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Gabriel Meurier's lexicographical œuvre: the lifetime work of a French schoolmaster in early modern Low Countries

It was not until the 16th century that the French language became the object of a lexicographical description in its own right. While in France the foundations for French lexicography were laid by Robert Estienne in the second edition of his learned *Dictionnaire Francoislain* (1549), in the Low Countries a number of “French schoolmasters” set about creating an entirely new type of lexicographical product: the bilingual vernacular-to-vernacular dictionary in which French was contrasted with Dutch.

Among the pioneers, Gabriel Meurier, a French schoolmaster of Picardian descent established in Antwerp, stands out because of the volume and variety of his lexicographic output that includes onomasiological vocabularies and large (by Renaissance standards) semi-alphabetical dictionaries. Unlike most early modern vernacular lexicographers, Meurier took great care to improve his works. He was particularly keen on enhancing his French-to-Dutch dictionary of which as many as six different versions were printed between 1557 and 1584.

The major differences between those versions can be summarized as following: (i) typographical modifications partially linked to the technical progress made by Meurier's editors; (ii) entry number and arrangement modifications; (iii) amount of supplementary metalinguistic information provided beside the Dutch translations. A comparative analysis of the six versions will help us retrace the evolution of Meurier's views on the French language and on the function of *dictionary* as a learning tool within the context of early modern language teaching methods. In particular, the place of idiomatic expressions, homonymy and polysemy as well as diatopic variation will be zoomed on.

Selected references

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