

# Cultural identity and language in the Low Countries<sup>1</sup>

*Ludo Beheydt*

*Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium*

## 1. Introduction

The name ‘Low Countries’ has been used since the Middle Ages to indicate a region that more or less coincides with the present-day Benelux countries: Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The Low Countries do not constitute a political unit and neither do they share a unique language. Dutch, French, German, and Luxembourgish are spoken, as official languages, in that area.<sup>2</sup> Only the Netherlands (also known as Holland), and Flanders (the Dutch speaking part of Belgium that constitutes an official Community and Region in the Federal State of Belgium) share a common language, officially named *Nederlands* (‘Dutch’). But do they also share a cultural identity? In his famous 1882 lecture titled *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?* (‘What is a nation?’), the French philosopher and historian Ernest Renan wrote: “*La langue invite à se réunir; elle n’y force pas*” (‘Language invites people to unite, but it does not force them to do so’). Flanders and the Netherlands share a common language, but do they also share a cultural identity? That is the complex issue I want to explore in this paper.

Since they share a common language, it has often been claimed that Flanders and the Netherlands also share a cultural identity. Indeed, for a long time – at least in Flanders – it was believed that sharing a language means precisely that, i.e., sharing a cultural identity (De Tollenaere 1981). The famous slogan of the Flemish movement, *De tael is gansch het volk* (‘The language is the entire

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on the keynote lecture pronounced at CAANS 2022. It summarizes key points of the author’s monograph published in 2002, *Één en toch apart. Kunst en cultuur van de Nederlanden* (‘One and yet separate. Art and culture of the Low Countries’), as well as of subsequent publications on the same topic.

<sup>2</sup> To the list of official languages can be added West Frisian, which has an official status in the province of Friesland alongside with Dutch. The Low Countries’ linguistic landscape is also comprised of various regional varieties of the four major official languages, and of multiple immigrant languages. This paper, however, focuses on Dutch, the language shared as a standard language by the Netherlands and Flanders, and mainly examines how the Flemish, as an ethnic group, position themselves culturally vis-à-vis their neighbours to the North, i.e., the Dutch.

people'), coined by Prudens Van Duyse (1804-1859) (De Tollenaere 1981, 190), states it bluntly. Sharing a language is sharing a cultural identity. But is that so?

To answer this question, we must first define what we mean by 'cultural identity.' For the purpose of this paper, I will define cultural identity as the group identity that members of a community attribute to themselves on the basis of "core values" (Smolicz 1981) they consider as the most fundamental components of their "imagined community" (Anderson 1983).

Cultural identity is imagined as it is a mental construct existing so to speak only in the minds of its members. Members attribute it to themselves on the basis of believed common characteristics. It is thus the result of an attribution process. As such, it is moreover a dynamic construction that changes over time as the always temporary result of an ever-changing attribution process. My idea of being a Fleming today is totally different from that of my seventeenth-century compatriots. Cultural identity is hence neither an innate trait nor a stable heritage, but a flexible construction.

The self-attributed core values function as symbols of group identity and serve at the same time as boundary creating criteria. As Fredrik Barth (1994, 16) rightly claimed: "An imagined community is promoted by making a few diacritica [core values] highly salient and symbolic, that is, by an active construction of a boundary. This will always be joint work done by members of both the contrasting groups." Thus, cultural identity is always created in a process of 'us' versus 'them,' where 'them' can be a homogeneous group or not.

The selection of core values is not haphazard: "whenever people feel that there is a direct link between their identity as a group and what they regard as the most crucial and distinguishing element of their culture, the element concerned becomes a core value for the group" (Smolicz 1981, 77).

In general, the nature of cultural identities and their relative stability are determined by the same core values, though sometimes with a different hierarchy and with a different priority, and very often they are formulated in antagonisms.

There is growing consensus that the core values of cultural identity are:

1. *A common language*: a language is at the same time a pair of spectacles and a set of blinders, it unites and it separates. On the one hand, sharing a language implies creating a common universe of meaning and thereby creating a community. On the other hand, it excludes those who do not speak 'our language' and thereby creates a boundary.
2. *History*: being rooted in the same great past and referring to a common history (sharing a myth and roots) promotes shared identity. A cultural identity always fosters an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), i.e., a largely mythical history in which certain memorial places,

*“lieux de mémoire”* (‘sites of memory’) (Nora 1997), have a symbolic meaning.

3. *A shared tradition as the product of a “mental programming”* (Hofstede 2001): sharing a way of living created through a socialisation process of education, school and media also contributes to a feeling of a common cultural identity.
4. *Religion*: religion is often a core value of cultural identity, as sharing a religion implies sharing a set of common norms, values and beliefs and taking part in the same meaningful rituals.
5. *Civic society (State)*: as being subject to the same laws creates specific bonds and relations, it has an enormous impact on feelings of belonging.
6. *Art*: art is always to some extent an expression of a common world of signifiers, sometimes consciously so, sometimes unconsciously.

Looking at these core values in Flanders and the Netherlands and seeing whether they are shared or whether there is a boundary, we might decide whether the Low Countries form one cultural identity.

## 2. Language

Officially, Flanders and the Netherlands share the same language: *Nederlands* (‘Dutch’). There is, however, a difference in the significance of language for the cultural identity of Flanders and the Netherlands. In Flanders, ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, language has had an important symbolic value. It was and still is a core value of Flemish identity.

In the Netherlands, language is largely relegated to its instrumental value: it is a communication tool, not a core value of Dutch identity. Not once since the creation of the Dutch Republic in the 16<sup>th</sup> century have the Dutch had to defend their language. The Flemish, on the other hand, have always been engaged in a language struggle against French, the language of their great neighbour, France, but also of their French-speaking Belgian compatriots. As a consequence, in Flanders, language acts as a symbolic marker of identity whereas in the Netherlands language is foremost an instrument, a communication tool. But, stating that in the Netherlands language is mainly an instrument does not imply that it has no importance for the Dutch people. In the summer of 2019, the *Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau* (‘Social and Cultural Planning Bureau’) published a report on national identity under the title *Denkend aan Nederland* (‘Thinking of the Netherlands’), which revealed that the Dutch language is considered by the Dutch as their most important characteristic. Only, it lacks the symbolic value so typically associated with language by the Flemish.

Yet, in the Netherlands, language once had an important symbolic value too. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the nation was being built, the Dutch language was the cement of the nation. It served as a means of identification against the language of the Spanish oppressor. It was also the language of the officially translated Bible, the so-called *Statenbijbel* ('States Bible') (1637), which stimulated the feeling of Dutch cultural identity.

The whole intellectual and leading elite of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was eager to make the language a symbol of the new nation (Beheydt 2010): Simon Stevin created a Dutch language for science, Hugo Grotius for legal matters, and several authors contributed to a great Dutch literature. Thus, for instance, Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft (1581-1647), the son of the mayor of Amsterdam, wanted Dutch to sound as beautifully and as musically as Italian and after having made his Grand Tour<sup>3</sup> through Italy and having read Petrarca, he created grand sounding Dutch sonnets: "*Mijn lief, mijn lief, mijn lief, zo sprak mijn lief mij toe*" ('My love, my love, my love, thus spoke my love to me') (Hooft 2012, 193), and the merchant poet Roemer Visscher (1547-1620) wrote in the introduction to his *Sinnepoppen* ('Emblems'), that he wanted to prove that "*onse tale genoech beslepen en bedisselt is om de Voordansers te volgen met eenen lustigen tred*" ('that our language is refined and civilised enough to follow the lead dancers [i.e., Latin, Italian, and French] with pleasant pace') (Visscher 1949, V). Hence, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Dutch became the national language of the young Republic and served to construct a symbolic boundary against the Spanish oppressor.

In Flanders, it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that language became symbolically linked to Flemish cultural identity. In the Belgian context of 1830, when Belgium was created, the position of the Flemish language was threatened by the overwhelming presence of French, the *de facto* official language of the newly minted State. From that moment on, the Flemish had to defend their minoritized language against the prestige of the imposed dominant language. They had to fight for their minoritized language to be made a language of equal status, an official language of the newly created nation.

Belgium was and still is a country divided by its languages. Belgium was originally founded according to the 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist principle, *une foi, une loi, une langue* ('one religion, one law, one language') as a French speaking nation: "*Il est évident que la seule langue des Belges doit être le français*" ('It is obvious that the only language of the Belgians must be French') as Charles Rogier, the first Minister of Justice, proclaimed in 1832 in a letter to Jean Raikem (Smet-Castra 2007, 57). The Flemish have had to fight for equal language rights. And it was under the guidance of a lower middle class of priests, schoolmasters, and clerks

---

<sup>3</sup> A trip abroad undertaken by young upper-class men as a formative experience.

that the Flemish Movement gradually attained language rights. Guido Gezelle, the famous priest poet formulated the belligerent spirit poignantly: *“De Vlaamsche tale is wonderzoet, voor die heur geen geweld en doet”* (‘The Flemish language is magically sweet, for those who do not violate it’) (Gezelle 1998, 36). It was only after a double series of enforced language laws of the 1930s and the 1960s that Dutch finally achieved the status of a recognized official language of culture in Belgium. One must not forget that it is only since 1973 that Dutch (‘*Nederlands*’), but not Flemish (‘*Vlaams*’),<sup>4</sup> is the official language of the Flemish Community.

### 3. History

Apart from officially sharing a language do Flanders and the Netherlands share a common history? For, as Johan Huizinga already knew:

*Een nationaal gevoel, dat zich niet spiegelen kan in de roerloosheid van het verleden, mist den grondslag van zijn wezen. Het leven van een natie is historie, zooals het leven van den enkelen mensch historie is.*

(Huizinga 1935, 3)<sup>5</sup>

Being able to fall back on a common great past, having common roots in history is essential for a cultural identity. A community is in need of *“lieux de mémoire”* (Nora 1997), mythical places of remembrance. But Flanders and the Netherlands, though objectively largely sharing a common history, do not refer to the same ‘great past.’

Flanders refers to the medieval *Guldensporenslag* (‘the Battle of the Golden Spurs’) of 1302, when Flanders, led by the mythical Lion of Flanders (‘*Leeuw van Vlaanderen*’), beat the French army. The Netherlands, in turn, refers to the Revolt (‘*Opstand*’) (1568-1648) as its *lieu de mémoire*, that is the Dutch revolt against Spain and the foundation of the Dutch Republic.

In Flanders, a romantic novel written by Hendrik Conscience in 1839 about the Battle of the Golden Spurs, led by the brave knight, the Lion of Flanders, created that mythical invented tradition the Flemish people could eternally be proud of. The symbolism created in that novel is still alive today, not only in the flag and the anthem, but even in the stylization of the official Flemish stationary.

---

<sup>4</sup> As Flemish was not a unified language but only a conglomerate of regional variants, the choice of Dutch as the official language was considered *“een vraag van welbegrepen eigenbelang”* (‘a question of enlightened self-interest’) (De Vreese 1909, 45), not only to overcome reigning particularism but also so that the language of the Flemish Community would be able to successfully impose itself as a language of culture next to French (Geerts 1975, 119).

<sup>5</sup> A national consciousness, that cannot reflect back to the motionlessness of the past, misses the basis of its essence. History is the life of a nation, just like history is the life of each single person.

The Netherlands cherishes the Revolt against Spain. Ever since the Revolt started, halfway the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a national feeling has been created in opposition to the oppressive Spanish rule. The famous Renaissance poet, Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, offered as his ultimate cultural present to the new nation, the Dutch *lieu de mémoire* for future generations: its own monumental history of the Revolt against Spain. His *Nederlandsche historien* ('History of the Netherlands') in 27 volumes gave the Dutch their great past, with William of Orange, as the *vader des vaderlands* ('the father of the fatherland').

#### 4. Tradition: "mental programming"

For all cultures, cultural identity is also conditioned by a transmission of knowledge, ideas, patterns of thinking and feeling, a transmission that is started in early childhood. This "mental programming" (Hofstede 2001) of beliefs and practices, the nation's brainwash, is different in Flanders and the Netherlands. Flanders and the Netherlands have a separate educational system, with a different educational practice. Teaching methods in Flanders tend, traditionally at least, to be authoritative and teacher-centred, whereas the Netherlands tends to favour an interactive and student-centred approach. Consequently, in Flanders, children are educated to become authority respecting adults, whereas in the Netherlands children are encouraged to become assertive individuals. Tradition is constitutive of identity in that it provides a uniquely meaningful position in the world.

#### 5. Religion: Calvinist Netherlands versus Catholic Flanders

Although the Netherlands like most countries in Western Europe is highly secularized and religiously diverse today, the civil religion<sup>6</sup> still is through and through Calvinist. More than everything else, Calvinism is the deepest background of the national moralizing tendency, the missionary urge, the equality mania,

---

<sup>6</sup> 'Civil religion' is a concept first introduced by Rousseau (1762). It can be defined as "the collective piety a society generates [associating] elements of civic religion (the political dimension) with elements of a common religion (the cultural dimension)" (Willaime 1993, 571). In the Dutch interpretation Mak (1992) attributes to the concept, it is "*het grotendeels onuitgesproken conglomeraat van opvattingen, waarden en idealen dat vroeger werd uitgedragen door de kerk en dat tegenwoordig de permanente ondertoon vormt in de opinies van kranten, de debatten in de Kamer, de nieuwsselectie van het NOS-journaal, de borden van het ANWB, de etalages van de Hema en de duizend andere signalen die dagelijks op de burger afkomen*" ('the largely unspoken conglomerate of views, values and ideals that in the past were propagated by the church and that now constitute the permanent undertone of opinions found in newspaper articles, the debates in Parliament, the news items discussed in the broadcasts of the Dutch public broadcaster NOS, the road signs of the Royal Dutch Touring Club ANWB, and of the windows of shops, such as Hema, and thousands of other signals daily assailing the public').

sobriety, frugality, the belief in the written word of the law and the proverbial public modesty (Mak 1992, Couwenberg 2001).

In Flanders, on the other hand, the civil religion is still Catholic. True, other religions are practised on its soil, but Flanders remains profoundly Catholic in its political behaviour and in its lifestyle. Catholics live with margins, for there is always the confession, the sacrament of forgiveness. Hacking is a way of life. Compromising is the Belgian way of survival. The law is not really the law, it is a kind request (Droste 1993, Van Istendael 1993, De Foer 2001). And there is an historically inspired baroque desire to show off. The Counter-Reformation spirit of Baroque display still characterizes public life and the Catholic separation from the Calvinist North has created a lifestyle abyss between the North and the South: “Two distinct lifestyles and sequences of historical experience developed next to each other but in isolation from each other, a separate northern and southern cultural identity” (Shetter 1997, 175), and I would add: steeped in opposing religious beliefs.

## **6. The nation-state**

Belonging to a different nation-state means living up to different standards that structure the behaviour of the members of a society in a specific way. Every state imposes forces of constraint that shape the cultural identity in their own way.

Flanders is a Community and a Region in the Federal State of Belgium with its own laws. The Netherlands is a separate kingdom with different laws and standards. Laws and regulations create communities with specific characteristics and feelings of identity.

## **7. Cultural identity in art**

Difference in cultural identity which has its roots in history, tradition, religion, and nation also finds its expression and reflection in art. Art is a core expression of cultural identity, willingly or unwillingly. In whatever way we define culture, art is always part of it. Art is a creation of social meaning for the society in which it originates, and, in that sense, it may be taken as a core value of cultural identity (Beheydt 2014). That explicitly holds true for the Netherlands and Flanders. The international fame both enjoy is largely linked to their art. In fact, I would argue that the Dutch and the Flemings are best known internationally for their art. There is not an important museum in the world that does not have a section of Dutch and Flemish art. Rembrandt, Vermeer, Van Gogh, Mondrian are undeniably associated with Dutch culture, as are Van Eyck, Breughel, Rubens, and Ensor with Flemish cultural identity (Beheydt 2008). The cultural identity of Dutch and

Flemish art has been extensively documented in art history (Alpers 1983, Westermann 1996, Brown 2002, Beheydt 2002).

Particularly the diverging religious orientation after the scission between the North and the South in 1585 has affected the arts differently and given Flemish and Dutch art their specific cultural identity. The scission caused a culture clash between the Calvinist Republic of the North and the Catholic Spanish Netherlands. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, Dutch art is highly influenced in content and style by Calvinism. As illustrated in Figure 1, it is a sober, severe art of discrete riches, restrained and rigid, constructivist in its set up. Flemish art, on the other hand, as shown in Figure 2, is inspired by the Baroque Catholic Counter-Reformation, showy, of ostentatious riches, highly decorative and exuberant, explicitly sensual, with a gift for emotions and with a tendency towards fantasy and caricature. Already in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the famous art historian Heinrich Wölfflin made the distinction between Flemish and Dutch art on purely stylistic grounds:

Let us define Dutch art by contrasting it with Flemish art. [...] Dutch subtlety besides Flemish massiveness. In comparison with the energy of movement in Rubens' design, Dutch design in general is restful, whether it be the rise of a hill or the curve of a petal. No Dutch tree-trunk has the dramatic force of the Flemish movement, and even Ruysdael's mighty oak looks slender besides Rubens' trees. *(Wölfflin 1950, 7-8)*

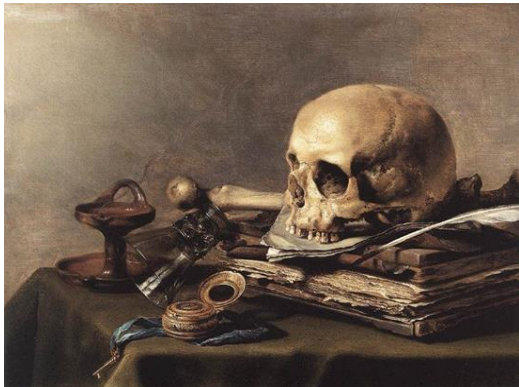


Figure 1. Pieter Claesz, *Vanitas - Still life*, 1630, Mauritshuis, Den Haag. Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 2. Jacob Jordaens, *The king drinks*, ca. 1640, Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels. Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

But it was not only the Calvinist influence that characterized the new Dutch art from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on. Admittedly, the Calvinist prohibition of religious



images led to the breakdown of the earlier church art, but the wealthy reformed bourgeois of the new Republic eagerly bought secular small format paintings depicting scenes of daily life, still lifes, landscapes and portraits (Helmers & Janssen 2018). In Flanders, on the other hand, the urge to express the triumph of the Catholic Counter-Reformation incited church and cloister patrons to order large baroque panels for their cloisters and churches, and the nobility of the court was pleased with emotional mythological scenes (Beheydt 2008, 280-282).

As shown in Figure 3, from Vermeer to Mondrian, Dutch art is foremost an art of restrained beauty. From the intimate silent interiors of Vermeer to the constructivist grids of Mondrian, serenity and motionless concentration create harmonious rest.



Figure 3. Johannes Vermeer, *Woman reading a letter*, ca. 1662-1663, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons. Piet Mondrian, *Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow*. 1930, Kunsthaus, Zürich. Photo courtesy Wikipedia.

Flemish art, from Rubens to James Ensor, by contrast, is sumptuously coloristic, with a tendency toward exaggeration, ecstasy, and caricature. It is highly decorative and exuberant, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Pieter Paul Rubens, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1624, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Photo courtesy Wikipedia. James Ensor, *Ensor with masks*, 1899, Menard Art Museum, Komaki. Photo courtesy Wiki Art.

All in all, we may agree with Hofstede (2001, 228): “I have never seen two countries, that, despite their common language and cooperation, differ so much in culture.” Comparing the core values of Flanders and the Netherlands leads to the conclusion that they have a different cultural identity.

But what about the common language? Do Flanders and the Netherlands indeed have a common language?

## 8. Dutch and Flemish

Officially, Flanders and the Netherlands share a common language. In 1973, the Flemish Community declared – by decree – that *Nederlands* (‘Dutch’, i.e., not Flemish) is the language of the Flemish Community (10 December 1973) and in 1995 the Dutch Parliament adopted a law stating that *Nederlands* (‘Dutch’) is the language of administration. Nevertheless, these official declarations do not alter the fact that reality is different. Never in history has there been a real unity of the language of Flanders and the Netherlands.

Already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when a wave of Flemish Calvinist well-to-do refugees migrated to the North and soon became part of the ruling regent classes of the Dutch cities, Flemish people were easily recognizable because of their

Flemish accent, and were also often stigmatized based on it. In 1617, the famous writer Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Bredero (1585-1618) wrote a highly successful social satire for the Amsterdam theatre titled *De Spaansche Brabander* ('The Spanish Brabanter') (Bredero 1982) in which, from the very first scene, the Antwerp immigrant boaster is exposed and ridiculed for his foreign Flemish accent. And the merchant-poet Roemer Visscher (1547-1620) criticizes the Amsterdam *Meyskes van de courtosye* ('posh bourgeois girls') that adopt the Flemish Brabantic accent: "*Op Brabants spreken sy alle gaer*" ('they all talk the Brabantic way') (Verdeyen 1929, 375).

Two centuries later, when the Flemish fought against French domination in the newly created Belgium and deliberately chose for a unitary language with the Netherlands because they could then refer to a standardized variety, they had to admit in a collaborative congress with the Dutch in Bruges in 1862 that – in the words of Flemish partisan of the *Groot-Nederlandse Gedachte* ('the idea of a Greater Netherlands') Jan David - : "Just as there is a difference between the daily life of the Hollanders and Belgians, there is a difference between their languages. There are Hollandic thoughts, just as there are Hollandic expressions" (quoted in Wils 2001, 49, my translation L.B.).

In the twentieth century, Dutch linguist C. B. van Haeringen (1979) observed that there is a language border between the Netherlands and Flanders that is different from borders between dialects. He saw a clear break between the North and the South of the language area, even in the standard language:

*In Turnhout begint iets dat we zouden kunnen bestempelen als Belgisch beschaafd<sup>7</sup> Nederlands [...] dat kennelijk uit een andere bron wordt gevoed. Er is geen continuïteit tussen de beschaafde omgangstaal benoorden en bezuiden de grens.*  
(Van Haeringen 1979, 278)<sup>8</sup>

The metaphorical "*uit een andere bron [...] gevoed*" ('fed from a different source') could be more adequately reformulated as 'rooted in a different cultural identity.'

Nonetheless, in the twentieth century, Flanders and the Netherlands have chosen for a common codification of the standard language. They refer to the same dictionaries and grammar books for the norm of their standard language,

---

<sup>7</sup> Standard Dutch was once called *Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands* ('General Civilized Dutch') or *ABN*. Today, Standard Dutch is called *Algemeen Nederlands* ('General Dutch') or *AN*.

<sup>8</sup> In Turnhout [Northern town in Belgium], begins what could be labeled Belgian civilized [or standard] Dutch [...] which is apparently fed from a different source. There is no continuity between the civilized [standard] colloquial language north and south of the border.

though that standard language reveals a considerable variety with a virtual language border between the North and the South.

The present situation of Dutch as a standard language can be roughly summarized as follows: Flanders and the Netherlands increasingly share the formal written language, but the informal colloquial speech reveals a growing divergence. The Low Countries today might hence be characterized as an asymmetric bicentric language area showing ongoing convergence and divergence.

### *8.1 Convergence in the written language*

Convergence has been largely achieved by the spelling reform of 1995 carried out under the auspices of the *Nederlandse Taalunie* ('Dutch Language Union'), which has unified the spelling in Flanders and the Netherlands in administration, media, and education. This has ensured that written Dutch in Flanders is – at least orthographically – hardly distinguishable from Dutch in the Netherlands. Before 1995, you could immediately tell whether a newspaper article was Dutch or Flemish. Now the same spelling codification, laid down in the so-called *Groene boekje* ('Green booklet'), which is updated every ten years, is generally accepted.<sup>9</sup>

Comparative research on magazines and newspapers has also observed a slow but growing convergence in the area of lexical choices (Geeraerts, Grondelaers & Speelman 1999). Given the fact that the same normative codifications are used for the written language and that there is a tendency to adopt the same new words, this convergence may continue to increase. Still, the convergence is certainly not absolute. During the recent *coronacrisis* ('Covid-19 pandemic'), a remarkable difference in word choice was noticeable: *mondmasker* (Flanders) versus *mondkapje* (the Netherlands) ('face mask'), for instance.

The convergence is also stimulated by the fact that in Flanders as in the Netherlands, the dictionary *Van Dale* (new book version in March 2022 and regularly updated online version) is considered as the normative referee in lexical discussions: in television quizzes, for scrabble, or crossword puzzles, but also in education. For grammatical discussions, the *Algemene Nederlandse spraakkunst* ('General Dutch Grammar') (book version and the recent online version, since April 20, 2021) still functions as a common normative guide.

---

<sup>9</sup> In 2006, however, Dutch media decided to adopt the so-called *witte spelling* ('white spelling') as proposed in *Het witte boekje* ('White booklet'), edited by the association *Onze Taal* ('Our language') (Redactie Onze Taal 2006). The presented spelling is only slightly deviant from the official codification in the updated *Groene boekje* ('Green booklet') (2005), but the booklet contains a considerable number of proper nouns, frequently used in the media. In 2015 *De Standaard*, a Flemish newspaper, published, in turn, *Het gele boekje* ('Yellow booklet'), a spelling guide for its editorial staff. This spelling guide follows the official spelling but recorded some 1,000 typical Flemish words that were missing from the *Groene Boekje* (Delarue 2015).

## 8.2 Growing divergence in colloquial speech

Contrary to the convergence in the written language, there remains a marked difference in pronunciation between the North and the South. In oral communication, it is immediately clear whether a speaker is Flemish or Dutch. The difference in pronunciation is moreover rapidly growing, with Dutch television series now needing to be subtitled in Flanders and vice versa. This led Flemish linguist Stef Grondelaers (2020) to claim that 500 years from now Flemish and Dutch speakers might not understand one another anymore. Today, that growing divergence is already recognized in the codification of Heemskerk & Zonneveld's (2000) *Uitspraakwoordenboek* ('pronunciation dictionary') and in the 2021 revision of the online version of the *Algemene Nederlandse spraakkunst* ('General Dutch Grammar'), to which was added a new section on pronunciation, *De klankleer van het Nederlands* ('Dutch phonetics'), with separate labels for Dutch Netherlandic and Belgian Netherlandic pronunciations (see *dossier* ('file'), *therapeut* ('therapist'), *tram* ('streetcar'), *politie* ('police') for some examples).

In the Netherlands, in the late 1980s, emerged a rapidly spreading new variant of spoken Dutch. It has been baptized *Poldernederlands* ('Polder Dutch') by the Dutch linguist Jan Stroop (1998) who described it as follows:

*Soort Nederlands dat gekenmerkt wordt door een opvallend afwaikende uitspraak. Het is een manier van praten die bovendien opvalt door zijn snelle opmars en door de sprekers ervan: jongere, goed opgeleide, ambitieuze, succesvolle vrouwen.* (Stroop 1998, 7)<sup>10</sup>

Polder Dutch is characterized by changes in pronunciation, such as the lowering of diphthongs<sup>11</sup>, as in *aai* [a:i] for *ei* or *ij* [ɛ:i], *taaid* for *tijd* (Stroop 1998, 25), and is rapidly superseding traditional standard Dutch.

In Flanders too, a rapidly spreading form of a *tussentaal* ('interlanguage') is superseding the traditional standard variant. It was originally disclaimed as *Verkavelingsvlaams* ('Flemish of the allotments') by the author-journalist Geert van Istendael, who introduced the term in 1989 as follows:

*Er is [...] iets nieuws, iets vuils de taal in de zuidelijke Nederlanden aan het aantasten, aan het doodknippen. Het is een manke usurpator in kale kleren, maar hij heeft de verwaandheid en de lomtheid van de parvenu. Hij heet Verkavelingsvlaams. Verkavelingsvlaams, dat is de taal die gesproken wordt*

<sup>10</sup> A kind of Dutch characterized by a remarkably deviant pronunciation. It is a way of speaking that is also remarkable because of its rapid spread and its typical speakers: young, well-educated, ambitious, successful women.

<sup>11</sup> A combination of two vowels in a single syllable.

*in de betere villa's op de verkavelde grond van onze verminkte dorpen. Het is de taal van de jongens en de meisjes die naar een deftige school gaan en andere kinderen uitlachen omdat die zo onbeschaafd praten.*

(Van Istendael 1989, 116)<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, that disparaging connotation has been strongly put into perspective by sociolinguists who defend its legitimate status as a genuine secondary standard variant (Grondelaers 2020, De Caluwe 2002). The status of a “*manke usurpator*” (‘limping usurper’) has given way to that of an acceptable colloquial Flemish variant.

The sociolinguists are backed in their defense of *Verkavelingsvlaams* (‘Flemish of the allotments’) by Flemish nationalist intellectuals like Charles Vanderhaegen, who in the name of Flemish cultural identity, claim that the Flemish have the right to their own Flemish variant, against the so-called “repressive pro-Dutch language police” (Vanderhaegen 1996) who impose by force the Netherlandic standard language (‘Algemeen [Beschaafd] Nederlands’) through inquisitional educational practice.<sup>13</sup>

Today, it seems justified to state that a secondary standardization is taking place in spoken Dutch (Beheydt 2003). The Flemish *tussentaal* (‘interlanguage’) has become the standard language for informal communication for those people in Flanders who do not want to speak a dialect or regiolect (De Caluwe 2002), as indeed a relatively stable, general Flemish interlanguage seems to be developing (Absillis, Jaspers & van Hoof 2012).

The recognition of two separate variants of spoken Dutch is gradually taking hold. Symptoms of the gradual recognition of the secondary standardization are that Flemish linguists and language professionals largely accept typical Flemish words and constructions. Also, in the media, the variants are increasingly being used.

Further symptoms of the secondary standardization that is occurring are: separate subtitles in films and television series, remakes of films in Flemish and Dutch, separate literary histories of Flemish and Dutch literature, increasing de-

---

<sup>12</sup> There is now something new, something dirty perverting and choking the language of the Southern Netherlands. It is a limping usurper in shabby clothes, but it has the arrogance and coarseness of an upstart. Its name is Flemish of the allotments. It is the language spoken in the smarter villas on the residential allotments of our mutilated villages. It is the language of the boys and girls that go to a posh school and laugh at other children because they talk uncivilized.

<sup>13</sup> In his quarterly magazine *De Vlaamse taal* (‘The Flemish language’) (1995-2000), Charles Vanderhaegen and his editorial staff set up a Flemish campaign against the “*pro-Nederlandse intelligentsia*” (‘pro-Dutch intellectuals’) who “*met fanatieke intolerantie alles wat Vlaams is belachelijk maakt, onbeschaafd verklaart of als verwerpelijk doodverft*” (‘with fanatic intolerance ridicule, declare uncivilized and classify as objectionable everything Flemish’) (Vanderhaegen 1996, 17).

standardization in literature, separate spoken versions of Disney-series, separate manuals for mobile phones (Dutch *mobieltje* versus Flemish *gsm*), microwaves (Dutch *magnetron* versus Flemish *microgolf*), dishwashers, etc.

But the clearest symptom and the ultimate recognition of the secondary standardization is the official inclusion in the codifications. The most recent dictionaries recognize on an equal footing Flemish and Dutch lexical variants, and use specific, non-connotated lexical labels for Dutch and Flemish variants. For instance, both the *Prisma Handwoordenboek* ('Prisma pocket dictionary'), and the new March 2022 edition of the *Van Dale groot woordenboek van de Nederlandse taal* ('Van Dale big dictionary of the Dutch language') use unprejudiced labels. Flemish words are identified by the label *BE* (Belgian Dutch) in the *Van Dale*, whereas typical Dutch words are labelled *NL* (Netherlandic Dutch). Some 1,500 Flemish words with the label *BE* were included in the newest edition of the dictionary. With that linguistic codification, the strife between the cultural identities of Flanders and the Netherlands seems to be finalizing in mutual recognition of separate cultural and linguistic identities.

## 9. Recent shifts in cultural identity

Recently, in the Netherlandic sphere, a new identity strife has emerged, in addition to the long-standing cultural identity clash between Flanders and the Netherlands discussed in this paper. If the latter was and still is largely linked to the ways Flemings or Hollanders, as members of two different nations, construct their cultural identity, the new identity wave primarily concerns the feelings of identity of minority and minoritized groups in a still predominantly male cisgender society. The discussion about language and identity is shifting focus under the influence of the global preoccupation with EDID (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization). In the Low Countries, that discussion is also very much under way. Dutch and Flemish women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ members want to see their identity reflected in a new Dutch language. It is as of this writing unclear how this debate will impact the cultural divide between Flanders and the Netherlands (Beheydt 2023a).

It should be noted that there currently is no consensual European opinion on the matter of inclusive language, though there is an official guide for *Genderneutraal taalgebruik in het Europees Parlement* ('Gender-neutral language use in the European Parliament'). The French position may be the most outspoken. Highly inspired by a still authoritative *Académie française* ('French Academy' – France's official authority on French language use), France is weary of any attempt to tinker with the French language. In fact, the French Minister of Education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, stirred up quite a controversy in the fall of 2021

when he tweeted: “*l’écriture inclusive n’est pas l’avenir de la langue française*” (‘inclusive writing is not the future of the French language’), while the famous lexicologist Jean Pruvost argued rather provocatively that the feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir had not needed to destroy French grammar to spread her ideas, adding that to take language hostage is dangerous (Develey, de Gestas & Michalik 2021). Consequently, the proposal to write in gender-neutral language *iel est belleau* (‘they are beautiful’) instead of *il est beau/elle est belle* (‘he is handsome/she is beautiful’) has met with serious commotion in the Francosphere. But how is the debate unfolding in Flanders and the Netherlands?

The Netherlands holds a markedly different position. The idea that language is a reflection of society and that the way we use our words is a direct representation of our identity has already found its expression in the publication of official language guides. Thus, for instance, in the *Code diversiteit & inclusie. Waarden voor een nieuwe taal* (‘Code for diversity and inclusion. Values for a new language’) (Samuel 2021. See Figure 5). This official brochure is subtitled “*Een veilige, inclusieve en toegankelijke taal voor iedereen in de kunst- en cultuursector*” (‘Safe, inclusive and accessible language for everyone in the arts and cultural sector’) and presents frames for inclusive communication and interaction. From now on, projects looking to obtain funding from the Dutch Ministry of Culture, must be written in that ‘code for diversity and inclusion,’ that distances itself expressly from the dominant language of “*de witte cisgender heteroseksuele man zonder lichamelijke, zintuigelijke, mentale en/of verstandelijke beperking*” (‘the white, cisgender, heterosexual man without physical, sensory, mental and/or intellectual disability’) (Samuel 2021, 2).



Figure 5. Title page of *Waarden voor een nieuwe taal* (‘Values for a new language’) developed by Mounir Samuel for Code Diversiteit & Inclusie (‘Code for diversity and inclusion’). The brochure is in the public domain.



In Belgium, the federal government has made available to its civil servants, as recently as May 2022, a comparable brochure *Tips voor genderinclusief schrijven* ('Tips for gender-inclusive writing') with recommendations for gender-inclusive language use. It is advised to no longer use *Mijnheer* or *Mevrouw* ('Mister' or 'Mrs.')

in official correspondence but *Beste* ('Dear') instead, to avoid gender specific professional names (not *geneesheer*<sup>14</sup> ('medical doctor') but *arts* ('medical doctor'); not *leraar/lerares*<sup>15</sup> ('teacher') but *leerkracht* ('teacher')), and to replace gender specific expressions like *met man en macht* ('with man and power') with *met alle middelen* ('with all possible means') or *als één man* ('as one man') with *eensgezind* ('in one accord').

In a comparable style guide, *Regenboog taaltips* ('Rainbow language tips'), edited by the city of Amsterdam, the city's administration promotes the use of gender-neutral language in all its communications with the people of Amsterdam. Thus, it recommends not to use the words *vader* ('father') or *moeder* ('mother') anymore, but *ouder* ('parent') instead and to use non-binary pronouns.

This new language, though still in flux, is already being codified. The most recent edition of the *Dikke Van Dale* ('Fat Van Dale' – nickname for the *Van Dale groot woordenboek van de Nederlandse taal* ('Van Dale big dictionary of the Dutch language')), published March 22, 2022, introduced the gender-neutral label *x*, next to *m* (male) and *v* (female). Some 15,000 words referring to persons and professions, like *minister* ('minister'), *held* ('hero'), *bakker* ('baker'), *crimineel* ('criminal'), *voetballer* ('football player'), received the new label in an attempt to present gender-inclusive language. However, much is still in transition. There is, as yet, no definite choice of a gender-neutral alternative pronoun for *hij* ('he') and *zij* ('she') in Dutch. The proposed alternatives *hen* and *die* are still in competition, even if the new *Van Dale* already mentions "*Hen zingt*" ('They sing'). In the meantime, a first comprehensive study of the new Dutch language of diversity and inclusion has already been published by Dutch linguist Vivien Waszink (2022), with the catchy title *Dat mag je óók (al niet meer) zeggen* ('You are also (no longer) allowed to say that'). The book is a linguistically sound description of recent inclusive-language developments in Dutch and is, in that respect, quite different from the more 'militant' or 'far-reaching' approach to inclusive Dutch found in Mounir Samuel's (2023) *Je mag ook niets meer zeggen* ('You are not allowed to say anything anymore') that boasts to be "*dé blauwdruk voor een Nederlandse taal van en voor iedereen*" ('the blueprint for a Dutch language of and for everyone') (Beheydt 2023b).

<sup>14</sup> *Geneesheer* literally translates to man ('*heer*') who cures ('*genees*').

<sup>15</sup> *Leraar* refers to a male teacher, whereas *lerares* refers to a female teacher.

For official language institutions, the expression of identity through language is also a concern. The *Raad voor de Nederlandse Taal en Letteren* ('Council for Dutch Language and Literature') explicitly demands that Dutch language users, in Flanders and the Netherlands, pay attention to inclusive language use, just like the official, supranational organization for the Dutch language, the *Nederlandse Taalunie* ('Dutch Language Union').

How this search for identity fair language will alter Dutch is as yet unclear, nor is it clear how it will influence the Flemish/Dutch divide. As of this writing, the fight for inclusive language seems more intense in the Netherlands than in Flanders. Thus, for instance, the non-binary Senn van Beek wants to take the Dutch State to court for not recognizing non-binary identity documents (Prakken d'Oliveira 2022).<sup>16</sup> In Flanders, gender-neutral language use appears to be less widespread than in the Netherlands. This is symptomatically clear in the language use of the media. Whereas Dutch newspapers, such as *de Volkskrant*, and *Trouw*, and the *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau* ('Dutch General Press Agency') have already introduced gender-neutral pronouns, none of the Flemish newspapers have done so up until now. Still, Dutch and Flemish media outlets show convergence in that they prudently use new inclusive words and expressions, though the Flemish press seems to be more reserved in doing so than its Dutch counterpart, at least for now.

## 10. Conclusion

Since the historical scission of 1585, there has been a parallel development of cultural identity in Flanders and the Netherlands, which has led to the absence of a unified Netherlandic culture. Idealistic attempts to come to cultural integration have not really been successful (Simons 1990). Instead, a growing awareness of Flemish cultural identity has been fostered by federal state reforms in Belgium that confirmed the existence of Flanders as a Community and a Region. In the wake of this development, a process of secondary language standardization is leading to a separate variant of spoken Dutch in Flanders which is markedly different from colloquial Dutch in the Netherlands. Recently, the debate on identity and gender has led to changes in the language of both Flanders and the Netherlands, but the shift towards inclusive language appears to be moving more quickly in the Netherlands than in Flanders, and this may ultimately widen the language gap.

---

<sup>16</sup> Belgium, however, plans to no longer include information regarding gender on Belgian identity cards (*'identiteitskaart'*) (VRT NWS 2021).

## References

- Absillis, Kevin, Jürgen Jaspers & Sarah van Hoof. 2012. *De manke usurpator. Over Verkavelingsvlaams*. Gent: Academia Press.
- Alpers, Svetlana. 1983. *The art of describing. Dutch art in the seventeenth century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and growth of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1994. Enduring and emerging issues in the analysis of ethnicity. In *The anthropology of ethnicity*, edited by Hans Vermeulen & Cora Govers, 11-32. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Beheydt, Ludo. 2023a. Aan de haal met de taal. Woke taalgebruik. *Neerlandia* 127.2: 26-27.
- Beheydt, Ludo. 2023b. Wat mag je nog zeggen? *Neerlandia* 127.2: 41-43.
- Beheydt, Ludo. 2014. Tekens van identiteit. Een semiotische benadering van kunst en taal. In *In het teken van identiteit. Taal en cultuur van de Nederlanden*, edited by Liesbeth Degand, Philippe Hilgsmann, Laurent Rasier, Matthieu Sergier, Stéphanie Vanasten & Kristel Van Goethem, 237-258. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain.
- Beheydt, Ludo. 2010. Culturele identiteit en normativiteit. In *Liever meer of juist minder? Over normen en variatie in taal*, edited by Els Hendrickx, Karl Hendrickx, Willy Martin, Hans Smessaert, William van Belle & Joop van der Horst, 1-14. Gent: Academia Press.
- Beheydt, Ludo. 2008. Art and cultural identity of the Low Countries. In *Lectures for the XXIst century*, edited by Bart Raymaekers, 261-284. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Beheydt, Ludo. 2003. De moeizame weg van een standaardtaal. De externe en interne druk op het Nederlands. In *Waar gaat het Nederlands naartoe?*, edited by Jan Stroop, 152-163. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.
- Beheydt, Ludo. 2002. *Één en toch apart. Kunst en cultuur van de Nederlanden*. Leuven: Davidsfonds.
- Bredero, Gerbrand Adriaensz. 1982. *The Spanish Brabanter. A seventeenth-century Dutch social satire in five acts*, translated by H.D. Brumble II. Medieval and Renaissance texts and studies 2. New York: Binghamton.
- Brown, Christopher. 2002. *The Dutchness of Dutch art*. Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Couwenberg, Servatius W., ed. 2001. *Nationale identiteit*. Nijmegen: Damon.
- De Caluwe, Johan. 2002. Tien stellingen over functie en status van tussentaal in Vlaanderen. In *Taalvariatie en taalbeleid: Bijdragen aan het taalbeleid in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, edited by Johan De Caluwe, Dirk Geeraerts, Sjaak Kroon, Virginie Mamadouh, Ronald Soetaert, Luc Top & Ton Vallen, 57-67. Antwerpen/Apeldoorn: Garant.
- De Foer, Steven. 2001. *Onder Hollanders. Een Vlaming ontdekt Nederland*. Amsterdam: Balans.
- Delarue, Steven. 2015. Hoe dissident is dat Gele Boekje van De Standaard nu eigenlijk? *Blog*, January 30. <https://stevendelarue.be/2015/01/30/hoe-dissident-is-dat-gele-boekje-van-de-standaard-nu-eigenlijk/>. Accessed March 2, 2023.
- Develey, Alice, Maguelonne de Gestas & Marie-Liévine Michalik. 2021. Le “pronom iel”, nouveau combat des militants de l’écriture inclusive. *Le Figaro*, November 18. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/langue-francaise/actu-des-mots/le-pronom-iel-nouveau-combat-des-militants-de-l-ecriture-inclusive-20211118>. Accessed January 12, 2022.
- Droste, Flip G. 1993. *Nederland en Vlaanderen. Een pamflet over grenzen*. Antwerpen/Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers.
- Geeraerts, Dirk, Stefan Grondelaers & Dirk Speelman. 1999. *Convergentie en divergentie in de Nederlandse woordenschat. Een onderzoek naar kleding- en voetbaltermen*. Amsterdam: Meertens Instituut.

- Geerts, Guido. 1975. *Voorlopers en varianten van het Nederlands. Een gedocumenteerd dia- en synchroon overzicht*. Leuven: Acco.
- Gezelle, Guido. 1998. *Waar zit die heldere zanger? De mooiste gedichten van Guido Gezelle*. Tielt: Lannoo.
- Grondelaers, Stefan. 2020. Over 500 jaar kunnen Belgen en Nederlanders elkaar niet meer verstaan! *NPO Radio 1-collectief Alicante*, 3 November. <https://www.nporadio1.nl/nieuws/podcast/5493e6e6-88f1-4ca9-89ae-f3199aed7a1d/dialecten-verdwijnen-over-500-jaar-kunnen-belgen-en-nederlanders-elkaar-niet-meer-verstaan>. Accessed December 8, 2021.
- van Haeringen, Coenraad B. 1979. Herverfransing. In *Gramarie. Keur uit het werk van zijn hoogleraarstijd*, edited by Coenraad B. van Haeringen, 247-279. Utrecht: HES Publishers.
- de Hart, Joep, Pepijn van Houwelingen & Maroesjka Versantvoort. 2019. *Denkend aan Nederland*. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau. <https://www.scp.nl/publicaties/monitors/2019/06/26/denkend-aan-nederland>. Accessed August 6, 2020.
- Heemskerck, Josée & Wim Zonneveld. 2000. *Uitspraakwoordenboek*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Helmers, Helmer J. & Geert H. Janssen. 2018. *The Cambridge companion to the Dutch Golden Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, Eric & Terence Ranger, eds. 1983. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hofstede, Geert. 2001. *Culture's consequences. Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hoof, Pieter Corneliszoon. 2012. *De gedichten*. Edited by Johan Koppenol & Ton van Strien. Amsterdam: Athenaeum – Polak & Van Gennep.
- Huizinga, Johan. 1935. *Nederland's geestesmerk*. Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij.
- van Istendael, Geert. 1993. *Het Belgisch labyrint. Wakker worden in een ander land*. Geheel herziene druk. Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Arbeiderspers.
- van Istendael, Geert. 1989. *Het Belgisch labyrint of de schoonheid der wanstaltigheid*. Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Arbeiderspers.
- Mak, Geert. 1992. Bescheidenheid als nationale trots. *NRC-Handelsblad*, December 24.
- Nora, Pierre, ed. 1997. *Les lieux de mémoire*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Prakken d'Oliviera. 2022. Dutch State sued in case regarding recognition of the non-binary gender identity. <https://www.prakkendoliveira.nl/en/news/2022/dutch-state-sued-in-case-regarding-recognition-of-the-non-binary-genderidentity>. Accessed May 15, 2023.
- Redactie Onze Taal. 2006. De witte spelling. *Onze Taal* 75: 92-93.
- Renan, Ernest. 1994. *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation ?* Avec une préface de J. Th. Leerssen. Leiden: Academic Press Leiden.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1762. *Du contrat social ou principes du droit politique*. Amsterdam: Chez Marc Michel Rey.
- Samuel, Mounir. 2023. *Je mag ook niets meer zeggen*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Nieuw Amsterdam.
- Samuel, Mounir. 2021. *Waarden voor een nieuwe taal*. Code diversiteit & inclusie. [https://codedi.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/WAARDEN\\_VOOR\\_EEN\\_NIEUWE\\_TAAI.pdf](https://codedi.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/WAARDEN_VOOR_EEN_NIEUWE_TAAI.pdf). Accessed March 2, 2023.
- Shetter, William Z. 1997. *The Netherlands in perspective. The Dutch way of organizing a society and its setting*. Utrecht: Nederlands Centrum Buitenlanders.
- Simons, Ludo. 1990. *Het ravijn tussen Essen en Roosendaal. Culturele integratie voor beginners*. Leuven: Kritak.
- Smet-Castra, Laurent. 2007. L'union fait la force. Eendracht maakt macht. Einigkeit gibt Stärke. Devises belges. *Humanisme* 279.4: 57-67.

- Smolicz, Jerzy. 1981. Core values and cultural identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4.1: 75-90.
- Stroop, Jan. 1998. *Poldernederlands. Waardoor het ABN verdwijnt*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.
- de Tollenaere, Félicien. 1981. De tael is gantsch het volk. *Ons Erfdeel* 24.1: 189-198.
- Vanderhaegen, Charles. 1996. *De Vlaamse taal (I). Het Vlaams manifest*. St. Denijs Westrem: Vanderhaegen.
- Verdeyen, René. 1929. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche taal- en letterkunde II. *Belgisch tijdschrift voor filologie en geschiedenis* 8.1: 359-376.
- Visscher, Roemer. 1949. *Sinnepoppen. Naar de uitgave van 1614 bij Willem Jansz*. Edited by Leendert Brummel. 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
- de Vreese, Willem. 1909. De 'regeling' van de uitspraak in Zuid-Nederland. *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde*, Januari 20: 44-71.
- VRT NWS. 2021. Vermelding van geslacht op identiteitskaart gaat binnenkort verdwijnen. *VRT Nieuws*, November 30. <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2021/11/30/federale-regering-wil-vermelding-van-geslacht-weglaten-op-identi/>. Accessed May 15, 2023.
- Waszink, Vivien. 2022. *Dat mag je óók (al niet meer) zeggen. Welke woorden kunnen? En welke juist niet?* Den Haag: Onze Taal.
- Westermann, Mariët. 1996. *A worldly art: the Dutch Republic, 1585-1718*. London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd.
- Willaime, Jean-Paul. 1993. La religion civile à la française et ses métamorphoses. *Social Compass* 40.4: 571-580.
- Wils, Lode. 2001. *Waarom Vlaanderen Nederlands spreekt*. Leuven: Davidsfonds.
- Wölfflin, Heinrich. 1950. *Principles of art history. The problem of the development of style in later art*. Translated from the 7th German edition (1929) into English by M.D. Hottinger. New York: Dover Publications.

