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The relation between dialect and standard language in the Netherlands in the past as a key to the present

Abstract

It is necessary to go back into history to get a clear understanding of the views that influenced the 19th and even the 20th century.

I choose the end of the 16th century as a springboard and after a fast flight through the 17th and 18th centuries we will land in the 19th century. From there I will step with seven-league strides in order to arrive in the present. But a big jump like that requires a long run-up.

1 The title

'The relation between dialect and standard language' is the central point of the title. 'Standard language' is a relatively young word, whose meaning is denoted fairly accurately by 'variety of a language as a model or standard'. It is necessary to keep in mind that, as a rule, standard languages are bound to political entities, denoted by 'state' or 'nation'. The word *dialect* on the other hand is rather old. In a publication about the 19th century I wrote that the word occurs in the Latin form *dialectus* in the Netherlands and Germany in the 17th century (Daan 1989). The editor of *Twe-spraack* (1584), a grammar in the form of a dialogue, drew my attention to a passage in this book, in which the word occurs in the Greek form *dialektos* (Dibbets 1985, 317). Mr. R. says here: 'Ghy zeyde flux dat de Duytse taal bij haar zelven bestaat, ick heb my wel laten segghen dat onse spraack uyt het Hóóghduyts zou ghesproten zyn'. And Mr. G. answers: 'Ick spreek (met Becanus) int ghemeen vande duytsse taal, die zelve voor een taal houdende, dóch dat de zommighe wat te hóógh, andere wat te laegh spreken, ende dat de Nederzaxense of Mysense spraack (vande welcke wy ghekomen zyn) de middelbarichste ende vriendelyckste is, de welcke van Brug af tot Ry ende Revel toe streckt, wel iet wat in de uyt spraack verschelende, maar zó niet of elck verstaat ander zeer wel; tis

kenlyck dat de Griexe taal, die so waard geacht is, óóck haar verscheyden *dialektos* had'. (In this passage it is said that the German language is spoken from Flanders to the Baltic States, admittedly with differences in pronunciation, but yet these differences are very small and everyone understands each other. It is also said that it is well-known that the prestigious Greek language had various dialects.¹ (In modern Greek *διόλεκτος* is a language of country-people). This passage makes it clear that at the end of the 16th century the word *dialect* meant nothing but a pronunciation variant of the language Mr. R. called 'our language', which at that time we may not yet call a standard language. The Englishman Roger Bacon too said something to that effect in the 13th century (Arens 1969, 60-61).

The common meaning of the word *dialect* in former days must have been roughly 'pronunciation variant', and it is the same in the 18th century. The word 'roughly' indicates that 'pronunciation variant' (Dutch: *uitspraak*) stands for more than accent. In some passages of the *Aenleiding* (Lambert ten Kate 1723), *dialecten* (dialects) indeed is translated as 'pronunciation'. Page 109: 'Meest ijder discht zijne eigene uitspraak, of die van zijne Geboortestad, als de beste rigtsnoer voor, zonder acht te geven op de verschillende Uitspraken (*dialecten*) der gelijk-regthebbende steden, of op de onderscheidene klanken, die tot de Gemeene-Lands *dialect* behooren'. (Many people present their own pronunciation or that of their native city as the best guide, without giving attention to the different pronunciations (dialects) of the equivalent cities or to the different sounds of the standard). And page 110: '... ick doelde op uwe Aenmerkingen, die gij voor eenige jaren over die stoffe op het papier bragt, op dat wij hier na met vrugt mogten spreken over 't gene ik wegens de onderscheidene Spreekwijzen (*dialecten*) te vragen heb'. (I referred to the comments you have written down about this material some years ago so that we can talk successfully about my questions concerning the different ways of speaking (dialects)).²

Huydecoper, a linguist of the same time, also heard regional differences. He points out the difference between *d* and *t* and remarks that this difference is as audible as the difference in pronunciation between different towns. And he continues: 'Die dit niet kan vatten, dien willen wy't niet opdringen, maar ik ben verzekerd, datmen in de Vergadering van fyne Tongen, en gezuiverde Ooren, dit zoo klaar zal vinden, als het zeker is dat ieder stad een byzondere uitspraak heeft, ja dat de burgers derzelfde stad het dikwijls niet eens zijn, waarom men, zo ieder zyne uitspraak blijft volgen, noodzakelyk altyd met zyne buuren moet overhoop leggen; dat met den geest van edelmoedigheid ... geenszins kan overeenkomen' (Huydecoper 1730, 33). (We do not want to force our conviction on anyone, but I am sure that it is clear to people who speak carefully and who have keen ears that every town has its own particular pronunciation and that even within that town

there are differences which can lead to arguments between citizens, contrary to the spirit of generosity in every way'. He does not use the word *dialect*, but his word *uitspraak* has unmistakably the same meaning as *dialect* in Ten Kate's book.

In the course of the 19th century that meaning changed gradually. In our century people try to give definitions; they differ according to the selected criteria: phonetical only or morphologic-syntactical and lexical as well (Weijnen 1966, 26-28). None of them are satisfactory in a linguistic context. Only Goossens (1977⁽²⁾, 11) comes close to a satisfactory solution with his 'diasystem', which is a collection of corresponding language systems.

These definitions do not make clear how the word is interpreted by laymen. The layman himself does not know exactly either; summarizing his judgment it may be 'deviation from the standard language, particularly in pronunciation'. But in the Netherlands we still disagree about the concept of 'standard language'.

2 'Eternal' elements

Some elements of the language concepts that were cherished by earlier scientists, philosophers, theologians and others, were very persistent. We find them not only in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, but also in the works of 16th century writers such as Spieghel, who refers to the Dutchman Becanus in his *Twespraak*.³ We find them in the 18th century as well, with Lambert ten Kate and all the others whom he influenced. One of them is Weiland, who wrote a grammar around 1800 which was the guide to the Dutch language for decades in the field of education. Only four of the elements which had a long-standing effect can be discussed here. They are:

1. The belief in a source language, a proto-language, the lingua Adamica.
2. The effect of climate, soil condition, occupations, etc. on language.
3. Contempt for the language of the farmers.
4. The fluctuation in recognition of language registers and local and regional varieties, taking place more or less gradually, but which had its turning point especially during the French Revolution.

2.1 *The lingua Adamica*

For ages philosophers, early Christian Church Fathers and similar authorities spread the conviction that originally there was only one language, the lingua Adamica. This language was confused and divided into a number of languages during the building of the tower of Babel. Although over the centuries more and

more languages became known that were mutually divergent to such an extent that a belief in one original language was no longer justifiable, this conviction has not altogether been abandoned, but rather modified. It seems that people were afraid of rejecting rigorously the authority of the Bible. In 1692 the influential Leibniz, who lived from 1646 till 1718, declared that all European tribes had migrated from the Black Sea region (Borst 1961, 1477). (See the map reproduced in Lambert ten Kate, *Aenleiding*). And in 1782, almost a century later, Herder wrote that there must have been a proto-language (Borst 1961, 1524). Until Leibniz this was believed to be Hebrew (Arens 1969, 70). Even about 1850 Rudolf von Raumer tried to find evidence for this belief (Arens 1969, 239-242). In any case, until the end of the 18th century there was a tendency to find a common base for all or for many languages. The historical linguistics of the 19th century did the same for the Indo-European languages. It is true that the linguists did not support the belief in one proto-language, but the method of determining linguistic affinity remained more or less the same. And lexicological considerations continued to be applicable.

The fact that Gothic was known helped to encourage, as early as the 16th century, the understanding of a possible linguistic affinity so that the existence of a few larger language families that had developed from one language was assumed (Van de Velde 1966). That proto-language could have been one's own language. The Dutchman Becanus (1518-1572) was convinced that that proto-language was Dutch (Borst 1960, 1216).

Borst points out that Becanus was one of the first writers to express nationalism in linguistics. By doing so Becanus opposed the older conception of Hebrew as a proto-language with the younger languages originating from it. His conviction was probably closely linked to the sense of identity of peoples and nations.

We can see how important this nationalism proved to be some centuries afterwards during the French Revolution. But Becanus was considered a fool by linguists of his own time, like the Frenchman Scaliger did, who lived from 1540 till 1609 and who taught at the University of Leiden. Due to the commercial voyages of the Portuguese and the Dutch to far-away countries, more and more unknown languages were found, languages for which no affinity to any known languages could be determined. On the other hand the contempt for these languages of uncivilized tribes – because people did not understand them – was an important cause of language nationalism (Borst 1960, 1221, 1305).

In contrast to older convictions and in accord with modern ones all languages are in principle equivalent to each other, but this has been recognized recently only. But many a layman still believes that there are defective languages, with an incomplete and inadequate structure.

2.2 *Living conditions*

A second very persistent element is the following: accidental circumstances like climate and soil condition were thought to have an influence on the character of the language. Borst cites several places where this conviction is expressed. Epicurus, who lived in the 4th and 3rd century B.C., already commented on it in the same sense (Arens 1969,18). Here I will restrict myself to Lambert ten Kate⁴ and Weiland, the Dutch grammarian of around 1800. Two passages, the first from Ten Kate and the other from Weiland show to how great an extent the latter was influenced by the former. Ten Kate writes: '... indien men hier nu nog bijvoegt, hoe de Volkeren na de land- en luchtstreek, die ze komen te bewoonen een verschillende driftsbeweging en gematigheid aannemen, waer door ook 't eene volk, dat zagt van aert word, een zoetvloeyenden tongeslag en woordleiding in zyn spraek zal betragten en beminnen, terwyl het andere, dat streng is van ommevang, de hardigheid als iets manlijks in zyn taelvoering behartigt, zo is ligtelijk te begrijpen dat door lankheid van tijd na 't uitbreiden der volkeren niet alleen een onderscheid van dialect moet ontstaan, maer ook een onderscheid in de Uitdrukkingen en Spreekwijzen' (Lambert ten Kate 1723, I, 21). (... considering how tribes adopt a different disposition and moderation in adjustment to region and climate so that the speech of one tribe is soft and pleasant and that of another tribe harsh and discordant as an expression of its manliness, it is easy to understand that not only a distinction between dialects comes into being, but also between proverbs and phrases). And Weiland says in his grammar, published about eighty years later: 'Maer er heeft ook bij een en hetzelfde volk nog andere verscheidenheid in taal plaats: luchtstreek, levenswijs, gesteldheid des lands, bezigheid der inwoneren, en vele andere en plaatselijke toevallige omstandigheden zijn, zelfs in de enkele gewesten van ons land, onderscheiden, en hebben een aanmerkelijken invloed op de taal. En uit deze verscheidenheid ontstaan de verschillende tongvallen, welke in de taal van ieder volk plaats hebben (Weiland 1805 Inl.§ 5). (But within one and the same people another variety in language occurs as well: climate, way of life, condition of the soil, occupations of the inhabitants and many other local and accidental circumstances are different even in the few regions of our country, and they have a considerable influence on language. And from this variety the different accents originate that occur in the language of every nation). Here Weiland uses the word *tongvallen*, one of the words gradually replacing the word *dialect*. Did Rousseau mean this when he wrote in his Confessions: 'Les climats, les saisons, les sons, les couleurs, l'obscurité, la lumière, les éléments, les aliments, le bruit, le silence, le mouvement, le repos, tout agit sur notre machine et sur notre âme par conséquent'?

Still in the 20th century Van Ginneken, a very well-known Dutch linguist who died in 1945, attributed the missing *h* in the dialects of fishermen, for instance of Zeeland, to the fact that this consonant had no function at all because it could not be heard anyway when the fishermen had to scream against the wind. Similar statements may seem absurd, but has it ever been proved that they are?

2.3 Contempt for the language of farmers and country-people

The idea is very old that the language of farmers and country-people is inferior compared with the language of the nobility and the clergy, and later on of towns-people and the better educated. It is true that the work of a farmer is considered original and essential, but that is exactly why his speaking-competence is limited, which is made even worse by the fact that he uses a dialect. The appreciation of the farmer, or the lack of it, changes according to region and time. But the nobility, priests, monks and later the bourgeoisie especially, placed him low on the social scale because of his difficult living conditions and his poverty. In the Netherlands the appreciation of the farmer changed somewhat during the Second World War, when the towns-people were very much dependent on those who could provide them with food, but immediately after the war all appreciation disappeared like snow in summer. And today, when the farmer has become an important manager, investing enormously in land and machines, his dialect is no longer considered uncivilized but in fact it is still thought to be impolite if he does not adapt to the person he is speaking to, who feels quite superior as a townsman, even though he is only a wage slave.

2.4 Fluctuations in the recognition of language registers and local and regional varieties

Before the 19th century the prevalent purpose was to standardize the written language and establish the rules for it. Until the end of the Middle Ages Latin was the written language, but in the 16th century, when the vernacular began to oust Latin in the Netherlands, a standard was cultivated for the written language, but yet variants in spoken language were accepted. However, the extending of a spoken standard language was a guiding principle build up towards the end of the 18th century. But nevertheless in previous ages people had been interested in the spoken language for different reasons. Arens mentions an Icelandic tract of the 12th century as the oldest work discussing the phonological aspect. At the end of the 16th century the Dane Aarhus and in the 17th century the Scotchman Hume linked spelling and pronunciation (Arens 1969, 49-55). Arens obviously did not know the Dutchman Montanus, who lived in the 17th century. For he would

certainly have been interested in the work of this Dutch pioneer of phonetics if he had known it (Montanus 1964). But as I wrote at the beginning of this paragraph, it was not until the end of the 18th century that the phonetic-phonological concept began to play a part in the development of the spoken standard language.

As early as the 16th century De Heuiter tried to compose a supra-regional Dutch put together from a few dialects (Dibbets 1968, 176). A predominance of the dialect spoken in Holland can already be found. In the 17th century linguists and authors developed a standard for the written language in the Netherlands. Orthography as well as words and grammar were considered. After the abuse of foreign words by the rhetoricians of the 16th century, there was a need for purism. During the last decades of the 17th century the attempts to impose regulation on language became stricter and left less room for personal and regional variation. The rules for spelling, morphology, syntax and use of words are derived from the language usage of Dutch writers, that is to say of writers who use the variant or variety of Holland.⁵ In the 18th century Huydecoper in particular proceeded in the direction of standardizing the written language. He discussed the Ovid translation by Vondel line by line. He proved thereby to be a conscientious linguist who spelled consistently, but he did not draw up a systematically ordered linguistic description.

To him the written language is the only standard. He wrote: 'De regels uit het schrijven gehaald, hebben meer gezag' (Huydecoper 1730, 71). (The rules of the written language have more authority). And: 'We zeggen dikwijls, en herhaalen hier weder, dat het dagelijksche gebruik van spreken, een blinde leidsman is in het rechte gebruik der woorden te bepaalen' (Huydecoper 1730, 136). (We often say and repeat here again that the everyday way of speaking is a blind guide to the right use of words). Huydecoper certainly had a great influence on written language in later years, but Lambert ten Kate was far more important in the education of the unskilled writers who formed the majority of the population of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. One could call Ten Kate the opposite of Huydecoper. Ten Kate thought the spoken vernacular to be far more important than the written language. He not only glorified speech (Ten Kate 1723, I, 6), but also paid attention to differences in sound and composed a phonetic alphabet in two different ways; he rewrote a poem in both alphabets. He made in fact a linguistic description which was greatly admired by Weiland.

Shortly before and during the French Revolution these 'eternal' elements are emphasized differently. The proto-language faded into the background, but linguistic affinity, the conviction of large language families developing from an

older language, became more prominent and was confirmed by the historical linguistic school that can best be identified with the name of Grimm.

Language nationalism became stronger. This phenomenon was connected with the establishment of the nation states. In the Netherlands this took place after the French period, which can be considered as a run-up period. Not until then was a central government established that could take general measures. The importance of a language to the state was more emphasized and this speeded up the development of standard languages. Such standard languages began by being the speech of the educated and eventually came into general use. The contempt for the language of farmers and country people seemed to become greater.

3 The standard language

3.1 *The dissemination of the standard language*

In the decades before and after 1800 only a minority of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Holland, now called the Netherlands, spoke the dialect of the province of Holland, which was being considered more and more as the standard language. Primary education was abominably bad, there was no training school for teachers and until far into the 19th century teachers for primary education were recruited mainly from the lower middle class, a social environment in which dialect was mostly the daily speech. Especially in the first part of the 19th century voices were heard that the lower classes should be better educated, that they should learn to read the Bible, and that they should be educated in the Christian virtues. Mainly they should be able to understand government regulations. To accomplish this, education and teacher training had to improve. And everyone had to learn to speak and understand the same language as was propagated in France. In the Netherlands the historical development left no other possibility than to spread the *dialect* of Holland, i.e. the daily speech of the higher classes in Holland. I cannot repeat this too frequently.

To teach this variant a uniform spelling had to be fixed, which was done by Siegenbeek around 1800. His guide line was that Holland-language of the higher classes I mentioned already. But other principles, like etymology, played a part in this spelling too. The relationship between these elements is not very clear in Siegenbeek; the etymology and the spelling used by former writers often seem to be more important to him than pronunciation. Otherwise he would have spelled the long *ee* and *oo* as diphthongs. Or Siegenbeek did not have the refined hearing which Huydecoper thought essential. Lambert ten Kate stated in 1723 that the Hollander had a tendency to diphthongize (Ten Kate 1723, I, 118). A hundred

and fifty years later, in 1886, this was also stated by Eldar, one of our most famous speech therapists (Daan 1989, 27). Today the Hollander still diphthongizes and he still does not hear it, the same was probably true with regard to Siegenbeek.

A few years later Weiland provided the grammar for the standard language. He also followed the Holland dialect as he calls it, but a few times he makes a choice which deviates from it. In Weiland's time most Hollanders did not make a distinction between *liggen* (to lie) and *leggen* (to lay). But Weiland chooses both *liggen* (to lie) and *leggen* (to lay). Another example is the spelling of *bracht* (brought) for *brocht* (Daan/Francken 1972, 2). Siegenbeek still acknowledged *brocht* as well as *bracht*, but Weiland decided for *bracht*. A few examples can be attributed to the need for more clarity.

Of the cultivated language, for which the spelling and grammar rules were laid down by Siegenbeek and Weiland, we mainly know the written form and only a few details of the spoken standard, as they were occasionally discussed by grammarians, education experts like school inspectors, and a single speech therapist. For more details I refer to my publication about the 19th century (Daan 1989).

3.2 *Dialect becoming more and more substandard*

From Weiland's grammar and from other statements, we may conclude that the popular meaning of the word *dialect* did not change (Daan 1989, 22/23). Until the first part of the 20th century *dialect* remained, in the layman's opinion, a pronunciation-variant of the standard language, which nowadays is called Standard Dutch. It was still generally believed that the dialects had been developed from an elder mother tongue. A uniform Low-German was considered as this mother tongue in this part of Europe. As late as around 1950 a journalist of a leading Dutch newspaper told me that dialects were degenerations of Standard Dutch. Though the conviction slowly gained ground that dialects are older than Standard Dutch and that they are languages with specific but related structures, many 'Hollanders', inhabitants of the provinces of South- and North-Holland, in spite of this, believe that their pronunciation is socially the best.

Of course this is also a kind of nationalism dictated by social and economic causes. After Antwerp had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards in 1584, the province of Holland became one of the wealthiest and most powerful provinces, especially thanks to international trade. It became and remained militarily powerful, culturally important, and the seat of government.

The prestige gap between standard language and dialect grew larger in the 19th century. The standard language was propagated and taught as the only language that counted; the dialects were rejected for more than one reason: dia-

lect was considered to be a pronunciation variant, using dialect was contrary to patriotism and dialect speakers belonged to population groups that were looked down on because of their lack of education. Education experts and higher classes seemed to think that it did not require much effort to learn the 'right', that is the Holland-pronunciation and thereby to master the standard language. There are still Hollanders, nowadays better be called 'Randstedelingen', i.e. Western Holland urbanites, who think that six years of primary school education should be sufficient to master Dutch for children who speak a regional dialect as their mother tongue. In the early part of the 19th century authorities and higher classes thought that a few years of school education was sufficient to become 'beschaafd' (cultured), as it was put then. Considering how insignificant education was at that time one can imagine that this view was based on utter ignorance.

From the end of the 18th until the middle of the 20th century, the opinion that the language of Holland was socially the best dialect and that it therefore should count as the standard language, reduced all other colloquial languages in the Netherlands and in Dutch-speaking Belgium to phonetic variants of the Holland dialect, deficient variants with only a limited vocabulary. This conception was rammed into the heads of the boys and girls training to be teachers, and into the heads of the young children of primary schools.⁶ Even in the first decades of this century, Van Ginneken asserted that a manual worker knew no more than eight hundred words. What he wanted to say was that a man like that, with his deficient regional or social dialect, did not have great power of expression.

Fortunately there were also people with a more positive approach who stood up for regional ways of speaking. The first learned study of dialects was published in 1822 by Laurman on the dialect of Groningen (Laurman 1822). In the Introduction he wrote, in accordance with the beliefs of that time, that the Frisian and Groningen dialects were possibly 'coarser and less cultured' than dialects in other regions of our country, but in order to justify his studies he said that they are less corrupted. Behrns, who wrote an article about the dialect of Twente in 1842, defended this too even on learned grounds. He added that linguistic studies no longer existed of the study of one privileged dialect that was upgraded to written language, i.e. a standard language, but that studies of regional dialects were considered being of equal learned standard. In these dialect studies voices were heard speaking of the growth of a regional consciousness.

'Voices' is the wrong word. For these remarks can only be read and have been written by better educated persons. I have not been able to find anything about the opinion of the uneducated country people. In the 19th century, in spite of the increasing quantity of scholarly studies of dialects dealing with both the phonological and lexicological differences, dialects, in the eyes of the common

man, remained variants of the standard language, the variant as it was spoken in the province of Holland.

3.3 *Theory and practice*

In the foregoing it has become clear that at the beginning of the 19th century the spoken dialect of Holland was regarded as the standard, but because of the teaching methods it really was the written variant of the Holland dialect. In addition a literary and official language had been developed, which was very artificial and had become more and more remote from the written vernacular. About the middle of the 19th century authors like Jacob van Lennep and the linguist Taco Roorda already resisted this, but as late as 1878 Conrad Busken Huet said at a congress in Paris that there were two languages in the Netherlands. And so in the last decades of the 19th century a new movement began, which wanted the spoken cultural language as the standard and acknowledged regional variants of the standard.

In those days people were especially tolerant towards members of the more educated groups. There are some remarks to that effect in publications, but I also have met people myself who were born in the final decades of the 19th century who had a recognizable regional accent, but were not criticized for it. But they were always intellectuals. I do not know any stories about people being rejected for an appointment or about professors and ministers with a regional accent being ridiculed, because they had been born and educated outside the province of Holland and had a pronunciation of Dutch different from that of their colleagues from Holland. This again applies to the higher classes, but up to the present day many an applicant of the lower classes suffers from the harmful consequences (Daan 1989, 4-6).

4 The future

It is impossible to predict the trends in the 21st century, for at this moment the door to the future is closed. I can put the key into the lock, turn it and open the door for you. And then I can point out the characteristics of the landscape in front of you, but I am unable to extend into the future the lines I saw in the past. I have formed my picture of the past from a limited number of data from the writing minority that were passed down to us. As to the present we are being confused by the multitude of contradictory opinions and do not know which way things will develop. Therefore I will only point out some important changes.

Since the beginning of this century linguistics has expanded and broadened. Linguists and laymen know, or at least are in a position to know, that dialects are not corruptions of standard languages and that many dialects are older than standard languages. The connection between state and language has become closer, but we know that nowadays one standard language in one state is more the exception than the rule. Sociolinguistics has spread knowledge about the great variety which is found in all languages because of the many different language functions, each requiring its own style. By means of education and of the media this is getting gradually better known.

Has all this knowledge contributed to a decrease in contempt for minority languages, which dialects really are? I do not think so. My journey through the past has shown me that social and economic circumstances and the balance of power are decisive for the predominance of a language. And I believe this still is so. For quite some time I have wondered why the southern dialects of Brabant and Limburg but Flemish too, are on the way up. Only authority could provide a sensible answer.

The influence of Dutch government officials is the best explanation with regard to North-Brabant and Limburg. We have had quite a few ministers with a southern accent in the last few years. Mr. van Agt was the first; he spoke in a formal style with a regional accent, a glaring contrast according to public opinion. After him a few more followed. Not only can they be heard, but they can also be seen on television. Great appreciation seems unnecessary. People laughed at Mr. van Agt quite a few times or they spoke disapprovingly about him, and at his first important public appearance he was a total failure. Not long ago he was described, in a quality paper, as 'de malle Van Agt, die met zijn onnavolgbare Ollie B. Bommeltaal weliswaar vele kijkers en kiezers wist te vertederen, maar wiens gedrag anderzijds volstrekt onvoorspelbaar was – niet in de laatste plaats voor de CDA-top zelf'. (the silly Van Agt, who moved spectators and voters by his inimitable O.B.B. language [O.B.B. is a comic strip person who speaks in a formal style], but whose behaviour was unpredictable, for the leaders of his own political party too). Later the general opinion improved somewhat, when his behaviour improved, when people became accustomed to his accent, but also when he was photographed on a racing bike.

Things are a little different at a somewhat lower level, but there too hierarchical characteristics can be recognized. To many people a television appearance seems to be a life fulfilment. The person who manages this is soon considered a well-known Dutchman. A television presenter is such a person. A few Flemish presenters who have also been on Dutch television are very popular and I think that this explains the fact that lately the Flemish accent is on the way up.

The third accent that recently seems to have gained support, is the substandard of the Holland dialect. It is quite possible that the language variant used by some successful sportsmen was responsible for this.

It depends on developments like these what will happen to language predominance in the Netherlands and the rest of the world. Self-esteem of minority languages will certainly play a part, but is not sufficient in itself. Language values are determined to a large extent by money, power, authority and popularity, forces that have a controlling influence, almost without speaking or writing. The existence of hierarchies also seems to belong to those 'eternal' elements.

This end would be rather disappointing for the regional and social dialects. I expect that these dialects will acquire other functions. It is remarkable that popular songs in dialect are heard more and more. Songs in the substandard of Amsterdam, of the famous Jordaan for instance, were sung half a century ago, but nowadays regional dialects and regional accents are also popular in this function. About fifteen years ago the rock group Normaal became very popular, at first in their own region, the Achterhoek, but gradually in a larger part of our country. Young people are no longer afraid of their somewhat coarse expressions. Other groups with quite different styles have followed. I expect they will gain appreciation. If I am right, the regional and social dialects will gain new territory with again an intimate function.

Notes

- ¹ Translations of Dutch passages are not literal, but just a reproduction of the essence.
- ² In other contexts this word has a somewhat different meaning. At present I am working at a paper on the meaning of the words *dialect*, *uitspraak*, *sprekwijze* a.s.o. in former times.
- ³ See 2.1.
- ⁴ See 1.
- ⁵ I suppose that 17th century writers considered their *dialect* as a variant; modern linguists will prefer variety.
- ⁶ Daan 1989 *passim*.

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