

Do we want more or less variation?

The comparative markers *als* and *dan* in Dutch prescriptivism since 1900

Marten van der Meulen
Radboud University

The *suppression of optional variability* is a cornerstone of English prescriptivism. For Dutch, however, it is unknown whether this concept is equally important. The goal of this paper is to investigate which stance towards variation is taken in Dutch prescriptivism, and what arguments are used to support this stance. I address these questions by looking at 236 usage advice items from 73 Dutch prescriptive publications concerning the comparative particles *als* and *dan*. This data shows a clear division in the allowance of variation. With the standard comparative (*groter als/dan*), variation is often allowed, but with equative constructions (*even groot als*) only one form is ever accepted. Furthermore, the allowance of variation decreases over time. The argumentation that is used shows few patterns, and is frequently completely absent. This indicates the existence of an *ipse dixit* ('assertion without proof') tradition in Dutch prescriptivism since 1900.

Keywords: prescriptivism, Dutch language, comparatives, variation

1. Introduction

In prescriptivism, language advice is given with regard to specific *usage advice items*, linguistic constructions where at least some degree of unwanted variation exists or is thought to exist. This variation is targeted, so that only one form is deemed correct. The use of any other form is wrong and therefore prohibited, or at least discouraged. For English prescriptivism, this approach to variation is seen as one of the most fundamental characteristics, having being dubbed the *suppression of optional variability* (Milroy & Milroy 1999: 30–33). This notion has been studied fairly **extensivelt**, and has indeed been shown to exist under certain circumstances (e.g. Albakry 2007; Peters & Young 1997). In most of the cases that were studied,

however, no argumentation is given to support a verdict, making the suppression implicit. This implicitness of argumentation, or assertion without explicit proof, is another well-known characteristic of English prescriptivism, and has been called the *ipse dixit*-culture (Peters 2006).

Whether these two characteristics, suppression of variation and *ipse dixit*-culture, also exist in Dutch prescriptivism, is currently unknown. The reason for this is that Dutch prescriptivism has received little attention, at least for the period since 1900. Only in a few examples have scholars attempted to map out the various prescriptive publications (Haeseryn 1999), or have they studied the development of the norms for specific usage items (Maureau 1979). However, even these works are limited in scope, as they only superficially discuss the prescriptive tradition and its contents. What can be established is that Dutch prescriptivism operates on the same level as English, in the sense that it consists of usage advice items. What stance towards variation is taking in these usage items, and how this stance is supported, will be the purpose of this paper to describe. By taking one particularly salient usage advice item, not only will these two factors be studied, but more insight into the Dutch prescriptive tradition since 1900 will also be gained.

The usage advice item studied for this paper is the use of the comparative particles *als* and *dan*, which is one of the most well-known usage advice items in the Dutch prescriptive tradition. Normative commentary about *als* and *dan* dates back to the 16th century, when the first works on Dutch grammar appeared (Van der Sijs 2004: 526). This early commentary shows just how important this case is to language users and prescriptivists, and indeed, for linguists. This importance is also shown by the amount of research that has focussed on this case, especially from a diachronic perspective (Paardekooper 1950, 1970; Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen 1963; De Rooij 1965, 1972; Stroop 2011, 2014; Postma 2006), but also from a theoretical perspective (Reinarz, de Vos & de Hoop 2016) and a synchronic perspective (Hubers & de Hoop 2013). Still, while the comparative markers have received their fair share of attention, no research seems to have been done into the way in which their use is discussed in prescriptivism since 1900.

In this paper, I will describe the development of usage advice about the comparative particles *als* and *dan* in Dutch prescriptivism since 1900. I will do this by looking at two aspects: the suppression of variability, and the argumentation used in the advice. Section 2 describes the parameters used in collecting the data used for this study, the different aspects of the comparative particles that were studied, and the annotation that was employed. In Section 3, I describe the types of usage advice, their respective stance towards variation and the argumentation used to support this stance. I look at these aspects both for the prescriptive tradition as a whole as well as from a diachronic perspective. In Section 4, I will discuss my findings, after which I will draw conclusions in Section 5.

2. Method

Language advice publications were chosen for inclusion based on criteria concerning time period, geographic aim, target audience and type of publication. Firstly, the work had to have been published between 1900 and 2017. 1900 was chosen because it marks the rise of a new type of normative work, the so-called *taalverzorgingsboekjes* ‘language care publications’ (van der Wal & van Bree 1992: 330–331). These works, as opposed to earlier normative grammars, only treat certain offending linguistic items “in isolation, without systematic appraisal of their place in the language” (Peters 2006: 761). Additionally, these works started to be aimed at the population at large, whereas the normative works that appeared in the 19th century were either aimed at teachers, or at linguists. 21st century works were also included, in order to give as up to date an overview of the diachronic development of Dutch prescriptivism as possible. Secondly, a work had to be aimed explicitly at the Netherlands, either partly or completely. Works that aimed only at Flanders were excluded, because of the different sociolinguistic history, which could result in a very different usage tradition (cf. Vandebussche et al. 2005). Thirdly, I included works that were intended for a general public of mother tongue speakers. This meant that works intended solely for secondary and tertiary education, for L2-speakers, and for specialists were excluded, again because these traditions differ in scope and contents (Veering 1966: 16). Next, in order to maximize comparability, I limited myself to one medium only: published books. This meant that I had to exclude magazines and internet-based resources. Especially the last type of data could potentially be interesting, but because of its very narrow time-depth combined with its probable high frequency in publication would skew the data and befuddle results. Finally, a publication had to include advice about the use of the comparative particles *als* and *dan*. Based on these parameters, I identified 73 publications that contained language advice about *als/dan* between 1932 and 2017 (see Appendix 1),¹ written by 61 different authors.² These authors come from several different backgrounds,

1. In fact, 71 publications contained advice about the use of *als* and *dan*. Remarkably, however, two publications contain two separate and dissimilar instances of advice each (Overduin 1986; Houthuys & Permentier 2016). I have included both instances, and treat them separately from here on out.

2. Six authors published between two and four works each on language advice. However, in almost all cases the formulation of the advice is different, and in several cases advice is given about different categories. Also, even when advice was similar, a new work marks a new point in the prescriptivist tradition, and is therefore of interest for the present analysis. I therefore included all these works.

such as journalism, linguistics and teaching.³

This paper focusses on the uses of *als* and *dan* as comparative conjunctions. I classified the usage advice into five different categories: the standard comparative (1), the excepting comparative (2), the equal equative (3), the unequal equative (4), and the negative equative (5). Some of these categories are very closely related, but as the language advice publications treat these instances separately, so did I. Any of the 73 publications could contain either number and combination of these categories. For example, Kolkhuis Tanke (1975) only discusses the double comparative, while Meijers (1959) discusses all five categories. All in all, my sample set contained 236 specific advices.

- (1) Anna is knapper ... Pieter (standard comparative)
'Anna is more handsome **than** Pieter'
- (2) Niemand (anders) ... Fatima kwam naar het feest. (excepting comparative)
'Nobody other **than** Fatima came to the party'
- (3) Pieter is even slim ... Jelle (equal equative)
'Pieter is equally smart as Jelle'
- (4) Henk is twee keer zo slim ... Rogier (unequal equative)
'Henk eats twice as much as Rogier'
- (5) Hij is niet zozeer lelijk ... wel irritant (negative equative)
'He is not so much ugly as he is annoying'

Next, the 236 specific advices were annotated using the open source annotation tool *brat* (Stenetorp et al. 2012). Firstly, the expressed stance towards optional variability was determined. I follow the established threefold distinction (cf. Albakry 2007; Peters & Young 1997), by differentiating between complete acceptance (6), limited acceptance (7) and complete non-acceptance of optional variation (8).

- (6) Na de vergrotende trap (comparatief) en na *ander(e)*, *anders*, *elders*, *nergens*, *niemand niet(s)*, *nooit zijn dan* en *als* even correct (Smeyers 1955:25)
'After the comparative degree and after *other*, *elsewhere*, *nowhere*, *nobody*, *nothing*, *never dan* and *als* are equally correct.'

3. As one reviewer suggested, the background of the authors could play a role in determining their stance and argumentation. While this might be interesting to delve into, it presently unfortunately goes beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say here that there are no clear **development** with regards to language advisors from any one group 'taking over' at any stage in time.

- (7) *Duurder als* in plaats van *duurder dan* wordt niet meer onjuist gevonden, maar *dan* heeft de voorkeur. (Van der Horst 1988:24)
 ‘*More expensive as* instead of *more expensive than* is no longer considered to be wrong, but *than* is preferred.’
- (8) *als / dan* Het is: *even groot als, tweemaal zo groot als*, maar: *groter dan*. (Schaafsma 2013:30)
 ‘*as / than* It is: *as big as, twice as big as*, but: *bigger than*.’

Finally, I annotated the arguments that were used in the usage advices, adapting the annotation schema developed by van der Meulen (forthcoming). This annotation schema was developed bottom-up⁴ on the basis of a large collection of Dutch language advice, and so was well-suited for the present task. Tags included different kinds of PURISM (an advice is given because it concerns an anglicism or germanism), GRAMMATICALITY (an advice is given because of a certain grammatical rule), SUPPOSED EFFECT (an advice is given because it annoys people) and others. When no argument was given, the label IPSE DIXIT was used (see Appendix 2 for the full schema).

3. Results

In this section I will discuss various aspects of the acceptance of variation and the use of argumentation with regard to the different categories of *als* and *dan*. First, I will describe the distribution of the usage advice between the different categories, and between equative and comparative (3.1). Section 3.2 gives an overview of the stance towards variation per category, with a particular focus on those advices that allow for limited acceptability. In 3.3, I will give an overview of the diachronic development of the stance towards variation. Finally, I will describe the argumentation that is used in the usage advices (3.4).

3.1 Categorical distribution of usage advice items

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the 236 specific usage advice items over the five usage advice categories. The maximum for any category is 73, which is the number of publications. The graph shows that advice is distributed nearly equally among comparatives and equatives, with 117 and 119 cases respectively. As for the different categories, however, there are pronounced differences in the level of inclusion.

4. Because of its bottom-up nature, arguments may seemingly overlap, but they are classified according to the way language advice writers use them.

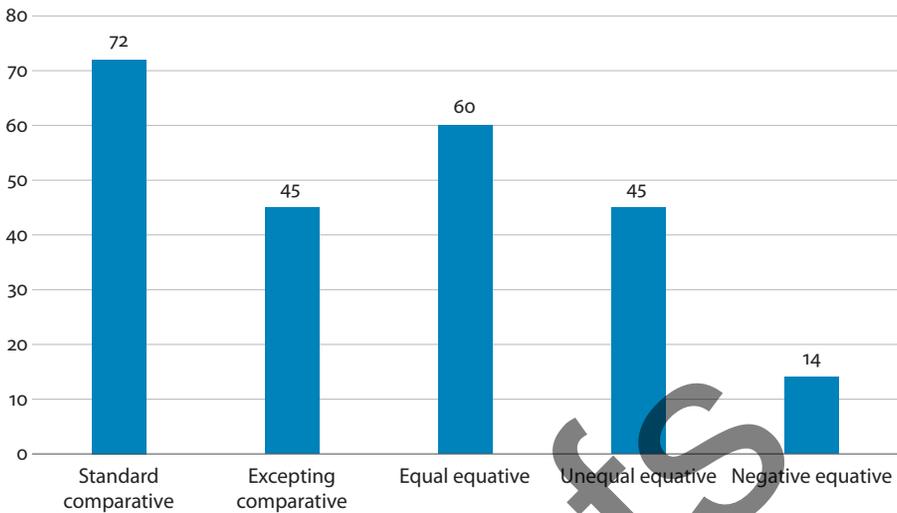


Figure 1. Categorical distribution of usage advice items ($n = 236$)

Of the 73 publications, all but one include advice about the standard comparative. The excepting comparative is found less frequently, but still in 45 publications (61% of the total). Within the equatives the equal equative is the most commonplace, as it is found in 60 publications (82%); advice about the unequal equative is as widespread as the excepting comparative with 45 occurrences (61%). Finally, the negative equative is only addressed in a minority of publications (14, or 19%).

The 73 publications vary in the amount of categories that they give advice on. Eight guides give advice about all five categories; conversely, seven guides only give advice about one category. Most publications, however, give advice about three or four categories. However, there do not seem to be patterns that determine which categories of advice are presented together. The only trend is that advice about the negative equative is only given when advice about the equal equative is also given. Also, there are no patterns with regard to the distribution of categories over time.

3.2 Degree of acceptance of variation per category of usage advice item

There is a marked division in the level of acceptance of variation for the different categories of usage advice items (see Figure 2). For the comparatives, variation is to some extent accepted. In the case of the standard comparative, almost half (43%) of the advices fully or partially accept variation. With regard to the excepting comparative, this figure is much lower, but still amounts to 16%. As for the three categories of equatives, not a single advice displays any acceptance of variation.

As Figure 2 shows, complete acceptance of variation is found in seven cases: four cases with the standard comparative and three with the excepting comparative.

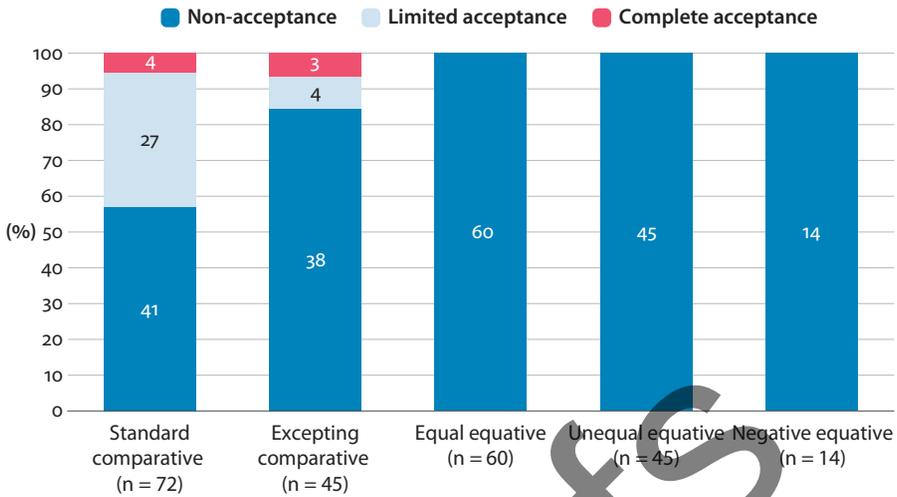


Figure 2. Level of acceptance of variation per usage advice category ($n = 236$)

These cases were distributed over six publications. Of these, only Dezaire (1964) does allow for complete variation with the excepting comparative, but does not allow variation with the standard comparative. In all cases, publications give more than one advice, showing that acceptance for one category does not mean a general acceptance of variation.

A limited degree of variation is permitted in 31 cases: 27 with the standard comparative and four with the excepting comparative. These verdicts are **distributed** among 25 publications. The advice that is given in these cases can be divided into three types: advice that allows free variation in general, but with a caveat (9), advice that allows free variation in spoken language, but with a caveat (10), and advice that allows free variation in spoken language without a caveat (11).

- (9) 2. Hij speelt beter als ik gedacht had. (...) In 2 mag 'als' ook, hoewel 'dan' beter is. (Edens & Lindeboom 1994:61)
 '2. He plays better *als* I had thought" (...) In 2 'als' is also allowed, though 'dan' is better.'
- (10) *dan*: wanneer men bij vergelijking ongelijkheid vaststelt: *Hij is ouder dan mijn broer*. Opmerking 1: In het laatste geval hoort men heel vaak *als*: *Hij is ouder als mijn broer*. Dat is niet fout, maar *Hij is ouder dan mijn broer* is meer verzorgd Nederlands. (Apeldoorn & Pot 1981:21)
 'dan: when one finds inequality in a comparison: *he is older dan my brother*. Remark 1: In the last case one very often hears *als*: *He is older als my brother*. This is not wrong, but *He is older dan my brother* is more proper Dutch.'

- (11) Hoewel *groter als* zeker in spreektaal niet meer fout is, kunt u zich in geschreven tekst maar beter aan de oude regel houden (Ligtvoet 2005:82) ‘Although *bigger als* is definitely no longer wrong in spoken language, it is better if you comply with the old rule in written texts.’

Of these three types, the second is the most numerous: of the 31 cases with limited acceptability, 20 allow free variation in spoken language with a caveat of some kind. These caveats are quite varied, and include cases where use of a linguistic form is discouraged because it is ‘less civilised’ (*minder beschaafd*), ‘less correct’ (*minder juist*), or because ‘many people think that it is wrong’ (*veel mensen denken dat het fout is*).

3.3 Diachronic development of level of acceptance of variation

Figure 3 shows the diachronic development of the level of acceptance per decade across all usage advice items. While there is a marked increase in the number of usage advice items per decade, the level of acceptance gradually diminishes.⁵ In the 1940s, 40% of all advices accepted at least some variation, but this number

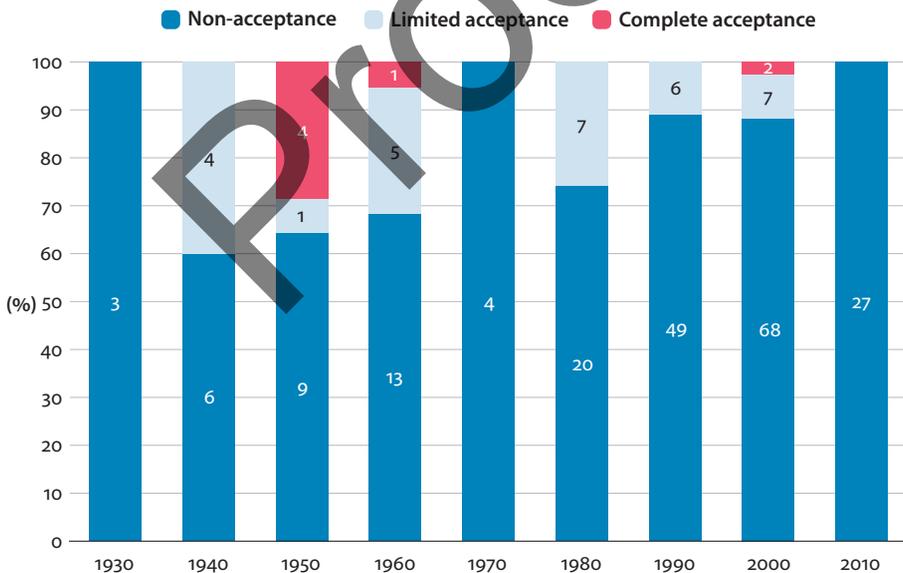


Figure 3. Diachronic development of level of acceptance of variation ($n = 236$)

5. For the 1970s only two publications included advice about the use of the comparative particle *als* and *dan*. This makes it hard to compare with other decades, and so, this decade is ignored in the rest of the analysis. Why the 1970s seem to have produced so few usage advice publications is unclear.

had fallen to 11,6% in the 2000s. In the present decade, variation is no longer allowed in a single usage advice item. Additionally, it is noteworthy that complete acceptance of free variation is only found in the 1950s and 1960, with one exception in the 2000s.⁶

3.4 The use of argumentation

In the 236 usage advice items in my sample, I annotated 383 arguments.⁷ These arguments were divided over 23 different classes of arguments. As Figure 4 shows, the most frequent argument was GRAMMATICALITY (an advice is given because of a grammatical rule), which was found in 27,7% of all usage advice items. The other frequently encountered arguments were IPSE DIXIT (no explicit argument was given, meaning that an advice is given because the writer says it is right) and MODE (an advice is given because of the use of a form is right or wrong in written or spoken language), with 21,4 and 15,4% respectively. Next, four arguments make up between 3 and 6% of all arguments: EFFECT (an advice is given because it has a certain effect on language users), SYSTEM (an advice is given because it fits with the system of a language), HISTORY (an advice is given because it was right/wrong in the past), and FREQUENCY OF USE (and advice is given because a majority of people use it). The remaining sixteen arguments were attested in less than 3% of cases each, meaning that they occurred a maximum of 11 times each.

From a diachronic perspective, the same arguments remain in use over the whole time period. Some decades show slightly increased or decreased use of any particular argument, but very few patterns or trends can be observed. The only major development seems to be an increase in the importance of GRAMMATICALITY as an argument, from 7,4% of all arguments in the 1950s to 36,4% in the 2000s. The present decade has seen a minor fall, as GRAMMATICALITY represents 33,3% of all arguments used in that decade. Whether this trend will continue is at this point impossible to tell. Two other minor observations can be made. In the 1990s two arguments were overrepresented: HISTORY and FREQUENCY OF OPINION. For both

6. However, this one publication in the 2000s, called *Groter als. Nieuwe regels voor het Nederlands van nu* 'Bigger as. New rules for present-day Dutch', is suspect for two reasons. First of all, the **works** accepts variation in every one of the 80 usage advice items it discusses. This begs the question whether the intention of the work is to give actual language advice or whether this book is more a reflection on the non-acceptance of variation in language advice. Secondly, writer Wim Daniëls (who published this work under the pseudonym De Taalclub 'The Language Club') wrote three more prescriptive works, one of which was written after *Groter als*. In all of these works he categorically condemns variation.

7. A second annotator, who was not involved in the project, annotated a random sample of the data (13%). This resulted in an inter-rater agreement score (Cohen's Kappa) of $\kappa = 0.79$.

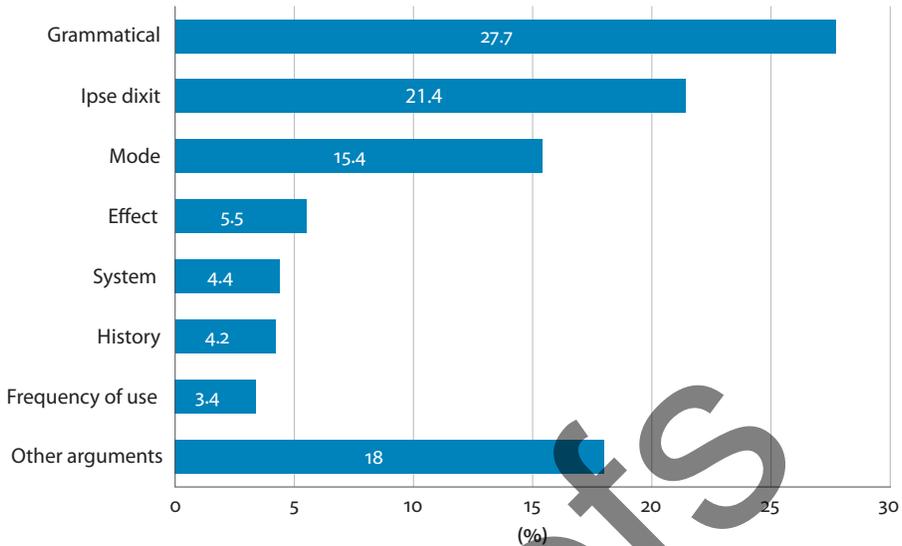


Figure 4. Percentages of arguments used in usage advice items

these arguments 40% of their total number of tags is found in that time period. A similar phenomenon can be observed for the 1980s, when 33% of all annotations of FREQUENCY OF USE can be found.

4. Discussion

The first aim of this study was to map out the stance towards optional variation as taken in Dutch language advice concerning the comparative particles *als* and *dan*. It was shown that for the use advice items studied here, the suppression of optional variability indeed plays a central role. In this way, the language advice about *als* and *dan* seems comparable to the English prescriptivist tradition. However, there are certain aspects of the Dutch data that are worth delving into. Firstly, the unflinching dismissal of variation does not hold for all categories of *als* and *dan*: with regard to the standard comparative, which is the most frequent usage advice item, almost half of the language advisors accept variation under certain circumstances. This combination of frequency of occurrence and acceptance of variation is striking, as it seems to contradict the idea of suppression being central to the whole idea of prescriptivism. Surely the central notion of a phenomenon would be found with the most central examples of that same phenomenon? To complicate matters, the relative tolerance towards variation that some language advisors display may not necessarily be indicative of the opinions of the Dutch language user. A recent

survey of around 3000 Dutch native speakers showed that 82% only accepted *dan* with the standard comparative (van Wingerden 2017: 141). This discrepancy could point at an alienation between the prescriptions of language advisors and the wishes of the general public. Perhaps, however, the general language user's opinion is reflected in the data from the language advisors after all. Van Wingerden's survey took place in the 2010s, a period when, according to the data from this paper, language advisors also seem increasingly likely to dismiss variation in the use of the comparative particles. Whether the advice follows public opinion or vice versa is an interesting question, but unfortunately it lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

Another striking observation is the ubiquitous condemnation of variation with all equative constructions. Even in the two publications that accept variation for both the standard comparative and the excepting comparative, variation for the equatives is dismissed:

- (12) Maar wie (...) schrijft *even lekker dan* of *zoo lekker dan*, die maakt een echte fout. (Taalclub 1943:69)
 'But those who (...) write *as nice than* or *so nice than*, he makes a real error.'
- (13) Dan of als? Jan is (niet) zo oud als Piet. Jan is (niet) even oud als Piet. Jan is evenmin een leugenaar als Piet. (Smeyers 1955:24)
 'Than or as? Jan is (not) as old as Piet. Jan is (not) equally old as Piet. Jan is not any more a liar than Piet'

Variation with the equative is strongly denounced, but variation in use is found nevertheless. Why then are language advisors so much more intransigent with this usage advice item? At least four explanations seem plausible. First of all, it has been argued that the variation with the equative constructions is the result of *hypercorrection*, i.e. the avoidance of a wrong form by language users to such an extent that they also avoid it in places where it is in fact correct. This hypercorrection does not fit with the natural cycle of the development of the comparative markers (cf. Reinartz, de Vos & de Hoop 2016), and perhaps because of this 'unnaturalness', language advisors come out strongly against it. Secondly, and related to the first explanation, hypercorrection is often assumed to be an effect of prescriptivism (Hubers & de Hoop 2013). Perhaps language advisors are aware that they may be responsible for this phenomenon in the first place. This could make them feel threatened in their approach to language advice, and make them lash out those cases where hypercorrection manifests, which in this case means the equative constructions. Thirdly, it seems that mistakes with the equatives are substantially less frequent than mistakes with the comparative. This could lead language advice writers to be more likely to see equative mistakes as errors, whereas mistakes with

the comparative are seen as variants.⁸ Finally, it is possible that the use of *als* with the comparative is tolerated to a higher degree because almost all Dutch dialects only allow for this form (cf. Paardekooper 1950). Whereas other dialectisms may be seen as errors, it may again be because of frequency that in this case there is more acceptance of another form.

The diachronic decline in the acceptance of variation with regard to the comparative particles is also remarkable. This decline contradicts the trend observed by van der Meulen (forthcoming). His study of around 1600 usage advice items since 1900 found a slow but steady shift towards a greater acceptance of variation. It is possible that this disparity, between *als* and *dan* on the one hand and language advice in general on the other, is the result of a process of *shibbolethisation*. In this scenario, one or more usage advice items would become the focal point of prescriptivist zeal, with the effect that the opinion about other usage advice items becomes more tolerant. Another explanation for the reduced tolerance could be an increase in use of the 'wrong' form, which triggered a harshening in language advice. However, there does not seem to be data available as to the diachronic use of *als* and *dan* in the time period studied here. Again, an explanation for this development lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

No clear patterns emerge with regard to the use of argumentation. The types of arguments that are used do stay more or less the same over time. This again seems to be similar to the English prescriptive practice. One specific argument is noteworthy however: the overrepresentation of the argument *MODE* (an advice is given because it is right or wrong in written or spoken language) with *als* and *dan* as opposed to language advice in general. Perhaps this presence is an acknowledgement of the fact that both forms are frequently encountered in spoken language, at least synchronically (cf. Hubers & de Hoop 2013). However, there is also great variation in the use of the relative pronoun following neuter nouns in spoken language (Stroop 2011: 144–146), but *MODE* is not used as an argument to support or condemn this in language advice. However, as neither of these papers delves into age differences, more diachronic research is needed to explain this result.

5. Conclusions

This paper shows that the suppression of optional variation and an *ipse dixit*-culture are characteristics of Dutch language advice since 1900, at least concerning the comparative particles *als* and *dan*. Because of this, Dutch language advice seems to be comparable in scope to English prescriptivism. Also, the results of the

8. Thanks to one of the reviewers for pointing this out.

present research seem to strengthen the claim that this suppression is fundamental to prescriptivism (Milroy & Milroy 1999). However, a notable exception to this assertion appears in the discussion of the use of a comparative particle accompanying a standard comparative. In that case, variation is acceptable for many language advisors, albeit under certain circumstances (mostly in spoken language). By contrast, variation in equative constructions is invariably condemned, even by writers who otherwise accept at least some degree of variation. Over time, the acceptance of variation seems to diminish. This is remarkable, given that the prescriptive tradition as a whole seems to be more disposed to the acceptance of optional variability. As for argumentation, a wide range of different arguments is used since 1900 to either accept or condemn the use of certain language forms. GRAMMATICALITY seems to gain importance, but aside from that, no patterns can be discerned. Often, however, argumentation is lacking, which seems to indicate that Dutch, like English, has an *ipse dixit*-culture. However, as this research only looks at one case study and one medium of publication, grand conclusions should not be drawn. More research into Dutch prescriptivism since 1900, for example on the Internet or as presented in schoolbooks, would be a worthwhile endeavour.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers, as well as the members of the research group Grammar & Cognition of the Centre for Language Studies at Radboud University, for their constructive and extensive criticisms.

References

- Albakry, Mohammed. 2007. "Usage Prescription Rules in Newspaper Language." *Southern Journal of Linguistics*, 31 (2): 28–56.
- Haesyn, Walter. 1999. "Normatieve taalkunde." *De Nederlandse taalkunde in kaart* ed. by W. Smedts and P. C. Paardekooper, 237–248. Leuven/Amersfoort: Acco.
- Hubers, Ferdy & Helen de Hoop. 2013. "The effect of prescriptivism on comparative markers in spoken Dutch." *Linguistics in the Netherlands 2013* ed. by S. Aalberse and A. Auer, 89–101. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/avt.30.07hub>
- Maureau, Hans. 1979. *Goed en begrijpelijk schrijven. Een analyse van 40 jaar schrijfadvisen*. Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho.
- Milroy, James & Leslie Milroy. 1999 [1985]. *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*. London: Routledge.
- Paardekooper, P. C. 1950. "Als en dan bij vergelijkingen." *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 43: 160–167.
- Paardekooper, P. C. 1970. "Groter als." *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 63: 329–337.

- Peters, Pam. 2006. "English Usage: Prescription and Description." *Handbook of English Linguistics* ed. by B. Aarts and A. McMahon, 759–780. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470753002.ch32>
- Peters, Pam, & Wendy Young. 1997. "English grammar and the lexicography of usage." *Journal of English Linguistics* 25(4): 315–331. <https://doi.org/10.1177/007542429702500406>
- Postma, Gertjan. 2006. "Van groter dan naar groter als – structurele oorzaken voor het verval van het comparatieve voegwoord dan." *Nederlandse Taalkunde* 11: 2–22.
- Reinarz, Lukas, Hugo de Vos & Helen de Hoop. 2016. "Conflicting Constraints in the Comparative Cycle." *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* 28(4): 403–425.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1470542716000131>
- Stenetorp, Pontus, Sampo Pyysalo, Goran Topić, Tomoka Ohta, Sophie Ananiadou & Jun'ichi Tsujii. 2012. "BRAT: a Web-based Tool for NLP-Assisted Text Annotation." *Proceedings of the Demonstrations Session at EACL 2012*.
- Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen, Maria A. 1963. "Dan en als bij vergelijkingen." *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 56: 259–268.
- de Rooij, Jaap. 1965. "Als-of-dat." PhD diss., Radboud Universiteit.
- de Rooij, Jaap. 1972. "Als of dan." *De Nieuwe taalgids* 65: 199–209.
- Stroop, Jan. 2011. "De lange arm van de grammatici." *Praagse perspectieven 7. Handelingen van het colloquium van de sectie Nederlands van de Kareluniversiteit te Praag, op 24 en 25 maart 2011* ed. by Z. Hrnčířová, E. Krol, K. Mercks, J. Pekelder and J. Ultzen, 137–153. Prague: Prague University Press.
- Stroop, Jan. 2014. "'t Ene 'dan' is 't andere niet." *Een dubbelfeestbundel bij het emeritaat van William Van Belle en Joop van der Horst*. ed. by F. Van de Velde, H. Smessaert, F. Van Eynde and S. Verbrugge, 447–457. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt14jxsro.33>
- Vandenbussche, Wim, Roland Willems, Jetje De Groof & Eline Vanhecke. 2005. "Taming thistles and weed amidst the wheat: language gardening in 19th century Flanders." *Linguistic purism in the Germanic languages* ed. by W. Davies and N. Langer, 46–61. Berlin: de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110901351.46>
- van der Meulen, Marten. Forthcoming. "Language should be pure and grammatical: Values in prescriptivism in the Netherlands 1917–2016." *Values and Multiplicity: Identity and Fluidity in Prescriptivism and Descriptivism* ed. by D. Chapman and J. D. Rawlins. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Veering, Jan. 1966. *Mogelijkheden en moeilijkheden van taalverzorging*. Delft: Van Markens Drukkerij.
- van der Sijs, Noline. 2004. *Taal als mensenwerk. Het ontstaan van het ABN*. Den Haag: Sdu.
- van der Wal, Marijke & Cor van Bree. 1992. *Geschiedenis van het Nederlands*. Utrecht: Spectrum.
- van Wingerden, Wouter. 2017. *Maar zo heb ik het geleerd! : de waarheid achter 50 taalkwesties*. Utrecht: Van Dale.

Appendix 1. Dutch language advice publications included in this paper

- Aalbrecht, Heidi. 2008. *Schrijfstijl. De basis van een goede tekst*. Amsterdam: Augustus.
- Ansems, Joost. 1988. *Van woord tot tekst. Een basiscursus praktische taalvaardigheid voor onderwijs en zelfstudie*. Culemborg: Phaedon.

- Apeldoorn, Cornelis & S. Pot. 1983. *Twijfelgevallen Nederlands*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Bakels, Floris. 1956. *Goed Taalgebruik*. Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema.
- de Berg, Jaap. 1999 [1996]. *Trouw schrijfboek*. Amsterdam: Muntinga.
- Blom, M. C., Jan van de Laar & Marja Verburg. 1999. *Stijlgids: Leidraad voor financieel-economische teksten*. Amsterdam: Het Financiële Dagblad.
- de Boer, Theo. 2011. *Van Dale Taalhandboek Nederlands. Gebruiksaanwijzing van de Nederlandse taal*. Utrecht: Van Dale.
- Bouman, Jolanda. 2006. *Hoe schrijf je dat? Schrijftips en taalregels*. Zaltbommel: Thema, uitgeverij van Schouten en Nelissen.
- Braas, Cees & Job Krijgsman. 2001 [1996]. *Taaltopics. Formuleren*. Groningen: Noordhoff Uitgevers.
- Charivarius [pseudonym of Gerard Nolst Trenité]. 1940. *Is dat goed Nederlands?* Amsterdam: De Spieghele.
- Damsteegt, Boudewijn Cornelis. 1964 [1948]. In *de doolhof van het Nederlands*. Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink.
- Daniëls, Wim. 1995. *Verbeter uw tekst*. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgever.
- Daniëls, Wim. 2011. *Teksten redigeren. Wat elke redacteur moet weten maar nooit ergens kan vinden*. Houten: Unieboek.
- Daniëls, Wim. 2005. *Gids voor de eindredacteur*. Amsterdam: Veen.
- Dezaire, Pieter. 1964. *Ons Nederlands, een taal- en stijlboek*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Doeve, Rob & Ton den Boon. 1996. *Taal in bedrijf. De belangrijkste kwesties uit de Van Dale Taalbrief*. Utrecht: Kosmos – Z&K.
- Dominicus, Foort Cornelis. 1962 [1961]. *Schrijft u ook zulk Nederlands?* Den Haag: Van Goor en Zonen.
- Edens, Bert & Eva Lindeboom. 1994. *De taal- en stijlgids*. Amsterdam: VNU/BPA.
- van Eijk, Inez. 1984 [1982]. *De Taalhulp*. Amsterdam: Bakker.
- van Eijk, Inez. 1999. *De nieuwe Taalhulp*. Amsterdam: Contact.
- Gerritsen, Susanne. 2001 [1998]. *Schrijfgids voor economen*. Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho.
- van Gessel, Han, Bas van Kleef & Jan Tromp. 1997. *de Volkskrant Het nieuwe stijlboek*. Den Haag: SDU.
- Haje, Christian F. 1932. *Taalschut. Schrijf weer Nederlands*. Leiden: N.V. Leidsche Uitgeversmaatschappij.
- Halink, Yvonne, Frans van Eemeren & Robert Grootendorst, eds. 1993. *Taalbaak*. Houten: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum.
- Harthoorn-Lokhorst, H. J. A., ed. 1984. *Schrijf beter spreek beter*. Amsterdam: The Reader's Digest.
- Heerink, Marcel. 2006 [2005]. *Praktische schrijfgids*. Amsterdam: Pearson Education.
- Heerink, Marcel. 2007. *Rapporteren*. Amsterdam: Pearson Education.
- Heidbuchel, Hendrik. 1962. *Hoe zeg en schrijf ik het?* Hasselt: HeideLand.
- Hermans, Mariët. 1992. *De kleine schrijfgids. Adviezen voor een goede zinsbouw, woordkeuze en spelling*. Muiderberg: D. Coutinho.
- Hermkens, Hendrik. 1974 [1966]. *Verzorgd Nederlands*. Den Bosch: Malmberg.
- van der Horst, P. J. 1988. *Taal en Tekst van A tot Z: Praktische handleiding voor schriftelijk taalgebruik*. Zutphen: Thieme.
- Houthuys, Astrid & Ludo Permentier. 2016. *Schrijven: leer de knepen van het vak*. Leuven: Davidsfonds/WPG Uitgevers.
- Houët, Henriëtte. 2000a. *Prisma Handboek van de Nederlandse taal*. Utrecht: Spectrum.

- Houët, Henriëtte. 2000b. *Schrijfstandaard. Raadgever bij taalkwesties*. Den Haag: Performa Human Resources Information.
- Houët, Henriëtte. 2002. *Kramers Stijlgids*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Jansen, Carel, Michael Steehouder & Marnix Gijsen. 2004. *Professioneel communiceren: Taal- en communicatiegids*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff.
- de Jong, Jaap, ed. 1993. *Handboek Bedrijfsrespondentie*. Groningen: Nijhoff.
- Kempeneers, Paul. 1981 [1974]. *Tips voor taalzuivering*. Leuven: Acco.
- Klein, Maarten & Mieke Visscher. 1996. *Handboek verzorgd Nederlands*. Amsterdam: Contact.
- Koenen, Liesbeth & Rik Smits. 1999 [1995]. *Basishandleiding Nederlands*. Utrecht: Bijleveld.
- Koenen, Liesbeth & Rik Smits. 2004. *Handboek Nederlands*. Utrecht: Bijleveld.
- Kolkhuis Tanke, Johan. 1975. In *verzorgd Nederlands en prettig leesbaar*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff.
- Ligtvoet, Arjen. 2005. *Stijlwijzer schriftelijk rapporteren*. Amsterdam: Tekstridder.
- Meijers, Jan. 1959. *Allerlei taalkwesties*. Amsterdam: Moussault.
- Nieuwenhuijsen, Peter. 1990. *Beter Nederlands*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Overduin, Boudewijn. 1986. *Rapporteren. Het schrijven van rapporten, nota's, scripties en artikelen*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Pak, Dick. 2004. *Taaldilemma's: taalquizen met uitleg*. Den Haag: Uitgeverij Pak.
- Pak, Dick. 2007. *Taaldilemma's 3: met nieuwste spelling*. Den Haag: Uitgeverij Pak.
- Pol, Jan H. J. van de. 1996 [1993]. In *goed Nederlands*. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers.
- de Raat, Friederike. 2012. *Hoe bereidt je een paard?* Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam.
- Renkema, Jan. 1989. [1979]. *Schrijfwijzer*. Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij.
- de Rijk, Peter. 1994. *Grammaticale tips*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Rogier, Louis. 1963. [1944]. *Nederlandse briefstijl*. Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink.
- Sanders, Ewoud & Koos Metselaar. 2000. *Stijlboek NRC Handelsblad*. Utrecht: Van Dale Lexicografie.
- Schaafsma, Eddy. 2013. *Elsevier Stijlboek*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Boeken.
- Schaars, Frans A. M. 2006. *Belangrijkste regels van onze Nederlandse standaardtaal*. Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers.
- Smeyers, Jos. 1955. *Ik schrijf zonder fouten*. Leuven: Davidsfonds/Litair.
- van Son, Jos & Cor F. K. Verheul. 1996. *Spellingwijzer*. Apeldoorn: Auctor.
- Staverman, Werner & Wytze Brandsma. 1956. *Slecht Nederlands*. Groningen: Wolters Noordhoff.
- Taaladviesdienst. 2009. *Taal-top-100*. Den Haag: Genootschap Onze Taal.
- de Taalclub (pseudonym of Yge Foppema). 1943. *Onze eigen taal. Handboek van de Taalclub*. Den Haag: De Schouw.
- de Taalclub (pseudonym of Wim Daniëls). 2008. *Groter als. Nieuwe regels voor het Nederlands van nu*. Den Bosch: Adr. Heinen.
- Tiggeler, Eric. 2000. *Taalwijzer voor de overheid*. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers.
- Tiggeler, Eric. 2001. *Vraagbaak Nederlands*. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers.
- Tiggeler, Eric. 2006. *Check je tekst! Tips en checklists om snel beter te schrijven*. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers.
- Timmers, Corriejanne. 1994. *Timmers over taal*. Apeldoorn: Auctor.
- Veering, Jan. 1959. *Spelenderwijs zuiver Nederlands*. Amsterdam: Becht.
- Verdenius, Andries. 1943. In *de Nederlandse taaltuin, wandelingen en waarnemingen*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Vries, Ton de. 2004. *De Communicatiewijzer: Handboek voor schriftelijk taalgebruik*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.

Wagenaar, Pyter. 2008. *Voor de vorm: taalvraagbaak voor schrijvers*. Amsterdam: Augustus.

Wageningen, J. C. van. 1946. *Even tijd voor onze taal!* Leiden: Sijthoff.

van Wingerden, Wouter. 2017. *Maar zo heb ik het geleerd! : de waarheid achter 50 taalkwesties*. Utrecht: Van Dale.

Appendix 2. Annotation schema

Category	A form is right/wrong because...
AUTHORITY	a certain authority says it is (not) so
AUTHORITY GRAMMAR	a grammar or grammarian says it is (not) so
BEAUTY	it is (not) beautiful
CARE	it is (not) a sign of careful language use
FREQUENCY OF OPINION	a number of people say it is (not) so
FREQUENCY OF USE	a number of people (does not) use it
GEOGRAPHIC	it is (not) used in a certain geographic area
GERMANISM	it is due to German influence
GRAMMAR	it (does not) conform(s) to a certain grammatical rule in the language
HISTORY	it is (not) historically used
IPSE DIXIT	no argument is given
LOGIC	it is (not) logical
MODE	it is (not) used in spoken or written language
NATURE	it (does not) conform(s) to the nature of the language
OTHER ARGUMENT	of some other reason not mentioned above
PURITY	it is not part of the Dutch language
QUALITY	it (does not) display(s) a certain quality
REGISTER	it is (not) used in a certain register
STANDARD	it is (not) used in the standard language
SUPPOSED EFFECT	it (does not) has (have) a certain effect
SYSTEM	it (does not) fit(s) with the system of the language
USE	it is(not) used
USE BY A SOCIAL GROUP	a certain group of people (does not) use(s) it
VARIETY	it is (not) used in a certain variety

Author's address

Marten van der Meulen
Centre for Language Studies
Radboud University
Erasmusplein 1
6500 HD Nijmegen
The Netherlands
m.vandermeulen@let.ru.nl

Proofs