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Terminology and the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*¹

Abstract

The selection of words from the fields of sciences, technology, trade and crafts (terminology) for incorporation in general dictionaries is often under discussion and is problematic especially in the case of historical dictionaries. By investigating the selection of musical terms in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* we try to gain more insight into the terminological principles and practice of this long-term project in particular and, at the same time, into the problem of word selection in general.

Introduction

Terminology (taken to refer to terms as well as to specific terminological meanings of general words) is distinguished from standard language first of all by its restriction to certain "sublanguages". It is precisely the currency of a word that constitutes an important criterion for incorporation into a general dictionary, yet currency is often quite difficult to determine. The problems selection poses are well known from the lexicographical literature². Even though various authors defined terminology versus standard language, the criteria for the selection of terms are still unsatisfactory³. Béjoint (1988:366), for instance, concludes that, whether he bases himself on a corpus or relies on word lists provided by specialists, the lexicographer cannot be sure of a well-founded selection. In the former case "he runs the risk of ending up with a selection of words that constitute a 'patchy', or even unfair, coverage of each domain in particular and of sciences and techniques in general." In the latter case the lexicographer has to judge the list of terms himself "and this can only be done intuitively".

It will be clear that the lack of objective criteria leaves room for all sorts of other, more opaque, considerations regarding the selection of terms. This goes all the more for historical dictionaries such as the *WNT* (and e.g. the *DWB* and *OED*). The criterion of currency is a difficult one to operationalize because, among other things, frequency of use is not easy to determine. The corpus of primary texts is necessarily the most important determinant for this; the second source of terms which offers an important contribution to contemporary dictionaries, i.e. professional literature and informants, is likewise dependent on the same historical texts. Information from other dictionaries can be helpful in this case. It may often be, however, insidious as well.

We examined how the compilers of our voluminous historical academic dictionary used their sources to select and describe terms. Other important aspects such as defining and labelling will only be discussed indirectly. We have used the fact that it is almost 150 years since work on the *WNT* began and the fact that because of this the dictionary does not form a unity, to our advantage: the change of the corpus over time (see 3.1) has enabled us to gain more insight into the relation between the corpus available at a certain moment (specialized as well as other texts) and the lexicographic output. More importantly however, the differences in working methods and views of the successive editors (see for their purposes a survey in 2.)⁴, offer us an idea of how the issue of selection was dealt with in the lexicographical practice of the past. Apart from the criterion of general currency, other criteria such as cultural–historical or language–political interest come up. We hope that the result, summarized in 3.2, offers a close look at the methods of the *WNT*, and will form a contribution to the historiography of this project. At the same time we try to answer the question of whether a long-standing lexicographical practice can teach us something about problems and possibilities of future lexicographical projects.

Our choice of musical terminology, one of the domains to which M. de Vries wanted to pay full attention from the beginning (De Vries 1856:32), is not necessarily more representative than some other field, mainly because of the dependence on specialist literature available at any given moment in time. It might well be true, furthermore, that the large proportion of foreign words in this terminology distinguishes it from traditional special languages like those of shipping or agriculture. The criteria of selection, however, will not be fundamentally different.

2. Purposes of the *WNT* with respect to terminology

130 years of *WNT* fascicles⁵ inevitably show ongoing developments and changes. A major factor, the constantly expanding corpus, will be dealt with in the next paragraph; first we shall report how the editors' views that changed over time were formulated. There are explicit accounts of the general principles and methods in the early period. Terminology as a separate category was mainly discussed as far as the compilation of the corpus and the selection–process were concerned⁶; the view on defining, labelling and selection of quotations as well as the actual use of the corpus available can only be inferred from the fascicles⁷. The question of whether the occurrence in certain works (e.g. literary) or any other characteristic was indicative of the general character of a term and, by corollary, of inclusion, has – as far as we can see – not been discussed explicitly. On the other hand, the importance of consulting specialists was regularly emphasized⁸.

According to the first statements of principles, great value was attached to so-called *kunstwoorden* ('terms') from all kinds of sciences, technology, trade and crafts. Matthias de Vries, founder of the *WNT*, in his *Ontwerp* (De

Vries 1852:29–33) and later on in the *Inleiding* (De Vries 1882:xlvi) indicates the presence of old and unknown language material in some terms, and the metaphorical use of such language in figurative expressions. Apart from this linguistic interest, the practical utility of the *WNT* was what mattered: this would increase if the developing industries and techniques were able to find the appropriate terms in the dictionary. For that very reason a number of engineers was asked to collect the technical terms in their field, and their so-called engineer-notes are still part of the *WNT* corpus. Frequent categories such as totally obsolete words and words of merely a local or regional importance had to be excluded, however. In its first period the *WNT* wanted to focus on contemporary Dutch. For the second and following generations of lexicographers, theory and practice on these two points were less restrictive. Especially drastic was De Vries' attitude towards foreign words: if they had not become fully established in common language – for this he drew up certain, mainly formal criteria⁹ – they were not to be included. He felt that the creeping corruption of language caused by the use of large numbers of foreign words in science and technology had to be put to a stop. Normative statements of this kind are not to be found after the first editorial period, at least, not in so many words; the normative principles were not openly rejected, either.

A decision on a practical level with possible implications for the treatment of terms was made by the second generation: they opted for a more concise treatment of some words, for instance compounds (*WNT* II² 1903:i). During the following decades the principles were not changed fundamentally. Knuttel even concurred with the old principle by declaring that (as he states in *WNT* III² 1916:iii) not all foreign words and *bastaardwoorden* ('loan words') more or less established in our country would be included, but only those which, from the point of view of Dutch linguistics, either because of their form or because of the derivations and compounds that had come into being here, were of any interest.

A tremendous enlargement of the corpus took place from the forties to the seventies of this century, especially between 1966 and 1976, when it grew 25 percent. A rather liberal attitude towards foreign words developed and attention was being paid to derivations and compounds (even marginal ones). They were included as so-called *opnoemers* (keywords which are attached to the article of the simplex and are no independent entries). About these last categories it was more or less stated that words occurring in works that had once been accepted, had to be included as much as possible (*Canones* 1962:§ 28). At the same time, again according to the *Canones* (1962:§ 6), the sheer bulk of specialized literature led to the rejection of many highly specialist terms, in particular those from medicine and sciences. The latest *WNT* period is mainly to be distinguished from the former by a restriction of the corpus (see 3.1). Even though editors after De Vries also mention the contributions of specialists, little is known about the consultations with these people.

3. Practice

The use of the different sources for selection and editing terms by the successive *WNT* editors were investigated in two ways. First of all we selected a number of volumes representing the different editorial periods and had a close look at the occurrence of musical terms and musical–technical meanings of general words. The other approach was made possible by two inventory lists: one a list of musical terms which we compiled from 16th– to 18th–century works on music¹⁰, the other a list of terms from a widely used 19th–century musical lexicon. By checking these we could determine which of the available terms had been selected in the *WNT*, and, once selected, how they had been edited¹¹. Before discussing the results (3.2), we shall discuss the corpus.

3.1 Corpus

The *WNT* started on the basis of a corpus of about one thousand works. When editing started, the corpus was not closed; it was enlarged regularly by both older texts and new publications. In the beginning the editors relied upon two specialized works for musical terms, both from the second half of the 19th century (see under 3.2). The addition of works in the field of music went on, in the middle of this century even by the dozens at one go. This went on until 1976, when the so–called 1921–caesura was agreed upon: as from that year, no works postdating 1921 were dealt with¹². This resulted not only in an enormous reduction, but also in a more balanced structure of the corpus. At the beginning of the period the *WNT* covers, a shift took place, too. Already in the first editorial period the original *terminus a quo* had been moved back from 1637 to 1580. Around the turn of the century another change was made: now the year 1500 was chosen as a starting point¹³. With respect to musical language, however, this did not immediately result in the addition of early works as the two text books with a passage on the art of singing had been dated end of the 16th century, and were first mentioned in the lists of sources of 1890 (Valcoogh 1591) and 1920 (*T'samensprekingen* 1567). Furthermore, the list of 1893 mentioned two 17th–century works, namely by Ban and Huygens. The *Bronnenlijst* of 1953 and of 1966 (additions to the list of works published in 1943) mention 33 works on music, but as is evident from the issues published at that time, dozens of other sources were consulted, too. Among those were sources for the 16th–18th century, with, however, contemporary works dominating. Not only the increasing number of works on music is of interest: many terms owe their inclusion to their occurrence in educational, literary or administrative texts (e.g. editions of statutes or edicts), in (general) encyclopaedias and dictionaries, newspapers and many other types of texts.

3.2 Selection

The attention the first editors paid to contemporary Dutch (see 2) appears clearly from the selected musical terms as well as from the accompanying illustrative quotations. It is clear that only words well established in our language were to be selected, like: (*een toets*) *aanslaan*, *akkoord*, *altsleutel*, *g* (tone), *obligaat*, *octaaf*. In the absence of sufficiently illustrative quotations in the corpus, the editors would often use so-called *poëmen*: sentences without acknowledgement of the source, invented by the editor himself on the basis of his own linguistic usage (or possibly that of others). Often, these contained idiomatic phrases. After the primacy of contemporary language was abandoned, this type of illustration is found less and less.

Not only words used in common language were selected, but also terms restricted to use by specialists, like *aanzetbuis*, *achtste*, (*een toon*) *afstooten*. These were often labelled as specialist words: *in de toonkunst*, *kunstterm in de muziek* etc. The first editors did not merely focus on existing words. At times their normative, puristic attitude emerged, like in *aanmonding* ('the way in which a wind instrument is put to the mouth'). It says in this article: "The word is not common, but designed by Beets as a translation of the French *embouchure*"; the only quotation is from Beets' *Camera Obscura*.

The initial preference for literary language appears from the quotations from 19th- and 17th-century literary authors (like Van Lennep, Beets, Ten Kate; Vondel, Hooft). These were given in addition to the *poëmen*, albeit in small numbers. But terms could also come in by the literary back door. A striking example is the musical vocabulary of the 17th-century priest and musicologist Joan Albert Ban, who, by means of his correspondence with Hooft (included in the edition of Hooft's letters) saw a fair part of his highly idiosyncratic terms immortalized in the *WNT*. Probably the puristic character of *onklank*, *snipsel* and *stemsprong* lent a helping hand. Specialized sources as such remained in the background. Not only as a source for words but also for their definitions¹⁴ an abstract of the *Nieuw beknopt en volledig muziekaal woordenboek* (...) by K. v. M. (Amsterdam, 1855) was used¹⁵, though without acknowledgement on the spot.

Among musical terms there are many that are of foreign origin. The reluctant attitude of the first board of editors towards such words was probably one of the reasons why only part of the terms that are supposed to have been common in that period were included in the first volumes. Words like *a*, *as*, *ais*, *andante*, *allegro*, *allemande*, *offertorium*, *octet* are examples of words which certainly were found in the *Muziekaal Woordenboek*, but were nevertheless not included in the *WNT*.

We find a more generous choice of terms from the second generation of lexicographers who changed the *WNT* into a historical-descriptive dictionary. Slowly a more liberal attitude towards foreign words won ground. See for example purely Italian-looking terms like *mezzo-piano*, *piu-piano* and *poco-piano* s.v. *piano* (*II*). A small number of musical works were added

to the corpus: the *Lexicon der Toonkunst* by H. Viotta, published in 1881–1885 in three volumes, and the *Muzijkaal Kunstwoordenboek* by J. Verschuere Reynvaan (1795)¹⁶. These works remained of great importance for the *WNT* as far as musical terminology is concerned, the more so because many older terms (*contrapunt, mi* etc.) were included in the *WNT* through these works.

Selection of totally obsolete words was not dependent any longer on their relevance to contemporary language, so that words like *claret* (a musical instrument) and *eenkelen* 'to add ornaments into playing or singing' (found no later than in the 16th, resp. 17th century) were also included. Fourth generation lexicographers selected yet more comparable words. Many terms were still being illustrated with literary quotations, but other sources were quoted as well.

The fact that the second generation paid more attention to non-literary works, appears from the quotations from general and dialectical dictionaries (by Kiliaan, Plantijn, Halma, Marin, Tuerlinckx, Molema and others) and from works on specific subjects or domains within that of music (like the *Volledige Beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, handwerken, fabrieken, trafieken, derzelve werkhuiizen, gereedschappen, enz.* (1788–1820), volumes 19–21: *De Orgelmaker*).

As appears from the quotations, the selection of a number of terms such as *hommel, mazurka, manuaal, mixtuur* and *pianino* took place only on the basis of a specialist work. This is, however, mainly the case with terms which are attached to the simplex entry as a derivation or a compound, terms which are included within an article as a specialist meaning or as a part of a phrase, or terms which could follow a general word as a homonym entry. It seems as if the barrier for selection was less strong for these words, or, discussed in more favourable terms, they were supposed to add a meaningful extra to the common, simplex word.

Let there was also a tendency to take into consideration the currency of a word in the general language. Terms that were very much specific technical ones were paid little or no attention to. In the entry *maxime* 'principle, maxim', for instance, no information is given other than that this word, found in Kiliaan's dictionary, is a musical term that is now obsolete. *Majeur* "a word borrowed from French, which is nowadays a very common musical term", is only explained as meaning 'stokregel' (a literary term) and was illustrated with a quotation from a 16th-century literary text (see also, for instance, *pianissimo* s.v. *piano* (II)). Analysis of the definitions of musical terms will no doubt show that there is a big difference between the *WNT* articles as far as the amount of encyclopaedic information given is concerned. At first sight it is clear that from the second generation onwards much of this type of information is given in a number of articles; see e.g. *de zang breken* (s.v. *breken*), *opera, pianoforte*.

Apart from explicitly formulated principles and a tradition, fixed (and developed) by practice, big differences could exist between the methods of

individual editors. Above we have pointed out that for the C–F–volume (which included many a foreign word) Knuttel, in agreement with the first editors, selected only a small amount of terms, in spite of the more liberal practice of his fellow editors. As had been the case in the beginning, most of the quotations were taken from literary sources (*cimbaal, compositie, courante, snik (I), sopraan*). Some of his definitions show that specialized works or informants were not consulted at all (though the first editors used to do so). Sometimes he even tried to deduce the meaning of a musical term from a literary (metaphorical) quotation of the word (see *fuga*).

As was mentioned before (3.1), from the forties onwards a considerable addition to the corpus took place. Many specialized works were added, also in the field of music. In the articles a large amount of quotations from occasional sources can be observed as well. As a result of the introduction of the 1921–caesura the predominance of contemporary literature disappeared, so that the diffusion of the different types of works over the period from 1500 onwards is much more balanced (see e.g. the articles *aria* (Suppl.), *toon* with compounds, versus *zakpijp, zang*). Since the fourth generation a better judgement of the currency of words has become possible. It is clear, however, that this criterion has been implemented less strictly, and less current terms have seldom been rejected. Comparison with the (random) word list from Viotta shows in the first place an evident increase of the number of musical terms selected. Besides, judging from the number of entries at which only specialized musical works are being quoted, many more specific terms which hardly had any importance for the common language, have been included (*arithmetische verdeeling, harmonische additie* (Suppl.)). Furthermore, much more often than before, words of foreign origin are among them (for instance *accent, 3), agreement, aliquotpiano, –tonen, amusement, angelica, antithese, 1,b,), applicatuur, regaal (II), tripel (II)*). As appears from a comparison with our list of musical terms from the 16th–18th century, this holds for older terms as well, including those from the 16th century. Among those are terms that denote antiquated objects (*viola, regaal (I), violine, virginaal (II)*). In this editorial period the addition of older specialized works on music and of archival texts played an important role. Not only these sources, but also the addition to the corpus of older general works such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, contemporary specialized literature (see e.g. *proportion 2,a, 3rd and 4th paragraph*) and sources on more or less related subjects like acoustics added to the number of musical terms.

4. Conclusion

Departing from a list of musical words taken from works included in the *WNT* corpus, we concluded that different criteria for the selection of terms have been applied by the successive generations of *WNT* editors. We discovered linguistic or language-political criteria, especially where the foreign character of a term was under discussion. The semantic value of a term may have played a part in the inclusion of (historical) terms within an expression (*de bovenzang zingen*), in the inclusion of words with a specialized meaning within a general word (*haak*) or of a terminological compound attached to a general simplex (*orgelpunt*). The general cultural-historical interest which is served indirectly by a historical dictionary, is likely to have played a part, but is hardly to be considered to have been an independent criterion. Antiquated musical instruments like *kwene*, *pandoor* and *zink (II)*, fascinating though they may be to the (music) historian, are known in the first place as words, and as such are always interesting enough to be included in the dictionary.

We observed that, particularly in the first three periods before the enlargement of the corpus in the middle of this century, many words occurring in all sorts of sources have not been included. From time to time one comes across the phenomenon of a series of related words, either limited or not, of which one was selected and the other was not. If one leaves aside modifications of the corpus, this is partly to be explained by the early aversion towards foreign words, an aversion which later on disappeared (the note values *brevis*, *semibrevis*, *fusa* were not selected, *unca* was), and partly from evident differences in currency (*violist* was selected, not so *blokfluitist*). Partly there seems to have been some arbitrariness in the selection, too: the arbitrariness of the corpus or of the editor's decision. Compare these examples: from the series of intervals *sext* and *septiem* are missing. As far as groups of singers or players go, from *duo* to *octet* only *trio* and *kwartet* were selected (though all of these were to be found quite easily in any musical encyclopaedia). The same goes for the tempo markings *andante* and *andantino* (*WNT Suppl.*, issue 1949), which were selected where in the same editorial period (1964) *vivace* is lacking.

Another reason that a fair amount of terms is wrongly missing and that the selection shows a rather big inconsistency, is that it is difficult to decide upon the general character of terms. It will be clear that neither the occurrence in one or a small number of literary sources¹⁷, nor the mentioning in one or more specialized sources or general encyclopaedias can give a definite answer about that. In the first period the editor had the opportunity to rely on his own knowledge of the common language, but even then he was strongly depending on his own interest and education in certain areas.

It proved to be hardly possible to formulate general, objective criteria with respect to the selection of terms on the basis of the practice of a big lexicographical project. In this respect the answer to the question we raised

in the first paragraph must be in the negative. But what becomes very clear indeed is the great importance of a corpus of which the size and variety guarantee that at least the most important terms can be found. Next to a sufficient number of general and literary sources, a balanced corpus of specialized texts should be available. In addition specialists are needed, both for the selection of the entries as well as for checking the definitions. The use of specialized literature together with a systematic treatment of the different domains (a possibility offered by electronic lexicography), can prevent the inconsistent edition of (series of) connected words within a domain¹⁸.

Notes

- 1 *WNT*: Dictionary of the Dutch Language.
- 2 Of the publications dealing with this problem we only mention some recent ones: Béjoint 1988, Kempcke 1989, Swanepoel 1989 and Verkuyf 1993.
- 3 For several scalings from different sources see e.g. Swanepoel 1989:12; Malige–Klappenbach:309; Kempcke 1989:843.
- 4 Traditionally the period of editing of the *WNT* has been divided into 5 generations of editors. See e.g. Van Sterkenburg 1984:51–101.
- 5 The project started in 1851; the first fascicle was published in 1864.
- 6 De Vries 1852:29–33; De Vries 1854:19–23, 32–41; De Vries 1856:27–43; De Vries 1882:xlvi–xlvi; *Canones* 1962:§ 6.
- 7 For the successive lists of sources published from 1882 to 1966 see Van der Voort van der Kleij 1976:61–62.
- 8 Personal consultation of specialists needs further investigation. With respect to the field of music, one indication was found in the mentioning of a contribution by the organ builder K. Sybrandi in De Vries 1854:73.
- 9 The criteria are mentioned in De Vries 1952:38 and De Vries 1882:li. To be included as a Dutch word, it should have stress and pronunciation according to Dutch rules, form compounds and derivations with Dutch elements, or have a meaning different from the original word meaning. Though (partly) mentioned afterwards several times (*WNT* III² (1916):v; *Canones* 1962:§6), these criteria do not seem to have been applied very strictly.
- 10 These lists are based on the following works (for complete titles see the list of sources of the *WNT*): *T'samenspr.* [Antw., 1567], Valcoogh, *Reg. d. Schoolm.* (ed. de Planque) [1591], Stevin, *Singkonst* (enz.) [voor 1620]; Versch.–Reynv., *Muz. Kunstwdb.* [1795]; Lustig, *Muzykk.* [1751]; K. v. M., *Muziekaal Woordenboek* [1855]; Viotta, *Lex.* [1881–1885]; en: Christiaan van Varenbraken, *Conste van musike oft vanden Sanghe* (Gent, UB, hs.2141, f.95r–121r); *Dit is een seer Schoon Boecxke* [1568] (ed. Amsterdam:Frits Knuf 1973); J.A. Ban, *Kort Sangh–Bericht* (ed. Amsterdam:Frits Knuf 1969).
- 11 Compare Schiewe's investigation of the terminology in *DWB* (Schiewe 1991). Unlike this author we did not carry out a quantitative investigation.
- 12 For the treatment of terms within dialect sources after 1921 see Tempelaars 1991:147, footnote 17.
- 13 For these termini see Van Sterkenburg 1984:57–58.
- 14 Compare for instance the definitions of *akkoord* in the *WNT* and *Muz. Wdb.*:205; see also *aanzetting, alt, altsleutel, altviol, octaaf* 2,b).
- 15 Mentioned in De Vries 1856:32.
- 16 See note 10.
- 17 The use of terminology in literary works does not necessarily imply familiarity of non-experts with these words. About the function of terminology in literature see Fluck 1976:172–4.
- 18 This does not mean that any word within those series has to be selected or edited in a similar way.

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