The Language Situation in the Low Countries

Lecture 5. History of the Dutch language | Middle and Modern Dutch

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Last week

- R-pronominalisation
- history of Dutch (part 1)
    - historical method
    - (Proto-)Indo-European and (Proto-)West Germanic
    - Old Dutch and Middle Dutch
        - *i.e.* before beginning of standardisation in 17th century

Aims for today

- Middle Dutch
- Early Modern Dutch
    - *i.e.* standardisation
    - dialect levelling
    - koineisation

Middle Dutch
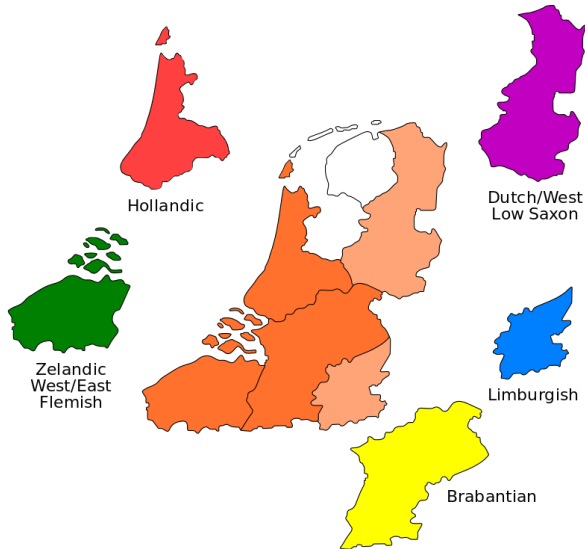

Figure 1: Middle Dutch dialect groups

Middle Dutch: 12th–13th centuries

- Flemish (*i.e.* Western) varieties clearly dominate
  - Bruges, Ypres and Ghent

Middle Dutch: 12th–13th centuries

- ▶ fiction and poetry
- ▶ encyclopæpic texts for common people with no access to Latin
- ▶ Latin and Flemish coëxist until ca. 1253
- ▶ from 1253 onwards all city records in *e.g.* Ghent drafted in Flemish

Middle Dutch: 12th–13th centuries

Chronological order of the Low Countries switching to Dutch in the administrative spheres of life

- ▶ Flanders
- ▶ Holland-Zeeland (Middelburg in 1254)
- ▶ Duchy of Brabant (Kortenberg in 1266)
- ▶ Limburg ca. 1280

Middle Dutch in 12th–13th centuries: summary

Dutch-language documents prior to 1300:

- 70% in Flanders
- 15.5% in Holland
- 10% in Brabant
- 1.5% in Zeeland
- 1.3% in Utrecht

Middle Dutch in 14th century

- Dutch is gradually becoming the dominant written language in all spheres of life

Middle Dutch in 15th century: The Burgundian Netherlands

Unification/consolidation of the Low Countries

- ▶ Bruges is the capital in 15th century
    - ▶ subsequently added were Holland, Zeeland, Brabant, Hainault, Namur, Luxemburg
- ▶ industry in Ypres and Ghent loses to the English, precipitating economic decay in Flanders
- ▶ Antwerp becomes "heir" to Bruges as centre of prosperity

Middle Dutch in 15th century: The Burgundian Netherlands

Antwerp

- trade headquarters of Spaniards and Portuguese
- offices of German and Italian banks

1425

- first university in Low Countries (Leuven)

1430

- Dukes of Burgundy make Brussels one of their major residences

Middle Dutch in late 15th century

- ▶ Northern and North-Eastern provinces still not part of the union

1477

- ▶ French-speaking County of Burgundy is lost
- ▶ the remaining Burgundy becoming an essentially Dutch-speaking territory

Administrative bilingualism in Burgundian Netherlands

- Dutch and French
- different degrees of courteousness (*cf.* Willemyns, p. 63)

1482

- Burgundian Netherlands inherited by the Austrian House of Habsburg upon the death of Mary of Burgundy
- House of Valois-Burgundy becomes extinct

16th century: Spanish Netherlands

1556

- Emperor Charles V abdicates
- the provinces are passed to the Spanish Habsburgs

1581

- northern part of Low Countries breaks away from Spain and forms the Dutch Republic
- William of Orange

16th century: Het Wilhelmus (in use since at least 1568)

- Dutch national anthem

  Wilhelmus van Nassouwe

  Ben ick van Duytschen bloet,

  Den Vaderlant getrouwe

  Blyf ick tot in den doet:

  Een Prince van Oraengien

  Ben ick vrij onverveert,

  Den Coninck van Hispaengien

  Heb ick altijt gheeert.

16th century: Het Wilhelmus

- English translation

  William of Nassau

  am I, of Duytschen blood.

  Loyal to the fatherland

  I will remain until I die.

  A prince of Orange

  am I, free and fearless.

  The king of Spain

  I have always honoured.

Standardisation

- large-scale internal migration within Low Countries

Why standardise?

- variation (5 dialect groups)

Early Modern Dutch

- prior to 16th century no political entity 'Netherlands'

Early Modern Dutch

1585

- Antwerp recaptured by Spain
- massive migration northwards to the Dutch Republic

Early Modern Dutch

2 views on *standardisation*

Kloeke (1925) and *Hollandic expansion*

- migrants from Brabant settling in Holland in huge numbers
- their Brabantic features percolating to the language of Holland

Howell (2006) and *koineisation*

- dialect contact
- dialect levelling

Koineisation: example

mîn vs. *klein*

Next time

- Modern Dutch
- Dutch orthography