7 Language Should Be Pure and Grammatical: Values in Prescriptivism in the Netherlands 1917–2016

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1 The Condemnation of Wrong Language

The notion of prescriptivism is built upon a binary distinction between 'good' language and 'bad' language. This division is made both on the macro level between different linguistic varieties and on the micro level between linguistic variants. On this latter level, the term *usage item* can be used to describe any combination of linguistic forms that seem synonymous, but include one that is condemned by someone.[1] Three fundamental assumptions underlie this distinction between good and bad language: (1) that it is at all possible to divide linguistic variants into good and bad categories; (2) that the categories that any linguistic variant falls into can be determined; and (3) that it is desirable for bad language to be avoided and (if possible) eradicated. These assumptions are usually unproblematic for both prescriptivists themselves, that is, writers of language advice literature, and their intended target audience, that is, language users. However, as soon as one scrutinizes these premises more systematically, they become rather questionable. For example, how can it be ascertained whether a certain sound, word or phrase is 'bad' language? It is a longstanding given in linguistics that there is no inherent reason why any linguistic form should be better than another. Nor is there, in most cases, a law or any other binding social construct that separates the good from the bad. And yet, prescriptivists and language advisors persist in their arbitrary division. This raises the question of how they build their case and what arguments they use to condemn 'wrong' linguistic forms. One way of looking at this is by looking at which evaluative epithets are used to express this condemnation.

This chapter studies the evaluative epithets and values found in Dutch prescriptivist publications in the Netherlands. In studying this language,

it joins a growing number of studies that focus on prescriptivism in a language other than English. For English, prescriptivism has received a fair amount of attention, especially in recent years (see, for example, several papers in this volume and in Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Percy, 2016). Even though individual papers have appeared on a variety of languages (e.g. Poplack & Dion, 2009, on French; Vaicekauskienė, this volume, on Lithuanian), these remain understudied. Dutch is no exception to this rule. Some recent efforts attempt to address this research gap (e.g. Rutten *et al*., 2014), but investigations of Dutch prescriptivism as a phenomenon remain scarce, in particular for the 20th century. This relative shortage of scholarly interest is all the more remarkable given the immense popularity that prescriptive publications enjoy with the general public in the Netherlands. For example, the online language maven community *Taalvoutjes* (*Language Mistakes*) has hundreds of thousands of followers and has spawned several successful books. Also, the language magazine *Onze Taal* (*Our Language*), which was founded in the 1930s to combat the German influence on Dutch, has tens of thousands of subscribers and even more followers online.

In this chapter, I will describe the use of evaluative epithets in language advice publications in the Netherlands.[2] I will comment upon patterns in the use of these epithets, and I will look at the values underlying them. In doing so, I will argue that studying these values is not only a worthwhile study in its own right, but also that it gives insight into the language ideologies of prescriptivists. First, I will give a general overview of the development and study of prescriptivism in the Netherlands (Subsection 2.1). Next, I will zoom in on evaluative epithets in prescriptivist writings and their argumentative function (Subsection 2.2). I will then proceed to explain how these epithets can be seen as surface realizations of underlying values (Subsection 2.3). After that, I will describe my data collection process and sample build-up (Subsection 3.1), before explaining the annotation (Subsection 3.2). In the Results section, I will comment on the acceptance of optional variability (Subsection 4.1), the use of epithets for the Dutch prescriptive tradition in general (Subsection 4.2), the development of the use of epithets over time (Subsection 4.3), the relation between argument and epithet (Subsection 4.4), and the relation between argument and level of acceptance (Subsection 4.5). I will finish with some concluding remarks (Section 5).

2 Background

2.1 Prescriptivism in the Netherlands

The first attempts to standardize Dutch were made in the 16th century, with the appearance of treatises about spelling (e.g. Lambrecht, *c*.1550) and later by writers of grammars (e.g. Spiegel, 1584). In later

centuries, hundreds of works on grammar, spelling and pronunciation appeared (see Knol & Maas, 1977, for an overview). Many of these works have been fairly well studied, as has the history of metalinguistic works in the Netherlands in general (e.g. Noordegraaf, 1985; Noordegraaf *et al*., 1992; Rutten *et al*., 2014; van der Sijs, 2004). Of all of the grammatical works that appeared between 1530 and 1800, none was ever adopted by the government as an official rule book. This changed at the beginning of the 19th century, when the Dutch government set out to regulate the Dutch language. This resulted in both an officially sanctioned spelling (Siegenbeek, 1804) and a grammar (Weiland, 1805). The publication of these works is seen as 'the beginning of the official codification of Dutch' (Rutten, 2016: 19). For other countries where Dutch is spoken, the implementation of the language took very different paths, which is why I focus only on the Netherlands in this chapter.

With regard to spelling, Siegenbeek's work proved to be the first in a long line of official spelling guides. At present, there is an official spelling for Dutch, which is updated every five years by the Nederlandse Taalunie (Dutch Language Union), an international organization that is supported by the Dutch, Flemish and Surinam governments. The use of this official spelling is nominally compulsory in education and government (as is stated in the Spelling Law of 2005[3]), but no official steps are taken when the law is 'broken'. In contrast to the official spelling, no governmentally sanctioned grammar was published after Weiland's. Consequently, no official rules exist for the grammar of Dutch. This gap has been filled, however, by many private grammars. In addition, the early 20th century saw the emergence of publications that are similar to the English 'usage guide' (van der Wal & van Bree, 1992: 330–331). Like the English usage guides, these language advice publications contain 'a miscellany of linguistic cruces including spelling, pronunciation, lexical semantics, collocation, and grammar, which are mostly treated in isolation, without systematic appraisal of their place in the language' (Peters, 2006: 761).

The Dutch prescriptive landscape is, again, comparable to the English, as it contains various genres. These include style guides and usage guides, magazines and newspaper columns. Some of these language advice publications focus on one part of the language, such as lexis or prepositions; others conform more to Peters' general description. New language advice books continue to appear regularly (cf. Houthuys & Permentier, 2016; van Wingerden, 2017). Dutch prescriptivism has also found its way onto the internet. Next to many privately run language advice websites, two sites in particular seem to be seen as authorities: the online language advice service of *Genootschap Onze Taal*, and the online language advice service of the aforementioned *Taalunie*. Next to these explicitly prescriptive publications, several other (perceived) language authorities exist. One of these is the most well-known and most thorough Dutch grammar of the 20th century, the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* (Geerts *et al*., 1997).

Others include the historical dictionary *Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* and several commercial dictionaries, especially from Van Dale publishers.

Dutch prescriptivism in the 20th century has been documented to some extent, in the sense that there are (incomplete) overviews of publications (Gillaerts, 1989; Haeseryn, 1999; Hermkens, 1974). The contents of the prescriptive publications, however, have received little attention, neither from a qualitative nor a quantitative perspective. There are a few exceptions such as Veering (1966) and Maureau (1979), but these only discuss a select number of usage items and a limited amount of prescriptive publications. A recent and fairly detailed exception is Hendrickx (2013). In this work, the development of prescriptive comments about a great number of lexical items is mapped out, as part of a study on the impact of prescriptivism on Flemish newspapers in the period between 1958 and 2008. However, all in all, it is safe to say that the Dutch 20th century prescriptive tradition has not been adequately described or investigated, nor has there been much interest in the specific argumentation used in prescriptivist writings. The current chapter will make a start at remedying this situation.

2.2 Arguments and epithets

One of the most fundamental differences between prescriptivist and descriptivist writings is the former's use of evaluative epithets regarding the language that is described (Hendrickx, 2013: 10). In doing so, any linguistic 'description' becomes a prescriptive *usage item*: a discussion of one or more specific linguistic forms for which unwanted variation exists. For example, a descriptive dictionary, such as the Van Dale Online Dictionary, simply presents the word type, grammatical gender and plural formation of the word *stellingname* (taking a stance), without evaluative terms (s.v. *stellingname*).[4] In contrast, a prescriptive grammar or usage guide describes the form using one or more epithets, with the express goal of condemning the wrong form. This is what, for example, Damsteegt does when he says that the word *stellingname* is 'een heel lelijke vorming' (a very ugly formation), and that 'iedere andere manier om deze gedachte uit te drukken wel beter [is] dan deze (journalistieke) uitvinding' (every other way to express this thought is better than this (journalistic) invention) (Damsteegt, 1964: 53). Many other evaluative expressions are used, including aesthetic judgements ('ugly'), puristic judgements ('germanism') and effect-based judgements ('annoying'). While the type of epithet varies, their purpose is always the same: to judge and/or evaluate the use of a certain linguistic form so as to discourage people from using the disapproved form.

For English, prescriptive epithets or value judgements have, to some extent, been studied. The most thorough example is the *Dictionary of*

English Normative Grammar 1700–1800 (Sundby *et al.*, 1991). In this comprehensive work, the authors classify 'between 500 and 600 different prescriptive epithets' (Sundby *et al.*, 1991: 38) along several dimensions. Although the considerations are fairly sophisticated, little is offered in terms of analysis. A more profound example of the use of value judgements is given in Anderwald (2012), who links the use of epithets to actual language changes regarding four tense and aspect phenomena in the 19th century. In another recent example, Ebner (2015) examines evaluative words in the 2003 BBC News Styleguide as compared to two earlier usage guides.

Although the abovementioned and other papers discuss evaluative epithets to different extents, they always do this in relation to another phenomenon, such as language change. Until recently, epithets were rarely studied as a phenomenon in their own right, nor was their development over time studied. Again, a few exceptions can be found. Anderwald (2012) commented on the evolution of epithets in the 19th century. Kostadinova *et al.* (2016) compared Dutch and English epithets in four usage items, looking at, among other things, the relation between type of argument and the acceptance of optional variability. Chapman (2019) maps out words for disapproval in two corpora of usage guides, concluding that the evaluative terms become less harsh over time. Such case studies, while noteworthy, only scratch the surface of the possible research into epithets, and no effort seems to have been made to connect epithets to values.

2.3 Epithets and values

In prescriptive publications, evaluative epithets are usually employed regarding a specific usage item, as seen in the example above, or in connection to a broader linguistic phenomenon such as foreign influence (cf. Moschonas, 2018, on type and token in prescriptivism). In both cases, an epithet can be seen as an instantiation of a more general language norm. In the case of the abovementioned example, the more general norm would be 'ugly language is bad'. This norm, in turn, can be seen as a depiction of a more general value, or a 'higher-order norm' (Johnson, 1961: 50). Such values are usually implicit, in prescriptivism and otherwise, but they can be brought to the forefront using the simple logical formula known as the *modus ponens* or syllogism. Here, the value corresponds to the major premise. The abovementioned example about *stellingname* is a good example of this:

If language is formed in an ugly way, it is wrong (major premise).

The word formation *stellingname* is formed in an ugly way (minor premise).

Therefore, the word formation *stellingname* is wrong (conclusion).

Although the major premise can be positive, in prescriptivism it is usually negative. In these cases, a positive underlying value can be extracted by (somewhat ironically) cancelling out the negations. In this case, 'if language is formed in an ugly way, it is wrong' can be resolved as 'language should be beautiful'. Using this method, any number of values can be extracted from prescriptivist writings. Some of these values have been commented on in the literature. Most notably, as Milroy and Milroy (1999: 22) state, the idea underlying the whole concept of language advice is the non-acceptability of optional variability. In terms of values, this can be put as 'language should not contain variation'. In condemning the existence of variation, however, this value interacts with a plethora of other values that are held by prescriptivists. In the next section, I will describe which values can be found in Dutch prescriptivist writings, and how these were found.

3 Methodology

3.1 Collection of language advice works

Several demarcations were made regarding which material should be included in the present research. First, only language advice literature written in the 20th and 21st centuries was included. The reason for this is that, while normative publications for Dutch have existed since the late 1500s, the nature of the publications changed in the 20th century from more normative grammar towards specific usage advice (van der Wal & van Bree, 1992: 330–331). Secondly, only language advice publications intended for speakers in the Netherlands were used. This means that works intended only for Flanders were excluded. Although Dutch has been used there for centuries as well, and language publications certainly exist, the historical and social development of the language there is vastly different from that in the Netherlands (cf. Vandenbussche *et al*., 2005). It could therefore be expected that the way problems were discussed in Flanders varied significantly as well. For the same reasons, I excluded works written for former colonies of the Netherlands (such as Indonesia, cf. de Geus, 1922) and works for second language speakers. Thirdly, only non-educational works were incorporated in the corpus, because the approach to language advice in school books is mostly formative, as opposed to the corrective approach of prescriptive publications (cf. Veering, 1966: 16). Finally, for reasons of comparability between publications, only published books were included, whereas language advice from magazines (such as the popular scientific *Onze Taal*) and internet presences such as the *Taaladviesdienst* were not included.

Using these selection criteria, 130 language advice publications were collected (see Appendix 1). These language advice publications were written by a total of 101 different authors. Several authors published more

than one book, most notably the Algemeen Nederlands Verbond (ANV, General Dutch Union), who published 11 prescriptive works between at least 1917 and 1941, seven of which were available for study. In cases where more than one work by an author was included, I took different entries for my sample.[5]

The distribution of the 130 works was heavily skewed towards the last quarter of the 20th century. To remedy this, I sampled 100 entries from each decade at random (as far as that was possible, see below). The number of entries that I included in my sample per publication depended on the amount of publications in the corresponding decade (see Table 7.1). For example, as the 2000s were represented by 33 guides, I used three entries per guide. In some decades in the early 20th century, not all guides for a decade reached the required amount. In these cases, I added additional entries from one of the other guides for that decade. For example, as there were four guides from the 1920s, 25 entries were required per guide. However, the database contained just two and four entries from ANV (1926) and ANV (1927), and thus the remaining number for the sample was taken from Moortgat (1925).

I followed the internal structure of the work to determine what made up an entry. An entry could thus be a chapter, a lemma, a paragraph or another demarcated unit. This meant that the length of the entries varied considerably, between only one 'right' and one 'wrong' word (cf. Anonymous, 1917), and a lengthy essay (e.g. van Wissen, 1995). These longer entries often contained more than one usage item. For example, in van Wageningen's (1946: 34–36) essay entitled 'Gewichtigdoenerij' ('Pomposity'), he discusses six different usage items. Such cases caused the number of usage items to be substantially higher than the number of entries. In the end, my sample contained 1578 usage items. The number of usage items varies quite heavily between decades, ranging from 101 in the 1920s to 244 in the 1970s, with an average of 153 (see Table 7.1).

3.2 Annotation

I annotated usage items for two parameters using the open source annotation tool *brat* (Stenetorp *et al*., 2012). First, I checked which stance was expressed towards the acceptance of optional variability. Following the existing literature (Albakry, 2007; Ebner, 2017; Peters & Young, 1997;

Table 7.1 Number of language advice publications, authors, usage items per decade

Decade	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Total
Number of publications	2	5	6	7	7	7	4	16	34	33	9	130
Number of usage items	171	101	113	129	139	129	244	142	145	146	119	1578

Yáñez-Bouza, 2015), I distinguished between three different stances, namely COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE, COMPLETE NON-ACCEPTANCE and LIMITED ACCEPTANCE of free variation. This last category included, for example, instances where free variation was accepted in spoken language but not in written language. Stance could be expressed either explicitly, by using a phrase such as 'the use of this form is unacceptable', or implicitly, when for example only a rule was given: 'this is the way in which this form should be used'. In the latter case, when no other arguments were given, the condemnation of the form was interpreted as being a result of the non-acceptability of variation. However, in the vast majority of cases the stance is explicit, as I will show below.

Secondly, I annotated evaluative epithets. To do this, I built upon the annotation schema used in Kostadinova *et al*. (2016), who devised a bottom-up approach for tagging epithets. I took their categories and created a more detailed version. In the version used for this chapter, epithets were classified into six main categories, as illustrated in Table 7.2. These in turn were each divided into several more specific epithet categories. I included separate tags for OTHER_ARGUMENT and OPTIONAL_VARIABILITY (Table 7.2). All these arguments, top and lower level categories, corresponded to underlying values (see Appendix 2 for the values that underlie these epithets). The goal was to be as specific as possible in the annotation, and so, in general, lower level categories were tagged. However, epithets could be unspecified, or not be interpretable within any of the provided lower level categories. In these cases, the label UNSPECIFIED was used. For example, van Nierop (1963: 129) explains that a certain form *klinkt het gewoonst* (sounds the most common), which was classified as USE_UNSPECIFIED.

The categorization deserves some explanation. The category PURITY contains epithets that are used to condemn foreign influences, specifically from German, English and French. The category VARIETY consists of epithets that denote an awareness of different types of speech, including dialects or other geographically bound varieties (GEOGRAPHIC), spoken and written forms (MODE), formal and informal registers (REGISTER) and

Table 7.2 Epithets used in annotation scheme

Top-level category	Lower level categories
PURISM	ANGLICISM, GERMANISM, GALLICISM, OTHER_LANGUAGE, PUR_UNSPECIFIED
VARIETY	GEOGRAPHIC, MODE, REGISTER, STANDARD, VAR_UNSPECIFIED
AUTHORITY	AUTHORITY_SOCIO, AUTHORITY_DICTIONARY, AUTHORITY_GRAMMAR, AUTHORITY_LITERARY, AUTHORITY _FREQUENCY, AUTHORITY_UNSPECIFIED
USE	USE_SOCIO, USE_DICTIONARY, USE_GRAMMAR, USE_LITERARY, USE_FREQUENCY, USE_UNSPECIFIED
QUALITY	LOGIC, BEAUTY, CARE, QUANTITY, EFFECT, QUAL_UNSPECIFIED
SYSTEM	HISTORY, NATURE, GRAMMATICAL, SYS_UNSPECIFIED

standard and nonstandard language (STANDARD). The categories AUTHORITY and USE are closely connected. In the case of AUTHORITY, a language form was condemned or accepted because it was condemned or accepted by a certain group of language users (AUTHORITY_SOCIO), a dictionary (AUTHORITY_DICTIONARY), a grammar or grammarian (AUTHORITY_GRAMMAR), an author (AUTHORITY_LITERARY) or a certain number of speakers (AUTHORITY_FREQUENCY). For example, the statement 'This is correct because Webster's Dictionary says it's correct' would warrant the label AUTHORITY_DICTIONARY. Closely related to the category AUTHORITY is the category USE. The labels in this category were employed when a usage advice writer mentioned the fact that any of these entities or groups of entities used a certain language form. For example, 'this is correct because Shakespeare uses it' warranted USE_LITERARY. Next, the category QUALITY contains what are arguably the most 'classic' epithets, which evaluate whether a form is logical (LOGIC) or beautiful or ugly (BEAUTY), whether the user shows care in their language use (CARE), whether a form is superfluous or unnecessary (QUANTITY), or what kind of effect a language form has (EFFECT). Finally, the category SYSTEM encompasses those epithets that make a statement about the use of a linguistic form in the past (HISTORY), whether it conforms to the nature of the language (NATURE),[6] and whether it conforms to the rules of the language (GRAMMATICAL). If no explicit epithet was used, I used the label OPTIONAL_VARIABILITY.

4 Results

I tagged 2322 epithets in the 1578 usage items.[7] In this section, I will first discuss what the stance towards the acceptance of optional variability is in Dutch prescriptivism in general, and how this stance has developed over the years. Secondly, I will describe which epithets are most characteristic for the Dutch prescriptive tradition, after which I will highlight some temporal developments in the use of epithets. Finally, I will touch on some other noticeable patterns in epithet use.

4.1 Acceptance of optional variation in general and over time

Implicitly or explicitly, all usage items take a stance on the acceptance of optional variability. Consequently, I analysed all 1578 usage items for this parameter (see Figure 7.1). In 83.9% of cases no optional variability was accepted. Limited acceptance was found in 10.6% of items; in 5.5% of cases there was complete acceptability of variants being used interchangeably.

This distribution of stances towards optional variation does not remain static over time (Figure 7.2). Two observations about the development can be made. First, there is a marked increase in the (partial) acceptance of optional variation between the 1930s (1.8% (partial) acceptance)
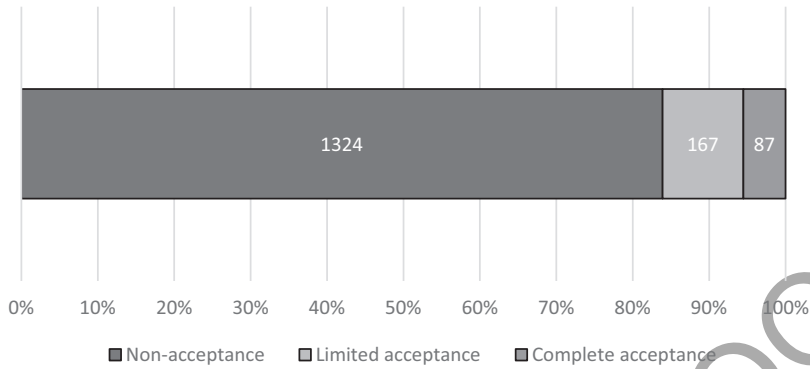
Figure 7.1 Degree of acceptance of optional variability (*n* = 1578)

and the 1940s (19.4% (partial) acceptance). Secondly, a somewhat irregu-
lar but steady increase of the (partial) acceptance of variation can be dis-
cerned from the 1940s onwards, towards a share of 28.6% of all usage
items in the 2010s. The portion of limited acceptability has always
exceeded that of complete acceptability, except during the 1930s and
1980s, when both labels made up, respectively, 0.9% and 8.3% each of the
total (partially) acceptable cases.

It is noteworthy that the use of optional variability as an argument (or
rather the lack of an argument that this annotation represents) remains
fairly stable over time, with an average of 23 instances per decade and a
median of 24. There is a peak in the 1970s, when explicit epithets are absent
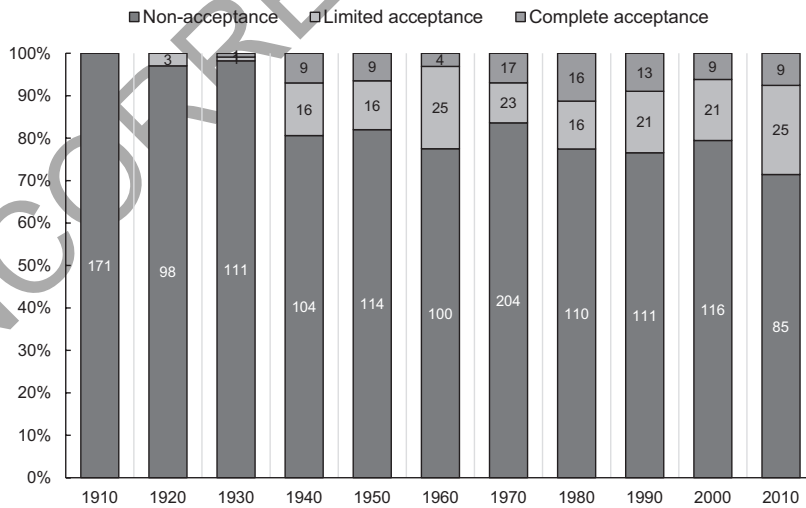in 73 cases. This is an effect of the preference of one author, as Kolkhuis

Figure 7.2 Development of the acceptance of optional variability over time

Tanke (1975) shows 56 cases of suppression of optional variability without any other supporting epithet. Aside from this, there seems to be a small but fairly stable condemnation of forms without any supporting argument. This lack of argument is not connected to any specific usage case.

4.2 Epithets

As Figure 7.3 shows, epithets in all six top categories are found in the sample, albeit in different distributions. The two most important categories are System and Purity, which together make up more than 53% of all epithets. The other categories are less well represented, making up between 4% and 15% of cases each.

Looking at both top-level and lower categories, 31 out of the 34 possible epithets in the annotation schema were awarded more than once.[8] However, as Table 7.3 shows, the vast majority of these epithets were found very infrequently: 11 of the epithets make up less than 1% each of the total number of annotations; a further nine make up between 1% and 2% each. So, only 11 epithets are found in more than 2% of cases. This analysis reveals three further points. Firstly, Purity is often unspecified. A possible explanation for this is that writers assume that readers already know what language a word is from, and don't feel the need to repeat this. This assumption is belied, however, by the relative lack of ability that language users seem to have to identify the source language for loanwords (van Bezooijen *et al.*, 2009). Secondly, Purity_Unspecified and Germanism together make up the vast majority of cases in top-level category Purity. Thirdly, Grammatical accounts for almost 80% of epithets in the category System.
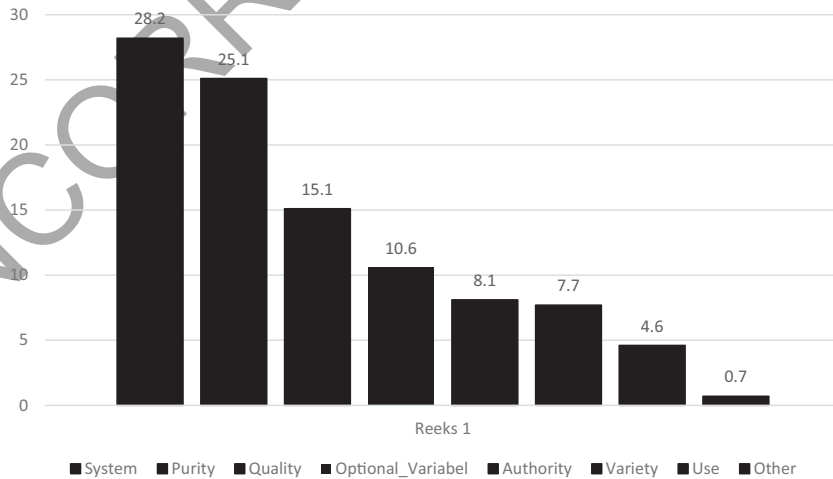

Figure 7.3 Distribution of epithets in percentages split out per top-level category

Table 7.3 Percentages of tagged epithets

Lower level epithets	Percentage of total epithets
Grammatical	22.4%
Germanism	12.1%
Optional_Varia	10.6%
Purity_Unspecified	9.7%
Effect	5.6%
Mode	4.3%
Quality	4.1%
Use_Freq	3.9%
Auth_Gram, Auth_Dict, Logic, History	2–3%
Geographic, Gallicism, Register, System, Authority, Quantity, Anglicism, Auth_Freq, Nature	1–2%
Auth_Socio, Auth_Literary, Other_Lang, Use_Socio, Use, Var, Standard, Beauty, Other_Arg, Care	< 1%

The level of abstraction on which to analyse the data posed a challenge (as it often does, cf. Karsdorp *et al.*, 2012). Even the 34-fold distribution could be more fine-grained. For example, the epithet Effect is found 136 times, and in all cases the underlying value can be analysed as 'Language should have a good effect'. Within this category, however, several more detailed values can be distinguished, such as 'Language should be understandable' and 'Language should not upset people'. Even within these groupings, more fine-grained values could be distinguished. For example, the group 'Language should not upset people' includes epithets such as *aanstootgevend* (causing offence), *storend* (troublesome) and *ergerlijk* (annoying). These specific epithets are only found in a few cases each, so for the purposes of the present investigation a rather abstract level of analysis is used. It is, however, important to realize that these other levels exist, and that they deserve further exploration.

4.3 Development of epithets over time

The development of epithets over time for the top-level categories is shown in Figure 7.4. The average number of epithets per usage item does not vary greatly over time. Leaving aside the 1910s, which have an average of one epithet per usage item, the average number of epithets between 1920 and 2016 per usage item is 1.5.

The first striking development is the decline of the epithet Purity.[9] In the 1910s, Purity is really the only argument to condemn any language form, taking up 99.3% of all epithets; the only other epithet used in this decade is Grammar, which is used twice. The primacy of Purity already
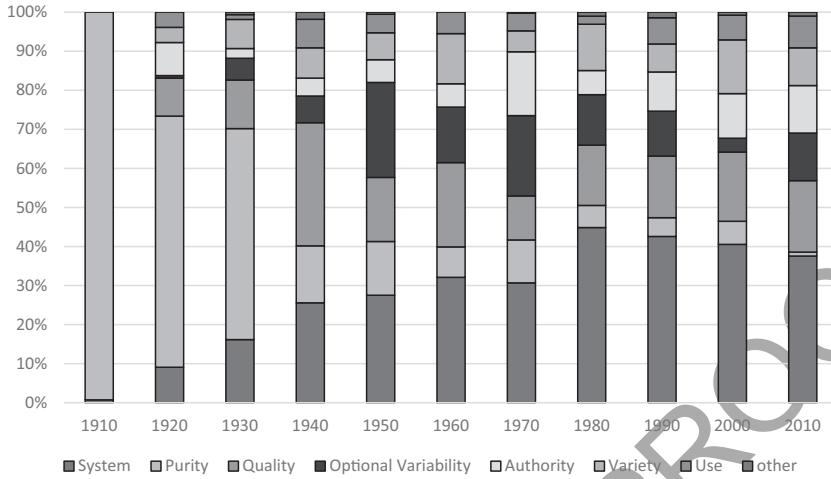
Figure 7.4 Development of top-level epithets 1910–2016

recedes in the 1920s and 1930s. Even World War II does not seem to have slowed down the importance of PURITY and GERMANISMS: use of the epithet PURITY plummets in the 1940s and becomes marginal in later decades.

The second trend that can be observed is the development of the epithet SYSTEM, which as a whole has steadily gained importance. At its peak, in the 1980s, epithets from the category SYSTEM are used in 44.8% of all cases. After that, however, this group of epithets gradually declines in relative importance, by approximately 2% per decade. Again, looking at the specific epithets within this category (SYSTEM, NATURE, HISTORY and GRAMMAR) gives a more nuanced view (see Figure 7.5). Here we see that the relative importance of GRAMMAR increases steadily, ending up with more than 90% of cases in the category SYSTEM since 2000. The advance of GRAMMAR is at the cost of NATURE and HISTORY, although this last category has a minor revival in the 1960s and 1970s.

The overall development, then, is from the use of epithet PURITY to the epithet GRAMMAR. Aside from this, there are a few other minor trends in the use of epithets. The 1970s see a large increase in the use of the epithets AUTHORITY and AUTHORITY_DICTIONARY. This is the result of a single work, namely *Germanismen in het Nederlands* by Theissen (1978). This work, which is a popular reworking of the academic dissertation by the same author, specifically examines the role that dictionaries play in the acceptance of usage items. Another example is the epithet MODE, which seems to have an unusually strong presence in the 2000s. This is due to an overrepresentation of a specific usage item in the sample: the comparative markers *als* and *dan*. This usage item, one of the most well-known in Dutch (cf. Hubers & De Hoop, 2013), accounts for almost half of all cases of the epithet MODE in the sample of this decade (14 out of a total of 30
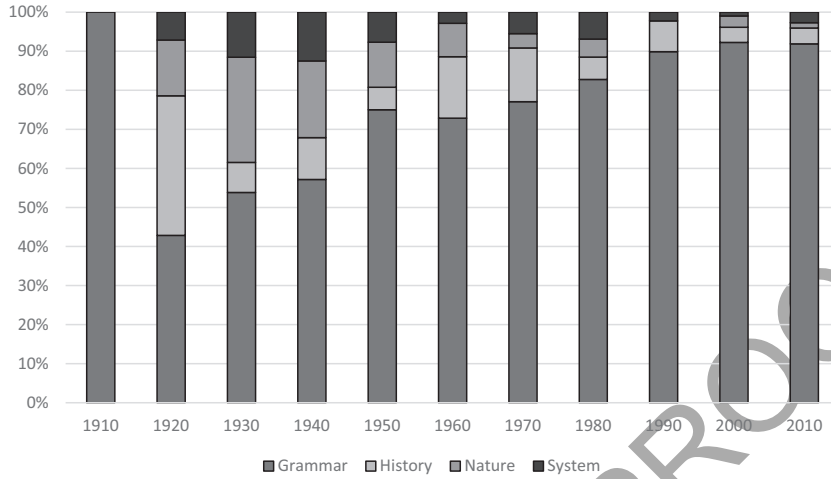
Figure 7.5 Relative development of epithets in category System over time

occurrences). As I show in van der Meulen (2018), the epithet MODE is strongly associated with this issue.

4.4 Relation between usage item and epithet

The data on which this chapter is based are very rich, and many details deserve exploration. Because of space constraints, I will limit myself to discussing two key observations. First, specific epithets are rarely bound to specific authors or specific usage items. In only a few cases (as discussed in the preceding section) do authors show a more than average preference for any specific epithet. Similarly, specific usage items do not correlate with specific epithets (again, some exceptions aside, such as *als/dan*), nor do specific epithets occur exclusively with certain usage items. For example, the epithet LOGIC (*n* = 58) is found in 28 works by 27 different authors and is connected to 38 different usage items. In contrast to this, the condemnation of the usage item *tot de beste behoren* ('belong to one of the best') does frequently occur by making use of the epithet LOGIC, namely in 77.8% of cases. This usage item is, however, of very low frequency: it only occurs nine times in the sample, in seven times of which LOGIC is used. However, it does raise the question of whether there are indeed different patterns in use for frequent vs low-frequent items: perhaps the latter category is more likely to be condemned with the same argumentation.

4.5 Relation between argument and level of acceptance

Another issue is the possible connection between level of acceptance and argumentation. To see whether this connection existed,

I examined the 87 cases where optional variability was deemed completely acceptable. These cases were given 140 epithets. The distribution of these epithets is indeed somewhat different compared to the whole set. Notably, AUTHORITY epithets make up 28% of arguments used in relation to complete acceptance, as opposed to their 8% for the whole data set. Specifically, AUTH_DICTIONARY is found a lot more frequently in the set of accepted usage items (11.4%) than would be expected based on the whole amount of tags (2.3%). Another notably different distribution is found in USE_FREQUENCY (11.4% with acceptance vs 3.9% total).

A connection to the complete acceptance of variation does not necessarily mean that an epithet is used to argue in favour of this acceptance. In several cases, arguments both for and against a linguistic form are presented in the discussion of a usage item (cf. van der Meulen, 2020). For example, when Theissen (1978: 15) discusses the usage item *aantrekken (arbeidskrachten)* (hiring of workers), he states that although some purists and the Van Dale dictionary consider this word a GERMANISM, it is generally accepted – even by Koenen, another dictionary. So, three arguments are used against the acceptance of the form (GERMANISM, AUTH_DICTIONARY, AUTHORITY) and two in favour (AUTH_DICTIONARY, AUTH_FREQUENCY). Such a careful consideration of arguments in favour and against the acceptance of a certain usage item is, however, rare: in the 87 cases where variation is completely acceptable, 81.1% of the arguments support the acceptance.

5 Conclusion

The study of evaluative epithets yields valuable insights into the values that language users attribute to their language. Of course, the values found in the publications used for the current chapter should not be taken as completely representative for the whole population of Dutch speakers, present or past. Rather, they represent the values of the writers of prescriptivist publications, whose views may or may not be representative of the general population. Whether this is the case is unclear: there has been no research into the relationship between judgements by usage advisors and judgements by 'normal' language users.

Based on the research presented in this chapter, we may conclude that the dominant values in 20th century Dutch prescriptivism are 'the Dutch language should be pure' (and its subsidiary 'the Dutch language should not be influenced by German') and 'the Dutch language should be grammatical, should obey the rules'. Additionally, like in English, the prescriptive value 'language should not contain variation' is pervasive and continues to play an important role in Dutch prescriptivism. Furthermore, a variety of other values play a role in Dutch prescriptivism, including 'language should have a good effect' and 'good language is determined by what an authority says'. This final value seems to tie in with the

acceptance of variation to some extent, which could mean that an additional value of some importance is 'variation in language is acceptable when an authority says it is'.

Several changes in the relative importance of values can be observed over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries. Although in the early 1900s the dominant (even ubiquitous) value in Dutch prescriptivism is 'the Dutch language should be pure', this value starts to disappear from the 1940s onwards, becoming marginal in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In its place, 'the Dutch language should be grammatical' becomes the most important value expressed. However, in recent years, there seems to be a slow but steady decline in importance of this value. As for the acceptance of optional variation, there is again a slow but steady increase in the acceptance of variation, either completely or in restricted contexts, from the 1940s onwards. The acceptance of variation is to some extent connected to the value 'language should follow what an authority says'.

In general, while the number of different values is limited, there seem to be a few patterns in their distribution. First of all, authors do not appear to have a preference for certain values, with the exception of Kolkhuis Tanke (1975) and Theissen (1978). Secondly, specific usage items seem only to be related to specific values in a few cases (*als*/*dan*, *behoren tot*) and, conversely, specific values do not seem to be exclusively connected to specific usage items. So it seems as if value judgements are made ad hoc. This raises the question of how language advisors determine their evaluations and what kind of role intertextuality plays in Dutch prescriptivism. Some guides do mention other usage advice publications (notably Hermkens, 1974), but whether this has any effect on their treatment of usage items remains to be seen. At this point it seems as if Dutch prescriptivists follow their English colleagues in their preference for *ipse dixit* judgements (cf. Algeo, 1991; Peters, 2006).

Research into Dutch prescriptivism since 1900 remains sparse, so more research would be welcome. For example, in several cases, arguments both in favour of and against accepting variation are given. It is unclear at this point, however, if there are patterns in whether any argument is deemed the most important and, if so, which argument this is. Looking into this matter could give more insight into the relative importance of values in the Dutch prescriptive system, and into the interaction between values in general. Other possible paths of research involve widening the parameters of this chapter, which can be done in several ways. First, the set of entries can be expanded, for more robust findings. Doing this can also shed more light on the development of specific usage items. Secondly, the use of epithets in the post-standardization 20th and 21st centuries can be compared to earlier stages of the standardization of Dutch. This could shed light on the supposed *ipse dixit*-ness of the judgements. And finally, the research can be widened to include other language areas, such as Flemish, or completely different languages, such as English.

Appendix 1: Dutch Language Advice Publications Included in this Chapter

Aalbrecht, H. (2008) *Schrijfstijl. De basis van een goede tekst*. Amsterdam: Augustus.

Anonymous (1917) *Lijst van enkele Germanismen*. Utrecht: Den Boer.

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ANV (1925) *Lijst van Nederlandse woorden en uitdrukkingen ter vervanging van vreemde termen en germanismen* (4th edn). Dordrecht: Geuze.

ANV (1926) *Lijst van Nederlandse woorden en uitdrukkingen ter vervanging van vreemde termen en germanismen* (5th edn). Dordrecht: Geuze.

ANV (1927) *Lijst van Nederlandse woorden en uitdrukkingen ter vervanging van vreemde termen en germanismen* (6th edn). Dordrecht: Geuze.

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Appendix 2: Annotation Schema Used with Underlying Values

The unspecified labels are not repeated here, but their values correspond to the top-level categories.

Category	Value
Purity	Language should be pure, free of the influences of other language
Anglicism	Language should be free of English influence
Germanism	Language should be free of German influence
Gallicism	Language should be free of French influence
Other_Language	Language should be free of the influence of another language

Variety	A specific variety of language is the right one
Geographic	The language spoken in certain geographic regions is right/wrong
Mode	Language should be used in the proper mode
Register	Language should be used in the proper register
Standard	Language should be used in accordance to the standard
Authority	Good language is determined by what an authority says
Authority_Socio	Good language is determined by what a certain group of people says
Authority_Dic	Good language is determined by what a dictionary says
Authority_Gram	Good language is determined by what a grammar or grammarian says
Authority_Lit	Good language is determined by what an author says
Authority _Freq	Good language is determined by what a number of people say
Use	Good language is determined by what an authority does
Use_Socio	Good language is determined by what a certain group of people does
Use_Dict	Good language is determined by what a dictionary does
Use_Gram	Good language is determined by what a grammar or grammarian does
Use_Lit	Good language is determined by what an author does
Use_Freq	Good language is determined by what a number of people do
Quality	Language should be qualitative
Logic	Language should be logical
Beauty	Language should be beautiful
Care	Language should be well taken care of
Quantity	Language should be used in the right quantities
Effect	Language should have good effects
System	Language should adhere to the system
History	Language should be used according to history
Nature	Language should be used according to the nature of the language
Grammar	Language should be grammatical
Other_argument	There is some other reason why language is good or bad
Optional_varia	Language should not contain variation

Acknowledgements

Notes

(1) I prefer and use the neutral term 'usage item' over the more generally used term 'usage problem', as this latter implies that there is a problem, which from a prescriptive point of view there may be, but from a descriptive viewpoint there is not. See, for a discussion of the term 'usage problem', Ebner (2018: 5–7)

(2) I use the terms 'language advice publication' and 'prescriptivist publication' to avoid the use of the somewhat loaded terms 'usage guides' and 'style guides'. Also, for Dutch, these types of publications do not seem to be specific text types (cf. Ebner, 2015, on English). The two terms are used interchangeably.

(3) See http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0018784/2010-10-10.

(4) Whether or not this dictionary and others like it are, in fact, purely descriptive is a matter of debate, and even if they are, this is a very recent development. For example, Theissen (1978) shows how all dictionaries in the 1970s contained such terms as *germanism* or *gallicism* to some degree.

(5) See van der Meulen (2020) for a discussion of the inclusion of several works from the same author in such samples.

(6) In Dutch prescriptivism, the rather curious word *taaleigen* is often used. Its meaning is hard to translate, but it means something like the nature, spirit, identity or soul of the language.

(7) On the basis of 163 usage items (10% of the total) that were annotated by both annotators, we computed an inter-annotator agreement score (Cohen's kappa) of $\kappa = 0.83$.

(8) The three tags that were not awarded all fell in the top-level category USE (USE_ DICTIONARY, USE_GRAMMAR and USE_LITERARY). The reason that these were included in the annotation schema was to create symmetry with the category AUTHORITY, and because these epithets were found in English usage guides. For example, 'This is good because Shakespeare used it' is found, for example, in *The American Heritage Guide to Contemporary Usage and Style* (Pickett *et al*., 2005).

(9) While the number of language advice publications makes the findings fairly robust, they should not be interpreted as saying that purism has died out in the Netherlands. Anti-English sentiments especially have run high in the last few decades, and pamphlets and other publications condemning the use of English continue to be published (e.g. Bakker *et al*., 2015).

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