



Historical-geographical and phonotactic variation of the Dutch diminutive suffix (16th–19th century)

Chris De Wulf (Universiteit Antwerpen)

(Joint work with Eline Lismont (VUB))

This paper examines the allomorphic variation of the Dutch diminutive suffix in non-metalinguistic texts from the 16th to the 19th century. It forms part of a broader study that aims to compare the implicit and explicit prescriptions of grammarians during this period with the actual patterns of variation observed in written language. Notably, with the exception of Marynissen's (1998) study, academic literature has largely overlooked the southern regions regarding both the attested linguistic variation and the metalinguistic texts produced between the 16th and 19th centuries. The present research draws on a diverse set of sources, including ego documents (45 texts), pamphlets (33 texts), and administrative records (18 texts), spanning multiple time periods and representing the dialectal regions of Brabant, Holland, Flanders, and Zeeland. The findings indicate that certain phonotactic criteria (i.e., the selection of morphemes based on stem type) influenced allomorph selection as early as the emergence of the first innovative morphemes (*-tge*, *-tje*, alongside Middle Dutch *-kel-kin*). By the 18th century, the variation and distribution of the *-ke* and *-tje* suffixes in Flemish and Brabant dialects appear to have stabilized, reflecting patterns that are still observable in contemporary usage.