

Remark and Remember

Cultivating Dutch in Early Modern Europe

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Abstract

As in most European language areas, a “linguistic cultivation programme” existed in the Netherlands in the 18th century, designed especially for the next generation of great poets, that is, for upper-class boys in order to teach them the grammar, poetic style and rhetoric of Dutch. The seminal texts engaged in this programme, all conceived around 1700, are discussed with special regard to David van Hoogstraten and Jacobus Nylöe. It is shown that cultivation of the language (*Sprachpflege*) and language teaching (*Sprachlehre*) are two sides of the same coin. Also, it is argued that such language cultivation and teaching was carried out in order to promote the position of literary Dutch on the international stage of the Republic of Letters. A comparison is drawn with the French (e.g. the *Académie française*) and the Germans (e.g. the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*), with whom the Dutch authors shared their elitist and educational goals.

1. Introduction¹

Upper-class children, that is boys, in the early modern Netherlands were usually multilingual. At home and in the schoolyard, they would probably speak a low (L), colloquial, or “dialectal” variety of Dutch lacking a writing tradition – unless their parents were the harsh type, like Montaigne’s who tried to bring up little Michel as a native speaker of Latin (Howatt, 1984: 210). Often, they would also learn French, e.g. at home from a personal “language coach”, French being a true international language. In addition, the boys would go to a Latin school. There they would study the high (H) variety of early modern society: Latin, the language one had to master e.g. in order to enter higher education. The boys would study Latin grammar, logic and rhetoric, and usually also a little Greek. About two thirds of school time they would spend studying the Latin *trivium*; including the Greek lessons about eighty or ninety percent of school time was devoted to the ancient languages (Rutten, 2006: 191, 193). This thorough linguistic training consisted of a combination of grammatical instruction, reading, translation and imitation.

As the boys grew up, another linguistic variety became more important. In church, the preacher had perhaps already spoken in a cultivated, high (H) variety of

¹ This article is based on a paper presented at the joint meeting on *Sprachpflege und Sprachlehre* of the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas and the Studienkreis “Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft”, held in Helsinki from 18 to 21 July, 2007. I would like to thank the participants of this meeting for their useful remarks, as well as two anonymous reviewers and the editor of the *Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas Bulletin*. Sections 4. and 5. are partly based on Rutten, 2006.

Dutch different from the one (L) used at home and in the school yard. Maybe the inhouse teacher of French had also devoted time to Dutch. Or perhaps the boy had to read landmarks of Dutch history and literature.² Besides, if continuously reading, translating and imitating the poetic style of Virgil and Horace made the pupils interested in literature, this might lead to a specific interest in Dutch literature. In that case, again, the second, H variety of Dutch became important since composing literature in an L variety had long been considered nonsensical.

Imagine such an upper-class boy with an interest in Dutch poetry – how would he be able to write poems? Dutch was not on the Latin school curriculum. He has hardly ever written Dutch (let alone Dutch poetry), so how to write, what rules to adopt? As with the teaching of Latin and Greek, a thorough combination of grammatical instruction, reading, translation and imitation in Dutch would be needed. But which are the basic texts necessary for this intensive study?

In the Netherlands, as in many European language areas, the cultivation of the mother tongue, the creation of a native H variety, came to the fore in the early modern period. This kind of *Sprachpflege* was at the same time directed towards educating the upper-class youngsters who would be the next great poets: *Sprachpflege* turned into *Sprachlehre*. In this paper, I will discuss the basic texts that Dutch poets-to-be could rely on.

In sections 2., 3. and 4., the first part of an interpretational framework for these texts is presented. In section 2. the main texts and authors will be introduced. In section 3., I will elucidate the fact that in these texts *Sprachpflege* and *Sprachlehre* are two sides of the same coin, by discussing two of the main texts: those who “took care” of the language remarked on it, those who learned the language were to remember these remarks. Section 4. addresses the question of for whom the texts were written and why; cultivating the mother tongue was connected to its prestige within the international Republic of Letters. In sections 5. and 6., a second interpretational step is made by discussing similarities between these Dutch and contemporaneous French and German texts in which the attempt is likewise made to construct a high variety of the mother tongue.

2. *The texts*

The texts we are dealing with were all written at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, and except for one they were all published within a few years around 1700. Of course, the history of Dutch linguistics had already begun in the 16th century,³ as in many European language areas, but the grammatical works from the 16th and the early 17th centuries were forcefully, convincingly, and definitively replaced by those from the late 17th and early 18th centuries. These are:

² See e.g. the diary (1791-1797) of the upper-class boy Otto van Eck (born in 1780): Van Eck, 1998.

³ The first grammar of Dutch, *Twe-spraack vande Nederduitsche letterkunst* (“Dialogue on the grammar of Dutch”), was anonymously published in 1584.

- 1 Petrus Francius,⁴ the preface to *Van de mededeelzaamheidt*, Amsterdam, 1699, which especially deals with orthography
- 2 David van Hoogstraten,⁵ *Aenmerkingen over de geslachten der zelfstandige naemwoorden* (“Remarks on the gender of nouns”), Amsterdam, 1700, devoted to the grammatical category *genus*
- 3 Jacobus Nylöe,⁶ *Aanleiding tot de Nederduitsche taal* (“Introduction to the Dutch language”), Amsterdam, 1703, a little book containing remarks on e.g. spelling, the parts of speech, style
- 4 Arnold Moonen,⁷ *Nederduitsche spraekkunst* (“Dutch grammar”), Amsterdam, 1706, which is a full grammar of the Dutch language, incorporating the recommendations of Francius, Van Hoogstraten and Nylöe
- 5 (again) David van Hoogstraten, *Beginselen of kort begrip der rederykkunst* (“Principles or short understanding of rhetoric”), Amsterdam, 1725, a posthumously published edition of a book on rhetoric that Van Hoogstraten had already conceived in the 1690s; it is in fact the first Dutch book on rhetoric with examples taken from Dutch literature.

Since the beginnings of Dutch grammar, orthography and the parts of speech, especially case and gender, had been considered its main subjects (Rutten, 2006: 114-122). This importance is reflected in the works of Francius and Van Hoogstraten (1 and 2). Nylöe’s introduction (3), in fact a short language guide containing the essentials of the Dutch language, precedes Moonen’s full grammar (4) which was about to appear. Nylöe himself says in the preface that he has written his introduction “in the meantime”, “for lack of something better”⁸. Clearly, Moonen’s grammar was the something better. All five texts were published in Amsterdam, and two of them even with the same publisher, who himself was a lexicographer⁹. Three works were repeatedly republished even late in the 18th century¹⁰, e.g. Nylöe in 1779 and Van Hoogstraten in 1783. Two of the authors were clergymen,¹¹ and from correspondence it is clear that all four knew each other.

These seminal texts from around 1700 to a great extent determined the course of Dutch linguistics in the decades to follow¹². First, I will focus on the

⁴ 1645-1704, professor of history, Greek and rhetoric in Amsterdam.

⁵ 1658-1724, teacher at the Amsterdam Latin school.

⁶ 1670-1714, preacher in Assen.

⁷ 1644-1711, preacher in Deventer and Zwolle.

⁸ Nylöe (1703: ++1^v): “Ondertusschen kan het niet ondienstig zijn, dat, by gebrek van beter, men geve wat men heeft, en dat de een den anderen zijne aanmerkingen en waarnemingen nopens de verdere zuivering en schikking der tale, voorstelle en in bedenken geve”.

⁹ Van Hoogstraten’s and Moonen’s books were published with François Halma (1653-1722), author of a well-known French-Dutch dictionary (1708, 1710).

¹⁰ Van Hoogstraten’s *Aenmerkingen* was published in 1700, 1710/11, 1723, 1733, 1759, 1783; Nylöe’s *Aanleiding* in 1703, 1711, 1723, 1746, 1751, 1779; Moonen’s *Spraekkunst* in 1706, 1719, 1740, 1751, s.d.

¹¹ Nylöe and Moonen, cf. notes 5 and 6.

¹² For a full understanding of early 18th-century Dutch linguistics, a few other authors should also be considered: Adriaen Verwer (*Linguae Belgicae idea grammatica, poetica, rhetorica*, 1707); Willem Sewel (*Nederduytsche spraakkonst*, 1708, ²1712), Lambert ten Kate (*Aenleiding tot de Kennisse van het verhevene deel der Nederduitsche sprake*, 1723), and Balthazar Huydecoper (*Proeve van taal- en dichtkunde*, 1730). See Verwer (2005), Ten Kate (1723) [2001], and De Bonth (1998).

methodological side of two of these texts¹³, discussing the relationship between *Sprachpflege* and *Sprachlehre* (section 3.). I will demonstrate that *Sprachpflege* and *Sprachlehre* are two sides of the same coin by showing how the second follows from the first (section 3.1.), and then how the first is implied by the second (section 3.2).

3. Method: Sprachpflege is Sprachlehre

3.1 Van Hoogstraten's remarks on the gender of nouns

The first work I will discuss is Van Hoogstraten's *Aenmerkingen over de geslachten der zelfstandige naemwoorden* ("Remarks on the gender of nouns"), first published in 1700; the sixth and last edition appeared in 1783.

What did Van Hoogstraten remark? In his times, the gender of nouns had become a rather complicated issue – as it is today – since historically Dutch distinguishes three genders (masculine, feminine, neuter), while two of them (masculine and feminine) partly integrated, especially the definite article. There are only two definite articles left (*de* and *het*), one of them (*de*) being masculine as well as feminine. Van Hoogstraten, as most of the grammarians before and after him, wanted to hold on to a grammatical system with three genders.¹⁴ That creates a problem: how does one know, e.g., if *de daedt* ('the act') is masculine or feminine? Van Hoogstraten's solution is quite simple: let's see what the best, the well-respected poets do. From the declensions they use we can learn whether nouns such as *daedt* are masculine or feminine. If they write *after the act* as *na de daedt*, the noun is feminine. If they write *na den daedt* with the masculine –n-ending, it is masculine. They write *na de daedt*, therefore it is feminine. Van Hoogstraten's book, then, consists of an alphabetical list of nouns. For each noun the gender is noted and at least one quotation from a famous author¹⁵ is added as proof. The formal structure of the entries of the list is represented in (1); (2) and (3) are examples taken from the 1711 edition.

(1) NOUN gender. *Quotation*, source. (*Quotation 2*, source 2, etc.)

where the gender is usually m for *mannelijk*, "male", v for *vrouwelijk*, "feminine" or o for *onzijdig*, "neuter"¹⁶.

¹³ For Francius (1) and Moonen (4), see Dibbets (1995) and Schaars (1988).

¹⁴ The debate still continues because some *de*-words are naturally masculine or feminine such as *de man*, "the man" and *de vrouw*, "the woman", and pronominal reference tends to adjust to this natural sex. Also, some Dutch dialects do distinguish three *genera*, even in the article.

¹⁵ The famous authors serving as the most important grammatical authorities for Van Hoogstraten are Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679) and Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft (1581-1649). In (2) and (3) reference is made to Vondel's Virgil translation (1646), to his tragedy *Noah* (1667), and to Hooft's prose masterpiece *Nederlandsche historien* (1677).

¹⁶ Van Hoogstraten also distinguishes a fourth gender which he calls *twijfelachtig*, "dubious" (Lat. *genus dubium*) or *gemeen*, "common" (Lat. *genus commune*). He mainly uses it for nouns of which it has not yet been definitely determined to which of the three proper genders it belongs. In the first two editions (1700, 1711), approximately 7% of the entries is attributed this fourth gender. See Rutten (2006: 223-225).

- (2) DAK o. *Op het dak*, Vondel in Virg. 4 b. der Eneade.
 “The noun *dak*, ‘roof’, is neuter; Vondel in book 4 of his Virgil translation writes *Op het dak*, ‘On the roof’.”
 (Van Hoogstraten, 1711: 30)
- (3) HOEK m. *In dien hoek*, Hooft in de Nederl. Historien 15. *Aen den hoek*, Vondel in den Inhout van Noach.
 “The noun *hoek*, ‘corner’ is male; Hooft in his Dutch history, p. 15 writes *In dien hoek*, ‘in that corner’, Vondel in the abstract of *Noach* writes *Aen den hoek*, ‘on the corner’.”
 (Van Hoogstraten, 1711: 70)

As Van Hoogstraten explains in the preface to the first edition, he came to the idea of compiling an alphabetical list when he and his friend Petrus Francius (cf. section 2.) were discussing the grammatical gender of nouns and realized contemporaneous writers had such tremendous difficulties with these. He then points to the fact that Dutch shares with Greek the invaluable property of articles, which elevates both languages above Latin, and that these articles signify the grammatical gender: *de* refers to masculine and feminine, *het* to neuter (Van Hoogstraten, 1700: *2^r-*3^r). Van Hoogstraten assumes that Dutch has a grammatical system with three genders, and also that a *de*-noun (such as *daedt* or *hoek*) has to be either masculine or feminine. Above all, he assumes that it is important to describe, to remark which gender applies. Van Hoogstraten is engaged in what we might call *Sprachpflege*, taking care of the language in itself: the gender of nouns has to be clear and evident.

There is of course more to this than this language-oriented purpose. A grammarian writing a book on language also has a certain public in mind. What should the public do with Van Hoogstraten’s remarks? By listing the most important and most frequently used nouns alphabetically, “as in an index”, “the curious reader” will “at a glance” be able to see “how he should use this or that word”.¹⁷ Thus, the reader should not just know which nouns are masculine and which are feminine and neuter, he should also adjust to Van Hoogstraten’s remarks. When the reader becomes a writer,¹⁸ he has to remember these remarks in order to produce impeccable Dutch. In this way, evidently, *Sprachpflege*, taking care of the language itself, gains an educational aspect and turns into *Sprachlehre*.

3.2. Nylöe’s introduction to the Dutch language

Nylöe’s introduction to the Dutch language is of a quite different nature with regard to the linguistic contents, yet from a methodological point of view at the same time completely similar to Van Hoogstraten’s list of nouns.

¹⁷ Van Hoogstraten (1700: *4^r): “Ik vond dan geen beter middel, dan de voornaemste en gebruikelyxte woorden, als in een register, op het A B te brengen, op dat de nieuwsgierige lezer, wanneer hy zich verlegen vindt, met eenen opslag konde zien hoe hy dit of dat woordt moest gebruiken.”

¹⁸ The work of Van Hoogstraten, as that of many early modern linguists, is totally oriented to written language. Improving the grammatical quality of written texts is his aim. See Rutten (2006: 133-134).

The first edition of 1703 (⁶1779) counts only forty-three pages with a ten-page preface. The forty-three pages of the main text consist of six chapters of which the middle four are traditional in the sense that they discuss, very concisely, the two main parts of grammar, that is orthography and morphology: spelling (ch. 2, pp. 10-17), the genders and declensions of nouns (ch. 3, pp. 17-27), some pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions (ch. 4, pp. 28-32), and, on barely two pages, the verb (ch. 5., pp. 33-34). The two (relatively) lengthy chapters at the beginning and the end are devoted to stylistic matters, such as redundancy, obscurity and clarity, latinisms and graecisms, neologisms, and the use and misuse of words, and include some morphological remarks. To give an example:

- (4) ‘t Is voorgevallen *op* het tiende jaar, men zegt *in* het tiende jaar; maar *op* den 10 dag. [sic] is goet. Wederom; deze woorden staan beschreven *op* het 6. kapittel, *op* het 4. vaars, is niet goet; *in* het kapittel en *in* het vaars, gelijk *in* het boek, *in* ’t register, hoewel men ook zegt, *op* ’t register staan.
 “It has happened *on* the tenth year, one should say *in* the tenth year; but *on* the 10th day is correct. Again; these words are written *on* the 6th chapter, *on* the 4th verse, is not correct; *in* the chapter and *in* the verse, like *in* the book, *in* the index, although people also say, *standing on* the index.”
 (Nylöe, 1703: 42)

As illustrated by (4), Nylöe’s introduction is an overtly prescriptive handbook for the writing Dutchman. It contains orthographical and morphological essentials as well as guidelines for a good style. Nylöe is a *Sprachlehrer* who teaches the correct norms for language use.

Just like his colleague Van Hoogstraten, Nylöe is at the same time engaged in *Sprachpflege*, and in a twofold way. It is clear that a language teacher who passes on grammatical rules is concerned with the language. He wants to make sure that his pupils will use the language correctly, that they will adopt the rules he teaches them. In another respect, Nylöe’s *Sprachlehre* also implies *Sprachpflege*. The cultivated, literary Dutch he teaches, did exist around 1700 but had not yet been fully described. As Nylöe himself explained, he wrote his booklet for lack of a full grammar of Dutch (which Arnold Moonen was about to publish, see section 2.). The description of this Dutch, then, was still in its building phase (Nylöe, 1703: +3^r -++1^v). A lot of (practical) work had been done, e.g. by the two literary heroes of the Dutch Golden Age (the 17th century): Joost van den Vondel and Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft¹⁹. On the descriptive side, amongst others, Petrus Francius and David van Hoogstraten have been important (ibid. +4^v, 22). But in many respects, concern for the language, *Sprachpflege*, deciding on what is good and what is not, what is correct and incorrect, was still necessary. To this enterprise, Nylöe wanted to contribute by publishing his introduction to the Dutch language.

Nylöe, a sickly man, died in 1714. It was Van Hoogstraten who edited the third edition in 1723, just one year before he himself passed away. In the preface, Van Hoogstraten elaborates on their shared method of combining *Sprachpflege* and *Sprachlehre*. First, he praises “distinguished and artistic men” such as Nylöe who gave

¹⁹ Cf. note 15.

their best in order to “end the disorder” (in Nylöe, 1723: **1^{r-v}). They took care of the language, but not just for its own sake. They also taught others how to handle it, what “rules and prescriptions” to adopt, “without which everything will fall to pieces” (ibid. **1^v).

4. Public and aim

Methodologically, texts such as Van Hoogstraten’s and Nylöe’s are characterized by a fine combination of *Sprachlehre* and *Sprachpflege*. But who did they want to teach the language and the way in which to take care of it? Who would be their readers? Who are Van Hoogstraten’s and Nylöe’s intended public? Essentially, it consists of 18th-century Dutch upper-class youngsters. Nylöe somewhat generally declares his book to be for “the inexperienced”, “to show them the path they should go and to warn them of wandering and stumbling.”²⁰ Van Hoogstraten refines the intended public by adding an age dimension. His *Aenmerkingen* are meant “for the use of the studious youth.”²¹ They are supposed to read his book, and to study the gender of nouns. Why should they? In short: because only then is there a chance they will become famous poets.²²

The linguistic activities of men such as Van Hoogstraten were mainly motivated by the will to cultivate the written literary language. The linguistic problem Van Hoogstraten met – the matter of the gender of nouns – was solved by turning to the writings of the great authors of the Dutch Golden Age, the 17th century²³. His strategy is quite plain. First, he treats their writings as normative linguistic sources. Then, he systematizes these sources into grammatical imperatives (this noun is masculine, this one is feminine etc). And finally, he passes on these imperatives to the next generation of poets, “the studious youth”. Linguistics serves literature.

This means linguistics is not carried out for its own sake. Linguists are not trying to understand language in some sort of pre-scientific way. They are also not merely describing the language; *Sprachpflege* by definition implies *Sprachlehre*. What they are doing is trying to consolidate a certain written form of the language, namely the literary form. They are messengers: they identify a certain usage, they call it the norm, the standard, and they want to pass it on to the younger poets-to-be.

Van Hoogstraten describes the result of this kind of linguistics as follows:

Thus [doing linguistics like this], Holland,²⁴ raising noble and ingenious people, will not yield to France which incessantly proceeds in the cultivation of its

²⁰ Nylöe (1703: ++1^v): “[om] onbedrevenen [...] den weg te wijzen waarze gaan moeten, en hen voor dolen en struikelen te waarschuwen”.

²¹ Van Hoogstraten (1700: **2^v): “ten dienst der leerzame Jeugt”.

²² For this section and the next one, see Rutten, 2006: *passim*.

²³ Hooft and Vondel, cf. note 13.

²⁴ I translate *Nederlant* with “Holland” on purpose because Van Hoogstraten’s concept of the Netherlands is quite Hollandocentric.

language and which has found the way to extending its glory by the power of the arts and sciences²⁵.

Linguistics not just serves literature, it serves cultural politics as well. It is clear what “Holland” has to do: it has to cultivate its language (*Sprachpflege*), and it has to teach young people its cultivated language (*Sprachlehre*) in order to promote the Dutch arts and sciences, just like France does.

This is definitely not some sort of pre-nationalist enterprise. Instead, the interpretational framework we should use is the international Republic of Letters.²⁶ With most European rulers almost permanently at war during the 17th and 18th centuries, the Republic of Letters, *la République des Lettres*, formed a “universal” unity across political and religious boundaries. Its “citizens” were the *savants*, the *gens des lettres*: literary and learned men. Despite its universal pretensions, the Republic of Letters in fact consisted of a rather small group of men of letters who lived in the bigger Western European cities; Stockholm and the Spanish cities e.g. were considered to be peripheral. The Republic of Letters also displayed a certain elitism: *honnêteté* and *civilité* were necessary conditions for successful functioning within this community (Johns, 1994: 9-10).

Within this European constellation, literary elites of different language areas were able to communicate in Latin or in French, by means of letters and, from the later 17th century onward, periodicals. Members of these elites knew each other. They knew what was going on. They saw the French under the reign of Louis XIV “extending their glory”, not because the illiterate and the lower classes within the French *nation* benefited in some strange way from the advancement of art and science but because of the high prestige these had within the international Republic of Letters, e.g. in the eyes of a Dutch savant such as Van Hoogstraten²⁷.

I give a brief example of how the Republic of Letters functioned (see also section 6.). In the second half of the 17th century a new form of Dutch dramatic poetry came into existence. It is called French Classicism and it follows the theatrical views of the famous French dramatists of the day, especially Pierre Corneille (1606-1684). French Classicism covers a great quantity of Dutch playwrights and plays and was very successful. This was due to the fact that communication in the Republic of Letters was well-organized. The literary elite in France developed a successful concept of literature which then spread all over Europe, and in other language areas people such as Van Hoogstraten thoughty this worthy of imitation in their own language, and that they too should have such a literary elite. So Van Hoogstraten started writing on the Dutch language, he remarked on the gender of nouns, and he wanted “the studious youth” to learn and to remember.

²⁵ Van Hoogstraten (1711: 3*5^v): “Dus zal Nederlant, edele vernuften aenquekende, Vrankryk niet toegeven, dat onophoudelyk voortgaende in het polysten zyner tale, den wegh gevonden heeft om zyne glory uit te breiden door de kracht der wetenschappen”.

²⁶ For this paragraph, see Bots & Waquet (1997) and Waquet (1989).

²⁷ On international comparison and competition within the Republic of Letters, see e.g. Waquet, (1989a) and Rutten (2006: 348-368).

5. *International analogies*

5.1 *France*

If Dutch linguistics from the late 17th and the 18th centuries is absorbed in such a literary and cultural enterprise (section 4.), then the comparison with France can be very enlightening. Already in 1635, the *Académie française* was founded. Its goal was to make a French grammar, a dictionary, and books on poetics and rhetoric.²⁸ Not all these projects were realized. The great *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, however, already began to appear in 1694. It aimed at describing (or: prescribing) “la Langue commune” (*Dictionnaire*, 1694: a4^v), “the common language”. What does this mean?

With regard to the language (*Langue*), we find that it had to be fixed forever. The French language had reached “sa dernière perfection”, “its final perfection”, and “dans cet estat [...] la Langue Française se trouve aujourd’huy”, “in that state the French language is found today” (*Dictionnaire*, 1694: a4^v).

Secondly, concerning the adjective *commune*, who are the commons who should use that particular version of French? They are the “honnêtes gens”, “the decent people” (*Dictionnaire*, 1694: a4^v). This is also clear from the well-known and indeed fundamental views of Claude Vaugelas (1585-1650), one of the academic linguists, who in his famous *Remarques sur la langue française*, “Remarks on the French language” (1647), opposed *le bon* and *le mauvais usage*, good and bad usage, and also *l'élite* and *la plarité*, the elite and the majority. The elite of the decent people covers regular upper-class people as well as poets and other writers.

One example, not from Vaugelas but from another *remarqueur*: Louis-Augustin Alemand (ca. 1653-1728) may elucidate the remarking method. In his 1688 book *Nouvelles observations ou guerre civile des françois, sur la langue*, he treated among many other subjects the gender of nouns. One chapter (1688: 27-29) is devoted to the question “*De quel genre est absinte*”, “Of which gender is *absinte*” (Figure 1). At the beginning of the chapter we read that the word *absinte* is “a true apple of discord” and that it “causes division”. The problem is that its gender is not clear and changes all the time. Alemand continues that “there are three parties in this dispute”, individual writers and groups of authors. One party favours masculine as well as feminine, the second only masculine and the third only feminine. At the end, Alemand (1688: 29) decides *absinte* should be feminine.

When we compare this to Van Hoogstraten’s and Nylöe’s approach (see (2), (3) and (4)), we can first conclude that Van Hoogstraten’s is quite similar to Alemand’s reasoning, except that Van Hoogstraten does not write a text as Alemand did, but composes an alphabetical list. In that sense, Van Hoogstraten’s approach is more technical; it recalls the lexicographical tradition. Both authors are considering different

²⁸ See Chevalier (1998), Mazière (2000).

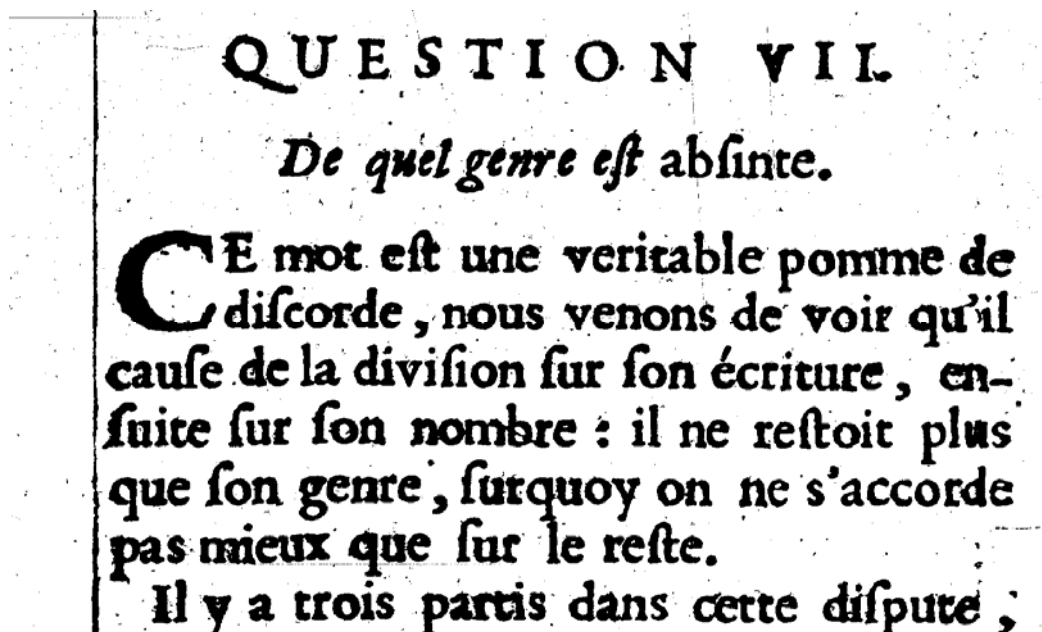


Figure 1: Extract from Alemand, 1688: 27

options and want to choose one, yet Van Hoogstraten's aim is to cover the most important and frequent nouns, while Alemand only expounds his views on the more problematic ones. In this respect, Alemand resembles Nylöe. Both authors are giving their readership advice on morphological and stylistic matters, though Alemand appears to be less overtly prescriptive than the Dutchman.

In sum, the French project of advancing the "common language" aimed at fixing the language in its perfect state and subsequently spreading it over society, that is, the society of "honnestes gens", "the decent people". The academicians remarked on the language, e.g. on the gender of nouns, and wanted the public (this specific public) to remember their remarks. Similarly, the *Sprachpflege-Sprachlehre* combination in the works of Van Hoogstraten and Nylöe displays this concern for a cultivated language which goes hand in hand with an elitist orientation towards the upper-class.

5.2. Germany

In Germany, already in 1617 the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* came into existence. Like the *Académie française*, its aim was to advance grammar, lexicography and poetry (Huber, 1984: 243-247). The *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* and other German *Sprachgesellschaften* gave rise to a certain number of linguistic publications of which Justus-Georg Schottelius' (1612-1676) grammar: *Ausführliche Arbeit von der Teutschen HauptSprache* (1663), and Kaspar Stieler's (1632-1707) dictionary: *Der teutschen Sprache Stammbaum und Fortwachs oder Teutscher Sprachsatz* (1691), belong to the most famous and influential. Schottelius' well-known 1663 masterpiece functioned as the most important model for Arnold Moonen's 1706 grammar of Dutch, that has even been regarded as merely an adaptation (cf. Schaars, 1988).

At the same time, around 1679, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) wrote *Ermahnung an die Deutschen, ihren Verstand und ihre Sprache besser zu üben, samt*

beigefügtem Vorschlag einer deutschgesinnten Gesellschaft, in which he urgently requested the Germans to practise their intellect and their language, and proposed that they establish a new learned society. Why is that? The crucial steps in Leibniz' reasoning are the following. We Germans should advance German culture. Knowledge and ethics are crucial to culture. Language is the gateway to knowledge and ethics. Therefore, advancing German culture depends on the advancement, that is the cultivation of language (read: *Sprachpflege*). In order to consolidate the cultivation of language, children have to be taught cultivated German because “die Erziehung überwindet alles”, “education overcomes everything” (Leibniz, 1967: 21). The *deutschgesinnte Gesellschaft*, then, has to supervise this language education (*Sprachlehre*).

In sum: according to Leibniz, cultivating the language (in order to advance German culture) consists of two steps. First, acclaimed linguists and poets have to cultivate the language. Then, the cultivated language has to be transmitted to the younger people. This in a nutshell recalls Van Hoogstraten's approach.

6. *The Netherlands within the Republic of Letters*

In the 17th century, language cultivation programmes had been proposed and carried out in France and Germany. The Dutch participants in the international Republic of Letters were aware of this. I already quoted Van Hoogstraten when he claimed Holland should follow France in the cultivation of its language (see section 4.). To this statement we can add one by his friend Petrus Francius (section 2.) of the year before:

How can we excuse it – as all other nations, Spanish, Italian, French, English, German, are working so hard to speak their language properly – that we are so careless about ours?²⁹

Nylöe, on his turn, claimed a justly ruled empire can be expected to have a pleasant and beautiful language. According to him, the Greek and the Romans are fine examples (1703: +2^r). He continues:

Who does not know how high the French usually speak of their language, and that they are not working less hard to enrich it and to regulate it more and more, than they are working on any other important art or science [...] ³⁰

It's not just the French, Nylöe goes on: “Germans, Italians, Spaniards are doing the same.”³¹

²⁹ Francius (1699: 26): “Hoe is 't te verschonen, daar alle andere volken, Spaansche, Italiaansche Fransche, Engelsche, Duitsche, zo veel werks aanwenden, om hunne spraak net te spreken, dat wy in de onze zo slordig zijn?”

³⁰ Nylöe (1703: +2^v-+3^r): “Wie weet niet, hoe hoog de Franschen doorgaans gewoon zijn van hunne tale optegeven, en datze daar van niet minder werx maken om die hoe langer hoe meer te verrijken en te regelen, dan van enige andere wetenschap of voorname oefening”.

³¹ Nylöe (1703: +3^r): “Hoogduitschen, Italianen, Spanjaarden doen het zelve”.

It seems that at the turn of the century, around 1700, a little group of Dutch poets and clergymen (see section 2.) realized what was or had been going on in neighbouring countries, or language areas (especially the German and the French): a cultural elite was organized, be it in a royal academy or a local language society, and this elite was working together as one man on what we might call a linguistic cultivation programme: books on grammar, poetics and rhetoric were published, along with dictionaries. These academies and societies were populated by men of letters, and they were writing for other men of letters, especially for the next generation of men of letters. This is the Republic of Letters in action: the elite writing for the elite (the older elite writing for the younger elite). The Republic of Letters constitutes the conceptual horizon of a big part of the linguistic activities of the early modern period.

The Republic of Letters was an international cultural network. The Dutch saw what was going on in other European language areas and decided they had to catch up. The way in which they caught up was characterized by that effective combination of *Sprachpflege* and *Sprachlehre*. On the one hand, they were discussing linguistic issues, they were *remarking*, as Vaugelas defined the activity, and as Van Hoogstraten who remarked on the gender of Dutch nouns also called it. They also shared the elitist orientation. On the other hand, they had the educational goal Leibniz defended, wanting the reader to *remember* the grammatical rules, for the intended public consisted of the next generation of great poets.

7. In closing

There is no overt evidence that these Dutch men of letters were harmoniously working on a joint linguistic cultivation programme. They were not organized in an academy or society, there was no king to decree such an academy.³² Yet they knew each other and there seems to have been some sort of division of labour. All in all, taking these five publications together, the young upper-class male knew what to read and to remember, in order to become the next great Dutch poet.

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³² As in most European countries, the typically enlightened learned societies came into existence in the Netherlands from around 1750.

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