

Intertextuality and translations in 17th-century Dutch newspapers: a study into early modern newspaper editing practices

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Studies from a cultural historical perspective have shown that publishers of 17th-century Dutch newspaper made conscious choices concerning the style, format, price and content of their newspapers (Der Weduwen, 2018), yet from a linguistic perspective it is sometimes assumed that no editing was done on newspapers from this time period due to time constraints (e.g. Demske, 2022). Unfortunately, none of the original sources of news reports in Dutch 17th-century newspapers (letters that were sent to the editors, diplomatic dispatches, etc.) are currently available to either confirm or negate this. However, just like today, newspapers in this time period often published the same news stories (even across language borders, e.g.: Hillgärtner, 2018). These stories form a gateway into studying whether newspaper publishers edited incoming news: working from the assumption that the stories came from the same written source, a linguistic comparison of these same stories in different newspapers can shed light on possible language editing practices. In this presentation, I take one article, published in two Dutch newspapers, the *Amsterdamse Courant* and the *Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant*, on the same date, June 26th 1694, as a starting point. The articles are the same in terms of content, but show many linguistic differences, including in the use of the reflexive pronoun *zich* ('self'). I use this pronoun as a case study to study possible editing of these news articles, in terms of both orthography as well as morphosyntax.

Using the new Couranten Corpus (2022), a corpus containing Northern Dutch newspapers from 1618 to 1700 (ca. 19 million words), I map the spelling of the reflexive pronoun *zich* over the course of the century and over 13 different newspapers. The spelling of this word differs significantly between these newspapers, providing a first indication that newspapers were edited orthographically.

Additionally, I use this corpus to trace the use of *zich* as opposed to other reflexive strategies common in Early Modern Dutch. In Middle Dutch, reflexivity was usually expressed using regular personal pronouns (e.g. Mooijaart & Van der Wal, 2011: 46), and only in the 17th century, the specific reflexive form *zich* became the standard in third person (e.g. Van der Sijs, 2021: 429). This pronoun is generally accepted as being a grammatical borrowing from neighbouring High German *sich* (e.g. Postma, 2011: 139). As Dutch newspapers were closely connected to their German counterparts in this time period – the genre as a whole was imported from the German-speaking area, news reports were often direct translations from news in German papers, and news from German-speaking areas also came to Dutch newspapers in the form of letters from correspondents who lived there (e.g. Der Weduwen, 2017; Van Oostendorp & Van der Sijs, 2019: 29-31) – this pronoun can be used to study possible German influence on early modern Dutch newspaper language. In a collaboration with Freek Van de Velde (KU Leuven), I compared the use of *zich* in news reports from German-speaking areas to domestic news and news reports from other language areas (de Vos & Van de Velde, 2023). Generalized Linear and Generalized Additive Mixed Models used to analyse the results of this comparison demonstrate a higher chance of the use of *zich* instead of regular pronouns in news reports from German-speaking areas. Aside from indicating German influence on Dutch 17th-century newspaper language, these results suggest that the possible editing detected on the orthography of *zich* may not have included the morphosyntactic level to the same extent.

References

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