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Dutch adnominal morphology in the *Gouden Eeuw*: what Hollandic recipes and private letters can tell us

ABSTRACT: La morfologia del neerlandese contemporaneo è il risultato di un profondo mutamento diacronico. Oggigiorno il sistema dei casi è pressoché scomparso e il sistema tripartito di genere (maschile vs. femminile vs. neutro) di origine indoeuropea è ridotto alla distinzione tra genere comune e genere neutro. La semplificazione morfologica, già in atto nella fase media, fu rallentata e, in parte, ostacolata dal processo di standardizzazione linguistica promosso dai grammatici del sedicesimo e diciassettesimo secolo nel tentativo di conferire prestigio alla lingua neerlandese usando il Latino come modello. Le norme prescritte dalle grammatiche proto-moderne sembrano descrivere un sistema artificiale, un modello da seguire, e non la lingua come era effettivamente in uso al tempo. Un'analisi condotta su un libro di cucina e un campione di lettere private risalenti alla seconda metà del diciassettesimo secolo non soltanto conferma una semplificazione morfologica molto più rilevante rispetto a quanto descritto nelle grammatiche e nei trattati del tempo, ma anche vari gradi di sistematizzazione e convergenza strutturale nella lingua formale e informale, indicando le possibili vie che hanno condotto alla graduale semplificazione del sistema originario.

ABSTRACT: Dutch morphology has undergone a deep restructuring over time. Nowadays cases have gone lost and the original tripartite gender system has been simplified into a binary one where masculine and feminine have conflated into common gender. Already in Middle Dutch the morphological system was largely under pressure, but the simplification was at least in part hidden by the standardization process and the attempts made by sixteenth and seventeenth century grammarians to restore the original system. As a matter of fact, linguistic accounts on medieval Dutch describe a morphological system which is equal to or even simpler than early modern grammars. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, attempts were made to give Dutch the status of a prestigious language, on the base of the Latin model. Accordingly, Early Modern Dutch grammars are commonly assumed to describe an artificial language and not the actual system as it was used by people in written and, presumably, in spoken form. An analysis carried out on a cookbook and a selection of private letters dating back to the end of the seventeenth century does not only confirm a stronger morphological simplification than assumed in contemporary grammars, but also recurring patterns in public and private written language, proving variable degrees of systematization in (formal and informal) language usage.

PAROLE-CHIAVE: Neerlandese, Standardizzazione, Caso, Genere, Morfologico

KEYWORDS: Dutch, Standardization, Case, Gender, Morphological

1. Introduction

The origins of Dutch date to the sixth century, in a geographical area where three different dialects of continental West Germanic came together: Frisian, Saxon and Low Franconian. In particular, Dutch originated from Low Franconian dialects spoken in areas covering modern France, Germany, and the Low Countries in Merovingian times preceding the seventh century. The earliest stages of the Dutch language (seventh – eleventh centuries) can only be reconstructed as there are no written documents before the tenth century.¹ In the Low Countries, reading and writing did not exist before the seventh and eighth centuries, when the Christianization process began.² Given the lack of Old Dutch texts, historical surveys commonly focus on Middle Dutch (twelfth – sixteenth centuries), especially considering that most of the decisive phonological changes that influenced the present status of the language took place during the Middle Ages. That is, it is from Middle Dutch dialects (Buccini 2010: 301-314) that the standard language has developed.

From the thirteenth century on the population in the Low Countries rapidly increased. Great cities developed in the south – Bruges, Ghent, Brussels, Mechelen and Antwerp – leading to the rise of town people, who were the first to extensively use Dutch, their native language, for written purposes. Indeed most documents dating to the thirteenth century come from the south as in the north, e.g. today's Holland, cities began to flourish later (in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). Accordingly, the label 'Middle Dutch' refers to the language spoken between the twelfth and the sixteenth century in present-day Flanders and, to a lesser extent, the Netherlands. In the beginning there was not a standard variety: people used the dialect of their city or region as the written language, although the dialect of the most prominent cities served as a model. As a consequence, information on the medieval case system mainly relies on southern dialects as at that time writing was highly connected to Flemish centres. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, due to changing economic and political conditions, the northern provinces, especially Holland, increased in power and wealth becoming the new cultural pivot promoting the standardization process. Thus the dialect of Holland formed the basis for standard Dutch, enriched with many southern (Brabantian and Flemish) elements (van der Wal 2006; van der Sijs 2004).

Much has been written about the effects of case loss in the history of Dutch. When

¹ The first Old Dutch texts which have survived are short phrases or fragments from direct translations of Latin biblical texts. The oldest surviving Dutch fragments – *Hollandse lijst van heidense praktijken* 'The Holland List of Pagan Practices' and *Utrechtse doopbelofte* 'Utrecht Baptismal Vow' – probably date back to the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth century. Among the most relevant and quite longer texts there are some fragments dating back to the tenth century written in Latin and an eastern variety of Old Franconian, the so called *Wachtendonckse Psalmen* "Wachtendonck Psalms", where the dialect could be either Old Limburgs or a variety of Rhine Franconian; and *Egmondse Williram* "Egmond Williram", a translation and adaptation of a German commentary. The most famous Old Dutch sentence (written in West-Flemish dialect) – *hebban olla uogala nestas hagunnan hi(c)(e)nda thu uu(at) unbida(t) g(h)e nu* "all birds have started making nests, except me and you, what are we waiting for" – dates back to the eleventh century.

² Originally the official language for writing was Latin.

the morphological simplification of the Dutch case system is discussed, the observation is generally made that (early) Middle Dutch still maintained a case system while Modern Dutch has lost morphological case. Despite the lack of medieval grammars, information on Middle Dutch morphology is sometimes to be found in Latin textbooks such as the *Exercitium puerorum* (Antwerp, 1485), a description of the Dutch vernacular for pupils of Latin schools in Flanders, where singular nominative and accusative forms have already coalesced and a few remnants of the original declensional system are visible in genitive case and prepositional NPs (van der Wal 1988: 234-257).

Accordingly, the end of the fifteenth century is generally considered as the point by which the case system broke down, that is, as the watershed between Middle Dutch and Modern Dutch. To give a few examples, van der Wal and van Bree (2008) argue that already in the fifteenth century case endings had almost completely eroded and in the sixteenth century only a few remnants of the original system could be observed; similarly, Marynissen (1996) claims that the syncretism of strong and weak declensions had already surfaced in early Middle Dutch.

If it is widely accepted that the Dutch language did not emerge from a single variant but from language contact between dialects in combination with language reform in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Weerman–De Wit 1998:18-46; Rutten *et al.* 2014), it is also true that this period remains silent in most accounts as there are no detailed studies dealing with the deflexion process observable in Early Modern Dutch texts. Moreover in linguistic histories and handbooks, the Dutch case system in the period in-between Middle Dutch and Modern Dutch is often referred to as an inconsistent, archaic, or artificial one: it is widely assumed that the Dutch case marking system had already collapsed in the Early Modern Age, and that case markers observable in contemporary texts should not be taken as evidence that case categories still existed. Indeed such forms are seen as the reflection of the language nurturing promoted by Renaissance grammarians who intended to give Dutch the status of a prestigious language using Latin as a model (Mooijaart–van der Eal 2011: 54-56; van der Sijs 2014; Janssens–Marynissen 2005; van der Wal–van Bree 2008, among others.).

This paper aims at filling, at least in part, this gap in historical linguistics by comparing historical, e.g. medieval and early modern grammatical accounts, with data extrapolated from texts dating to the end of the seventeenth century. This contribution has a twofold aim. On the one hand, it intends to add further evidence regarding the mismatch between actual language use and contemporary grammatical accounts in Early Modern Dutch; on the other hand, it attempts at assessing to what extent the standardization pressure affected language use, both in its formal and informal channels.

The paper divides into two parts. The first part describes the development of Dutch adnominal morphology comparing the current system with the older stages of the language (§2), e.g. reconstructed Old Dutch and Middle Dutch, and Early Modern Dutch, relying on contemporary linguistic accounts. The second part reports the results of an investigation carried out on NP-internal agreement in two sources dating to the end of the seventeenth century: a recipe book published in Amsterdam in 1667-1669, and a selection of private letters extrapolated from the corpus *Brieven als buit* (§3). The data are discussed in §4. Some concluding remarks are sketched in §5.

2. An overview of Dutch morphological simplification over time

In contemporary Dutch there is no morphological expression for the feature ‘singular’ of nouns, i.e. the nominal stem corresponds to the singular form of a noun. Nouns divide into two gender classes, e.g. common (*de*-words) vs. neuter (*het*-words). Nouns only inflect in plural, that is, gender is not a declensional category since there is no direct morphological expression of gender. Nominal gender manifests itself in the choice of determiners and pronominal adjectives. Within noun phrases (henceforth: NP), determiners (articles and demonstratives) and adjectives agree in number and gender with the head noun (cfr. Table 1).

	Common gender	Neuter gender	Plural
Definite NPs	<i>de goede-e wijn</i>	<i>het goed-e bier</i>	<i>de goed-e wijnen/bieren</i>
Indefinite NPs	<i>een goed-e wijn</i> <i>goed-e wijn</i>	<i>een goed bier</i> <i>goed bier</i>	<i>goed-e wijnen/boeken</i>

TABLE 1. The Dutch adnominal group today

As evident from the patterns displayed in Table 1, Dutch nouns, adjectives and determiners no longer mark case (today mostly limited to pronouns and a large number of set phrases).³ Besides, gender has become covert in the noun and only shows up in singular NP, i.e. gender distinctions for determiners and adjectives are neutralized in the plural. As in many Germanic languages, Dutch adjectives exhibit two kinds of inflection, depending on the syntactic configuration in which they occur, e.g. the (in)definiteness of the NP. Basically, today’s Dutch pronominal adjectives have the form stem + schwa unless the NP bears the feature [indefinite/singular/neuter]: in that case, the adjectival ending is \emptyset (Booij 2000).

Indeed, the current appearance of Dutch adnominal morphology is the result of a gradual morphological simplification that began in the Middle Ages (§ 2.1) and has been going on until today. Though the decisive step towards the loss of distinctions between masculine and feminine nouns was the gradual coalescence of nominative forms during the Middle Ages, masculine and feminine remained distinct in the rest of the nominal declension, that is, the change in gender began in Middle Dutch, but did not end at that stage (§2.2). In effect, it is difficult to date Dutch gender reduction, especially considering the prescriptive approach of early modern grammarians, who made many efforts towards language standardization providing complex paradigms for nouns, determiners and adjectives (§2.3).

2.1. *From Old Dutch to Middle Dutch: the gradual erosion of the original declensional system*

Despite the lack of written attestations, Old Dutch inflectional paradigms must have been very similar to those of other ancient Germanic languages: gender was

³ Inflected determiners can still be found in idioms, surnames and place names.

morphologically assigned – determined by the stem declension – and morphosyntactic agreement was ensured by reliable morphological markers (vocalic endings were still distinct) for case, number and gender. Nevertheless, compared with other Old Germanic languages, Old Dutch was characterized by the lack of gender distinctions in the plural of all paradigms and in other areas of singular adjective and pronominal inflections (Duke 2009: 192).

As in all other Germanic languages, stress was initial (on the stem) both in Old and Middle Dutch. In Old Dutch, however, different vowels could occur in unstressed syllables (*hebban* ‘they have’, *uogala* ‘birds’; *namon* ‘name’), while in Middle Dutch all unstressed vowels were reduced to a schwa ending, spelled < e > (*hebban* > *hebben*; *uogala* > *vogele*; *namon* > *name(n)*), with subsequent drop phenomena, namely the apocope of final *-e* and/or final *-n*. This phonological reduction had a strong effect on the morphological asset of the language leading to the gradual erosion of the case system: Old Dutch declensions gradually coalesced during the medieval period and a bipartite distinction between strong (original vocalic stem) and weak (*n*-stem) nouns emerged.

Accordingly, Middle Dutch nouns divided into two classes, were inflected in nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative case, and belonged to one of three genders, i.e. masculine, feminine and neuter. The declensional class was largely deducible from the shape of the noun: nouns ending in *-e* in the nominative case belonged to the weak declension, i.e. *cnape*, *tonge* (cfr. Table 2), while those with a final consonant belonged to the strong declension, i.e. *worm*, *daet* (cfr. Table 3).⁴

	Singular		Plural	
	M/N	F	M/N	F
NOM	<i>worm</i>	<i>daet</i>	<i>worme</i>	<i>dade</i>
GEN	<i>worms</i>	<i>daet</i>	<i>worme</i>	<i>dade</i>
DAT	<i>worme</i>	<i>daet</i>	<i>wormen</i>	<i>daden</i>
ACC	<i>worm</i>	<i>daet</i>	<i>worme</i>	<i>dade</i>

TABLE 2. The Middle Dutch strong declension⁵

⁴ The strong declension also included masculine and neuter derivatives in *-el*, *-em*, *-en* and *-er* and masculine derivatives in *-ing*, *-ling* and *-do(e)m*, masculine *nomina agentis* in *-are* and *-ere*, feminine nouns in *-heit* and neuter diminutives (like *vogel-ijn*). In contrast, neuter derivatives in *-nisse* and nouns in *-e* with a prefix *ghe-* (like *ghe-slacht-e*) and original *ǫ*-stems and feminine derivatives in *-inge*, *-inne*, *-esse* and *-te* followed the weak declension. Latin loans, depending on their shape, divided between the two declensions: *amijs* and *prijs* followed the strong declension, while *prinche* and *prophete* belonged to the weak class (van Loey 1973: 8-20).

⁵ Adapted from van Loey (1973: 8-20). Middle Dutch grammars vary a little concerning the paradigms of weak and strong nouns. For instance, in van Royen’s grammar (1991) masculine/neuter dative singular nouns can occur with or without *e*-ending, e.g. *worm/worme*; similarly, the feminine genitive can occur with or without *e*-ending, e.g. *daet/dade*.

	Singular		Plural	
	M/N	F	M/N	F
NOM	<i>cnape</i>	<i>tonge</i>	<i>cnapen</i>	<i>tongen</i>
GEN	<i>cnapen</i>	<i>tonge(n)</i>	<i>cnapen</i>	<i>tongen</i>
DAT	<i>cnape</i>	<i>tonge(n)</i>	<i>cnapen</i>	<i>tongen</i>
ACC	<i>cnape</i>	<i>tonge</i>	<i>cnapen</i>	<i>tongen</i>

TABLE 3. The Middle Dutch weak declension⁶

Within the strong class, masculine and neuter nouns were characterized by the *s*-ending and the *e*-ending in the genitive and dative singular respectively, while feminine nouns had zero-ending, and *e*-ending in the plural for all genders. Within the weak, masculine/neuter nouns were characterized by the *n*-ending in genitive singular, whereas feminine nouns could show the nasal ending in both genitive and dative singular and *n*-ending for plural forms (van Loey 1973: 8-32). Accordingly, strong nouns displayed differences between masculine/neuter and feminine only in the genitive and dative singular, whereas weak nouns contributed to nominal classification through the marking of a feminine either deleting or adding the *n*-ending only in genitive and dative singular, respectively. In other words, the weak declension had most cases with *en*-ending in the singular, while the strong declension had different endings.

Between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, with the gradual loss of the declensional system, nouns easily changed their gender. Many masculine and neuter nouns with unstable *e*-ending were transferred to feminine gender (for instance *nose* and *name*)⁷ and to the weak class even if they originally belonged to the strong declension (for instance *ellende*, *armoede*, *orloghe*, derivatives in *-schap* and Latin loans like *legioen* and *serpent*). Besides, strong feminine nouns without *e*-ending (for instance *arbeit* and *tijt* and derivatives in *-heit*) could become masculine or neuter.⁸ In other words, zero-ending and schwa-ending tended to associate with masculine/neuter and feminine gender respectively. Such a tendency, however, could not ensure a systematic restructuring of the declensional system since the *e*-ending was highly unstable (cfr. *bijl/bile*, *closter/clostre*, etc.). Over time *e*-apocope became so pervasive that even weak feminine nouns lost their *e*-ending.⁹ As a consequence, by the end of the medieval period the strong and the weak declensions became confused, with the strong and weak endings slowly merging into a single. Meanwhile the *s*-ending became the only suffix for genitive and every schwa at the end of a noun could be deleted, also in the dative singular. Then all feminine nouns

⁶ Adapted from van Loey (1973: 21-26).

⁷ According to van Loey (1973: 10), the schwa-ending for these nouns had already been lost by the end of the fourteenth century, i.e. *nose* > *neus*; *name* > *naam*.

⁸ For more details see van Loey (1973: 8-26).

⁹ Once stem endings were all weakened to *-e*, feminine nouns began to be homophonous with masculine and neuter vowel stems and the class of original masculine *a*-stems started to incorporate nouns which originally belonged to the *-i* and root stem classes. Besides, all feminine nouns showed the tendency to adopt the weak feminine singular declension: feminine *i*-, *u*- and root stems began to fluctuate between the strong and weak declensions (*arbeit/arbeiden*) both in dative and genitive singular.

began to merge into a single class (weak declension) and the (*e*)n-ending gradually spread to nearly all non feminine nouns as well (Duke 2009: 199). Thus the older strong plural forms disappeared and all nouns became weak in the plural (*en*-ending), whereas in the singular the weak declension was replaced by the strong one for most nouns.

Hence, in Middle Dutch three genders divided into two plural classes, namely *-e* and *-n*. The former was gradually abandoned in favour of *s*-plural and, when the *en*-marking ousted the *e*-plural, the distinction between singular and plural became the most significant for noun forms. On the one hand, gender historically became less and less marked in the plural paradigms of associated words, but was retained in the singular.¹⁰ On the other hand, declensions were simplified in the singular, but were maintained in the plural. This state of affairs led to a complementary redistribution of number marking: once the number of nominal classes was reduced – as happened to different degrees in all Germanic languages – the original link between gender and declension gradually disappeared.

2.2. *The effects of morphological simplification in medieval NP-internal agreement*

In Old and Middle Dutch, case distinctions were not only visible in the noun, but also in determiners, adjectives and pronouns. In Old Dutch masculine (*thē/thie*), feminine (*thiu*) and neuter (*that*) determiners¹¹ had distinct forms (Quak and van der Horst 1997: 37-53). In the nominative case, however, masculine and feminine forms only differed in the quality of their final vowel and therefore, during the Middle Ages, the original distinction between nominative masculine and feminine determiners was opacized by phonological reduction. The masculine and feminine nominative forms merged in the unique variant *die* (*de*), while the neuter *dat* (proclitic *t*, *d*, e.g. *tkint*, *dwater*) remained distinct.¹²

The case system also survived for the indefinite article (which originally followed the strong adjectival declension), but the distinction between masculine, neuter and feminine forms was almost completely neutralized in nominative case. There was a unique uninflected nominative form *een* for all genders (for feminine nouns, however, the variant *eene* could be used); the only difference between masculine and neuter paradigms reduced to the accusative case, as for masculine nouns both *een* and *eenen* were possible (van Loey 1973: 50).

Adjectives varied according to case, gender and number of the noun they combined with and could end either in a consonant (*goet* ‘good’) or in an unstressed <e> (*blauwe*

¹⁰ This might have been a side effect of the loss of the zero plural as well as of the perceptually higher prominence of singular forms to distinguish genders.

¹¹ In all Germanic languages it has been assumed that definite articles have arisen from the distal demonstrative pronoun, as nouns originally had no article at all in Indo-European (see Diessel 1999). With respect to this Dutch is not exceptional: *die* and *dat* were original demonstratives which could also be used as definite articles and relative pronouns. The unstressed forms *de* (< *die*) and *t* (< *dat*) of the nominative have become the definite article in Standard Dutch, while the stressed forms of the nominative have maintained their original function as distal demonstratives.

¹² The modern definite article *het* did not exist at this stage, but developed later, at the end of the Middle Ages, thanks to the reanalysis of the unemphatic form *t* which was homophonous with the neuter personal pronoun *het* [ət]. The unemphatic *dat*-form *t* was originally a proclitic form of the article and still [ət] is the regular pronunciation today (Donaldson 1983: 163).

‘blue’). Hence the undeclined form of some adjectives may be attested both with and without final vowel: *hoch* vs. *hoghe* ‘high’; *rijc* vs. *rike* ‘rich’. Plural paradigms had already been neutralized in Old Dutch: feminine and masculine endings were used interchangeably with masculine and feminine nouns, that is, the adjective plural declension displayed an earlier form of gender syncretism. The only relic of the Germanic opposition between strong and weak adjectival forms (depending on the presence or absence of a determiner within the NP),¹³ was the uninflected form *goet* for nominative/accusative neuter singular and nominative masculine singular: the uninflected (strong) form surfaced in bare NPs and in predicative usages, while in definite NPs the declined (weak) variant appeared, i.e. *goet ridder* ‘good knight’/ *die ridder es goet* ‘the knight is good’ vs. *die goede ridder* ‘the good knight’).

A summarizing picture for the Middle Dutch adnominal group is provided in Table 4 and Table 5. These tables were constructed taking as reference point van Royen’s grammar (1991: 58-59), whose paradigms have been enriched (italic-typed forms) comparing it with van Loey’s grammar (1973: 43-50). Van Royen distinguishes between strong and weak declension on the basis of the usage in context, specifying that the strong declension (cfr. Table 4) is used when the adjective occurs in attributive position and is not preceded by a determiner, e.g. bare NP; and when the adjective is preceded by an indefinite determiner *een*, (*ne/en*)*gheen*, *menich*; whereas the weak declension (cfr. Table 5) appears with definite determiners and possessive pronouns.

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
NOM	een goet man	ene/ <i>een</i> goede daet	een goet huus	goede manne(n)	goede dade	goede huse(n)
GEN	eens goets mans	enere/ <i>eenre</i> / ere goed(e)r(e) daet/dade	eens goets huus/huses	goed(e)r(e) manne(n)	goed(e)r(e) dade(n)	goed(e)r(e) huse(n)
DAT	enen/ <i>een</i> goeden man(ne)	enere/ <i>eenre</i> / ere/ <i>een</i> goede(e)r(e) daet/dade	enen/ <i>een</i> goeden huus	goeden manne(n)	goeden daden	goeden husen
ACC	enen/ <i>een</i> goeden man	een goede daet	een goet huus	goede manne(n)	goede dade(n)	goede huse(n)

TABLE 4. Strong declension of the Middle Dutch nominal group

¹³ The Protogermanic double adjectival inflection was involved in the marking of definiteness (Traugott 1992: 173). The system that was still at work in Old Dutch got disrupted in Middle Dutch as a consequence of the mutual influence of strong and weak inflection upon each other, the preceding determiner and the confusion between different gender classes and cases (van Bree 1987: 247-249).

	Singular			Plural		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
NOM	die goede man	die goede daet	dat goede huus	die goede manne(n)	die goede dade(n)	die goede huse(n)
GEN	des goets mans	der goed(e)r(e) daet/dade	des goets huus/huses	der goed(e)r(e) manne(n)	der goed(e)r(e) dade(n)	der goed(e)r(e) huse(n)
DAT	den/ <i>dien</i> goeden man(ne)	der goed(e)r(e) daet/dade	den/ <i>dien</i> goeden huse	den/ <i>dien</i> goeden mannen	den/ <i>dien</i> goeden daden	den/ <i>dien</i> goeden husen
ACC	den/ <i>dien</i> goeden man	die goede daet	dat goede huus	die goede manne(n)	die goede dade(n)	die goede huse(n)

TABLE 5. Weak declension of the Middle Dutch nominal group

As evident from the tables above, the morphological system of Middle Dutch was already in a state of flux. Definite NPs in nominative case have coalesced for masculine and feminine gender, whereas in indefinite NPs the distinction is only portrayed by adjectival declension. The merging of masculine and neuter gender shows up in genitive and dative case both in definite and indefinite NPs, whereas in accusative case the tripartite system is maintained. Although the common way of representing Middle Dutch NP-internal agreement is to give a three-way gender system that keeps masculine, feminine and neuter singular distinct, Table 4 and Table 5 demonstrate that such a distinction was not that sharp. Besides, many nouns could have more than one gender. Dutch historical dictionaries list many double or multiple gender nouns. In a situation in which a three-gender system was gradually shifting towards a binary one, certain nouns may appear unspecified for gender and shift from one class to the other.¹⁴ Consequently, switches between strong and weak declension were frequent. For instance, some strong nouns followed the weak declension in the plural – the *n*-ending was a clearer plural marker (and the *-n* was already present in the dative plural of the strong declension) –, while strong feminines often followed the weak declension as the *e*-ending was easier to associate with feminine gender.¹⁵

2.3. *Towards standard Dutch: language reform in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*

Before the second half of the sixteenth century, there were no Dutch grammar or detailed dictionary available in the north: grammatical rules had to be determined and the vocabulary to be described (van der Wal 2003: 168). In 1568 a Dutch merchant, Johan Radermacher, pointed out in his *Voorreden van de noodich ende nutticheit der*

¹⁴ For more details on Dutch double gender nouns in diachronic and synchronic perspective see Semplicini (2016).

¹⁵ The gradual coalescence of masculine and feminine gender did not affect third person pronouns which – as in all Germanic languages – retained the original tripartite system. Though gender distinctions were neutralized in the plural and the case system already displayed many cases of syncretism, Middle Dutch third person pronouns still distinguished three genders and four cases and today it is still so.

Nederduytscher taelkunste, the importance for people to be trained in correct language usage. Indeed he had observed that many of his colleagues, despite having a ready tongue and being able to wield a pen, could not write their documents correctly (Ruijsendaal 1991: 281). Radermacher's wish was soon fulfilled as in the Low Countries the interest in the vernacular and, consequently, in the development of a standard language, started exactly at that time. Problems to be dealt with were to find a proper norm for a good language, the relationship between spoken language and its orthography and, of course, issues regarding case and gender. The process of language building spanned approximately between 1550 and 1650 (Noordegraaf 2001: 895). It began with the publication of the first printed Dutch grammar – the *Twe-spraack vande Nederduitsche letterkunst* (Amsterdam 1584) – written by members of the Amsterdam Chamber of Rhetoric, and ended with Petrus Leupenius' *Aenmerkingen op de Nederduitsche taale* (Amsterdam 1653). In-between the publication of these two works, other relevant grammars appeared: van Heule's *Nederduytsche grammatica ofte spraec-konst* (Leiden 1625), followed by its revised version *Nederduytsche spraec-konst ofte tael-beschrijvinge* (Leiden 1633), and Kók's *Ont-werp der Neder-duitsche letter-konst* (Amsterdam, 1649). Besides, two texts – De Hubert's *Noodige waarshouwinge aan alle liefhebbers der Nederduijtze tale* (Leiden, 1624) and Ampzing's *Nederlandsch tael-bericht* (Haarlem, 1628) – were published as preliminary parts in larger publications.¹⁶

Early modern grammarians were conscious of language variation, in general, and of certain dialectal differences, in particular, but all of them tried to provide readers with a comprehensive description of Dutch in order to promote common rules (van der Wal 1992: 121). They were not specialized philologists, but beginners who had only Latin as a model. Basically, the norms they prescribed relied on the Latin-school tradition displaying different degrees of syncretism for number, gender and case marking in nominal declension. The output of the grammars and language treatises which are more relevant to compare with my data (§3) is discussed in the rest of the paragraph. Given the aim of the paper the survey exclusively focuses on issues concerning NP-internal agreement.

2.3.1. *The first printed Dutch grammar: The Twe-spraack (1584)*

In the *Twe-spraack* the most serious misuse in the growing Dutch language is claimed to affect morphology and syntax. Apart from the inappropriate combination of article and noun due to the conflict between natural and grammatical gender, like *dat man* 'the.N man.M', *die wyif* 'the.M/F wife.N', *die kind* 'the.M/F child.N',¹⁷ misuses in gender and number are stated to be frequent, e.g. *op den ghebaanden pad* 'on the.M/F beaten path.N' instead of *het ghebaande pad* 'on the.N beaten path.N'.¹⁸ Incorrect usage

¹⁶ De Hubert's language treatise was published at the beginning of *De Psalmen des Propheeten Davids* (Leiden 1624); Ampzing's work appeared in the third edition of *Beschrijvinge ende lof der stad Haerlem* (Haarlem 1628). See Zwaan 1939.

¹⁷ The label 'grammatical gender' refers to the lexical gender of a noun, whereas natural gender refers to the entity the noun identifies: it is widely recognised that agreement is affected by natural gender, leading to instances of semantic rather grammatical agreement. See Corbett (1991; 2006).

¹⁸ The authors of the *Twe-spraack* also condemned the new usage of the definite article *het* over the

also regards case features: for instance, subjects can appear with an incorrect accusative feature (*enen zót laat zyn tóorn zien* ‘a.ACC fool.NOM shows his anger’ instead of *een zót* ‘a.NOM fool.NOM’; *waar den ós werckt* ‘where the ox.ACC labours’ instead of *de ós* ‘the.NOM ox.NOM’). To remedy this situation, the grammar presents its paradigms of six cases – Nominative, Genitive, Dative, Accusative, Vocative and Ablative – for definite and indefinite NPs (cfr. Table 6 and Table 7, respectively).¹⁹

	M	F	N	PL (all genders)
NOM	de heer/here	de vrouw/vrouwe	het dier	de mannen/vrouwen/dieren
GEN	des heers	des vrouws	des diers	der mannen/vrouwen/dieren
DAT	den here	den vrouwe	den diere	den mannen/vrouwen/dieren
ACC	de/den heer/here	de/den vrouw/vrouwe	het dier	de/den mannen/vrouwen/dieren
ABL	vande/vanden heer/here	vande/vanden vrouw/vrouwe	van het/vant dier	vande/vanden mannen/vrouwen/dieren

TABLE 6. Definite NP-declension in the *Twe-spraack* (1584)

	M	F	N	PL (all genders)
NOM	een man	een vrouw	een dier	veel mannen/vrouwen/dieren
GEN	eens mans	eens vrouws	eens diers	veler mannen/vrouwen/dieren
DAT	enen man/manne	enen vrouwe	enen diere	veel mannen/vrouwen/dieren
ACC	een/eenen man	een/eenen vrouw	een/eenen dier	veel mannen/vrouwen/dieren
ABL	van enen/een man	van enen/een vrou	van enen/een dier	van veel/velen mannen/vrouwen/dieren

TABLE 7. Indefinite NP-declension in the *Twe-spraack* (1584)

Hence the complexity of the case system displayed by the *Twe-spraack* is only apparent. The articles – described as the elements signaling the noun gender and declension – are three: *de*, *het* and *een*.²⁰ There are two kinds of definite NPs: masculine and feminine nouns trigger the article *de* (and its declined variants), whereas neuter words trigger the article *het* (only in genitive case all three genders show the same determiner, e.g. *des*). Masculine and feminine gender have merged into a single class with the *n*-ending existing as a pure case marker: the form *de* is to be used with subjects, whereas *den* appears with direct and indirect objects. Accordingly, the only differences in the case system concern the opposition between masculine/feminine and neuter nominative, accusative and ablative singular. This binary system of gender does neither show up in plural nor in indefinite nouns phrases, i.e. *een* (and its declined variants) and plural determiners are the

original *dat*, e.g. *dat ghódlóós wezen* vs. *het ghódlóós wezen* ‘the godless creature’ (1584/1962: 50).

¹⁹ Adapted from Spieghel (1584/1962: 45-46). The vocative case is not included in the tables provided in this section and in the following ones as it does not entail the use of the article.

²⁰ The grammar also lists contracted variants: *d’* (< *de*), *s’* (< *des*), and *t’* (< *het*), e.g. *d’appelboom* ‘the appletree’, *t’wyf* ‘the wife’, *s’mans* ‘of the man’ (Spieghel 1584/1962: 39-40).

same for all genders (cfr. Table 7).

For the noun declension, the *Twe-spraak* assumes that an *s*-ending is added to the nouns of any gender in genitive case; whereas an *-e* is added to all nouns in dative case (*heer* > *her-e*, *vrouw* > *vrouw-e*), which for monosyllabic nouns can lead to repetition of the final consonant, e.g. *man* + *e* > *man-n-e*. The original distinction between masculine and feminine nouns, however, has not completely gone lost. The adjectival declension distinguishes between two forms, i.e. with and without *e*-ending. Masculine and neuter nouns trigger an uninflected adjective in indefinite NPs, e.g. *een schoon man/een schoon paerd*, whereas feminine nouns associate with declined adjectives, e.g. *een schone vrouw*. Accordingly, an adjective is triggered by a feminine noun if it shows up with *e*-ending, otherwise the controller is masculine or neuter. In definite NPs, however, there are no distinctions for gender in that all nouns trigger a declined adjective, e.g. *de schone man/de schone vrouw/het schone paerd*. The *Twe-spraak* does not add further details about the adjectival declensions, that is, no distinctions are provided for different cases.

2.3.2. *Christiaen van Heule's Nederduytsche grammatica ofte spraec-konst (1625) and Nederduytsche spraec-konst ofte spraec-konst tael-beschrijvinge (1633)*

Forty years after the appearance of the *Twe-spraak*, the second Dutch grammar was published: the *Nederduytsche grammatica ofte spraec-konst* written by the mathematician Christiaen van Heule. In his work, van Heule was strongly influenced by Latin-school grammars. The author described a nominal system characterized by three genders and six cases, as in the *Twee-spraak*, with a more complex system of endings and less syncretism between genders for definite and indefinite determiners (cfr. Table 8 and Table 9).

	M	F	N	PL (all genders)
NOM	de man	de vrouwe	het velt	de mans/mannen; vrouwen; velden
GEN	des mans	der vrouwe	des velts	der mannen; vrouwen; velden
DAT	den man	de/ter vrouwe	het velt/den velde	den mannen; vrouwen; velden
ACC	den man	de vrouwe	het velt	de mans/mannen; vrouwen; velden
ABL	van den man	vande vrouwe	van het velt / van den velde	van de/den mannen; vrouwen; velden

TABLE 8. Definite NPs in van Heule's *spraec-konst* (1625: 28-29)

	M	F	N
NOM	een man	eene vrouwe	een velt
GEN	eenes/eens mans	eener vrouwe	eens/eenes velts
DAT	eenen man	eene vrouwe	een velt
ACC	eenen man	eene vrouwe	een velt
ABL	van eenen man	van eene vrouwe	van een velt

TABLE 9. Indefinite NPs in van Heule's *spraec-konst* (1625: 26)

Nouns are never declined in the singular, with the exception of genitive case where masculine and neuter words take *s*-ending.²¹ The author also refers to the existence of noun variants with and without *e*-ending. In Middle Dutch most nouns ended in *-e*, e.g. *vrouwe* ‘lady’, but through the process of *e*-deletion, already started in Middle Dutch, alternative forms had begun to appear, e.g. *vrouwe* vs. *vrouw*. Van Heule argues that at that time in Holland almost every word was enunciated without *-e*, whereas southern dialects (Brabantian and Flemish) did not show *-e*-deletion (*ibid.*91).²²

With respect to the article declension, van Heule adds that, according to some learned people, for masculine nouns beginning with *h* or a vowel, the form *den* should be used, e.g. *den hemel*, *den outaer*. If the noun is preceded by an adjective, however, the nasal ending only appears on the target which is closest to the noun, that is, the article form to choose is *de*, e.g. *de schoonen hemel*. Besides, the *den* article can appear with nouns beginning with *d*, e.g. *den dach*, *den douw* (*ibid.*15).

As for the adjectival declension, van Heule does not provide complete paradigms. In general terms, the author states that articles and adjectives have to display the same ending, e.g. *den/eenen goeden/vroomen*; *de/eene goede/vroomen*; *het/een goet/vroom* (*ibid.*15). Masculine adjectives are declined in genitive, dative, accusative and ablative case and all share the same form, e.g. nasal ending; feminine adjectives take *e*-endings, whereas neuter adjectives take an ending only in genitive case (*ibid.* 15, 23-24; 33). In nominative case, adjectives are undeclined in indefinite NPs, but take *-e* in definite NPs, e.g. *een beter man/de beste man*; *een beter vrouwe/de beste vrouwe*; *een beter beest/het beste beest* (*ibid.*17).

Van Heule revised his grammar to *De Nederduytsche spraeck-konst ofte tael-beschrijvinge* adopting a more independent attitude towards Latin sources (Dibbets 1992: 44). He simplified the system by reducing the number of cases to four, but added further forms in the declension of definite determiners (cfr. Table 10).

	M	F	N	PL (all genders)
NOM	de man	de wet	het velt	de mans; wetten; velden
GEN	des mans	der wet	des velts	der mannen; wetten; velden
DAT	den man/manne	derr/de wet	den velde	den/denn mannen; wetten; den velden
ACC	den man	de wet	het velt	de mans; wetten; velden

TABLE 10. Definite NP-declension in van Heule’s *tael-beschrijvinge* (1633: 39-41)

Basing his work on Greek, van Heule tried to introduce the artificial distinction between the second and the third case in the singular of the feminine: traditionally in genitive and dative case the form *der* was used, but the author suggested to use *derr* for

²¹ Some feminine nouns can show up with *s*-ending as well: in that case they trigger the article *des*, e.g. *der waerelts* (*ibid.* 27-28).

²² By the seventeenth century, many dialects and particularly the Hollands dialect had a high proportion of schwa-less forms. Apocope probably first affected polysyllabic nouns, e.g. *riddere* > *ridder*, indicating the phonological or prosodic nature of the change (Marynissen 2009: 237-239).

the latter. Similarly, to distinguish between forms in masculine dative singular and plural, elsewhere both expressed by *den*, he suggested *denn* for plurals.

In his revised work, van Heule also reports complete paradigms for adjectival declension in definite NPs: adjectives always appear inflected, taking *e-* ending or *n-*ending depending on gender and case (cfr. Table 11).

	M	F	N	PL (all genders)
NOM	de goede	de goede	het goet	de goede
GEN	des goeden	der goede	des goeden	der goede/goeden
DAT	den goeden	derr goede	den goeden	denn goeden goeden
ACC	den goeden	de goede	het goet	de goede/goeden

TABLE 11. Adjectival declension in van Heule's *tael-beschrijvinge* (1633: 46-47)

In genitive, dative, accusative and ablative case masculine adjectives take the nasal ending, while feminine nouns always take *e*-ending; neuter adjectives take *en*-ending in genitive and dative case, otherwise they remain uninflected. Van Heule also claims that, in language usage, masculine targets in nominative case sometimes appear with *-n*; *den byzonderen man* instead of *de byzondere man* 'the special man'. For the genitive declension, the author adds that feminine nouns trigger no further ending, but in case they appear with an *-s* even the article should have the same ending (*des* instead of *der*).

2.3.3. *Antonis De Hubert's Noodige waarshouwinge aan alle liefhebbers der Nederduijtze tale (1624) and Samuel Ampzing's Nederlandsch tael-bericht (1628)*

In his treatise, De Hubert maintains the distinction between masculine, feminine and neuter gender, also reporting the existence of nouns belonging to more than one gender, e.g. *het oorlog/de oorlog* 'the.N war/the.M/F war' (*ibid.*124). De Hubert argues that almost all nouns ending in *-e* are feminine or neuter, whereas other nouns are masculine. To identify whether a noun ending in *-e* is feminine or neuter, the context is relevant, as neuter words trigger the definite article *het*. Generally speaking, there are two definite articles (*de* and *het*, cfr. Table 12) and an indefinite form *een* for masculine/neuter nouns and *eene* for feminine nouns (cfr. Table 13). All nouns are declined according to the general scheme given in Table 12 and Table 13. Exceptions are provided by nouns ending in *-er* that in dative and ablative case do not trigger the *e*-ending, e.g. *de/eenen vader*) and, in plural form, can trigger an *s*-ending or *en*-ending in nominative, accusative and ablative case, but exclusively *-en* in genitive and dative.

	M	F	N	PL (all genders)
NOM	de man	de vrouwe	het wijf	de mans/mannen; vrouwen; wijven
GEN	des mans	der vrouwe	des wijfs	der mannen; vrouwen; wijven
DAT	den man/manne	de/der vrouwe	den wijve/ het wijf	den mannen; wijven de vrouwen
ACC	den man/ (manne)	de vrouwe	het wijf/(den wijve)	de mans/mannen; vrouwen; wijven
ABL	van den man/ manne	van de/van der vrouwe	van het wijf/ den wijve	van den mans/mannen van de vrouwen van de/van den wijven

TABLE 12. Definite NPs in De Hubert's *Noodige waarshouwinge* (1624)

	M	F	N
NOM	een man	eene vrouw	een wijf
GEN	eens/eenes mans	eener vrouw	eens/eenes wijfs
DAT	eenen man/(manne)	eene/eener vrouw	een/eenen wijf
ACC	eenen man/(manne)	eene vrouw	een wijf/eenen wijve
ABL	van eenen man/(manne)	van eene/eener vrouw	van een wijf/ van eenen wijve

TABLE 13. Indefinite NPs in De Hubert's *Noodige waarshouwinge* (1624)

De Hubert maintains the distinction between genders in definite and indefinite NPs. With the exception of nominative singular, masculine and feminine NPs do not show syncretism in the declensional system, whereas there is a partial overlap of masculine and neuter forms.

As for the adjectival declension, De Hubert only states that plural forms always take *e*-ending, irrespective of the gender of the controller (adjectives in *-en* lose the nasal ending in masculine plural form, e.g. *een verscheijden menz/twee verscheijde luijden*), and *-e* or *-en* when they appear in bare NPs. Besides, feminine adjectives are said to have the same form in singular and plural, e.g. *e*-ending (*ibid.*128).

In his *Nederlandsch tael-bericht*, the minister Samuel Ampzing was strongly influenced by De Hubert and van Heule and considered gender as the first problem to deal with. Like his predecessors, Ampzing distinguished between three genders, e.g. masculine (*de man/een man*), feminine (*de vrouw/eene vrouw*), and neuter (*het kind/een kind*).

The definite article declension allows discrimination between masculine/feminine and neuter words, while the indefinite article declension permits to discriminate between masculine/neuter and feminine nouns. In indefinite NPs the attributive adjective further signals the opposition masculine vs. feminine, e.g. *een geleerd man* 'an educated.M man' vs. *eene vroomme vrouw* 'an educated.F woman'. A summarizing picture of Ampzing's account is provided in Table 14 and Table 15.

	M	F	N	M PL	F PL	N PL
NOM	de geleerde man	de vroomme vrouwe	het kleyn/ kleyne kind	de geleerde mannen	de vroomme vrouwe	de kleyne kinders
GEN	des geleerden mans/manne	der vroomme vrouwe	des kleynen kinds	der geleerde mannen	der vroomme vrouwe	der kleyne kinders
DAT	den geleerden man	de vroomme vrouwe	het kleyn/ kleyne kind; den kleynen kinde	den geleerden mannen	de vroomme vrouwe	den kleynen kinders
ACC	den geleerden man	de vroomme vrouwe	het kleyn/ kleyne kind	de geleerde mannen	de vroomme vrouwe	de kleyne kinders
ABL	van den geleerden man/manne	van de vroomme vrouwe	van het kleyn/ kleyne kind; van den kleynen kinde	van de geleerde mannen/ van den geleerden mannen	vande vroomme vrouwen	van de kleyne /van den kleynen kinders

TABLE 14. Definite NPs in Ampzing's *Nederlandsh tael-bericht* (1628: 142-143)

	M	F	N
NOM	een geleerd man	eene vroomme vrouwe	een kleyn kind
GEN	eens/eenes geleerden mans	eener vroomme vrouwe	eens/eenes kleynen kinds
DAT	eenen geleerden man	eene vroomme vrouwe	een kleyn kind/eenen kleynen kind
ACC	eenen geleerden man	eene vroomme vrouwe	een kleyn kind
ABL	van eenen geleerden man	van eene vroomme vrouwe	van een kleyn kind/van eenen kleynen kinde

TABLE 15. Indefinite NPs in Ampzing's *Nederlandsh tael-bericht* (1628: 142-143)

As shown in Table 14 and Table 15, Ampzing keeps masculine and feminine nouns distinct in definite and indefinite NPs, preferring the form *de* for nominative case irrespective of any initial consonant or vowel. The author argues that for neuter nouns, the dative form *den wijve* can be used, although the variant *het wijf* is to be preferred. Besides, the masculine accusative forms *de* and *een* are to be preferred to *den* and *eenen*, especially in NP containing an attributive adjective. Some neuter nouns are argued to trigger both *het* and *den* in accusative form, e.g. *aan den kruyze*, *by den leven*, whereas the form *des* is observed to be used with feminine nouns in prosa. Interestingly, compared to De Hubert's work, Ampzing's paradigms display a simplified declension for feminine determiners as *der* and *eener* only appear in genitive case.

Simplified paradigms are provided also for the nominal declension. The undeclined masculine form *man* is listed as the unique variant not only in nominative case but also in dative and accusative case, whereas feminine nouns always take *e*-ending. Ampzing also refers to some exceptions, for instance some neuter nouns in nominative case can show up with and without *-e* (*kruyze/kruys gelove/geloof*) and, especially for rhyme needs, feminine nouns in genitive case can trigger an *-s* if preceded by the article form *des*, e.g. *des werelds begrijp* vs. *het begrijp der wereld*.

2.3.4. *Allard Kók's Ont-werp der Neder-duitsche letter-konst (1649) and Petrus Leupenius' Aenmerkingen op de Neerderduitsche taale (1653)*

For his grammatical account, the silk manufacturer and musician Allard Kók relied on previous Dutch grammars and Latin-school works. Kók's grammar offers a detailed description of NP-internal agreement in that full paradigms for definite and indefinite NPs, including adjectival forms, are provided (cfr. Table 16 and 17).

	M	F	N	PL (all genders)
NOM	de ghoede man	de ghoede vrouw	het ghoedt wijf	de ghoede mannen; vrouwen; wijven
GEN	des ghoeden mans	der ghoede vrouw/ vrouwen	des ghoeden wijfs	der ghoede/ghoeder mannen; vrouwen; wijven
DAT	den ghoeden man/ manne	der ghoede vrouw	het ghoedt wijf den ghoeden wijve	den ghoeden mannen; vrouwen; wijven
ACC	den ghoeden man	de ghoede vrouw	het ghoedt wijf	de ghoede mannen; vrouwen; wijven

TABLE 16. Definite NP-declension in van Kók's *Ont-werp* (1649/1981: 22-25)

	M	F	N
NOM	een ghoedt man	een ghoede vrouw	een ghoedt wijf
GEN	eens ghoeden mans	eener ghoede vrouw/vrouwen	eens ghoeden wijfs
DAT	eenen ghoeden man/manne	eener ghoede vrouw	een ghoedt wijf eenen ghoeden wijve
ACC	eenen/een ghoeden man	een ghoede vrouw	een ghoedt wijf

TABLE 17. Indefinite NP-declension in van Kók's *Ont-werp* (1649/1981: 22-25)

The four-case system displayed by Kók's grammar is further simplified in Petrus Leupenius' account. Although the book cannot be considered a complete grammar, the author made many independent observations which are relevant for NP-internal agreement (Dibbets 1992: 44). In particular, Leupenius reduced the number of cases to three: first case (nominative/vocative), second case (genitive), and third case (accusative/dative/ablative) and reported a regular system of nominal declension in which all nouns regardless of gender take *s*-ending and (optionally) *e*-ending in the second and third case, respectively. As shown in Table 18 and Table 19,²³ case marking is primarily conveyed by the usage of determiners which, however, do not allow to distinguish between masculine and neuter in the second and third case, e.g. *des manns/des kinds; den man(ne)/den kind(e)* (Geerts 1966: 100-103).

²³ The nominal forms with *-e* only appear in dative case. The dative forms with *e*-ending are assumed to be rare.

	M	F	N	Plural (all genders)
1 st case	de mann	de vrou	het kind	de mannen; vrouwen; kinders
2 nd case	des manns	der vrous	des kinds	der mannen; vrouwen; kinders
3 rd case	den man(ne)	der vrouw(e)	den kind(e)	den mannen; vrouwen; kinders

TABLE 18. Definite NPs in Leupenius' *Aemerkingen* (1653)

	M	F	N
1 st case	een mann	eene vrou	een kind
2 nd case	eenes manns	eener vrous	eenes kinds
3 rd case	eenen man(ne)	eene vrouw(e)	eenen kind(e)

TABLE 19. Indefinite NPs in Leupenius' *Aemerkingen* (1653)

As for the adjectival declension, Leupenius discriminates between two forms, e.g. *goede/goeden*. In adjectival and determiner declensions, the *n*-ending is explicitly considered as a case marker, and not as a gender marker as it happens in other grammars, where the *n*-ending is associated with masculine accusative case and, even in nominative case, with masculine nominative nouns beginning with vowels, *h*, and *d* (cfr. van Heule's account, 1633: § 2.3.2).

2.3.5. Concluding remarks

The linguistic accounts that appeared in Dutch grammars and treatises in the period 1550-1650 display interesting inconsistencies regarding the degree of morphological simplification and its effects on the tripartite gender system. The first printed grammar – the *Twee-spraack* (1584) – shows a higher degree of simplification than later works. Masculine and feminine nouns have merged into a single class in definite NPs, whereas indefinite NPs are invariable for gender. Indeed in seventeenth century accounts, a more complex case system is described with gender distinctions still at work both in definite and indefinite NPs.

In definite NPs, all seventeenth century linguistic accounts confirm the coalescence of masculine and feminine determiners in nominative singular, that is not surprising as it was a regular practice already in Middle Dutch. Besides, all works keep masculine/neuter NPs distinct from feminine NPs in genitive case, e.g. *des* vs. *der*, and in other oblique cases (with different degrees of simplification in feminine declension), whereas in accusative case the tripartite system is still at work, e.g. *den* vs. *de* vs. *het* (the only exception is constituted by De Hubert's and Leupenius' accounts where the two neuter variants *het wijf/den wijve* and the unique form *den kind(e)*, respectively, are listed). Mismatched accounts are provided for singular feminine and neuter NPs in dative and ablative case. In dative case feminine nouns can take the determiners *der* or *de*. Some authors report both forms, others only report one variant (in van Heule's *De Nederduytsche spraec-konst ofte tael-beschrijvinge* a new variant *derr* is introduced). Similarly, neuter nouns can appear with *het* or *den*. The same variation, e.g. *de/der* and *het/den*, also appears in ablative case. In plural NPs, the syncretism of plural forms is confirmed by all accounts, the only difference concerns the variation *de/den* in ablative case reported by van Heule's

De Nederduytsche spraec-konst ofte tael-beschrijvinge and Ampzing's *Nederlandsch tael-bericht*, whereas De Hubert's *Noodige waarshouwinge aan alle liefhebbers der Nederduijtze tale* distinguished between masculine (*den*), feminine (*de*) and neuter (*de/den*), and van Heule's *De Nederduytsche spraec-konst ofte tael-beschrhrijvinghe* suggested the artificial variant *denn*.

In indefinite NPs, the distinction between masculine/neuter and feminine determiners is reported in all seventeenth-century grammars. e.g. *een* vs. *eene* and their declined variants. Masculine and neuter NPs have merged in genitive case (*eens/eenes*), but are kept partially distinct in accusative, dative and ablative case. Masculine nouns always trigger the declined determiner *eenen*, whereas neuter nouns can also appear with the uninflected form *een*. The optionality between *een* and *eenen* in dative and ablative case is reported by De Hubert and Ampzing. Kók lists both variants in dative case, whereas only the form *een* appears in accusative case as is in Ampzing and van Heule 1625 (the latter reports the uninflected variant also in ablative case).

As for the nominal declension, all works display a few remnants of the original declensional system. Singular masculine and neuter nouns trigger *s*-ending in genitive case (the same ending applies to feminine nouns in the *Twe-spraack* and Leupenius' grammar), whereas feminine nouns remain uninflected or trigger *e*-ending (in Kók's grammar even *-en*, e.g. *der vrouw/vrouwen*). A residual declensional system also appears in dative and ablative case, where nouns of any gender can display *e*-ending. In accusative case, however, nouns rarely take *e*-ending. In De Hubert the form *manne* (< man) is said to be rare, the neuter forms *het wijf/den wijve* are interchangeable, whereas feminine nouns in most accounts appear with *e*-ending, which is in line with contemporary assumptions concerning the correlation between vocalic ending and feminine gender.

The adjectival declension in definite and indefinite NPs is not explicitly described in all accounts provided, that is, most authors made observations regarding the form of adjectives, but did not report complete paradigms. In general terms, adjectives vary between uninflected and declined forms taking *e* or *n*-endings. Apart for nominative singular, where the binary system masculine/feminine vs. neuter is confirmed (adjectives preceded by *de* take *e*-ending, whereas neuter adjectives appear uninflected),²⁴ and genitive singular, where the opposition is between masculine/neuter (*en*-ending) and feminine adjectives (*e*-ending), the descriptions provided by grammarians vary. In van Heule's revised grammar, singular masculine and neuter adjectives have coalesced in dative case (*en*-ending) and are kept distinct from feminine forms (*e*-ending), while in accusative case the tripartite distinction is maintained (*den goeden* vs. *de goede* vs. *het goet*) as is in Kók's account. The distinction between masculine and feminine forms in accusative case is also portrayed by Ampzing's account, although neuter adjectives appear less stable (*het kleyn/kleyne kind*). As for ablative case, Ampzing reports a higher instability for neuter adjectives (*van het kleyn/kleynen kind*; *van den kleynen kind*), which is the same reported for dative case.

To conclude, the brief survey of the linguistic accounts appeared between 1550

²⁴ The only exception is provided by Ampzing's paradigm, where two possible forms are listed, e.g. *een kleyn kind/een kleyne kind* (cfr. Table 14, § 2.3.3).

and 1650 concerning NP-internal agreement permits two main generalizations. On the one hand, the earlier grammar – the *Twe-spraack* – testifies a more simplified system with respect to later works that is in line with accounts on Middle Dutch (cfr. §2.1) apart from the introduction of ablative case. On the other hand, the descriptions provided by seventeenth-century authors do not completely overlap and, in some cases, even artificial distinctions are introduced. The higher degree of complexity displayed by later works may be explained as the result of different purposes. The *Twe-spraack* had basically a descriptive function and consequently provided a more genuine account of the effective consequences of morphological deflection in real language usage. By contrast, seventeenth century grammarians were guided by a conservative aim, namely the maintenance of the original inflectional structure, which was believed to be the most suitable for a standard language. Consequently, Early Modern grammars and treatises are not reliable sources for establishing at which time Dutch speakers began to give up the distinction between masculine and feminine nouns as well as the morphological marking tied to the original case system.

3. Assessing the ‘healthiness’ of Dutch adnominal morphology in the seventeenth century: sources and methodology²⁵

3.1. Sources.

To investigate the extent to which the case system marking was still at work in Early Modern northern Dutch I focused on two different text types: a published book and a sample of private letters. This choice primarily depended on the wish to assess the effect of standardization in two different written genres, viz. formal and informal: a published text meant for an upper and middle class public, and a collection of private documents mirroring real language usage, that is, a representative sample of speakers and data in a genre where normative pressure is low.²⁶

The first source I took into account – *De verstandige kok* ‘The wise cook’ (1667/1669) – is a short cookbook consisting of about 15,000 words, part of a longer text – *Het vermakelijck landtleven* ‘The entertaining country life’ – first published in Amsterdam by Marcus Willemsz Doornick in 1667 and later in 1668 and 1669, when the book found its final form.²⁷ The book was addressed to wealthy merchants and the royal elite, viz. town people, who had convened their money in country houses, far away from noisy and polluted cities. The book’s aim was to provide the social and cultural elite with tips for enjoying life in the countryside: a target which presumes a fairly

²⁵ The data discussed in this paper were partly gathered during my DAAD scholarship at the University of Muenster under the supervision of Prof. Gunther De Vogelaer (De Vogelaer–Semplicini, *to appear*).

²⁶ In recent research of sixteenth and seventeenth century Dutch relying on ego-documents, orthography is assumed to reflect the spoken language rather straightforwardly. See Paul Kerswill (2002: 669-702).

²⁷ My investigation focused on the definitive version of the cookbook, viz. the 1669 edition (critical text and transcription by Marleen Willebrands). A further version was released in 1802 which, however, is the same as that which appeared in 1669. The 1669 copy is kept in the museum De Waag in Deventer. The full text is available at: <<http://kookhistorie.nl/>>, 2013-(date of access: Apr. 2017).

standardised language.²⁸ The cookbook at the end of the manuscript must have been an attempt at celebrating Dutch culinary traditions. It is divided into twelve sections. After a short introduction about the publication of the text (*Extract uit de privilegie*), a list of the ingredients mentioned in it (*Koockregister*), some tips for constructing a functional oven (*Manier om een bequaem forneys te maken*), and the dedication to all cooks (*Aen alle kocks en kockinnen*), the author describes different recipes, subdivided according to their main ingredients: vegetables and fruit (*Van salaet, moes-, kook- en stoofkruiden, tuyn- en aerdruchten*), meat (*Van alderley vleesch*), and fish (*Van alderley visch*). The recipe book also deals with baked food (*Van alderley geback, gekoock* and *Van alderley taerten*), and the way of making pastries and sauces (*Van veelderley pasteyen met hare saussen*). The last sections give further tips about butchery (*De Hollandtse slachttijdt*) and the preservation of fruit (*De verstandige confituurmaker*).

The second source I used for my investigation is a selection of letters from the inventory of the so called ‘sailing letters’ (*Brieven als buit* ‘Letters als loot’). These letters were confiscated aboard ships taken by the English fleet and by private ships during warfare between England and The Netherlands, from the second half of the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century. The inventory of documents comprises treatises on seamanship, plantation accounts, textile samples, ships’ journals, poems and lists of slaves. Among these documents, there are 15,000 private letters sent home by sailors and others from abroad, but also vice versa by those remained at home to keep in touch with relatives, friends and lovers.²⁹ The *Brieven* represent priceless material. They were written by both men and women (and even children), of various social ranks and of different ages, coming from different regions of the Dutch Republic or from abroad (for example the East and the Caribbean). Moreover, the letters maximally resemble the colloquial Dutch of people from the middle and lower classes – the material pertains to written discourse but reveals clear characteristics of the spoken language –, contain data for a substantial number of writers, and therefore allow to effectively detect change within the seventeenth century.

The proximity of private letters to spoken usage, however, should not obscure the value of the medium, i.e. written form, that is, it is important to bear in mind that letters are hybrid texts, containing features which are characteristic of the spoken and written codes. Of course, being intended for interaction, private correspondence is close to the language of intimacy, closer than diaries and travel journals. As a matter of fact, an early attempt at investigating a sample of fifty letters showed similarities and dissimilarities between these non-literary documents and contemporary literary usage, leading to the conclusion that spoken language in the seventeenth century should not be so distant from literary

²⁸ This handbook is the oldest source in northern standard Dutch concerning culinary matters. Earlier cookbooks were published between the fifteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century but they all come from the south: *Een notabel boecxken van cokeryen* (Brussel, ca. 1514), *Magirus’ Koochoec oft familieren keukenboec* (Leuven 1612), *Paddenstoelen in de zeventiende eeuw* (Antwerp, 1668). The choice to analyse this source depended on the DAAD project, that primarily concerned the investigation of semantic tendencies in the pronominalization of nouns referring to quantities, as did Kraaikamp (2017: 259-297).

²⁹ For more details on the *Brieven als buit* see van Gelder 2006 and Rutten–van der Wal 2014. The corpus can be accessed at: <<http://brievenalsbuit.inl.nl>>, 2013–(date of access: Apr. 2017).

use (van Megen 2002: 264-285). Recently, Rutten and van der Wal (2014: 8-9) have claimed that the letters contain traces of contemporary spoken language, phonological, morphological as well as syntactic ones, basically mirroring a new supra-local regional variety (at least in writing conventions), with dialectal features playing a marginal role.

The data used for my investigation were gathered from the *Brieven als buit* corpus that consists of approximately 1,000 Dutch letters from the second half of the seventeenth and the second half of the eighteenth centuries. In order to obtain data comparable with those provided by the seventeenth century cookbook, my analysis focused on a sample of letters written during the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch wars (1665-1667 and 1672-1674 respectively). The sample was selected according to two main parameters: timespan (letters written in the seventeenth century), and sender's region of residence, i.e. the region where s/he was born and raised or where s/he spent most of his/her life (North Holland and Amsterdam).

3.2. Methodology

The gathering of data was carried out in subsequent steps and partially depended on the peculiarities of the sources. On the one hand, the shortness and the structural repetitiveness of the cookbook, allowed to list in the database all singular NPs in the text,³⁰ without discriminating between stable and unstable (multiple) gender controllers. On the other hand, given the complexity of the letters' sample, e.g. higher amount of words to be processed and lots of ambiguous passages, for this source I decided to collect a random sample³¹ of reliable singular NPs, i.e. NPs controlled by stable nouns, which could be representative of the case marking system as it was known by seventeenth century letters' writers: 100 masculine NPs, 100 feminine NPs and 100 neuter NPs.³²

For both sources the data were arranged in a database. Both databases contain manually extracted NPs. For each NP contained in the cookbook database I added information concerning the gender of the controller, checking it in historical lexicological sources, i.e. MNW and WNT vocabularies.³³ The same procedure was used while

³⁰ Since in plural NPs gender distinctions had already been neutralized in the medieval period (see §2.2) I exclusively looked for adnominal morphological marking maintenance where it should be most visible according to grammatical accounts (see §2.3).

³¹ I purposely did not include NPs headed by a noun denoting a human entity. This was due to the wish to obtain maximum comparability with the cookbook data, where nouns referring to humans are almost absent.

³² In the *Brieven als buit* corpus query interface I searched for PoS 'NOU' (noun) and I filtered for Sender <Noord-Holland (excluding Amsterdam)> for the timespan 1660-1700; the same was made for Sender <Noord-Holland – Amsterdam>. The two queries about different areas depended on the fact that the corpus query interface does not allow multiple selections, i.e. North Holland and Amsterdam together.

³³ I used as reference point the historical dictionaries freely accessible on the INL website: <http://gtb.inl.nl/>. In particular, I compared my data with the gender properties listed in the *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* (MNW 'Middle Dutch dictionary') and the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT 'Modern Dutch dictionary'). To check the gender of nouns I used the GTB query interface that allows simultaneous access to all Dutch historical dictionaries. In particular, I typed the modern lemma in the <Mod. Ned. trefwoord > (modern form) row and I looked for the (in)stability of the lemma in MNW and WNT. I exclusively included nouns having a unique gender value in both dictionaries, for instance, *manier* (MNW f. > WNT f.), *schip* (MNW n. > WNT n.), *hemel* (MNW m. > WNT m.).

constructing the letters' database: in this case, however, the search for gender information in electronic dictionaries was carried out simultaneously so that only NPs headed by stable nouns were gathered. In other words, nouns having different or multiple values in historical dictionaries – even though they appeared consistently used in my sources – were discarded,³⁴ this was done during the collecting procedure, for the letter sample, and in a subsequent step for the cookbook database.³⁵ In both databases, information concerning the construction type, e.g. bare, definite or indefinite NP, and presence or absence of adjectival attributes,³⁶ was added. In the cookbook database, indefinite NPs without adjectival attribute, e.g. *een hoen* 'a chicken', were eliminated: this was done to avoid proliferation of genderless rows.³⁷ In the letter database, however, given the random selection of NPs headed by stable nouns, a few indefinite NPs having the structure *een* + N, are included.³⁸ A further refinement concerning the classification of data concerns adjectival targets referring to materials and irregular past participles: both kind of targets have an invariable *en*-form, e.g. *sijden mantel* 'silk mantel'/*gebaken taert* 'baked tart' and therefore they were not counted as reliable adnominal morphological markers.³⁹ A

³⁴ Not only nouns appearing with more than one gender value in at least one source were left out of consideration, for instance *vlijt* (MNW m. > WNT f.,m.); *wereld* (MNW f.,m. > WNT f.,m.); *pilaar* (MNW m.,o. > WNT m.,o.); *middel* (MNW n. > WNT m.,f.,n.); *getuigenis* (MNW n.,f. > WNT n.,v.); *grief* (MNW n.,m. > WNT n.,m.); *staat* (MNW m.,f. > WNT m.), *inhoud* (MNW m,n. > WNT m,n.), etc., but also nouns whose gender stability is uncertain in at least one dictionary, e.g. *wijn* (MNW m/?o. > WNT m.); *peterselie* (MNW f./?m > WNT f.). I also excluded prepositional phrases with *te* + N, even though – in the letters – some variability has been observed, for instance: *te landt/ten lande*; *te water/ten water*, *te hand/ter hand* (the first form, i.e. *te* + N, is the most frequent).

³⁵ The cookbook data discussed in this paper refer to a second version of the database, that is, I exclusively refer to the rows related to NPs headed by a stable gender noun. The original database contains all NPs present in the cookbook, irrespective whether they are headed by a stable or unstable noun. The original database contains 954 adnominal targets (tokens) headed by 258 nouns (types), i.e. many nouns recur in more than one NP. Among these nouns, 167 are stable (corresponding to 621 tokens), while 91 nouns (corresponding to 328 tokens) are unstable.

³⁶ I did not take into account possessive adjectives. In Middle and Early Modern Dutch possessive adjectives do not always inflect, which is not surprising given that they originated from the genitive forms of the personal pronouns. Accordingly, taking into account possessive forms would have obscured rather than clarified the degree to which case marking is still at work in Early Modern Dutch. Besides, the cookbook does not contain possessive pronouns, which led me to discard possessive NPs in the letter sample in order to gather data as comparable as possible.

³⁷ In the whole cookbook only one declined indefinite article appears, e.g. *eeenen*, triggered by the stable feminine noun *pan* (*eeenen stenen pan* 'a stone pan'). The noun *pan* consistently triggers feminine markers in the book, e.g. *de* article and *e*-ending adjectives, therefore here the inflected form of the indefinite determiner may have been wrongly used by the author for consistency with the invariable adjectival ending (adjectives denoting materials always end in *-en*).

³⁸ 14 masculine NPs are characterized by the structure *een* + N (§4). A further analysis carried out on the *Brieven als buit* corpus demonstrated that even in the letters the inflected form of the indefinite article is almost absent: 3/475 or 99.5 per cent and 15/734 or 98 per cent indefinite article forms are uninflected in the North Holland and in the Amsterdam sample, respectively. *Eenen* appears in two masculine accusative NPs (*eeenen dronck waeter* 'a sip of water'/*eeenen man* 'a man') and in a potentially masculine accusative NP (*eeenen post* 'an office') in a North Holland letter. In the Amsterdam sample *eeenen* and *eene* surface in seven and eight letters, respectively, in direct (*enen brieffene brif* 'a letter') and indirect object (*met eenen goeden dienst/in ene plaesz*) position, with potentially masculine and feminine nouns, e.g. all nouns involved according to historical dictionaries are unstable for gender.

³⁹ It is important to note, however, that in both sources both kinds of targets frequently appear with

summarizing picture of the data gathered in the two databases, according to the gender of the head noun, is provided in Table 20.

	<i>De verstandig kok</i> (1669)	<i>Brieven als buit</i> (1660-1700)	Tot. (both sources)
NPs	578 (100%)	300 (100%)	878 (100%)
<i>masculine</i>	96 (16.5%)	100 (33.3%)	196 (22.5%)
<i>feminine</i>	195 (34%)	100 (33.3%)	295 (33.5%)
<i>neuter</i>	287 (49.5%)	100 (33.3%)	387 (44%)
adnominal markers	620 (100%)	325 (100%)	945 (100%)
<i>masculine</i>	107 (17%)	97 (30%)	204 (21.5%)
<i>feminine</i>	214 (34.5%)	116 (35.5%)	330 (35%)
<i>neuter</i>	299 (48%)	112 (34.5%)	411 (43.5%)

TABLE 20. Total amount of NPs and adnominal markers in *De verstandige kok* and in the *Brieven* sample

As evident from the table above, the amount of NPs analyzed in both sources does not correspond to the number of adnominal morphological markers: a NP can appear without markers (*hoen* ‘chicken’), it can contain one marker (*het water* ‘the.N water’), or more than one (*de eerste geleegtheydt* ‘the.M/F first.M/F occasion’).

To check the ‘healthiness’ of adnominal morphology in Early Modern Dutch and get data comparable with those provided by historical grammars, I further divided the collected NPs into three subcategories: NPs in subject position (nominative case, cfr. (1.a) and (1.b)), NPs in direct object position (accusative case, cfr. (2a) and (2.b)) and NPs in indirect object position (genitive and prepositional NPs, cfr.(3a) and (3.b)).

- (1) a. *Maer de vlesse moet vol wesen*
 But the.F bottle.(F) must full become
 ‘But the bottle must be fulfilled’
 (*De verstandige kok*, recipe 193)
- b. *de pest is al in onse stadt Jan kouer is*
 the.F pest is all in our town Jan Kouer is
gestoruen
 dead
 ‘The pest is everywhere in our town: Jan kouer is dead’
 (*Letter to Adriaan Dirksz. Pondt, 2 september 1664 by Jan Muessen Ossenweijder*)
- (2) a. *Als het vlees gaer is doetet vet schoon*
 when the.N meat.(N) ready is put-the.N fat.(N)
af
 away of
 ‘When the meat is ready remove the fat’
 (*De verstandige kok*, recipe 36)

n-deletion, e.g. *sijde mantel* instead of *sijden mantel*.

- b. *de Goede godt veerleen u alte saem een goeden*
 the good God give you all a.F goed.F
rijes
 voyage.(F)
 ‘The good God allow you (to have) a safe trip’
 (*Letter to Jacob Dirksen (1), 27 mei 1672 by unknown*)
- (3) a. *Doet ‘et in de korst en baktse dan in den*
 Put-it in the crust and bake-it then in the.M
oven
 oven.(M)
 ‘Put in in the crust and bake it in the oven’
 (*De verstandige kok, recipe 127*)
- b. *en wij gebracht in een ellendige toestant*
 and we brought in a miserable.M condition.(M)
 ‘and we lived in a miserable condition’
 (*Letter to Gualter Zeeman, 12 november 1672 by Jacob Zeeman*)

As evident from Table 21, the proportion of NPs and adnominal markers in different syntactic positions is well balanced. In both sources the higher amount of data concerns the indirect object position, whereas the subject position is the least documented.⁴⁰

	Subject position (nominative case)	Direct object position (accusative case)	Indirect object position (genitive, dative, ablative cases)	Tot.
NPs				
<i>De verstandige kok</i>	96 (16.5%)	230 (40%)	252 (43.5%)	578 (100%)
<i>Brieven</i>	42 (14%)	115 (38%)	143 (48%)	300 (100%)
Morphological markers				
<i>De verstandige kok</i>	98 (16%)	249 (40%)	273 (44%)	620 (100%)
<i>Brieven</i>	48 (15%)	121 (37%)	156 (48%)	325 (100%)

TABLE 21. Relative distribution of adnominal morphological markers in different syntactic positions in both sources

Given the high comparability of the data in the same syntactic position for the sources under investigation, the discussion of the results focuses on adnominal morphological marking in subject, object and indirect object position, viz. genitive and prepositional NPs, separately.

⁴⁰ This is not surprising given the genre of the two texts. Cookbooks are characterized by an instructional language and therefore subjects are rare. Private letters are ego-documents, i.e. writers speak in first person, so that first person pronouns are the most frequent subjects.

4. Discussion of the results

4.1. Adnominal morphology in subject position

The total amount of adnominal morphological markers in subject position, i.e. nominative case, corresponds to 108 determiners (77 in the cookbook and 31 in the letter sample, cfr. Table 22) and 38 adjectival attributes (21 in the cookbook and 17 in the letter sample, cfr. Table 23).

The convergence of masculine and feminine definite articles, that was a common practice already in Middle Dutch (cfr. §2.1 e § 2.2), is confirmed: 17/19 or 89.5 per cent masculine nouns are headed by the *de* article (*de bodem*, *de wint*), whereas only 2 masculine nouns appear with *den* (*den hemel*, *den prijs*). *Den* only surfaces in the letter sample, while the cookbook is consistent in triggering exclusively *de*. Neuter nouns are consistent in both sources: they only trigger the definite determiner *het* (and its contracted variants, e.g. ‘*t*, *-t*, *t*’): *het water*/*t water*. Similarly, feminine nouns almost exclusively trigger the *de* article (*de saus*, *de victorie*).⁴¹

	<de>	<den>	<het>	Tot.
<i>De verstandige kok</i>				
Masculine	6	0	0	6
Feminine	23	1	0	24
Neuter	0	0	47	47
Tot.	29	1	47	77
<i>Brieven</i>				
Masculine	11	2	0	13
Feminine	8	0	0	8
Neuter	0	0	10	10
Tot.	19	2	10	31

TABLE 22. Distribution of determiners in NPs headed by stable gender nouns

As for adjectival targets, masculine nouns only appear with inflected forms triggering the *e*-ending: in a bare NP (*Spaense hutspot*), and in an indefinite NP (*een halve stuyver*) in the cookbook, and in one bare NP (*goede moet*), and two definite NPs (*de herde reegen*, *de beste welstant*) in the letter sample. Adjectives triggered by neuter nouns always show zero-ending in the cookbook, irrespective of the NP type (bare: *geharst broot*, indefinite: *een groot stuck*, definite: *het vermakelijck landtleven*). The same happens in the letter sample, although in one definite NP the adjective shows up with *e*-ending (*het gehelle lant*). Accordingly, the behaviour of masculine and neuter adjectives only in part overlaps with historical accounts in that all grammarians assume masculine and neuter adjectives to appear uninflected in indefinite NPs. Hence the most complex picture is provided by adjectival targets triggered by feminine nouns. Although the *e*-variant is the most

⁴¹ The only exception is constituted by the definite NP *den ansiovis* ‘the anchovy’ in the cookbook.

frequent one in both sources, in definite (*de gemeenste manier*), indefinite (*een groote blijtschap*) and bare NPs (*groote blijtschap*), in the letter sample one adjective triggers *-en* (*een grooten bloet stortin*), while in the cookbook four indefinite NPs trigger zero-ending (*een ander manier/ geen beter verkoelinge*). As for the cookbook data, the zero-ending in the NP headed by *verkoelinge* may depend on the wrong assignment of neuter gender to a feminine noun, especially considering that the NP is followed by the neuter demonstrative pronoun *dit* agreeing with the noun, e.g. *en is geen beter verkoelinge als dit* ‘and there is no better cooling than this.N’. The remaining NPs have almost an identical structure (2x *een ander manier*; 1x *ander manier*); the zero-ending, however, does not seem to depend on wrong gender assignment: in definite NPs *manier* always triggers the *de* article and in a subject bare NP the adjective is inflected, e.g. *diverse manier*. More probably, uninflected variants depend on phonetic reasons, viz. schwa-apocope.⁴² Remarkably, historical grammars only report schwa-ending adjectives in feminine nominative NPs.

	<-e>	<-en>	<zero-ending>	Tot
<i>De verstandige kok</i>				
Masculine	2	0	0	2
Feminine	8	0	4	12
Neuter	0	0	7	7
Tot.	10	0	11	21
<i>Brieven</i>				
Masculine	3	0	0	3
Feminine	8	1	0	9
Neuter	1	0	4	5
Tot.	12	1	4	17

TABLE 23. Distribution of adjectival endings in NPs headed by stable gender nouns

4.2. Adnominal morphology in direct object position

My sources contain 159 definite determiners (97 and 62 in the cookbook and letter sample, respectively, cfr. Table 24), and 211 adjectival markers (152 in the cookbook and 59 in the letter sample, cfr. Table 25) in NPs referring to direct objects.

As evident from Table 24, definite articles in accusative case are consistent for neuter and feminine: in both sources neuter nouns exclusively trigger *het* (*het hoen*, *het gelt*), while feminine nouns exclusively show up with *de* (*de saus*, *de koors*), which is in line with the forms preferred by grammarians. Both sources, however, display the usage of *de* (*de boom*, *de dagh*) and *den* (*den bodem*, *den dagh*) for masculine nouns, the latter being the preferred form in contemporary grammatical accounts.

⁴² Schwa-apocope notoriously increased in the seventeenth century as a reflection of spoken usage in different regions (Rutten and van der Wal 2014: 395-396), and primarily affected polysyllabic words, indicating the phonological or prosodic nature of the change (Marynissen 2009: 233-254).

	<de>	<den>	<het>	Tot.
<i>De verstandige kok</i>				
Masculine	6	14	0	20
Feminine	25	0	0	25
Neuter	0	0	52	52
Tot.	31	14	52	97
<i>Brieven</i>				
Masculine	11	7	0	18
Feminine	25	0	0	25
Neuter	0	0	19	19
Tot.	36	7	19	62

TABLE 24. Distribution of determiners in NPs headed by stable gender nouns

In *De verstandige kok* the most frequent form is *den* (14/20 or 70 per cent), whereas in the *Brieven* the form *de* is the most widespread (11/18 or 62 per cent), a discrepancy which seems to confirm the effect of standardization to be stronger on formal than in informal written language usage. A closer look at the 21 masculine NPs (14 + 7) triggering *den* reveals that for some nouns the use of the determiner with nasal ending may depend on phonetic reasons (cfr. § 2.3.2), i.e. the letter the word begins with (h: *hals*, *door*; d: *dagh*, *dorst*, *dach*). In the cookbook, however, nouns beginning with *h* also trigger the *de*-variant, e.g. *de haes*, which presumes the nasal form to be in free variation with *de* even in *den*-friendly contexts. Consequently, the distribution *de* vs. *den* appears to be only in part affected by phonetic reasons: a sharp distinction does not longer exist.⁴³ Said differently, in actual language usage accusative case does not straightforwardly associate with the *den* article (as prescribed by contemporary grammarians). The presence of alternative forms, in both sources, confirms the merger of nominative and accusative masculine forms to be in progress.

As already shown for NPs in subject position, adjectival declension is confirmed to be more chaotic (cfr. Table 25). In the cookbook most masculine adjectives trigger *e*-ending (19/25 or 76 per cent) and a lower number appears with *en*-ending (6/25 or 24 per cent); by contrast, in the letter sample the distribution of *-e* and *-en* adjectival endings is more balanced (9/18 or 50 per cent *-e* vs. 6/18 or 33.5 per cent *-en*), and even undeclined adjectives appear (4/18 or 22.5 per cent cases). In the cookbook, the only difference between *-e* and *-en* variants is constituted by bare NPs, where adjectives only take *-e* (*soete room*); in definite and indefinite NPs both endings are attested (*de verstandige confituurmaker/den nederlantschen hoevenier*; *een versche limoen/een helderen droogen dagh*). In definite NPs, the form of the adjectival ending seems to be tied to the determiner

⁴³ The distribution of *de* vs. *den* is partly affected by semantic reasons too. In the cookbook 7/14 or 50 per cent nouns referring to human entities trigger *den* (*hovenier*, *suppliant*, *huishoudster*, *leser*), while 2/6 or 33.3 per cent (2x *maker*) trigger *de*. A further investigation in the *Brieven als buit* corpus for nouns like *heer*, *god*, *vijant* confirmed that nouns referring to human entities are generally associated with *den*-forms.

form, that is, all NPs showing adjectival *en*-ending also contain *den* articles. In the letters, uninflected adjectives only appear in bare NPs (*beeter moet*); *en*-inflected forms surface in indefinite (*een hellen dach*) and definite NPs irrespective of the form of the article, e.g. *de anderen dach/den heelen dach*; finally, *e*-variants show up in any kind of NP: bare (*heeel raet*), indefinite (*een goede oostelijcke wint*), and definite (*de tegenwoordige toestant*). In historical grammars, masculine adjectives in definite and indefinite NPs are assumed to exclusively trigger *en*-ending adjectives. The higher number of schwa-ending adjectives in my sources further confirms the gradual coalescence of masculine and feminine nouns as a consequence of apocope phenomena.

Neuter adjectives are uninflected or trigger *e*-ending. The distribution of uninflected and inflected forms follows the same pattern in both sources: in definite NPs, e.g. *het* + adjective + N, the adjective always triggers the schwa-ending (*het gescherfde kruyt*), while zero-ending shows up in bare (*groen edel vleeschkruyt*) and indefinite NPs (*een bequaem forneys*). The pattern displayed by neuter adjectives in the cookbook is confirmed by the letter sample: no definite NPs contain an uninflected adjective, that is, they all trigger an adjective with schwa-ending (*het eerste gelt*). Uninflected adjectives surface both in bare (*ander geld*) and indefinite NPs (*een seer groot verlangen*). In indefinite NPs, however, also *e*-ending adjectives appear (*gen slackte water*). The variation displayed by neuter adjectives only in part overlaps with prescriptive accounts. In definite NPs, van Heule (1633) and Kók (1649) do not list inflected adjectives (only Ampzing reports the variable forms *het kleyn/kleyne kind*), whereas in indefinite NPs no grammarians list schwa-ending forms.

Feminine adjectival declension is the most chaotic. In both sources *-e*, *-en* and zero-endings are attested. Schwa-ending adjectives surface in all kinds of NPs in the cookbook (*goede saus/een soete roompastey*) and in the letters (*de beste en bequamste manier*). In the cookbook both *en*-ending and zero-ending adjectives can appear in indefinite NPs (*een goeden saus/een soet kieckenpastey*), while zero-ending adjectives only surface in bare NPs with recurring nouns and structures ((*een*) *ander manier*; *een half loot*).⁴⁴ Similar results are displayed by the letter sample: schwa-ending adjectives appear in bare (*broederlijke liefde*), indefinite (*een korte reijs*) and definite (*de totale ruine*) NPs, *en*-inflected forms surface in indefinite NPs (*een goeden rijes*), uninflected forms appear in bare NPs (*goet gelegentheijt*) and in one definite NP (*de nader historie*). Although schwa-ending adjectives in feminine NPs are the most frequent (18/23 or 78 per cent) – which is in line with grammatical accounts – the variation displayed by these data suggest feminine NPs to be highly unstable both in formal and informal language.

⁴⁴ *Ander* ‘other’ and *half* ‘half’ are observed to remain often undeclined in my sources.

	<-e>	<-en>	<zero-ending>	Tot.
<i>De verstandige kok</i>				
Masculine	19	6	0	25
Feminine	33	1	15	49
Neuter	4	0	74	78
Tot.	56	8	89	152
<i>Brieven</i>				
Masculine	9	5	4	18
Feminine	18	2	3	23
Neuter	6	0	12	18
Tot.	33	7	19	59

TABLE 25. Distribution of adjectival endings in NPs headed by stable gender nouns

4.3. Adnominal morphology in indirect object position

For both sources under investigation the higher amount of NPs and, consequently, adnominal markers, appears in indirect object position, e.g. prepositional phrases: 287 (181 + 106, cfr. Table 26) definite determiners and 142 (92 + 50, cfr. Table 27) adjectival targets.

As shown in Table 26, feminine and neuter nouns consistently appear with *de* and *het* articles, respectively. The only exception is constituted by a feminine noun that triggers the *den* form in the letter sample (*met den eersten geleeghentheijt*). By contrast, in both sources masculine NPs show a fairly balanced proportion of *de* and *den* forms: 15/32 or 47 per cent *de* (*met de lepel*) and 17/32 or 53 per cent *den* (*in den oven*) forms in the cookbook, and 16/32 or 50 per cent *de* forms (*ijn de hoeck*) and 15/32 or 47 per cent *den* forms (*in den hemel*) in the letter sample. Interestingly, in the cookbook the same noun can occur with different article forms (*in de roock/in den roock; in de pot/in den pot*), and phonetic reasons – the letter the noun begins with – do not seem to play a role for this variation. The same observation applies to the letter sample: although almost all nouns triggering the *den* article begin with vowel (*avont*), *h* (*hemel*) and *d* (*dach*), nouns beginning with vowel and *h* also trigger the *de* article, e.g. *in de arm, ijn de hoeck*. Accordingly, phonetic reasons cannot account for the variation *de/den*: the nasal form of the definite article clearly lines up with masculine gender and oblique cases, although the coalescence between masculine and feminine gender is testified by a relatively balanced proportion of NPs triggering different article forms. Besides, the distinction between masculine and neuter nouns appears sharper than in contemporary grammars as no *den*-forms are found in neuter NPs. Finally, the simplification of the case marking system is confirmed by the absence of feminine NPs triggering the form *der*,⁴⁵ and by a unique

⁴⁵ Or *derr*, Heule (see § 2.3.2). In his monograph on adnominal morphology and pronominal agreement in seventeenth century Dutch, Geerts argues that among the non-neuter article forms attested in his sources *der* is the less frequent (Geerts 1966). Indeed in the Middle Ages there was already evidence for feminine nouns to trigger not only the article form *der*, but also *-s* ending and the corresponding definite article *des* (see §2.2). Accordingly, Geerts assumes that *des* is nothing more than a case exponent, having nothing to do with gender, and being especially used in cultivated language usage. As for the variation *de/*

attestation of the genitive form *des* (*des daags*).⁴⁶

	<de>	<den>	<des>	<der>	<het>	Tot.
<i>De verstandige kok</i>						
Masculine	15	17	0	0	0	32
Feminine	68	0	0	0	0	68
Neuter	0	0	0	0	81	81
Tot.	83	17	0	0	81	181
<i>Brieven</i>						
Masculine	16	15	1	0	0	32
Feminine	31	1	0	0	0	32
Neuter	0	0	0	0	42	42
Tot.	47	16	1	0	42	106

TABLE 26. Distribution of determiners in NPs headed by stable gender nouns

The results concerning adjectival endings confirm the variation sketched above. In both sources most masculine and feminine nouns trigger schwa-ending adjectives (20/22 or 91 per cent masculine and 26/36 or 72 per cent feminine in the cookbook, 9/13 or 70 per cent masculine and 13/19 or 68 per cent feminine in the letters), while neuter nouns almost exclusively appear with uninflected adjectival targets (33/34 or 97 per cent in the cookbook and 11/18 or 61 per cent in the letters). In the cookbook, adjectives triggered by masculine nouns take the *e*-ending in all kinds of NPs (bare: *met soete room*, indefinite: *van een verse lamoen*; and definite: *in de ziedende ketel*), whereas the *en*-ending only appears in one indefinite NP (*in een warmen oven*) and in one definite NP (*onder den voornoemden room*). Similarly, feminine nouns mostly trigger schwa-ending adjectives, irrespective of the NP structure (*door the groote hette/in een diepe pan/ met gestampte beschuyt*). 10/36 or 28 per cent feminine NPs show up with uninflected adjectives. These NPs, however, have the same structure and are almost exclusively headed by the same noun (9x *op een ander manier* and 1x *op een ander wijze*): a recurring schema which may depend on formulaic usage or on the polysyllabic nature of the adjective. As for neuter NPs, all uninflected adjectives appear in bare (*met heet water*) or indefinite (*op een sacht vuur*) NPs, whereas the unique inflected adjective appears in a definite NP (*in 't eerste quartier*).

den, Geerts argues that the nasal variant appears with words beginning with a vowel, or *b, t, d, r, (h)*, both in object and subject position with masculine nouns. In a recent investigation based on ego-documents written in the province of Holland during the early years of the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), Hendriks has observed no tokens of the dative feminine singular *der* and clear evidence of the use of the unmarked or nominative form *die* in this position; besides, the author reported the use of *den* forms in masculine NPs both in accusative and nominative case (2012: 123-151).

⁴⁶ The genitive NP also shows a declined noun: *dag > daags*. Nouns in genitive case appear to be the unique relics of the original nominal declension: with the exception of the NP *des daags*, no noun in my data displays case marking in indirect object position, e.g. *s*-ending in genitive case and *e*-ending in dative and ablative case.

In comparison with the cookbook data, the letters reveal a more complicated picture. While it is true that most masculine and feminine adjectives trigger *e*-ending, while neuter adjectives mostly appear uninflected, the proportion of alternative variants is higher for all genders. Schwa-ending is triggered by 9/13 or 70 per cent masculine nouns in definite (*in de gloeiende oven*) and indefinite NPs (*in een ellendige toestand*). 3/13 or 23 per cent masculine nouns trigger *en*-ending adjectives: this happens in definite (*inden groten dach*) and bare (*met goeden raet*) NPs, and in one NP a masculine noun triggers an uninflected adjective (*voor extraordinaris raet*).⁴⁷ Similarly, most feminine nouns (13/19 or 68 per cent) trigger schwa-ending adjectives irrespective of the NP structure (*met de eerste geleegentheyt/met een eewige straffe/in groote ellende*). The remaining adjectival targets (6/19 or 32 per cent) divide in balanced proportion between those which trigger *en*-ending (2/19, e.g. *met de eersten geleegentheyt*), those which trigger *er*-ending (2/19, e.g. *met groetter blijft schap*) and those which appear uninflected (2/19, e.g. *ynde groot benautheyt*). As for neuter nouns, most adjectives (11/18 or 61 per cent) are uninflected. They do not only surface in bare (*in kout water*) and indefinite (*in een goet huijs*) NPs, but also in one definite NP (*vant groot pereikel*). The remaining adjectival markers, i.e. with schwa-ending and *en*-ending, appear in definite (*voort gemeenne lant/op het heelen lant*) and bare NPs (*met grootte prijckell/ met grooten verraet*).

If for neuter NPs in indirect object position my data confirm the adjectival variation emerging from different grammatical accounts, the convergence of masculine and feminine NPs, e.g. schwa-ending forms, in (formal and informal) language usage is not in line with contemporary grammars where adjectives have different endings, e.g. *-en* and *-e* for masculine and feminine targets respectively.

	<-e>	<-en>	<-er>	<zero-ending>	Tot.
<i>De verstandige kok</i>					
Masculine	20	2	0	0	22
Feminine	26	0	0	10	36
Neuter	1	0	0	33	34
Tot.	47	2	0	43	92
<i>Brieven</i>					
Masculine	9	3	0	1	13
Feminine	13	2	2	2	19
Neuter	4	3	0	11	18
Tot.	26	8	2	14	50

TABLE 27. Distribution of determiners in NPs headed by stable gender nouns

4.4. Summary

The adnominal morphology displayed by my sources reveals a simplified case

⁴⁷ Again the uninflected adjectival form may depend on the polysyllabic nature of the target.

system with some recurring patterns in morphological restructuring, that only in part overlaps with the descriptions provided by seventeenth century linguistic accounts (compare Table 28 with Table 29 and Table 30 at the end of the paragraph).

All historical grammars report the coalescence of feminine and masculine definite NPs in nominative case, that was a common practice already in Middle Dutch and is clearly also confirmed by my data. In *De verstandige kok* definite articles and adjectival endings basically portray the binary opposition between neuter and non-neuter NPs as all masculine and feminine nouns trigger the article *de*⁴⁸ and schwa-ending adjectives.⁴⁹ In indefinite and bare NPs, this binary opposition is signalled by the adjectival targets that trigger *e*-ending in masculine and feminine NPs,⁵⁰ but remain uninflected in neuter NPs. Accordingly, the cookbook data only in part overlap with historical accounts in that masculine nouns should trigger uninflected adjectives like neuter words do (cfr. Table 28). The distance between contemporary rules and language usage is bigger in private correspondence. In the letter data nominative NPs headed by masculine nouns do not only contain the determiner *de*, but also *den*-forms (cfr. Table 30). Indeed, this is not surprising since ‘accusative subjects’ have been observed to be frequent for masculine singular nouns in texts from the late Middle Dutch period up to the eighteenth century (van der Horst 2008: 357, 580-581).

According to seventeenth century grammars, the binary opposition between neuter and non-neuter NPs does not apply in direct and indirect object position. Masculine nouns should trigger the *den* article in accusative, dative and ablative case, while feminine and neuter nouns are associated with *de/der* (in van Heule’s *Nederduytsche grammatica* and *Nederduytsche spraec-konst* the forms *ter* and *derr* are introduced, while the *Twee-spraack* lists the form *den*) and *het/den* forms, respectively (cfr. Table 28).⁵¹ My data portray a simplified picture: feminine NPs almost exclusively show up with *de*, whereas *het* is the unique variant for neuter NPs. By contrast, masculine nouns display variation between *de* and *den* forms (as reported in the *Twee-spraack*). More specifically, the cookbook lists a higher number of definite NPs with *den*-forms (cfr. Table 29), whereas in the letters *de*-forms are the most frequent (cfr. Table 30). Thus, the effect of standardization appears to be less strong in informal written language: prescribed *den*-forms are the most frequent in the cookbook both in direct and indirect object position, whereas in the letters *den*-forms outnumber *de*-forms only in indirect object position. The appearance of variable forms in both sources, however, indicate a more general restructuring in written usage, that is, *den*-forms are loosing ground both in formal and informal language, with the masculine/feminine distinction being still relevant.

In historical accounts, adjectival declension has been observed to represent the most confusing area: adjectival endings are often not described in detail or associated with

⁴⁸ There is only one feminine NP displaying the *den* article, e.g. *den ansjovis* (see §4.1).

⁴⁹ There is only one exception to the rule for neuter NPs, e.g. *het vermakelijk landleven*.

⁵⁰ The four feminine NPs with uninflected adjectives can be explained in terms of formulaic language usage, wrong gender assignment or the polysyllabic nature of the adjectival target.

⁵¹ The latter forms only appear in genitive dative and ablative case, e.g. *der* and *den* for feminine and neuter respectively. In Ampzing’s grammar, however, neuter *den* also appears in accusative case (together with the *het* variant).

variable markers in the same syntactic position. This especially applies to definite NPs: for instance, van Heule in *De Nederduytsche spraec-konst* reports *en*-ending adjectives for masculine and neuter nouns and *e*-ending adjectives for feminine words; the same description is provided by Ampzing and Kók, whereas neuter words are associated with *en*-ending and zero-ending by Kók and even with *e*-ending by Ampzing (in indefinite NPs the author lists only *en*- and zero-ending adjectives). All grammars, however, consistently link adjectival variants with the form of the determiner, that is, definite NPs containing *den* forms also trigger *en*-ending adjectives. Hence my data confirm the blurred status of adjectival declension reported in seventeenth century accounts. In the cookbook, in definite, indefinite and bare NPs, masculine adjectives in nominative case trigger a schwa-ending, while neuter adjectives appear uninflected. The same applies to the letters (only in one neuter definite NP the adjective takes a schwa-ending). In both sources, masculine definite NPs display schwa and *en*-ending adjectives: remarkably determiners and adjectival targets appear with the same marker, that is, *den*-forms are followed by *en*-ending adjectives. Feminine adjectives are the most variable in both sources. In line with grammatical accounts, schwa-ending adjectives are the most frequent, although in indefinite NPs both *en*-inflected adjectives (in the letters) and uninflected adjectives (in the cookbook) appear. Schwa-ending adjectives are the most frequent with masculine and feminine nouns, but *en*-ending and uninflected forms show up as well: this happens in both sources, but more frequently in the letters. Indeed, the *Brieven* also display variation in neuter adjectival declension as schwa-ending, *en*-ending and uninflected adjectives show up. By contrast, neuter NPs in the cookbook display a straightforward pattern in that they consistently trigger schwa-ending adjectives in definite NPs and uninflected adjectives in indefinite and bare NPs (in any syntactic position). Of course, the most evident discrepancy between historical grammars and actual language usage regards indefinite articles. The complex declensional system of indefinite determiners reported in all historical grammars (included the *Twe-spraack*), that does not only maintain the distinction between masculine, neuter and feminine gender, but also between different syntactic functions, is completely absent in my data: all indefinite NPs are unspecified for gender in that they exclusively show up with the article *een* irrespective of the gender of the noun and the syntactic position of the NP.

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Subject (NOM)	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N- \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>een(e)</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N	<i>het</i> + ADJ-(<i>e</i>) + N <i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N
Direct object (ACC)	<i>den</i> /(<i>de</i>) + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>een(en)</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i>	<i>de</i> (<i>der</i>) + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>eene(e)</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i>	<i>het</i> /(<i>den</i>) + ADJ-(<i>e</i>) + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>een(en)</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N \emptyset / <i>e</i>
Indirect object (GEN)	<i>des</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N- <i>s</i> <i>een(e)s</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N- <i>s</i>	<i>der</i> /(<i>des</i>) + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N- <i>e/s/en</i> <i>eener</i> /(<i>eens</i>) + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N- <i>e/s/en</i>	<i>des</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N- <i>s</i> <i>een(e)s</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N- <i>s</i>
Indirect object (DAT)	<i>den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>eenen</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i>	<i>der</i> / <i>de</i> / <i>ter</i> / <i>derr</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>eene(r)</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N-(<i>e</i>)	<i>het</i> + ADJ-(<i>e</i>) + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>eenen</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>een</i> + ADJ + N \emptyset / <i>e</i>
Indirect object (ABL)	<i>van de</i> / <i>den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>van een(en)</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i>	<i>van der</i> / <i>den</i> / <i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>van eene</i> /(<i>een(en)</i>) + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i>	<i>van het</i> + ADJ \emptyset / <i>e</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>van den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i> <i>van eene</i> + ADJ \emptyset + N <i>van eenen</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N \emptyset / <i>e</i>

TABLE 28. Adnominal morphology in definite, indefinite and bare NPs in grammatical accounts between 1550-1650

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Subject (NOM)	<i>de</i> [+ ADJ- <i>e</i> + N] <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N ADJ- <i>e</i> + N	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N/(<i>den</i>) <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N	<i>het</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N <i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N ADJ- \emptyset + N
Direct object (ACC)	<i>den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N/ (<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N) <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N/ (<i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>een</i> + ADJ + N) (<i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N/ (ADJ- \emptyset + N)	<i>het</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N <i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N ADJ- \emptyset + N
Indirect object (DAT/ABL)	<i>den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N (<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N) <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N	<i>het</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N <i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N ADJ- \emptyset + N

TABLE 29. Adnominal morphology in definite, indefinite and bare NPs in *De verstandige kok* ⁵²⁵² The forms into () are the less frequent, while those into [] are hypothesized as no data for that

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Subject (NOM)	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N/ (<i>den</i> [+ ADJ- <i>e</i> + N]) <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N ADJ- <i>e</i> + N	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N	<i>het</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N (<i>het</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N) <i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N ADJ- \emptyset + N
Direct object (ACC)	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e/-en</i> + N (<i>den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N/ (<i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (ADJ \emptyset + N)	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>de</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N) <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N/ (ADJ- \emptyset + N)	<i>het</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N <i>een</i> + ADJ + N (<i>een</i> ADJ- <i>e</i> + N) ADJ- \emptyset + N
Indirect object (DAT/ABL)	<i>den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N (<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N) <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N/ ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) (ADJ- \emptyset + N)	<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>de</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) (<i>den</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) (<i>de</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N) <i>een</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>een</i> + ADJ \emptyset + N) ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (ADJ- <i>er</i> + N)	<i>het</i> + ADJ- <i>e</i> + N (<i>het</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N) (<i>het</i> + ADJ- <i>en</i> + N) <i>een</i> + ADJ- \emptyset + N ADJ- \emptyset + N/ (ADJ- <i>e</i> + N) (ADJ- <i>en</i> + N)

TABLE 30. Adnominal morphology in definite, indefinite and bare NPs in the *Brieven*

5. Conclusions

The history of Dutch is very similar to that of other Western European languages as it has been dominated by the standardization perspective for a considerable time. The Dutch standardization process, that included the development from dialectal diversity in the Middle Ages towards a supra-regional standard language over time, started in the second half of the sixteenth century and continued with the publication of grammars, dictionaries, and other normative texts up to the nineteenth century.

The traditional view regarding Dutch standardization is based on the language of texts printed in the north, i.e. the province of Holland, and written by well-educated upper-class men: over time the language of this small group of speakers became increasingly uniform, which contributed to give the impression of a standard language gaining more and more ground (Rutten–van der Wal 2014: 3). Said differently, to gather information about the evolution of the Dutch language, linguists have almost exclusively relied on printed texts and ego-documents written by men from the higher ranks of society. Of course, this was mainly a consequence of the scarcity of private documents written by people belonging to the lowest ranks of society, but this made the language of large part of the Dutch population a *terra incognita* to us.

The present investigation aimed at filling this gap in linguistic accounts. By comparing

construction are found in the sources. Genitive case is not discussed in these tables since only one instance was found, i.e. *des daags*.

adnominal morphology in a printed text (the typical source of traditional accounts) and a sample of private letters (a fairly unexplored area in Early Modern Dutch linguistics), my investigation focused on two main issues: first, the extent to which concrete language usage lines up with the descriptions sketched in contemporary grammars, and, second, the effect of standardization pressure on different genres, i.e. formal and informal written language.

My data do confirm the discrepancy between normative rules and actual language usage especially regarding the maintenance of case distinctions in direct and indirect object position. In definite NPs, the genitive and dative feminine form *der* appears neither in the cookbook nor in the letters, the masculine and neuter genitive form *des* has almost gone lost (it only appears once), the occurrence of *den* is tied to masculine gender (as stated in grammars), but in free variation with *de*; finally, the neuter article *het* surfaces in all syntactic positions (no occurrences of *den* with neuter NPs have been found). Indefinite NPs have undergone an even more drastic reduction as *een* appears in all syntactic positions. The higher degree of simplification portrayed by my data with respect to grammatical accounts is not surprising: already in the fifteenth century it has been observed that in the Northern dialects no distinction existed between the nominative and accusative forms of nouns and articles, and in the seventeenth century gender apparently did not play any role either in NP-internal or NP-external agreement (Geerts 1966: 100-103).

All in all, the data discussed in this paper allow two main generalizations. On the one hand, they portray a morphological system characterized by strong syncretism between masculine and feminine forms (as reported in the *Twe-spraack*), as well as a messy distribution of inflections for adjectival targets. On the other hand, they testify recurring patterns in formal and informal written language: the association of *den*-forms with direct and indirect objects; the higher stability of neuter NPs for all targets (articles and adjectives) compared to non-neuter ones; the gradual coalescence of masculine and feminine gender in oblique cases in definite NPs and their complete merging in indefinite NPs; the general simplification of the morphological system (feminine *r*-forms and masculine/neuter *-s* forms are almost absent); and the instability of adjectival targets. As a matter of fact, in historical grammars adjectival declension was a grey area: this was clearly a consequence of the contemporary confusion regarding the use of adjectives in spoken and written form, for which schwa-apocope in spoken language must have played a prominent role with evident traces in written language. In definite NPs, adjectival endings mainly depend on the form of the determiner: if the *den*-form associated with masculine gender and direct and indirect object position lined up with *en*-ending adjectives, the same systematization pattern could not surface in indefinite NPs, where the determiner had already become unspecified for gender (and case).

Thus the comparison of adnominal morphology in two different written genres does not only prove the morphological reduction to be more ahead than reported by contemporary grammars both in formal and informal language usage, but also reveals converging patterns. Indeed Rutten and van der Wal have claimed that the *Brieven* present a low degree of orality, that is, they should not be considered as straightforwardly reflecting spoken language, but as specimens of hybrid nature which combine elements of speech with those of writing practice (Rutten and van der Wal 2014:394). In effect, in both

sources masculine and feminine gender have began to merge also in direct and indirect object position: if *den*-forms almost exclusively appear in masculine NPs, *de*-forms show up both in masculine and feminine NPs even in *den*-friendly contexts. Besides, in both sources indefinite NPs have become opaque for gender and case: indefinite determiners are unspecified for gender and adjectival targets mainly display schwa-ending forms, but also zero-ending and *en*-ending. The variable degree of instability of adjectival declension, which represents the main difference between formal and informal written usage, is best represented by neuter NPs: in the cookbook they are characterized by specific patterns in definite, indefinite and bare NPs, while the *Brieven* reveal a chaotic distribution of inflected and uninflected forms.

As a consequence of the morphological reduction, whose primary effect was the coalescence of feminine and masculine singular nominative forms during the Middle Ages, the accusative masculine (marked by the nasal suffix *-n*), probably began to be the only unambiguous masculine ending, although frequent apocope phenomena should have reduced this suffix as well. At first, *-n* was better maintained for phonological reasons before words beginning with a vowel or *h* and *d*, but gradually *de*-forms began to appear also in *den*-friendly contexts (cfr. *den roock/de roock*). Adjectives – which are the most opaque area in Middle and Early Modern Dutch grammatical accounts – are confirmed to be the adnominal targets with the less reliable morphological markers. Apocope phenomena invested adjectival targets even to a higher extent – as confirmed by the proliferation of variable endings in different syntactic positions in both sources – leading to greater confusion between different genders, especially in indefinite NPs where determiners had already become unspecified for gender. Further confusion originated from the association of *en*-ending targets with feminine nouns in direct and indirect object position, which speeded up the merger of original masculine and feminine words into a unique class, i.e. today's common gender. In a way, the system emerging from my data makes sense and might have been the most efficient one conceivable with so few endings, which testifies to its functionality for language users who opted to restructure the system rather than lose it. Indeed contemporary Dutch has maintained nominal morphology, that is, what was clearly in danger in Early Modern Dutch and finally went lost over time is the complex, partly artificial, system of cases.

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