

The negation particle *ne* in the historical dictionaries of Dutch

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In the historical stages of the West Germanic languages ne has been part of the negation system. In Old Dutch through Early New Dutch (c. 600 – 1600/1700) this particle had various specific functions and senses, depending on the sentence structure and on whether or not it co-occurred with other negation elements, such as negative indefinites and adverbs. The present paper focuses on the way in which this particle as function word is described in the four successive historical dictionaries of Dutch. As these dictionaries were compiled in different periods and on different editorial principles, one can expect differences in treatment of the particle. Sometimes shortage of material plays a role. The focus on translation in Modern Dutch rather than on a precise grammatical analysis, causes inadequate descriptions in other cases. Especially with respect to the conjunctive construction with ne, the lexicographer is in need of clear, insightful discussions of this complicated phenomenon in the linguistic literature as a basis to his description. In spite of these shortcomings, the dictionaries together contain a comprehensive survey of the various uses of ne, in some of them with a detailed inventory of contexts, together with a large amount of mostly dated illustrative citations.

1. Function words in lexicography

Function words (or grammatical words) are different from content words (or designative words) as an object of lexicographical description. The lexical meaning of a content word is a rather straightforward feature to the lexicographer, and its description follows well-known, approved procedures. Function words on the other hand, have little semantic meaning but mainly serve to express grammatical relationships between lexical words and the sentence in which they occur. Nevertheless, they belong in the dictionary: ‘These grammatical words (...) are just a part of the total lexicon of the language, as any other words’, and it is the lexicographer’s duty ‘to register them and to indicate with what grammatical function, when and how they are used’ (Zgusta 1971:115). Moreover, there is no clear-cut distinction between content words and function words. Many words can function as either content or function word, or combine these functions. Grammatical information should therefore be added, but to a limited extent. Generally spoken, only what is grammatically irregular is to be explained in the dictionary (Svensén 2009:143).

Describing or defining function words in historical dictionaries implies including grammatical information on historical language stages in the dictionary entry. In this paper I will discuss the problems of the description of an interesting function word, the negation particle *ne*, in the historical dictionaries of Dutch.

These dictionaries, compiled in different periods, between the mid nineteenth century and the first decade of the twenty first century, are available on the internet since december 2009. The first electronic dictionary was the *Vroegmiddelnederlands Woordenboek* (VMNW) or *Dictionary of Early Middle Dutch*, followed by the 40-volume *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT) or *Dictionary of the Dutch Language*, counterpart of (among others) the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* (MNW) or *Dictionary of Middle Dutch* and the *Oudnederlands Woordenboek* (ONW) *Dictionary of Old Dutch* were added to the internet application in 2009. The ONW is the only one not to have been published as hard copy thus far. More a more detailed description, see section 4.1.

2. The negation particle in the history of Dutch

As there is a close correspondence between Dutch and German with respect to the negation system, the brief outline of the history and characteristics of *ne* in the earliest language stages is partly based on Jäger's study of German negation (Jäger 2008), partly on Van der Horst (2008). (The negation particle appears in Dutch as *ne* or *en* and, in clitical positions, as *-n-*, but for practical reasons I will only use the form *ne* here.)

In the Germanic languages the standard negation particle was *ni*. In the oldest texts it was the only marker of negation in the clause, and these types of clauses are still to be found in Old Dutch:¹

- (1) *Ne ist heil himo in Gode sinemo.*
not is salvation for him in God of his
 E: 'There is no salvation for him in his God.'
 D: 'Er is geen redding voor hem bij zijn God.'
Wachtendonck Psalms 3,02 (901-1000) (ONW).

As sentential negation marker its position is always immediately before the final verb; for this reason it is also described as a clitic.

In the course of the Old Dutch period and in Middle Dutch, *ne* often co-occurs with a second (and sometimes a third) negation marker in the same clause: a negative indefinite pronoun or adverb, such as *niet* 'not' (as in example (2)), *geen* 'no, none', *niemant* 'nobody', *nemmer* 'never' (example (3)) or *nergens* 'nowhere'. These elements originate from a connection of *ne* and a (positive) indefinite pronoun or adverb; for instance, *niet* 'not' had developed from *ne iet* 'not a thing'. These second negation markers are traditionally considered as reinforcers of the original marker *ne*. Also minimalisers or generalisers such as *een ei* 'an egg' or *een haar* 'a hair' sometimes function as such reinforcers.

- (2) *Ic ne mach hu niet ontwenden.*
I not can you not escape
 E: 'I cannot escape you.'
 D: 'Ik kan niet aan u ontkomen.'
Reynaert the Fox 1840 (13th century)
- (3) *U en comter af nemmer goet.*
you not comes thereof never good
 E: 'Thereof never comes any good for you.'
 D: 'Er komt voor u nooit iets goeds van.'
Seven vroeden 2219 (1301-1350) (MNW)

This systematic twofold expression of negation in one clause, or 'bipartite negation', was already occasionally present in Old Dutch, and was common in Middle Dutch. In later Middle Dutch *ne* is occasionally left out in negative sentences. What was left was *niet* as the new neg-particle (example (4)), or a neg-indefinite such as *niemant* 'nobody', *nemmer* or *nooit* 'never' (example (5)), which effectuated sentential negation as well. This pattern, single negation

¹ In the examples the citations are followed by glosses (second line, in italics), and by a translation in Modern English (E, third line) and Modern Dutch (D, fourth line). Negation words in the citations are in italics. Some of the citations are cited after the dictionaries discussed in this paper (VMNW, MNW, WNT).

with *niet* or with a negative indefinite became standard during the period of Early New Dutch (sixteenth and seventeenth century).

- (4) Zoo de wensch *niet* te vermeetel waere.
 if the wish not too audacious were
 E: ‘If the wish were not too audacious.’
 D: ‘Als de wens niet te overmoedig zou zijn.’
 Hooft, *Brieven* 4, 43 (1641) (WNT)
- (5) Ick sprack *noyt* anders dan ick docht
 I spoke never different than I thought
 E: ‘I never talked different from how I thought.’
 D: ‘Ik sprak nooit anders dan ik dacht.’
 Marnix, *Psalmen* 17, 2 (before 1598) (WNT)

There have been no further developments; thus, what Jäger concludes for German is also applicable to Dutch: ‘In clauses containing an indefinite in the scope of negation, negation is marked by an n-indefinite, in other clauses, it is marked by *niht*, yielding the two main syntactic patterns of negation that we find in Modern German today’ (Jäger 2008:234).

The three stages of syntactic negation in Germanic (and other) languages, from one to two to one negation marker, is known as ‘Jespersen’s Cycle’. According to this model, the original negation marker weakened and was reinforced by a newly grammaticalized one. This resulted in a bipartite negation particle (second stage). In the last stage the first marker got lost, and one negation marker was left, as was the case in the original situation (Postma 2002:44-45; Jäger 2008:14-15; Breitbarth 2009:81-82).

In recent studies an alternative interpretation on the development of the negation system in West Germanic was presented. Breitbarth (2009) assumes that a simultaneous reanalysis had taken place in stage II of Jespersen’s cycle. The secondary negation marker takes over the expression of negation from the original element *ne*, which at the same time ceases to be a negation marker and becomes a polarity marker instead. It is clear that negative polarity plays an important role in the development of negation. Postma for instance, concludes that there are hardly any traces left from stage I of Jespersen’s cycle in Middle Dutch: (almost) all instances with single *ne* are cases of bipartite negation, the second element being a negative polarity marker (Postma 2002:44).

Although these new approaches imply a change in the interpretation of *ne* in certain language stages, I will leave them undiscussed here. For practical reasons this lexicographical discussion will be based upon the more traditional and descriptive information in Dutch grammars such as Stoett (1923-1977), Van den Berg (1971), Le Roux and Le Roux (1977) and Van der Horst (2008).

3. Specific functions of single *ne* in older Dutch; the conjunctive/conditional *ne*-construction

During the period that *ne* was part of the Old Dutch and Middle Dutch bipartite negation system, we still find sentences with single preverbal *ne*. In these cases it often has special functions and meanings, depending on the type of verb it co-occurs with, the syntactic structure of the clause and the co-occurring negations words. Important contexts of single *ne*

are clauses with frequent verbs (e.g. *doen* ‘do’, *weten* ‘know’, *gaan* ‘go’) and specific, frequently used formulas such as short answers and rhetorical questions (see for instance Stoett 1923-1977:154-157; 166-167). In these contexts *ne* has the original meaning ‘not’ and the function of sentential negation marker. Examples are (6) and (7).

- (6) Twi *ne comdi huut ende laet ons gaen?*
why not come you out and let us go?
 E: ‘Why don’t you come out so we can go?’
 D: ‘Waarom kom je niet naar buiten zodat we kunnen gaan?’
Reynaert the Fox 3206 (13th century)

- (7) ‘Ghi hout hu spot!’ ‘In [= ic *en*] doe, Reynaert.’
you hold you joke! I not do, Reynaert
 E: ‘‘You must be joking!’ ‘I am not, Reynaert.’’
 D: ‘‘Je maakt een grapje!’ ‘Echt niet, Reynaert!’’
Reynaert the Fox 585-586 (13th century)

Single *ne* is also found in a specific category of subordinate clauses. These clauses, B in the examples (8) – (12), follow the main clause A and have the word order of a main clause: S *ne* V, with the restriction that S always occupies the first position, and no inversion is possible. The construction in its prototypical form is shown in (8):

- (8) A. Griet *ne* gaat *niet* naar school, B. Trijn *ne* gaat mee.
Griet not goes not to school, Trijn not goes with (her)
 E: ‘Griet does not go to school, if Trijn does not go with her.’

In this construction the main clause has semantic negation, expressed either by

- a) negative verbs, e.g. *laten* ‘refrain from’, *vergheten* ‘forget’,
- b) adverbs such as *cume* ‘hardly’ or *onlanghe* ‘not long’, or
- c) negative markers: *ne ... niet* ‘not’, *ne ... niemant* ‘nobody’, *ne ... nemmer* ‘never’ or other instances of (mostly) bipartite negation.

In this contexts the single *ne* is not only a negation marker, but also part of a conjunctive construction. This construction seems to express a conditional meaning. Although the common characteristics of a subordinate conditional sentence are missing (i.e. a conditional conjunction *als* or *indien*, or the final verb on the first position), the contexts of the many instances of this construction inevitably lead to this interpretation.

This basic conditional meaning and the negative meaning expressed by *ne* contribute to a diversity of meanings, of which the main is ‘if not’. This meaning varies depending on the kind of verb in the main clause and on other features. This is illustrated by the examples (9) - (12), which are representations of four frequent types of the conditional *ne*-construction. If we translate these sentences, the relationship between the main clause (A) and the subordinate clause (B) can be expressed by conjunctions (9), by relatives (10), by an infinitive construction with deletion of the negation (11) and by the contrastive conjunction *maar* (12). Some of these types allow for more than one translation.

Type 1: negative condition; translation in modern Dutch with *als niet* ‘if not’ or *tenzij* ‘unless’ as conjunction:

- (9) A. armüde *en* is di *nit* swar
poverty *not* is you *not* heavy
E: ‘Poverty is not hard to you
D: ‘Armoede is niet moeilijk voor je,
- B. dñne makse seluer swar.
you not makes her *self* heavy
a. if you don’t make it hard yourself
als je het zelf niet moeilijk maakt.’
b. unless you make it heavy yourself
tenzij je het zelf moeilijk maakt.’

Moraalboek 397, 19 (1270-1290) (VMNW)

Type 2: negative condition, to be interpreted as a necessary negative feature of the subject of the main clause; translation in modern Dutch with *dat / die niet* ‘which / who not’, in which *dat / die* ‘which / who’ are relative pronouns.

- (10) A. Dat *gene* sake *en* is.
that no thing *not* is
E: ‘That there is nothing
D: ‘Dat er niets is
- B. minne *en* makse gelijk
love not makes it equal
a. that love doesn’t make equal.’
dat de liefde niet gelijk maakt’.

Moraalboek 418, 36-37 (1270-1290) (VMNW)

A second possible translation into modern Dutch is the so called ‘balance order’ with *of* ‘or’:

- D: ‘Dat er niets is of de liefde maakt het gelijk’.
or the love makes it equal

This *of* variant of the construction is relatively recent.

Type 3 expresses a consecutive relationship; the transitive verb in the main clause has no lexical object; the subordinate clause is translated by a positive infinitive construction functioning as an object clause to the transitive verb in the main clause:

- (11) A. Om haer vrese [...]. *Ne* liet hijs *niet*
For her fear not failed he this
E: ‘Because of her fear, he did not fail to enter the battle.’
D: ‘Wegens haar angst liet hij niet na om de strijd aan te gaan.’
Rijmbijbel 672, 22-23 (1285) (VMNW)
- B. hi *ne* nam den strijt.
not he not took the battle

In the fourth type, there is a contrast between A and B, in Modern Dutch to be represented by the contrastive conjunction *maar* ‘but’:

- (12) A. Ende ghod *ne* moetene *niet* begeuen
and god not may him not leave
E: ‘And god may not leave him, but give him the kingdom of heaven.’
D: ‘En god moge hem niet verlaten, maar hem het hemelrijk geven.’
Enaamse Codex 449, 21-22 (1290) (VMNW)
- B. Hine motem gheuen hemelrike
he not may him give kingdom of heaven

This conjunctive/conditional construction with *ne* is discussed in Dutch works on historical syntax such as Stoett (1923-1977:156-160), Van den Berg (1971:38-42) and Le Roux and le Roux (1977:193-195). Van der Horst (2009:517-519) summarizes the facts known thus far.

Postma (2002:62-63) describes the construction as a Middle Dutch equivalent of the so-called ‘balansschikking’ (balance order; see example (13a)) in Modern Dutch and considers *ne* in the subordinate clause as an expletive negative element.

- (13a) A. Er gaat geen dag voorbij B. of Samuel denkt aan haar.
there passes no day or Samuel thinks of her
 E: ‘No day passes that Samuel does not think of her’.

The semantically equivalent sentence in example (13b), which has the same structure as the Middle Dutch sentence in (10), however, makes clear that this interpretation is rather problematic. The B-clause must be interpreted as a negative sentence:

- (13b) A. Er gaat geen dag voorbij B. dat Samuel niet aan haar denkt
there passes no day that Samuel does not think of her
 E: ‘No day passes that Samuel does not think of her’.

Whether theoretically oriented, or focussed on practical needs of interpreting and translating Middle-Dutch texts, none of the publications mentioned here offer a convenient analysis suitable for easy reference by dictionary-makers.

4. Treatment in *ONW*, *VMNW*, *MNW*, *WNT*

4.1. The four historical dictionaries

The Dutch historical vocabulary is described in four scholarly dictionaries. All of them are available on the internet (<http://gtb.inl.nl>). See Table 1 for the characteristics (based on Mooijaart 2010).

	<i>dictionary</i>	<i>coverage</i>	<i>size, availability</i>	<i>number of entries</i>	<i>year of first publication</i>
ONW	Oudnederlands Woordenboek <i>Dictionary of Old Dutch</i>	600-1200	1 volume online	4,500	2009
VMNW	Vroegmiddelnederlands Woordenboek <i>Dictionary of Early Middle Dutch</i>	1200- 1300	4 volumes hard copy and online	25,000	1999
MNW	Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek <i>Dictionary of Middle Dutch</i>	1250- 1550	9+2 volumes hard copy and online	75,000	1920
WNT	Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal <i>Dictionary of the Dutch Language</i> [Early New Dutch and Modern Dutch]	1500- 1921/1976	40+3 volumes hard copy and online	400,000	1864-1998 / 2001

Table 1. Historical dictionaries of Dutch

The *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* is one of the great historical dictionaries of Europe (compare the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*), initiated in the middle of the nineteenth century. It aimed at a complete etymological and semantic description of the Dutch vocabulary. In the 147 years of its compilation editorial principles and lexicographical practice have changed, but its origin as a project of historical linguistics is still recognizable.

The *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* was initiated in the same period. Although it is considered to be not very reliable because of the use of often poorly edited texts, it is still an important reference work for scholars and students reading Middle Dutch literature. These two works share some striking features: their comprehensiveness and elaborateness, and their abundance of illustrative citations. See further Van Sterkenburg, Claes en De Tollenaere in Bakker en Dibbets (1977).

The vocabulary of the oldest language stages of Dutch became object of lexicographical research and description in the last decades of the twentieth century. Both the *Vroegmiddelnederlands Woordenboek* and the *Oudnederlands Woordenboek* were compiled as electronic dictionaries. The limited collection of sources, especially for the Old Dutch period, and the more systematic entry structure, including also quantitative information about word forms and dates to all citations, contribute to a dictionary type which is quite different from their ancestors. On the other hand, the VMNW is also closely connected to the MNW in many respects, not surprisingly, given the fact that both the dictionaries describe parts of the same Middle Dutch period.

Although very diverse in design and application, the four dictionaries form a network of lexicographical products which is a valuable source of information about the history of Dutch words. Since December 2009 all four dictionaries are available on the internet in the integrated language database of Dutch (GTB). For more details on this application, see Depuydt en De Does (2008).

4.2. Treatment of *ne*

The main usages of *ne* as mentioned above occur from Old Dutch through Early New Dutch, and thus all four dictionaries include this particle, but the approaches vary considerably. All four dictionaries distinguish between *ne* as sentential negation marker and as a phrasal negation marker.

In the ONW there is one entry *ne*, in which the various meanings and functions appear as different senses. The entry is based on a limited amount of material, as there are only three longer texts available for the Old Dutch language stage (see Schoonheim 2008:271-273). Other sources include onomastic material, glosses and very short fragments, in which function words are hardly to be found. In sense 4, the conjunctive construction is presented with a short description. The conjunctions and relative pronouns to be used in a modern Dutch translation are mentioned in the definition, with the explicit reservation that these translations are no strict equivalents of the construction.

In the ONW *ne* is qualified as an adverb in all usages; the VMNW, on the other hand, distinguishes the entries *ne* (I), adverb, and *ne* (II), conjunction. In the second entry there is no explanation of the construction as such, but only a listing of possible translations of the conjunctive element in modern Dutch: *als niet* 'if not', *of* 'or', *die / dat niet* 'who / which not', *maar* 'but'. The *ne* (II) entry includes also a complete inventory of all variants of collocations of *ne* with the subjunctive form of *sijn* 'to be' and *doen* 'do'. These conjunctive collocations such as *het ne si* 'if it be not', 'unless', or *ne dade* 'if did not' are very frequent in Middle Dutch texts. The Modern Dutch conjunction *tenzij* < *het en zij* 'if it be not', 'unless' finds its origin here. Remarkably, some of these collocations are also included in the entry *ne* (I), sense 1.2.3. In this entry, the 'regular' function of *ne* as negation marker is described in three types: co-occurring with *niet* 'not', without *niet*, and co-occurring with other negation words. Both entries offer an elaborate presentation of usages and contexts with citations from

both literary texts and official documents. The section with the bipartite negation for instance, lists each of the negative indefinites co-occurring with *ne* in separate sense numbers.

The same distinction in adverb and conjunction as made by the VMNW is found in the MNW, in the entries *en* (V), adverb, and *en* (VI), conjunction; further in the entry *ne*, which contains additions to the *en*-entries.² The MNW considers the bipartite negation as the rule in Middle Dutch, and gives only a brief overview of contexts with single *ne*. The entry *ne* describes the conjunctive function as follows: ‘*Ne* dient, als *en*, ter verbinding van een bijzin aan een ontkennenden hoofdzin.’ (*Ne* serves, in the form *en*, to connect a subordinate clause to a negative main clause.) *Ne* appears to be considered as a conjunction, not as a part of the subordinate clause. It is interesting that the MNW includes illustrative citations to this usage with *ne*, but also without *ne*.

Finally, the WNT entry EN (II), adverb, includes *ne* in all functions. The entry, written in 1917, offers a rather brief outline, probably due to the fact that this dictionary covers a period in the beginning of which many of the functions of *ne* were still commonly used, but in the end of which it had disappeared from the general language. This might explain the fact that the entry is relatively short and includes few illustrative citations.

With respect to the conjunctive construction, the WNT is the only dictionary to characterize this as ‘conditional’ (see type 1 above). Apart from the collocation with the verb *zijn* (compare VMNW) as an instance of this conditional pattern, the dictionary includes, as a separate sense, one citation with the remark: ‘In de aanhaling in consecutieven zin’ (In the citation in consecutive sense). This citation contains the conjunctive construction of the type translated with *of* ‘or’; *dat niet* ‘that not’ (see type 2 above).

<i>negation particles</i>	<i>ONW entries</i>	<i>VMNW entries</i>	<i>MNW entries</i>	<i>WNT entries</i>
<i>ne</i> single	<i>ne</i> adv. sense 1	<i>ne</i> (I) adv. sense 1.2	<i>en</i> (V) adv. addition: <i>ne</i> adv. and conj. sense I	<i>en</i> (II) adv. sense 4
<i>ne</i> with <i>niet</i>	<i>ne</i> adv. sense 2	<i>ne</i> (I) adv. sense 1.1.1		<i>en</i> (II) adv. sense 1
<i>ne</i> with other neg-marker		<i>ne</i> (I) adv. sense 1.3		
<i>ne</i> in conjunctive construction	<i>ne</i> adv. sense 4	<i>ne</i> (II) conj.+ <i>ne</i> (I) adv. 1.2.3. <i>het ne si</i>	<i>en</i> (VI) conj. <i>ne</i> adv. and conj. sense II	<i>en</i> (II) adv. sense 6
<i>niet</i> in co-occurrence with <i>ne</i>	<i>niet</i> (II) adv.	<i>niet</i> (III) sense 1.1.1	<i>niet</i> , pronoun, adj., noun, adv. sense IV (adv.)	<i>niet</i> (II), pronoun, noun, adj., adv. sense B, 1 (adv.)
<i>niet</i> single		<i>niet</i> (III) sense 1.1.3		<i>niet</i> (II), pronoun, noun, adj., adv. sense B, 2 (adv.)

Table 2. Negative particles in Dutch historical dictionaries.

² In fact, *ne* is the older, *en* the younger form of the negation particle. The *ne* entry was included with additions to the *en* entries may look strange, but can be explained by the fact that first the *en* entry was compiled being the first in alphabetical order. After its completion the editor Jacob Verdam went on collecting material, also for the entries already published. He used the opportunity to create a new entry, *ne*, for the same word in order to publish his corrections and additions to the *en* entry.

Table 2 offers an overview of the treatment not only of *ne*, but also of *niet*, the younger negation marker, in their most central function as sentential negation marker (N.B.: other functions, such as nominal and pronominal usages, are indeed described in the dictionaries but not included in the table).

5. Comments and conclusion

First I will summarize the treatment of *ne* as negation marker in its various contexts in the Dutch historical dictionaries. In general, they cover the most important semantic/syntactic functions of *ne*. With respect to specific features, there are various remarks to make.

1. The distinction between *ne* as a sentential and as a phrasal negation particle is pointed out clearly.
2. The preverbal position of *ne* in negative sentences is not specified in VMNW and MNW. This is a syntactic feature, however, which is of crucial importance for the function of *ne*, and furthermore easy to describe in a dictionary.
3. With respect to the explanation of *ne* in the conjunctive construction: none of the dictionaries gives a complete description of this construction. In ONW the limited material plays a role. VMNW offers many subtypes and illustrative citations, which can be helpful for users. Both VMNW and MNW describe *ne* as a conjunction and not as an adverb or particle which is part of a special construction, which is fundamentally incorrect from a grammatical point of view. A practical purpose, indicating the way in which the subordinate clause with this construction is usually translated in modern Dutch using conjunctions or relatives, has obviously been decisive for this treatment.
4. The distinction between *ne* and *niet*: both words are described as negative adverbs and thus as more or less synonym. The development of *niet* from a negative indefinite into a sentential negation marker however, is different from the origin of *ne*. This appears from the position of *niet* in the clause and its co-occurrence with *ne*, which is mentioned in all dictionaries.

An evaluation of these findings from different points of view leads to the conclusion that many aspects of the function word *ne* are included in the Dutch historical dictionaries, but especially with respect to the conjunctive construction with *ne*, the dictionaries fail to describe it satisfactorily.

From a linguistic point of view, this sounds as a negative judgement. It is not the lexicographer's task, however, to offer a complete and clear analysis of complex grammatical phenomena. The shortcomings are more in the inadequate specification of the part of speech, and the lack of precise descriptions of the syntactic valency, where it concerns word order and necessary or possible complements (Svensén 2009:141-143).

Historical linguists who are interested in the development of Dutch negation would profit from a more exact specification of the period in which certain patterns are found. As far as a reconstruction of this development is possible for the early stages with their shortage of linguistic material, the ONW and VMNW offer suitable data. The same goes for the MNW and the WNT, now the dates in these dictionaries are to a large extent completed in the internet application.

Many users of the dictionary, however, who consider the dictionaries as a practical help in translating historical texts, may not be interested in grammatical analyses or diachronic surveys. For them a listing of contexts, together with suggestions for translation, is sufficient.

It is from this point of view that especially the VMNW's method, with its detailed inventory of contexts, is rather satisfactory.

Finally, to the practising lexicographer, clear, insightful descriptions of the phenomenon of negation patterns in older language stages of Dutch in manuals and other linguistic literature would be of great help.

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