

The Language Situation in the Low Countries

Lecture 7. Dutch orthography | Purism and school grammar

Pavel Rudnev
University of Groningen
p.rudnev@rug.nl

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Last month

- Middle Dutch
- Early Modern Dutch
 - *i.e.* standardisation
 - dialect levelling
 - koineisation
 - * *i.e.* emergence of common language out of speech of various contributing groups, the result being distinct from every contributing variety
 - * simplification of grammar as side-effect

Aims for today

- crash course on writing systems
- problems posed by Dutch consonant and vowel system to orthography
- extant solutions, including spelling reforms

Writing systems: an introduction

- logographic (Chinese characters)
- syllabic (Japanese *kana*)
- **alphabetic** (Latin alphabet)
- abugida (Indian *Devanāgarī*)
- abjad (Arabic alphabet)
- featural (Korean *hangul*)

Sound and letter: an uneasy relationship

- English
- Dutch: too many vowels, too few letters

Main problem posed by Dutch vowel system for orthography

- too many vowel *sounds*
- too few vowel *symbols*

Dutch vowels

- recall the Dutch vowel inventory:

Dutch solution: take syllabification seriously

- **syllable:**
 - phonological unit that can be produced in isolation
 - consists of a vowel, optionally preceded or followed by consonants
 - **open syllables**
 - * end in consonant
 - **closed syllables**
 - * end in vowel

Purism and school grammar

- what do I mean by *purism*?
 - resistance to innovation
 - lexical, grammatical, orthoepic

English

- Pinker, Stephen. 2014. *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*.
 - *who* vs. *whom*
 - *less* vs. *fewer*
 - *amount* vs. *number*

Spanish

(1) Spanish

a. *Si quisiera hacer un buen viaje, iría a Japón.* [prescribed]
if want.SUBJ.SG do.INF a nice trip go.COND.SG to Japan

b. *Si querría hacer un buen viaje, iría a Japón.* [attested]
if want.COND.SG do.INF a nice trip go.COND.SG to Japan

‘If I wanted to do a nice trip, I would go to Japan.’

German

- *größer als du* coexisting with *größer wie du*

Russian

- resistance to loan words, lexical borrowings etc.
- *ixnij* etc.

Purism in Dutch

- 17th century: invent indigenous terminology for the sciences:
 - *scheikunde, taalkunde, wiskunde* etc.
 - *onderwerp, gezegde* etc.
- rôle of case and gender still being misunderstood
 - 17th century dialect levelling eliminated some of the distinctions including gender and case marking