

Fifteen centuries Dutch vocabulary. Four historical dictionaries in one internet application

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ABSTRACT

Since 2009 the four scholarly, historical dictionaries of Dutch have been freely available on the internet (<http://woordenboeken.inl.nl>).

1. Characteristics of the dictionaries

The dictionaries were compiled in two different periods: the MNW and WNT started in the middle of the 19th century while ONW and VMNW were compiled during the last decades of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st century.

WNT and MNW have their roots in the philological tradition of the 19th century. The WNT can be compared with the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* by the Grimm-brothers and the *Oxford English Dictionary*. WNT and MNW are based upon an open corpus of originally most literary texts. The number of sources expanded over time: the WNT started with c. 1000 source texts and ended up with a number of c. 12.000 texts of various kind.

The ONW and VMNW were compiled as electronic dictionaries. Their sources form a closed corpus of literary as well as official texts in diplomatic editions.

In an overview:

2009 - Oudnederlands woordenboek - ONW	
<i>Dictionary of Old Dutch</i> , 2009 (online)	coverage 500-1200
1999 - Vroegmiddelnederlands woordenboek – VMNW	
<i>Dictionary of Early Middle Dutch</i> (hard copy and online)	coverage 1200-1300
1882-1929/1941 - Middelnederlands Woordenboek – MNW	
<i>Dictionary of Middle Dutch</i> (hard copy, CD-ROM, online)	coverage 1250-1550
1864-1998/2001 Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal - WNT	
<i>Dictionary of the Dutch Language</i> (hard copy, CD-ROM, online)	coverage 1500-1976

2. Language Database of Dutch

The dictionaries are part of the INL Language Database of Dutch. Other components are corpora and computational lexica. The corpora part is still under construction, in cooperation with dbnl (Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren). Furthermore, work has started on the so-called GiGaNT diachronic lexicon of Dutch from ca. 500 until the present. Each entry in this lexicon will consist minimally of a standard form, word form, part of speech and attestation, with possibly additional semantic, morphological and syntactic information. The entries of this lexicon will provide access to texts and dictionaries. The variants to be attached to the standard entries are retrieved from historical texts and from historical dictionary citations.

3. The internet application

This application offers various search tools, by which combined searches in the four dictionaries are possible. For example:

- Searching an entry, one can choose between the full article text or a display of the article structure with only sense numbers and definitions. The display can be with or without citations. This may especially be helpful in the case of lengthy entries.

- When looking for a word, results are displayed as concordances with the number of results per article.
- One can select different sections for a search: “woord in betekenis” = word in a sense, “woord in citaat” = word in a citation, “woord in artikel” = word in full article (see “basiszoeken” = simple search). Key words are highlighted in the results.
- Search results can be exported.
- Many entries have external links to other reference works (etymology, dialect) and pictures.
- A modern standard headword is added to the headwords of the four dictionaries. ONW *fisk*, VMNW *visc*, MNW / WNT *visch* can also be found by searching *vis* (fish).
When you are looking for a Dutch equivalent of a foreign word in a historical language stage, and you are not sure about the form of the entry, you could enter the foreign word in “woord in artikel” (full text search). As a result you get concordances and the entry (or a list of entries, one of which is the entry you are looking for). E.g.: search key Middle High German *phëfferlinc*, the result is MNW entry *peperlinc*, modern headword *peperling*.

Bibliography

- Katrien Depuydt & Jesse de Does (2008). ‘United in diversity: Dutch Historical Dictionaries Online’. In E. Bernal & J. DeCesaris (eds.), *Proceedings of the XIII EURALEX International Congress* (Barcelona 2008), 1237-1241.
- Marijke Mooijaart (2010). ‘The complete history? Dutch words in four historical dictionaries’. In: John Considine (ed.), *Current projects in historical lexicography*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing [due for June].

Useful internet addresses

- www.inl.nl : Instituut voor Nederlandse lexicologie. Stores, describes and studies the Dutch vocabulary from the 6th – 21st centuries.
- www.dbnl.org : Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren. A language bank of primary and secondary texts from Dutch linguistics and literature, historical as well as modern.
- www.meertensinstituut.nl : Meertens Instituut. The research institute which describes and investigates linguistic variation in the Dutch language area.
- www.le.ac.uk/ee/jmc21/ishll.html : International Society for Historical Lexicography and Lexicology. Every second year the ISHLL is organizing a conference. ICHLL 6 will take place at the University of Jena in 2012.

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