

Met zoveel woorden. Gids voor trefzeker taalgebruik. Rik Schutz en Ludo Permentier



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In 2016 the language lovers and (Dutch) language experts Rik Schutz and Ludo Permentier published *Met zoveel woorden* (Mzw), which may be translated as ‘With so many words.’ It may be useful to begin with explaining what Mzw is not. Well, it is not a dictionary, though the authors on the inside front cover refer to the book’s dictionary section. They argue on p. IX that Mzw differs from traditional dictionaries. So, it’s not a traditional dictionary. Nor is it a textbook aimed at extending the users’ knowledge of Dutch (VII). The authors explicitly state that they do not pretend to offer their readers anything that they did not already know. Most of the expressions and phrases included in their book are known to most native speakers of Dutch, they say. Mzw does not include proverbs, because they hardly occur in normal Dutch texts. Mzw deliberately does not contain synonyms, the argument being that good collections of synonyms are already available.

Alright then, Mzw is not a (traditional) dictionary, it’s not a textbook, and it’s not a dictionary of proverbs, or of synonyms. So, what is it? The book’s subtitle gives an indication of what the book wants to achieve. It is meant to be a “guide to well-chosen language use”. Mzw wants to help its users to improve their Dutch writing. It would seem to aim at a general public of people who want to write in Dutch, to translate into Dutch, or simply to have a good time reading about Dutch (VII). The authors grouped together the wealth of expressions and phrases that are available to express oneself in Dutch in well-chosen, apt terms. The book provides the user with a useful and often illuminating overview of expressions and phrases that belong to a certain concept. Here we see the difference between Mzw and traditional dictionaries. If Mzw were a dictionary, it would be an onomasiological one. The authors seek to assist writers and translators by offering them ways to enforce concepts and to intensify their meaning as well as ways to aptly word a concept. To meet their goals, they provide 2,800 intensifications and 5,700 idiomatic expressions. Next to the dictionary part, there are three registers that should help the user find what he or she is looking for.

The book offers its users what the authors call a *grabbelton*, a lucky bag, or a grab bag, from which the reader may

take what fits best in their text (VII). The authors make an appeal to the users’ own linguistic feeling and their knowledge of the expressions found. Their appeal would seem to narrow down the target group considerably. You have to be an educated speaker of Dutch to fully appreciate Mzw. Non-native translators into Dutch must have a fairly high command of Dutch. For the latter group Mzw may be a textbook after all. The rich collection of expressions given in the book must be particularly tempting for them.

In the introduction Schutz and Permentier offer detailed instructions of how their book should be used. In addition, the inside front and back covers have a brief outline of the instructions with three sample questions divided into two or three steps. Assuming that most users will refer to the outline, I will put it to the test. The test will show how the book seeks to be a guide to well-chosen language use.

The first search question the authors give is ‘how can you express a concept in an evocative way?’ Reading all the time about a certain administration, the concept *beïnvloeding* ‘influencing’ springs to mind. Step 1 makes it necessary for me to figure out the most common word for that concept. Note that this step is completely intuitive and thus subjective. I am afraid that it will often require a more than average command of Dutch. If there is a more common word for *beïnvloeding*, I cannot think of it. Maybe it is the most common word then? Time for step 2, which involves looking up the word in the dictionary section. *Beïnvloeding* is not listed, however, nor is the verb *beïnvloeden* ‘influence’. Okay, let’s think again, *manipulatie* ‘manipulation’ is not the most common word for the concept *beïnvloeding*, I would say, but it comes close. *Manipulatie* appears to be not listed either, but *manipuleren* ‘manipulate’ is. Under *manipuleren* we find the expression *iets naar je hand zetten* ‘force/bend something to one’s will.’ That is an expression one could certainly use to liven up a text. The dictionary section provides for every expression a most welcome example sentence that should make clear in what context it might be used. Other than from the Internet, the authors do not provide the exact sources of their examples. The example given here is probably indeed from the Internet, and

maybe even quoted from a text on a certain administration:

De achterliggende visie is dat de wereld er is voor de mens, dat het tot de basisrechten van de mens behoort de wereld naar zijn hand te zetten.

‘The underlying vision is that the world is there for man, that it belongs to the basic human rights to force the world to one’s will.’

The second search question is: ‘how can you express the meaning of a word more strongly?’ Step 1 merely involves looking up the word you would like to intensify in the dictionary section. Let’s see what we find under *bekend* ‘known, familiar’ (that is step 2). Above a dotted line we find the intensifications *overbekend*, ‘very well-known, widely known’, *welbekend* ‘well-known, familiar’, and *wijd en zijd bekend* ‘widely known, known far and wide.’ Below the line we find no less than eleven expressions. The two following examples may serve to illustrate the wide semantic range the expressions in Mzw may have: *bekend zijn als de bonte hond* ‘have a bad reputation, be notorious’ and *publiek geheim* ‘open secret.’ The first example shows that it’s not only words that intensify, phrases can do the same.

The third question for the user to ask the book is ‘which words can be intensified by the word?’ Let’s take the adjective *duivels* ‘devilish.’ Step 1 requires a search in the first register, which goes from Intensifier > Expression > Headword. There we find, and that completes step 2, two collocations: *duivels dilemma* ‘diabolic dilemma’ and *duivels plezier* ‘sinful/wicked pleasure’, with references to *dilemma* and *plezier* respectively. It is worthwhile to follow the references, you may find out that you don’t even need the word *duivels*.

The fourth search question the authors give is ‘what was this expression again with ...?’ So, what was this expression again with *woorden* ‘words’? For the first step, we need the second register, Sorting word > Expression > Headword. Under the ‘sorting word’ *woord* ‘word’, we find *iets met zoveel woorden zeggen* ‘say something in so many words’ (step 2). It’s listed three times, referring to the headwords *duidelijk* ‘clear’, *expliciet* ‘explicit’, and *nadrukkelijk* ‘express’ respectively. The third step involves checking the headwords referred to in the dictionary section. Again, it’s

worthwhile to take this third step if only for your own pleasure, because that’s what Mzw abundantly gives to anyone interested in Dutch expressions.

There is a third, fairly short, register that is not discussed on the inside covers. This register claims that it will enable the user to find any of the over two thousand lemmata used to arrange the 7,500 expressions in the dictionary section. The headwords are grouped in eleven categories ranging from *Aandacht: valt het wel op?* ‘Attention: does it attract attention?’ to *Verstand: kan het worden begrepen?* ‘(Power of) reason: can it be understood?’ Does the third register help us find the concept *ongeduld* ‘impatience?’ It does, *ongeduld* is under the category *gevoel* ‘feeling’, but you don’t need the register to check that it’s in the dictionary section. So, why this register? The best I can think of is that the different categories may stir up the users’ inspiration.

Browsing through Mzw and writing this review I realized that I have got out of the habit of consulting paper reference works. The only paper reference works on my desk are those that are not available electronically. It appears that roughly the same collection of headwords is available on <http://onderwoorden.nl/intensivering/>. The online version is more extensive than the book when it comes to example sentences. On the other hand, online one does not find the many intensifying expressions that the book so generously provides.

Would I use Mzw myself? Yes, I certainly would. Mzw is a very useful, or even indispensable book for writers in Dutch and translators into Dutch who want to liven up their language. The user may occasionally find that the collection of concepts and expressions is not complete, but then the authors do not pretend to be complete. The Introduction and even the brief outline on the inside covers are excellent guides to the book’s content.

To the best of my knowledge Mzw currently is the only printed collection of Dutch intensifications and intensifying expressions. Providing access to Dutch idioms through meaning has been done before, though not exactly in the way Schutz and Permentier did. Their approach makes Mzw the only Dutch reference work of its kind.

Anne Dykstra

globaLex

Globalex mid-2017

Following GLOBALEX 2016 Workshop (that was co-located with LREC, <http://ailab.ijs.si/globalex/>), the new Globalex website (<http://globalex.link/>) and preparatory board began to operate in June. The board consists of representatives of the five continental lexicography associations (Danie Prinsloo, Afrilex; Edward Finegan, DSNA; Ilan Kernerman, Asialex; Julia Miller, Australlex; Lars Trap Jensen, Euralex) and of the eLex conference series (Iztok Kosem and Simon Krek). The members have been holding skype meetings about once a month, usually having to alternately miss someone due to the time difference between Australia and West Coast USA.

The initial outcomes so far were mainly in form of co-funding the website hosting (USD20 annual per association) and initiating mutual greetings and some participation in each other’s conferences in 2017. Most practically, the website is meant to function as a hub for the publications of its members and others. The next milestone is submitting a proposal to hold the second GLOBALEX Workshop at LREC 2018 in Mizayaki, Japan (<http://lrec2018.lrec-conf.org/en/>). This might be held in cooperation with the Global WordNet Association with the main topic of Lexicography and WordNets. Details will be released in Q4 of 2017.

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