	<i>dan</i>	<i>als</i>	<i>dan</i>
16 th century	4 (11.8%)	30 (88.2%)	2 (5.6%)	34 (94.4%)
17 th century	41 (66.1%)	21 (33.9%)	30 (76.9%)	9 (23.1%)
18 th century	27 (62.8%)	16 (37.2%)	22 (56.4%)	17 (43.6%)
19 th century	2 (8.3%)	22 (91.7%)	7 (20.6%)	27 (79.4%)

Table 17: absolute and relative frequencies comparative marker per period and area

Per period, area, and genre

Although the predictor *genre* was not included in the logistic regression model, and the findings for genre can therefore not be interpreted in terms of statistical significance, a careful interpretation of the observed data summarised in Figure 43 illustrates that almost no distinctive genre differences are discerned in the development of the comparative markers in language use.

When investigating the emergence of *als*, the form appeared first in the sixteenth-century ego-documents in the North (33.3%; n=2) and the South (10.0%; n=2), as well as in the Northern administrative texts of the same period (14.3%; n=2), before the variant showed up in the pamphlets of the seventeenth century. Although this observed rise of *als* in the sixteenth century is only backed by two ego-documents with variable use, and by one administrative document using *als* uniformly, such findings may indicate that the alternative variant *als* entered language use as a change ‘from below’. Although this idea needs further investigation, this possibility is strengthened by the greater share of the variant *als* in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ego-documents in the Southern Netherlands.

Another genre difference of interest is the previously discussed revival of *dan*. As was mentioned before, a strong increase of the variant was first observed in eighteenth-century Brabant. In addition, Figure 43 now indicates that this rise of *dan* occurs solely in the genre of pamphlets, suggesting that Brabantine pamphlets initiated the return to *dan* as a comparative marker, whereas the same printed genre in the North, as well as the other handwritten texts in the corpus only follow this change in the nineteenth century. Apart from these Brabantine pamphlets, one could claim that also the administrative texts played a (smaller) role in the change towards *dan* in the eighteenth century. This seems a less probable scenario, though, since the observed use of *dan* in this handwritten genre stems entirely from one Southern and one Northern document. The pamphlets from Brabant, on the contrary, had a more widespread use of the marker *dan* in the eighteenth century, with every document, uniformly or not, applying the marker *dan*. This may suggest that printed genres, such as the pamphlets, have taken charge in the change to *dan*, which suggests that the return to *dan* was initiated ‘from above’ (cf. section 4.3).

Despite the compelling shift to *dan* across all genres in the nineteenth century, uniformity in language use is achieved only in the ego-documents and the pamphlets in the Northern Netherlands. All genres in the South, and the Northern administrative texts, thus still showed variation between *als* and *dan* in the nineteenth century. However, since it is again only one or two documents which are held responsible for the continued use of *als* in these genres, it would be worthwhile to investigate the use of the comparative markers at the level of the individual rather than trying to explain variation for entire genres.

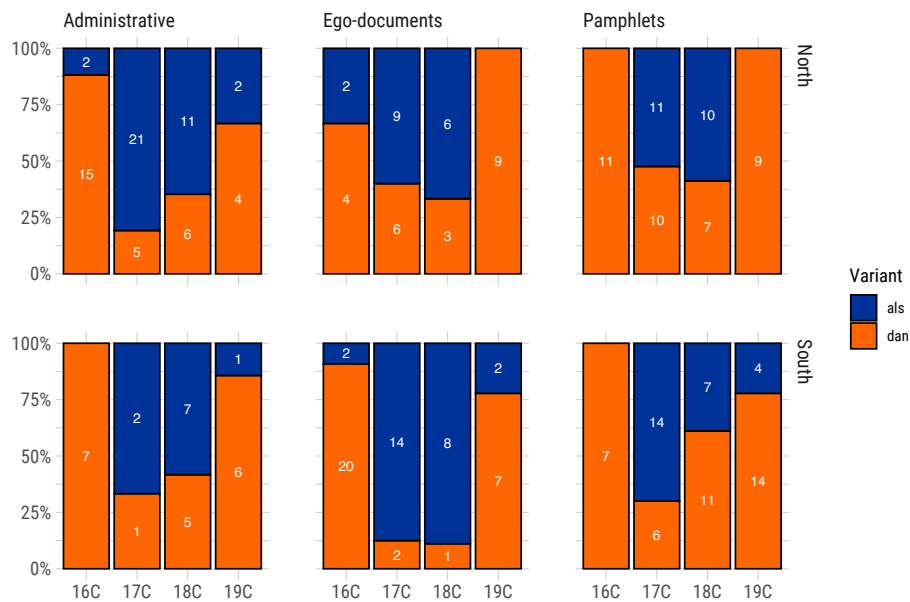


Figure 43: relative frequencies comparative marker per period, area, and genre

Conclusion

The exploration of the comparative markers in the *HCD* showed that the sociolinguistic variables *region* and *genre* barely account for variationist patterns in written usage. This is an interesting finding in different respects. Most importantly, the similarities in terms of region suggest that the diverging geographical backgrounds of the writers in the corpus, and thus the diversity of comparative markers in spoken dialects (cf. Barbiers et al., 2005), did not seep through the written language. And secondly, the lack of significant discrepancies

in the genres of the *HCD* indicates that different degrees of text formality only had a restricted impact on the use of *als* and *dan* as comparative markers in these historical writings.

Apart from the preferences of individual writers (i.e. the random effect *id*), only the period in which a text was written turned out to be a significant factor in determining whether *als* or *dan* were used as comparative markers. The variant *als* occupied a position as the majority variant in all regions and genres in the seventeenth century, and to a lesser extent in the eighteenth century. A strong decrease of *als* is subsequently observed in the entire nineteenth-century component of the *HCD*.

While the marker *dan* can be seen as the incoming variant in language norms, in language use, it is important to apply some nuance when categorising *dan* as the incoming variant, as is done in this case study. After all, in language use, we observe a shift from *dan* to *als*, followed by a return to *dan*. The usage patterns thus indicate that *dan* was the outgoing variant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and can be considered the incoming variant only in nineteenth-century usage. In retrospect, it would therefore be more accurate to categorise *dan* as the outgoing variant and *als* as the incoming variant in language use. Nevertheless, the current classification of the two variants does not interfere with the question of prescriptive influence explored in this chapter and is therefore retained for the purpose of comparing patterns in norms and language use in section 4.3.

4.3 Prescriptive influence

In this section, the influence of prescriptivism on variation and change in usage is investigated. The observed data in norms and usage are visualised per year and for each part of the language area, which enables a comparison of the chronology of language change in norms and language use. All contexts in which the chronology of change allows for an impact of prescriptivism are analysed and discussed in the remaining of this chapter.

Chronology of language change

Figure 44 shows the development of the explicit and implicit prescriptions per year, while Figure 45 visualises the observed patterns in language use per year. For each of these graphs, the observed datapoints, which were also discussed in section 4.1.2 and section 4.2, are now projected onto an underlying numeric scale (1-2) with equal distance between the outgoing variant *als* and the incoming marker *dan*.

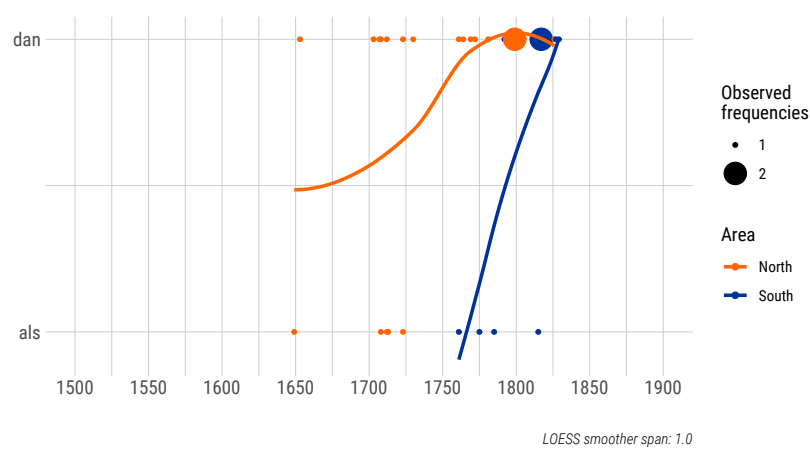


Figure 44: prescriptions comparative marker per year and area

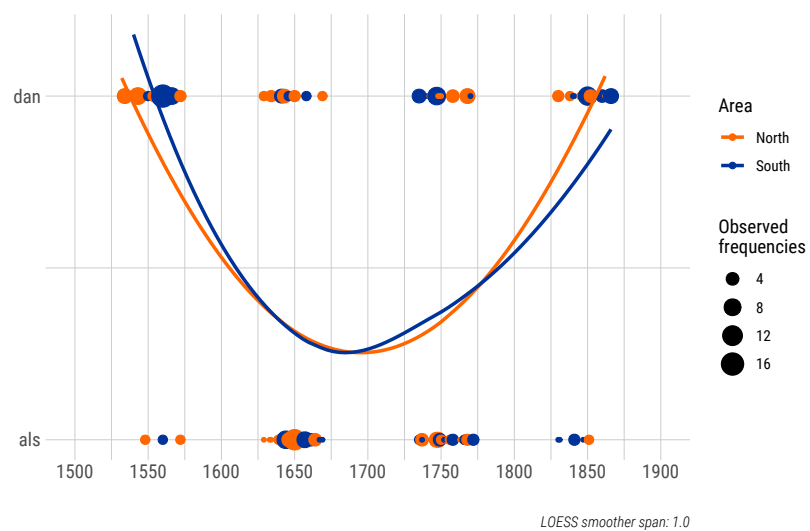


Figure 45: language use comparative marker per year and area

At first glance, the general comparison of the plotted data and the trendlines indicates diverging patterns in the prescriptions and in language use. Especially for the early periods, i.e. the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a relationship between language norms and usage is impossible due to the lack of prescriptions. The first (implicit) prescriptions appear only in the middle of the seventeenth century, at the time that language use is highly variable, and a major shift from *dan* to *als* has just taken place in Northern and Southern usage. With *als* first emerging as a comparative marker in ego-documents and in handwritten administrative texts in the sixteenth century, the massive increase of the form across all regions and genres in the seventeenth century rather points to an innovation that arose in language use, or perhaps, the marker *als* may have been broadly implemented in usage due to an indirect effect of standardisation practices and prescriptive efforts in the German language at the time. What is clear, however, is that the change to *als* in usage was not preceded by prescriptions for the variant in the Dutch normative tradition, which implies that Dutch prescriptivism did certainly not cause the shift to *als* as a comparative marker in historical language use.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, prescriptions and usage become more aligned as both apply the markers *als* and *dan* variably. The variability in norms is mainly related to the implicit prescriptions in the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century North, yet also in the language practice of grammarians, *als* and *dan* were often used interchangeably. In fact, these observed patterns indicate that Northern norms in the seventeenth- and early eighteenth century simply reflected ongoing developments in contemporary usage. From Huydecoper's (1730) authoritative prescription onwards, uniformity in favour of *dan* is achieved in Northern norms. Actual usage in the *HCD*, on the contrary, remained variable in the eighteenth century, although a change back to *dan* was initiated in usage. This return to *dan* as a comparative marker was almost completed in nineteenth-century usage in the Northern Netherlands, which was possibly a result of the uniform Northern prescriptions.

Southern language use also initiated a shift to *dan* in the eighteenth century. The start of this change took place at the same time as in Northern usage, so in the eighteenth century, when Southern norm givers were still prescribing *als*. This discrepancy in Southern norms and usage suggests that the *als* prescriptions of Southern grammarians were not successful, and did thus not influence usage,

probably due to (1) the implicit nature of these prescriptions, and (2) the prescriptions for a form that was already on its way back in usage. With Southern prescriptions for *dan* appearing only in the nineteenth century, an influence of these grammarians in causing the shift to *dan* in eighteenth-century usage is ruled out. Nonetheless, with Southern codifiers finding consolidation in prescriptions for *dan* at the time of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, a strong increase of the variant is observed in Southern usage. Such a chronology, in which Southern prescriptions precede the increase of the form in usage, may eventually point to another option of prescriptive influence.

Based on the comparison of the developments in prescriptions and in language use, I discussed different contexts in language history where prescriptivism failed to impact usage for the comparative markers. However, two specific instances in which the chronology of change allowed for prescriptive interference were also uncovered. The latter options, which are summed up below, are subjected to an in-depth investigation in section 5 to evaluate whether and to what extent prescriptivism influenced changes in language use.

- (1) In both parts of the language area, the comparative marker *dan* was the dominant variant in sixteenth-century usage. With the strong emergence of the marker *als* in the seventeenth century, *dan* decreased and became a minority variant, but the form never disappeared entirely from usage. In the course of the seventeenth century, Northern grammarians started prescribing the older variant *dan*. Although these prescriptions were variable at first, consistency in Northern norms was achieved in the eighteenth century, right before an increase of *dan* took place in Northern *and* in Southern usage.
- (2) In the Southern Netherlands, an initial incline of *dan* was attested in eighteenth-century usage, as was discussed in option 1. Southern grammarians were still prescribing *als* at the time. In the early nineteenth century, Southern codifiers shifted to uniform *dan* prescriptions. This switch is followed by a strong rise of the form in Southern usage.

5 Discussion

The two options of prescriptive interference discussed above are related to the revival of the marker *dan* in usage. When investigating whether prescriptivism induced this change, not only the chronology of change, but also the target audience of grammarians, the type of the prescription (cf. section 4.1), the regional and genre differences (cf. section 4.2), and the socio-historical context in which the change occurred are considered.

In **option 1**, the possibility of Northern grammarians initiating the resurgence of *dan* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is analysed. Before discussing the period in which usage changed to *dan*, let us first look at seventeenth-century norms. In this early period of top-down standardisation, only a few individual implicit prescriptions on the comparative markers appeared. In these prescriptions, Northern grammarians prescribed either *als* or *dan*, with little inter-grammarian agreement. Most of the norm givers also had variable usage at the time, as they applied *als* and *dan* interchangeably. Some other codifiers in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, as well as a few authoritative writers, however, used the comparative marker *dan* consistently in their own language practice. This latter group of norm givers includes codifiers and ministers from the elitist normative tradition, such as Leupenius (1653), Vollenhove (1686), Francius (1699), and Nyløe (1703, 1707), who formed a closely connected network of codifiers who aligned strongly with the poet Vondel for establishing the standard language. With the famous literary author Vondel switching to the marker *dan* in the course of the seventeenth century (Van der Horst, 2008, II, p. 1272), a number of elitist grammarians in the corpus followed this change. It is therefore highly probable that the choice for the marker *dan* was successfully disseminated within this prestigious and norm-giving community of literary and religious authors in the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century North, before language users were even made aware of the existence of a norm for the comparative marker.

With the emergence of Huydecoper's (1730) explicit prescription of *dan*, the comparative marker is officially established as the prescribed form. Huydecoper was also part of the discussed group of elitist norm givers, so he presumably influenced later codifiers in adhering to his prescription on the comparative

markers. In formulating a prescription for *dan* in the early eighteenth century, Huydecoper thus probably aided in further disseminating the marker *dan* as the prescribed comparative marker. Nonetheless, the influence of this specific prescription also turns out to be rather limited at a social level. Fellow grammarians only formulated an explicit prescription a few decades after Huydecoper, when Northern usage was already showing a slight increase of the variant. While prescriptive influence could still be an explanation for the increase of *dan* in usage, an impact of these elitist grammarians is unlikely when we consider the regions and genres in which the incline of *dan* occurred. A slight increase of the form is observed only in Zeeland. What is more, the use of the marker *dan* even declined in the region where the elitist grammarians were most active (viz. Holland). This makes an influence of prescriptivism that stretches beyond high-class individuals, such as literary authors and grammarians, less probable.

As option 1 suggested so far, a broader impact of elitist grammarians on general usage in the North is thus unlikely. However, also in the Southern part of the language area, an increase of *dan* is attested in eighteenth-century usage. An effect of these exact prescriptions should thus also be investigated for the South. In Southern usage, we observe an incline of *dan* in the pamphlets of Brabant. And, since authors of these printed documents were often schooled writers, it is indeed possible that some contributors to the genre were influenced by prescriptivism. Furthermore, if we contemplate that a fixed norm on the comparative markers was lacking in the South in the eighteenth century, and consider that the marker *dan* was uniformly applied in the language practice of a few Brabantine norm givers at the time (i.e. Verpoorten, 1752; P.B., 1757), it is indeed likely that the prescriptions of elitist grammarians from the North also spread to the South. Yet, also in this context, the Northern prescriptions influenced solely some norm givers and individual writers of printed texts from Brabant, and not genres or social groups in general.

So far, I have only discussed the role of Northern prescriptivism in the initial stages of the resurgence to *dan*. The largest increase of the variant, however, is observed in the nineteenth century. The prescribed marker is then applied as a majority variant in the entire language area, which leads to the question whether this strong increase of *dan* in usage is triggered by prescriptivism.

When considering the socio-historical and language-political context in the Northern Netherlands at the time, the answer to that question is probably ‘yes’. An official language policy meant for the entire nation in the Northern Netherlands appeared in the early nineteenth century. More specifically, the grammar of Weiland (1805) was published within these national language regulations. In this work, the marker *dan* was explicitly prescribed, while the grammarian also proscribed *als*. Given the official status of the grammar, and the utilisation of the book in schools, Weiland’s (1805) grammar experienced a wide dissemination across different social layers. Northern language users from different regions and social classes were thus probably reached with these prescriptions. As a result, these language users may have implemented the marker *dan* in a more deliberate manner in their language practice.

Still, the success of national language policy in the Northern Netherlands does not necessarily explain why the marker *dan* increased strongly in Southern usage in the nineteenth century. For understanding this development, let us turn to **option 2**, which shows that also this change towards *dan* is partly related to an influence of prescriptivism.

As was already discussed before, Southern grammarians changed their implicit prescriptions for *als* in the eighteenth century to explicit prescriptions for *dan* in the nineteenth century. This shift in norms takes place exactly at the advent of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The fact that Southern grammarians adjusted their prescriptions to what was being prescribed in the Northern normative tradition at the time, and that this shift took place in the period in which the North and the South were politically reunited, suggests that the cultural dominance of the North was probably imposed on the South. This in turn led to the implementation of the marker *dan* in the Southern prescriptions and, later, in Southern usage (cf. Vosters et al., 2014).

6 Conclusion

In the hypotheses set up in the beginning of this chapter, I formulated expectations for each of the two comparative markers, *als* and *dan*. Relying on the findings in this case study, I now reflect on these two hypotheses before arriving at an overall conclusion on prescriptive influence for the comparative markers.

Hypothesis 1, concerning the increase of *als* in the seventeenth century and the subsequent decline of the form, is largely confirmed. As expected, the variant showed up in handwritten genres in the sixteenth century before a general rise of *als* was attested in all genres and regions in the seventeenth century. No prescriptions for the variant were formulated in these early periods, which implies that the emergence of *als* in usage was certainly no effect of Dutch prescriptivism. For the rise of *als* in usage, it would be interesting for future research to investigate whether the form indeed came into use as an effect of standardisation processes in German at the time. Furthermore, as a result of prescriptive influence, I had foreseen a decrease of *als* in usage a few decades after the explicit prescriptions for *dan* and proscriptions for *als* appeared in the early eighteenth century. This was only partly true. Apart from a few high-class writers, only some contributors to pamphlets from Brabant turned out to be influenced by prescriptivism in the eighteenth century, as they showed a considerable decline of *als* at the time. The marker remained dominant in other genres and regions until the nineteenth century.

The large-scale revival of *dan* thus took place in nineteenth-century usage, and not in the eighteenth century, as I had expected in hypothesis 2. The results in language use moreover pointed to a comparable increase of the marker *dan* across different genres, indicating that, when compared to the formal genres of the *HCD*, the handwritten ego-documents did not lag on the change to *dan*. As was assumed in hypothesis 2, in all genres and regions, the cogent implementation of *dan* was at least partly provoked by nineteenth-century prescriptivism. However, also the socio-historical context is most likely a determinant in the return to *dan* as a comparative marker in the Southern Netherlands.

In establishing whether norm givers influenced changes in the comparative markers, I demonstrated that only the resurgence of the marker *dan*, and hence also the fading of *als*, was actuated ‘from above’. The normative preference for the marker *dan* was clearly set by norm givers from the elitist normative tradition in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North, who probably influenced each other in applying the comparative marker *dan*. The impact of these grammarians was limited to other writers and grammarians who were part of the circle of elitist norm givers, or who at least had tighter connections with these prestigious writers. Although the elitist grammarians did thus not influence the wider language community, they set the standard for the comparative marker, and in doing so, they triggered other codifiers in the Northern Netherlands in spreading their proposed norm. The actual and large-scale success of these prescriptive attempts, however, is visible in the nineteenth century. With the increase of *dan* taking place at a larger scale in usage, affecting different regions and genres at the same time, it is most likely that the national language policy in the Northern Netherlands is responsible for the broader implementation of *dan* in nineteenth-century usage. In the Southern part of the language area, on the contrary, the increase of the comparative marker *dan* is probably not caused by prescriptivism alone. The general rapprochement of Northern and Southern norms and language practices at the time of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands presumably had a great share in the increase of *dan* in Southern usage as well (cf. Vosters et al., 2014).

As such, in this case study, the influence of prescriptivism needs to be evaluated at two distinct levels. First, there is the socially restricted impact in which norm-giving figures successfully disseminate preferred variants to fellow high-class writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Apart from the impact in these elite circles, it is important to determine the influence of prescriptivism on general usage as a second level. For this grammatical feature, the latter scenario takes place only in a specific socio-historical context in the nineteenth century in which (1) language norms were publicly made available for the entire language community in the context of nation-building processes, and (2) the Northern and Southern Netherlands had just been politically reunited into the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Nonetheless, even in this restricted and concrete socio-historical context in language history, the success of prescriptivism is limited to reviving an older variant which had never disappeared entirely from usage.