

[1496] "Wie schrieuwe Seeltersk" – a study of the orthography of Saterland Frisian literary texts

Simon Bergqvist

***Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether literary texts in Saterland Frisian correspond to the written form codified in dictionaries. In order to answer this question, two dictionaries have been investigated: one by Pyt Kramer, and one by Marron C. Fort. Both Kramer and Fort have proposed their own orthographic systems, and made efforts to establish them not only in their respective dictionaries, but in other written works as well. Two literary texts, written by speakers of Saterland Frisian, have been compared to the dictionaries in terms of orthography: one by Gesina Lechte-Siemer, and one by Gretchen Grosser. The results of the investigation show that Lechte-Siemer's orthography mostly corresponds to that of Kramer. However, Grosser's text – which is the more recent of the two – does not adhere strictly to either orthographic system, instead combining aspects of both. This indicates that neither Kramer's nor Fort's orthography has established itself as standard, and that a degree of flexibility remains when using Saterland Frisian in writing.*

*1. Introduction**1.1. The Saterland Frisian language*

Saterland Frisian (or *Seeltersk*) is a minority language spoken in the German state of Lower Saxony. The home of the language is the region of Saterland, which primarily consists of three neighbouring villages; Scharrel, Ramsloh, and Strücklingen. Historically, Saterland Frisian is part of the Frisian language family. Around the year of 1100, the Northern coast of Germany was regularly hit by dangerous storms. Consequently, a number of Frisians, who had been situated in the coastal region by the river Ems, were forced to leave their homes and move further inland. These settlers, who spoke a certain variety of East Frisian, found themselves a new home in the county of Sögel, where Saterland is located. Its original inhabitants were assimilated into the Frisian community, becoming East Frisian speakers themselves (Fort, 2004:77). As of today, all other East Frisian varieties have gone extinct, making Saterland Frisian the only surviving remnant of the East Frisian language.

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In the 1990s, the German linguist Dieter Stellmacher estimated that there are 2.250 active speakers of Saterland Frisian; this is approximately one fourth of the total population of Saterland (1998:27). Two additional languages are spoken regularly in the region. One of these is Low German, which is used as a spoken language in large parts of Northern Germany. According to Stellmacher's study, three fourths of the inhabitants of Saterland are capable of speaking Low German (1998:27). Finally, there is the High German language, which is the "standard" language used supraregionally in the whole country. High German appears to be spoken by all inhabitants of Saterland (Stellmacher, 1998:26–27). This means that Saterland Frisian has two bigger languages to "compete" with. As of today, it is very uncommon for children to learn Saterland Frisian as their first language, and the proportion of active speakers is notably smaller in younger generations than in older generations. Because of the lack of intergenerational transmission, Saterland Frisian is classified as a severely endangered language, with a rating of *c* on the scale proposed by Michael Krauss (see Salminen, 2007:222–223). However, there are ongoing efforts to revitalize the language. Notably, Saterland Frisian is offered as a subject in the local schools, giving children an opportunity to learn it. These efforts are officially recognized and financially supported by the state of Lower Saxony.

1.2. Saterland Frisian as a written language

Additionally, a number of written works have been published in Saterland Frisian. This is an interesting development; throughout its history, Saterland Frisian has exclusively been a spoken language without a written form. In the last centuries, however, Saterland and its language became of interest to researchers, which led to the language finding use in a written context. 19th century linguists such as Johann Friedrich Minssen and Theodor Siebs developed Saterland Frisian word lists and linguistic descriptions, and compiled texts in the language. Research on Saterland Frisian has been carried over into the 20th century, where linguists have continued to publish texts in Saterland Frisian, as well as codifying the language in complete dictionaries. A recent effort of this kind has been made by Pyt Kramer, whose *Seelter Woudebouk* was published in 1961. A newer edition of this dictionary, comprising the letters A to E, was published in 1992, with the title *Näi Seelter Woudebouk*. Another linguist who has developed a written form of Saterland Frisian is Marron C. Fort, who published his *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* in 1980; a second edition appeared in 2015.

At the same time, using Saterland Frisian in a written context is not exclusive to linguists. In the latter half of the 20th century, several inhabitants of Saterland have used the language in published works of their own; these include poetry, translations of books, and newspaper contributions (see Fort, 2001:419-421). The use of Saterland Frisian in writing carries interesting implications for the future of the language, since it introduces the language in domains where it was previously unheard of. However, because the written form of Saterland Frisian is a relatively new innovation, a question that arises is whether the language is always written in the same way, or if the form varies depending on who uses it – especially considering that Saterland Frisian texts are produced by linguists and non-linguists alike. This issue is the primary focus of this paper.

2. *Research topic and method*

The research question for this paper is: "How do Saterland Frisian literary texts correspond to the written form codified in dictionaries?"

In order to answer this question, a total of four books in the Saterland Frisian language have been employed, each written by a different author. Two of the analyzed works are dictionaries, compiled by researchers on the Saterland Frisian language. The first step of the analysis is to compare these two dictionaries to each other in terms of orthography. This comparison is based on the linguistic descriptions given in the dictionaries by their respective authors, as well as on illustrative examples of Saterland Frisian words as they appear in the word lists.

The next step of the analysis is to compare the text of the literary works to the written forms proposed in the dictionaries. The two literary works – one collection of poems, and one children's book – are studied separately. The analysis is based on orthographic comparisons between individual lexemes and their counterparts in the respective dictionaries. Through these comparisons, general observations can be made on how the literary texts correspond to the written forms suggested by linguists.

It is reasonable to assume that many similarities will be found between the texts; they are all based on the spoken language of Saterland, they all use the Latin alphabet, and they are all produced by writers who are speakers of Germanic languages, including High German. Additionally, both dictionaries are primarily based on the dialect spoken in the village of Ramsloh. Kramer mentions this explicitly in the preface of the *Seelter Woudebouk* (1961:XIV). As for Fort, he developed the *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* in collaboration with Hermann Dumstorf (1906–2001), who was the chairman

of Hollen, a part of Ramsloh. Gesina Lechte-Siemer and Gretchen Grosser, who wrote the literary works investigated in this article, were both born in Ramsloh. Thus, the geographic factor is constant for every written work examined in this article.

At the same time, since the municipality of Saterland has not enacted an "official" written form of the language, there is a certain flexibility when it comes to using it in writing. Also, the works chosen for this analysis span a time period of more than fifty years, meaning that usage of Saterland Frisian has probably undergone some change between the dates of their publication. Therefore, my hypothesis is that each of the texts will have some unique features that makes it different from the others. Identifying these differences is a primary objective of this paper.

3. *Material*

The material used for this paper primarily consists of two Saterland Frisian dictionaries, and two literary works written by speakers of Saterland Frisian. These works and their respective properties are described below.

3.1. *Dictionaries*

Out of the two dictionaries used for this study, the first to be published was the *Seelter Woudebouk*. The book, which appeared in 1961, is written by the West Frisian researcher Pyt Kramer. It is a trilingual dictionary, with the Saterland Frisian words listed alphabetically, followed by their respective High German and West Frisian equivalents. Additionally, the book contains a description of Saterland Frisian pronunciation and grammar. According to the foreword of the *Seelter Woudebouk*, the dictionary was first conceived when Kramer started compiling a word list based on the "Leesebouk foar Seelterlound" (a series of Saterland Frisian newspaper texts by author Hermann Janssen). The more he worked with the language, the more did Kramer see the need for a Saterland Frisian dictionary. According to Kramer, the dictionary is intended to promote the use of Saterland Frisian, and to be an aid to people who are interested in learning the language (1961:III). Additionally, Kramer has published a number of other works in Saterland Frisian; examples include *Dät Ooldenhuus*, an anthology written in collaboration with Hermann Janssen, as well as a translation of the children's book *Little black Sambo* (as *Litje swotte Sambo*).

The second dictionary is the *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch*, first published in 1980. Its author, the American-German linguist Marron C. Fort, was one of the leading authorities on the Saterland Frisian language; aside from the

Wörterbuch, he has published several other texts on the language, including two volumes of Saterland Frisian texts – *Saterfriesisches Volksleben* and *Saterfriesische Stimmen* – as well as a Saterland Frisian translation of the New Testament (see Fort, 2001:422). The *Wörterbuch* is structured as a bilingual dictionary, with the Saterland Frisian words listed alphabetically, followed by their High German equivalents. The book also contains a description of Saterland Frisian phonology, as well as a preface outlining previous research on the language. In the preface, Fort mentions having started his work on the *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* in 1976 (1980:13). The previous written works on the Saterland Frisian language were, according to Fort, "either outdated or unreliable", because no actual Saterlander had been involved in their development: "only that, which a Saterlander deems to be Saterland Frisian, is Saterland Frisian" (1980:13).¹ Because of this, Fort decided to write his dictionary in collaboration with Hermann Dumstorf (1906–2001), who was the chairman of Hollen. In developing the dictionary, Fort and Dumstorf employed High German and Low German word lists encompassing all aspects of life in Saterland, and attempted to find the Saterland Frisian equivalent of each word (1980:14). Because of the authors' ambition of capturing indigenous Saterland Frisian in its authentic form, words that could only be located in written sources were left out of the dictionary, as well as modern loan words from High and Low German: "all, that is new, is no Saterland Frisian" (Fort, 1980:14). Since its first publication in 1980, the *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* has been published in a second edition in 2015. Additionally, an online version of the dictionary is available through <http://www.saterfriesisches-wörterbuch.de>.

As will be shown below, the orthographic systems employed by Kramer and Fort differ in several ways. Neither of the two orthographies has been officially enacted by the municipality of Saterland; because of this, two competing orthographies exist. Both authors have employed their respective orthographies not only in the dictionaries, but also in other written works, some examples of which have been given above. However, in order to determine if any one of the two orthographies has been successfully established among the speakers of Saterland Frisian, and if the competition between them is still ongoing, it is necessary to analyze texts written by authors besides Kramer and Fort themselves. In this study, the investigated texts are Lechte-Siemer's *Ju Seelter Kroune* and Grosser's *Oo, wät fluch is Panama*, which are presented in the next section of this paper.

1. All English translations of German quotes are by this author unless noted otherwise.

3.2. *Literary works*

One of the literary works chosen for this study is *Ju Seelter Kroune* ("The Saterlandic Crown"), a collection of poems by Gesina Lechte-Siemer. Born in Ramsloh in 1911, Lechte-Siemer started writing poetry in 1928, using her Saterland Frisian native language. Her writings include various kinds of poetry, such as children's rhymes, religious hymns, and poems about nature (Fort, 2001:419). *Ju Seelter Kroune*, published in 1977, is an illustrated collection of forty poems. Additionally, the volume contains a foreword written by Pyt Kramer, as well as an appendix where a handful of words from each poem are given a High German translation.

The second literary work is *Oo, wät fluch is Panama*, a translation of a children's book. The translator, Gretchen Grosser, was born in Ramsloh in 1934. She has published Saterland Frisian translations of a large number of books, including Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (as *Die Litje Prins*), and Heinrich Hoffman's *Struwwelpeter* (as *Tuusterpäiter*). Grosser has also made written contributions in Saterland Frisian to the newspaper *General-Anzeiger* (Fort, 2001:421). The work studied in this paper is a translation of *Oh, wie schön ist Panama*, an illustrated children's book by the German author Janosch, originally published in 1978. Grosser's Saterland Frisian translation appeared in 2016.

The writings of Lechte-Siemer and Grosser are mentioned by Fort (2001:419-421) as notable examples of Saterland Frisian literature, making them appropriate for a study of this kind. In the case of Grosser, a large number of published works exist. For this investigation, *Oo, wät fluch is Panama* was chosen because of its recency; because it was published as late as 2016, it gives an indication as to what written Saterland Frisian looks like today. However, for the sake of completeness, a brief comparison will also be drawn to a second work by Grosser: *Sienke Koodiegel fertäld*, published in 1994; this will show whether her orthography has undergone changes since then. It can also be pointed out that Grosser's translation of *Struwwelpeter*, (*Tuusterpäiter*, 2010), has been published with a foreword by Pyt Kramer, meaning that Kramer has been in personal contact with both authors. This adds another notable aspect: To what degree does the personal influence of a linguist affect the orthographic choices made by the literary authors? Since the goal of this study is to compare the orthographies found in the dictionaries to those used by the literary authors, this aspect must be taken into account.

4. Results

The starting point of this investigation is a comparison of the orthographies used in the two dictionaries; this will be given in section 4.1. After this, the orthographies used by Lechte-Siemer (section 4.2.) and Grosser (section 4.3.) will be discussed in comparison with the dictionaries.

4.1. Comparing the orthographies of Kramer and Fort

According to the preface of Kramer's *Seelter Woudebouk*, "the pronunciation of Saterland Frisian is to be derived immediately from the spelling" (1961:XII). This statement is followed by a guide to Saterland Frisian pronunciation, where each phoneme is given its corresponding letter or combination of letters. To give an impression of what Kramer's orthography looks like in practice, here is an excerpt from the preface of the dictionary, itself written in Saterland Frisian:

Dit Woudebouk is alsoo foarallen bestimd foar dat gewöönelke Liuend. Et wol deerbi ùk meehälpe um ju seelter Sproake ìnt Liuend tou hoolden ùn deertou schäl et fuul brukt wäide. Deerume is dat Bouk muugelskt billich heelden, dat di maaste Mon et koopje kon. (Kramer, 1961:III)²

As for Fort, he states in the preface of the *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* that Saterland Frisian is "not a written language; the orthography described in Sjölin's *Einführung in das Friesische* is not in use in Saterland" (1980:65).³ The orthographic rules employed by Fort (some of which are described in more detail below) are, according to the author himself, based primarily on the Dutch language. It can be pointed out, however, that Fort consistently employs the High German rule of capitalizing the first letter of every noun, as does Kramer.

In spite of their many similarities, the respective written forms used in the two dictionaries are not entirely identical. The most important differences between them are outlined below.

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2. English translation: "Thus, this dictionary is primarily meant to be used in everyday life. It will also help keeping the Saterland Frisian language alive; for this, it will be of much use. Because of this, the book has been kept as cheap as possible, so that most people can buy it."
 3. The orthography described by Sjölin (1969:67) is the same as that of Kramer (1961); Kramer's writings, including the *Seelter Woudebouk*, are included in the bibliography of Sjölin's chapter on Saterland Frisian (1969:69).

Vowel quantity and quality – One notable orthographic difference between the two dictionaries is the marking of vowel length. Kramer uses double letters for long vowels, in open syllables as well as closed syllables: *aa* for [a:], *ie* for [i:], *oo* for [o:], and so forth. However, Fort uses a different system. In his dictionary, double letters are also used to mark long vowels, but only in closed syllables. In open syllables – where, according to Fort, no short vowels are possible – long vowels are simply written as a single letter (which is basically in accordance with the Dutch system).⁴ Consider the following examples:

English translation	Kramer (1961)	Fort (1980)	comment
'weak, bland'	<i>laf</i>	<i>laf</i>	short vowel, closed syllable
'red'	<i>rood</i>	<i>rood</i>	long vowel, closed syllable
'speak'	<i>baale</i>	<i>bale</i>	long vowel, open syllable
'so'	<i>soo</i>	<i>so</i>	long vowel, open syllable
'offer'	<i>bjoode</i>	<i>bjode</i>	long vowel, open syllable

Additionally, the two dictionaries employ different methods for distinguishing short tense vowels – [i], [y], and [u] – from other sounds.⁵ According to Jörg Peters' phonetic overview of the language, these vowels "are shorter than /i: y: u:/ but usually a bit longer and more peripheral than the lax vowels /I ʏ ʊ/" (2019:225). Fort refers to these sounds as "half-long vowels", grouping them with the long vowels. In order to show that a vowel is long, rather than half-long, an accent is placed over one of the letters (1980:64). This rule applies to closed syllables as well as open syllables. Kramer, on the other hand, describes the short tense vowels as "short", and distinguishes them from the short lax vowels in terms of vowel quality. The short tense [i], according to Kramer, is pronounced as in the German word *ich* 'I', whereas the short lax [I] is pronounced as in the English word *little*. In his orthography, [i] is written *i*, and [I] is written *ì*. Similarly, the letter *u*, which represents the short tense [u], stands in opposition to *ù*. However, Kramer claims that the letter *ù* represents a "dark *o*", pronounced either [o] or [ø] (1961:XIII). Nevertheless, this "dark *o*" seems to be the same sound as Fort's short *u* (analyzed differently by the authors in terms of vowel quality), as Fort writes *u* where Kramer uses *ù*. Finally, Kramer does not

4. Exceptions from the rule are *ie*, *ie*, *oa*, *öä* and the diphthongs, which remain unchanged (Fort, 1980:65).

5. Here, the use of phonetic symbols corresponds to Peters' phonetic overview (2019). The phonetic symbols used by Kramer (1961, 1992) and Fort (1980) are partially different.

mention a letter \grave{u} (possibly due to the inconvenience of the double diacritic). Instead, \ddot{u} is used for the short lax [ɤ], while $\ddot{ü}$ is used for the short tense [y] as well as the long [y:].⁶ The following table contrasts this system with that of Fort:

sound (acc. to Peters, 2019)	Kramer (1961)		Fort (1980)	
	character	example word	character	example word
[ɪ]	\grave{i}	<i>besitte</i> 'own'	<i>i</i>	<i>besitte</i> 'own'
[i]	<i>i</i>	<i>Dik</i> 'ditch'	<i>ie</i>	<i>Diek</i> 'ditch'
[i:]	<i>ie</i>	<i>Jier</i> 'year'	<i>íe</i>	<i>Jíer</i> 'year'
[ø]	\grave{u}	<i>flùch</i> 'beautiful'	<i>u</i>	<i>fluch</i> 'beautiful'
[u]	<i>u</i>	<i>kut</i> 'short'	<i>uu</i> (or <i>u</i>)	<i>kuut</i> 'short'
[u:]	<i>uu</i>	<i>Huus</i> 'house'	<i>úu</i> (or <i>ú</i>)	<i>Húus</i> 'house'; <i>Kúze</i> 'ball'
[ɤ]	\ddot{u}	<i>füftich</i> 'fifty'	\ddot{u}	<i>füftich</i> 'fifty'
[y]	$\ddot{ü}$	<i>Küüt</i> 'calf'	$\ddot{ü}$ (or \ddot{u})	<i>Küüt</i> 'calf'
[y:]	$\ddot{ü}$	<i>Düüwel</i> 'devil'	$\grave{ü}$ (or \grave{u})	<i>Dúwel</i> 'devil' ⁷

It should also be pointed out that, for some words, the different spellings used by Kramer and Fort suggest different pronunciations. For example, Fort writes *Ku* (cow) with no accent, suggesting that the vowel is half-long; however, Kramer's spelling, *Kuu*, indicates that the vowel is long. According to Peters, there is "some disagreement about the distribution of long and short tense vowels", and many speakers have given up the distinction completely (2019:225), which would explain why the dictionaries differ somewhat in this regard.

Diphthongs – The dictionaries are also somewhat different when it comes to the spelling of diphthongs. The most notable examples are a few diphthongs which, according to Kramer's pronunciation guide, end with an [u] sound. Fort analyzes these diphthongs differently, identifying a [w] sound (pronounced as in the English word *water*) after the [u]. This is reflected in the orthography, Fort using the letter *w* where Kramer does not. The following examples illustrate this:

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- This has been changed somewhat in the *Näi Seelter Woudebouk* (1992). Here, a character $\#$ is used for the proposed [ø] sound (which, according to the pronunciation guide, is the sound that is represented by \ddot{u} in Fort's orthography; Kramer does not mention a short lax [ɤ] in the *Näi Seelter Woudebouk*). The letter \ddot{u} is used for the short tense [y], and $\ddot{ü}$ for the long [y:].
 - In the second edition of the *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* (2015), the character $\grave{ü}$ is no longer used, so the spelling *Dúwel* has been changed to *Düvel*.

English translation	Kramer (1961)	Fort (1980)
'wife'	<i>Wiu</i>	<i>Wieuw</i>
'remain'	<i>bliue</i>	<i>blieuwe</i>
'skew'	<i>scheeu</i>	<i>scheeuw</i>
'scattered'	<i>stäuen</i>	<i>stäuwen</i>

Consonants – In Kramer’s dictionary, the voiced [z] and voiceless [s] are both written as *s*. However, words with a voiced *s* are followed in the word list by a *z* in parentheses – (*z*) – to demonstrate how the word is pronounced. Fort, on the other hand, uses *z* for the voiced [z] and *s* for the voiceless [s]. Thus, the Saterland Frisian word for ‘read’ is written as *leese* by Kramer and as *leze* by Fort.

The use of double consonants should also be commented upon. Fort uses double consonants when the pattern is *short stem vowel + consonant + vowel*, in order to indicate that the vowel is short, even if stands in a phonologically open syllable. For example, the word for ‘pot’ is written *Pot* in the singular and *Potte* in the plural (1980:65). Kramer, on the other hand, formulates the broader rule that “the doubling of consonants occurs after a short vowel; except after short e, i, and u and before other consonants” (1961:XII).⁸ Because of this, a word such as *Fodder* ‘fodder’, with a short [ɔ] sound, has the double consonants, whereas *Roome* ‘frame’, with its long [o:] sound, does not. However, this rule does not seem to apply at the ends of words; for instance, Kramer writes *al* ‘already’, *Kat* ‘cat’, and *Rok* ‘skirt’.⁹ As a result, double consonants are only found in the middle of words. Because of this, Kramer’s use of double consonants is similar to that of Fort. In the aforementioned cases (*al* ‘already’, *Kat* ‘cat’, *Rok* ‘skirt’), Fort’s orthographic rules do not necessitate double consonants; since there is no vowel after the final consonant, it is already obvious that the syllable is closed, which makes it clear that the stem vowel is short. Thus, Fort writes *al* ‘already’, *Kat* ‘cat’, and *Rok* ‘skirt’, just like Kramer.

8. The rule regarding short *e*, *i* and *u* can be exemplified by words such as *Mile* ‘mile’ and *Mule* ‘mouth’, in which double consonants are not used. Here, it must be remembered that Kramer distinguishes *i* and *u* from *ì* and *ù*. Where the letters *ì* and *ù* are used, Kramer applies the general rule of following the short vowel with double consonants (as in *Lippe* ‘lip’ and *Sünne* ‘sun’).

9. In Lechte-Siemer’s *Ju Seelter Kroune*, with its foreword by Pyt Kramer, it is stated outright that “in contrast to High German, the consonant at the end of a word is not doubled, e.g. *flot* (*flott*)” (1977:7).

Other aspects – When comparing the two orthographies, it generally seems that Kramer has been more inclined to only use one spelling for each sound, regardless of its surroundings. This is evidenced by the fact that long vowels are always spelled with double letters, in open syllables as well as closed syllables. This can be regarded as more immediately transparent to the reader than the method used by Fort (double letters in closed syllables, single letters in open syllables). On the other hand, Fort's use of single letters is the more economic choice, and the context does reveal if the vowel is to be pronounced long or short.

As mentioned above, the orthography used by Fort is primarily based on Dutch orthography; this is evidenced by his rendering of the long vowels (compare Dutch *boom* 'tree' – *bomen* 'trees'). Another example is the use of *z* for the [z] sound. In this way, the [s] sound is distinguished from the [z] sound in terms of spelling, which can be regarded as an advantage. On the other hand, this use of the letter *z* clashes with German orthography, where *z* is normally pronounced [ts]. Kramer's usage of *s* for [s] as well as [z] is in line with German orthography; this can also be seen as advantageous, as Saterland Frisian is spoken in Germany, and the people who use it are generally speakers and writers of German as well.

It is also worth addressing which orthography is more convenient for typewriting. Here, Fort's usage of accents for marking long vowels can be seen as disadvantageous (especially in the case of *ú*, where the accent is placed above another diacritic¹⁰). The same could be said for Kramer's usage of *ì* and *ù*; however, Kramer acknowledges that these letters are usually written *i* and *u* by the authors (1961:XIV). This means that the inconvenience of the diacritics can be avoided when Kramer's orthography is used in practice. However, this also means that the distinction between [ʊ] (*ù*) and [u] (*u*), and between [ɪ] (*ì*) and [i] (*i*) has to be given up.

4.2. The orthography of Lechte-Siemer

When Lechte-Siemer's *Ju Seelter Kroune* appeared in 1977, the only one of the two dictionaries to have been published was Kramer's *Seelter Woudebouk* (Fort's dictionary would not appear until 1980). Additionally, Kramer seems to have been involved in the publication of *Ju Seelter Kroune*, since the foreword of the volume is written by him. It is not too surprising, then, that the written form used in the poems appears to be heavily influenced by

10. This might explain why, as mentioned in a previous footnote, the usage of *ú* has been given up in the second edition of the *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* (2015).

the orthography of the *Seelter Woudebouk*. The following excerpt from one of the poems, "Säiwens bi't Fjuur", can serve as an illustration:

Dät Fjuur waas in de Köäkene Midde,
Fuul Ljude kuden deerum sitte.
Dan jädde in de Äiwendstid,
Dät Foulk noch wäil binunner siet. (Lechte-Siemer, 1977:30)¹¹

The vast majority of the lexemes found in the above quote are identical in form to the ones appearing in the *Seelter Woudebouk*; these include *Fjuur* 'fire', *Köäkene* 'kitchen', *jädde* 'willingly', and *Foulk* 'people'.

To further illustrate the similarities between the orthographies of Kramer and Lechte-Siemer, a comparison can be made to the written form used by Fort. The following table contains a few instances where different orthographic rules are employed by Kramer and Fort, resulting in words being spelled differently. As shown in the table, the forms used by Lechte-Siemer correspond to those of Kramer:

English transl.	Kramer (1961)	Lechte-Siemer (1977)	Fort (1980)	comment
'speak'	<i>baale</i>	<i>baale</i> (1977:12)	<i>bale</i>	marking of vowel length
'spring'	<i>Foarjier</i>	<i>Foarjier</i> (1977:18)	<i>Foarjier</i>	long vowel – accent or not
'wife'	<i>Wiu</i>	<i>Wiu</i> (1977:28)	<i>Wieuw</i>	use of <i>w</i> in diphthongs
'be'	<i>weese</i>	<i>weese</i> (1977:12)	<i>weze</i>	<i>s</i> or <i>z</i> for voiced [z]

The orthographies used by Kramer and Lechte-Siemer are not entirely identical, however. A few deviations occur, some of which are listed below:

- Lechte-Siemer uses the letters *i* and *u* in all instances where Kramer uses *ì* and *ù*. This is not unexpected, however; in the preface of the *Seelter Woudebouk*, Kramer acknowledges that "'ù' and 'ì' are usually written 'u' and 'i' by the authors" (1961:XIV). A reason for this could be that the diacritic is inconvenient for type-writing.
- There are some words where the letter *e* is used by Kramer, but not by Lechte-Siemer. For instance, Lechte-Siemer uses *woln* 'want' (1977:16) where Kramer uses *wollen*, and *duurn* 'can' (1977:12) where Kramer uses *duuren*. According to Kramer, the letter *e* in the word endings *-enge*

11. English translation: "The fire was in the middle of the kitchen, / Many people could sit around it. / Then, happily, in the evening, / The people still sat next to each other."

and *-en* is silent (1961:XIV); the spellings used in the poems (*woln*, *duurn*) are presumably meant to show that the words end in a syllabic nasal consonant.

- Some forms used by Lechte-Siemer deviate from the *Seelter Woudebouk* in a way that suggests lexical differences, or differences in pronunciation. Examples include the use of *Püpe* 'pipe' (1977:20) where Kramer uses *Pipe*, and *oarendelk* 'proper' (1977:20) where Kramer uses *oarden(t)elk*. In these instances, the contrasting forms would also be pronounced differently. Therefore, it can be speculated that variation in the spoken language is part of the explanation; the different forms could be based on different ways of pronouncing the words.
- There are a few words which appear in more than one form throughout *Ju Seelter Kroune*. The table below contains three such examples. Interestingly, the "alternative" forms that do not appear in the *Seelter Woudebouk* may instead resemble those used by Fort.

English transl.	Kramer (1961)	Lechte-Siemer (1977)	Fort (1980)
'loud'	<i>luud</i>	<i>luud</i> (1977:26) or <i>luut</i> (1977:24)	<i>luud</i>
'time'	<i>Tid</i>	<i>Tid</i> (1977:26) or <i>Tied</i> (1977:26) ¹²	<i>Tied</i>
'warm'	<i>woarm</i>	<i>woarm</i> (1977:38) or <i>woorm</i> (1977:20)	<i>woorm</i>

The appearance of *Tied* 'time' is interesting, since the usage of *ie* – according to Kramer's orthographic rules – implies that the vowel is long, rather than half-long. In the *Seelter Woudebouk*, the form *Tid* is used, with *i* representing the half-long vowel. (Fort's spelling, *Tied*, also indicates that the vowel is half-long; otherwise, if the vowel were long, the form *Tíed* would have been used instead.) Because of this, the usage of *Tied* in *Ju Seelter Kroune* is a deviation that could suggest differences in pronunciation (as mentioned above, the distinction between long and half-long vowels may differ between speakers). However, *Tid* appears to be used by Lechte-Siemer far more often than *Tied*, making this another case where the orthography used in *Ju Seelter Kroune* mostly corresponds to that of the *Seelter Woudebouk*.

12. The exact lexical item used by Lechte-Siemer is *Tunschierstied* (or *Tunschierstid*), a compound word meaning 'time for gifts'.

4.3. *The orthography of Grosser*

Gretchen Grosser's translation of *Oh, wie schön ist Panama* appeared in 2016, after the publication of Kramer's *Seelter Woudebouk* and both editions of Fort's *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch*. Interestingly, the written form used by Grosser seems to correspond partially to the orthographic rules employed by Kramer, and partially to those of Fort. The following table illustrates this:

English transl.	Kramer (1961)	Fort (1980)	Grosser (2016)	comment
'piece of paper'	<i>Säädel</i>	<i>Sädel</i>	<i>Säädel</i> (2016:16)	marking of vowel length
'house'	<i>Huus</i>	<i>Húus</i>	<i>Huus</i> (2016:4)	long vowel – accent of not
'life'	<i>Liuend</i>	<i>Lieuwend</i>	<i>Lieuwend</i> (2016:9)	use of <i>w</i> in diphthongs
'be'	<i>weese</i>	<i>weze</i>	<i>weese</i> (2016:21)	<i>s</i> or <i>z</i> for voiced [z]

As shown above, Grosser uses the letter *s* rather than *z* for the [z] sound, as does Kramer. This could be a conscious choice in order to make the text more transparent to a German audience, the usage of *z* for [z] being more in line with Dutch orthography. On the other hand, the diphthong in *Lieuwend* 'life' is written with a *w*, which is the spelling used by Fort. This could be a matter of readability; since the *w* breaks up the string of vowel letters, it makes it easier to see how the word is pronounced.

Grosser's use of vowels deserves particular attention. Generally, Grosser follows the rule employed by Kramer in the *Seelter Woudebouk*, using double letters to mark long vowels. This includes instances where the syllable is open, as evidenced by spellings such as *Säädel* 'piece of paper' (2016:16), *hääbe* 'have' (2016:22), and *Droome* 'dreams' (2016:11).¹³ There are some exceptions to this, however; in the words *two* 'two' (2016:26), *Wareld* 'world' (2016:28), and *dälich* 'today' (2016:29), the long vowel is *not* marked with double letters.¹⁴ In these instances, the spellings used by Grosser are the same ones that Fort uses; since the long vowels appear in open syllables, Fort does not use double letters to represent them. Fort's rule of marking the longest vowels with an accent is not employed by Grosser, and so she writes *Huus* 'house' rather than *Húus*; this also corresponds to Kramer's orthography. The reason for this choice could be

13. Rather than *Sädel*, *håben*, and *Drome*, which are the forms used by Fort.

14. Kramer uses *twoo*, *Waareld*, and *däälich*.

that omitting the diacritics is more convenient; also, the book is written for children, which makes it appropriate to keep the text simple. On the other hand, Grosser uses *ie* rather than *i* for the [i] sound, and therefore writes *altied* 'always' (2016:14) and *iek* 'I' (2016:24), as does Fort. Kramer, who uses *i* for the [i] sound, writes *altid* and *ik*.

Some additional observations can be made about the orthography employed by Grosser:

- Grosser uses the letters *i* and *u* where Kramer uses *ì* and *ù*. As previously mentioned in section 4.2., this is to be expected.
- There are a few instances where Grosser writes *oa*, while Kramer writes *o*. The words in question include *boalde* 'soon' (2016:21), *groaie* 'grow' (2016:29), and *tougoang* (Germ. 'zustande') (2016:23); these are spelled *bolde*, *groie*, and *tougong* by Kramer. Fort's *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* contains the forms with *oa*, although *groaie* 'grow' is written *groaije*. For both Kramer and Fort, *o* and *oa* are distinguished from one another in terms of vowel length, *o* representing [ɔ] and *oa* representing [ɔ:]. It is possible that words such as *boalde* 'soon', or *bolde*, were recorded differently by Kramer and Fort due to differences in pronunciation (on an interindividual level, since both dictionaries are based on the dialect of Ramsloh). The fact that Grosser, herself born in Ramsloh, writes *boalde* rather than *bolde* might imply that her own pronunciation – in this specific case – matches the one Fort based his orthography on.
- Finally, a lexical observation can be made: Grosser's text contains a few words that are included neither by Kramer nor by Fort, including *Tiger* 'tiger', *Banoanen* 'bananas', and *Plüüsk* 'plush', indicating that there might be some territories of Saterland Frisian that have yet to be charted in the dictionaries.¹⁵

To conclude this section on Grosser's orthography, a comparison can be made to *Sienke Koodiegel fertäld*, a children's book published by Grosser in 1994. In this work, the orthography is nearly identical to the one used in *Oo, wät fluch is Panama*, although a few minor differences exist. In the earlier work, the spelling *Waareld* 'world' is used (1994:3), as opposed to *Wareld* in the later work (2016:28). As mentioned above, Grosser usually follows Kramer's rule of always using double letters for long vowels; according to

15. The online edition of the *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* at <http://www.saterfriesisches-wörterbuch.de> also does not have these words; however, it does contain the verb *tiegerje*, which translates to 'run like a tiger', or 'keenly jump at a challenge'.

this rule, *Waareld* is the correct spelling. Because of this, it is somewhat surprising that *Waareld* has been changed to *Wareld* (the spelling used by Fort) in *Oo, wät fluch is Panama*. There are also a couple of instances in *Sienke Koodiegel fertäld* where double consonants are used in a way that deviates from the dictionaries. For examples, the spelling *Bott* 'space' is used (1994:3) although neither Kramer nor Fort uses double consonants at the end of words. Similarly, the spelling *littje* (1994:17) deviates from the dictionaries; Kramer and Fort use *littje* and *litje*, respectively. In *Oo, wät fluch is Panama*, the spelling has been changed to *litje* (2016:4). However, these are only minor differences; for the most part, the orthography in *Sienke Koodiegel fertäld* is the same as the one used in *Oo, wät fluch is Panama*, indicating that Grosser's orthography has remained mostly unchanged between 1994 and 2016.

5. Conclusions

The research question for this paper was: "How do Saterland Frisian literary texts correspond to the written form codified in dictionaries?" In order to answer these questions, the orthographic systems employed in two dictionaries – Pyt Kramer's *Seelter Woudebouk*, and Marron C. Fort's *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch* – were compared to each other. Then, a comparison was made between these dictionaries and the writing systems employed in two Saterland Frisian literary works: *Ju Seelter Kroune* by Gesina Lechte-Siemer, and *Oo, wät fluch is Panama* by Gretchen Grosser. The results of this study show that certain orthographic differences exist between the two literary works. *Ju Seelter Kroune* mostly follows the system proposed by Kramer in the *Seelter Woudebouk*, with only a few minor deviations. This is not unexpected, since the *Seelter Woudebouk* was the only one of the two dictionaries to have been published when *Ju Seelter Kroune* was written. Also, the fact that Kramer has been personally involved in the publication of *Ju Seelter Kroune* (as evidenced by his foreword) is likely to have had an effect on the orthographic choices made by Lechte-Siemer.

Grosser's *Oo, wät fluch is Panama* is the more interesting case, since it does not strictly adhere to the rules of either dictionary. As has been outlined above, certain aspects of its writing system correspond to the orthography of Fort's *Saterfriesisches Wörterbuch*, and other aspects to that of Kramer's *Seelter Woudebouk*. It is likely that Grosser's combination of orthographic features is the result of conscious choices in order to keep the text as simple and readable as possible. This is evidenced by the lack of

accents above the vowels, and by the usage of *w* in the diphthongs (which breaks up the string of vowels in words such as *Lieuwend* 'life', making their pronunciation more transparent). Similarly, using *s* rather than *z* for the voiced [z] can be seen as the more intuitive choice when writing for a German-speaking audience.

Judging by the results presented in this paper, it would seem that – as of now – there is no generally agreed-upon standard of how Saterland Frisian is supposed to be written. Whether or not such a standard could be advantageous for the sustainability of the language is up for debate. Of course, it can be argued that having a standardized written form is not one of the most crucial factors for the survival of a language. Other aspects, such as intergenerational transmission and the proportion of speakers within the community, carry a greater importance.

At the same time, however, it is also advantageous for an endangered language to be usable in several different domains. As mentioned in section 1, the ability to use the language in writing can create such opportunities. With this in consideration, the efforts of Kramer, Fort, Lechte-Siemer, and Grosser, among others, to produce written texts in Saterland Frisian must be seen as very important acts of language revitalization. However, it should also be pointed out that the ability to write in Saterland Frisian is not very widespread. In his study from the 1990s, Stellmacher estimated that only 325 people were capable of using Saterland Frisian in writing; this equates to 3,9% of Saterland's total population (1998:29). It can be speculated that a standardized orthography would promote Saterland Frisian as a written language, as well as making the written form easier for speakers to learn. With this in mind, it is interesting to consider the status of the orthographies of Kramer and Fort. Both authors have made efforts to establish their orthographies not only in the dictionaries, but in other written works as well. The "competition" between the orthographies appears to be ongoing, as indicated by the fact that Grosser's *Oo, wät fluch is Panama* does not follow either of them strictly. If one of the two orthographies is to be established as the standard in the future, it can be speculated that Fort's orthography is the most likely; the latest edition of his dictionary was published as late as 2015, and it is also available online, which makes it accessible to a large number of language users.

However, there is another possible development: Users of Saterland Frisian might continue to write the language in a way that – as is the case with Grosser's text – does not strictly correspond to either of the two orthographies. Under such circumstances, an orthographic standard might

develop among the language users themselves. In this case, it can be speculated that Grosser's usage of the language – which, arguably, combines the best of Kramer's and Fort's orthographies – would be influential, since she has published a large number of written works that appeal to a broad audience. A development of this kind could also lead to the publication of new dictionaries that correspond to the orthographic system that has established itself among the speakers.

Poetry and children's books are only two examples of where Saterland Frisian has been used in writing; further research on the issues discussed in this paper could include investigations of how the language is used in other written contexts. Suggestions would include newspaper texts, educational material, and texts published on the Internet – the Saterland Frisian Wikipedia, with its user-generated content, could be a particularly intriguing object of study. Also, considering that Saterland Frisian is taught as a school subject, the handling of its orthography within the educational system could be an interesting matter of investigation. This type of research could create a more comprehensive overview of the current situation of Saterland Frisian in its written form; in turn, this would carry interesting implications for what a standardized writing system could look like, and whether or not the establishment of such a system can be deemed realistic. Answering these questions could give us interesting new perspectives on the future of Saterland Frisian as a written language, and the future of the language in general.

Uppsala
simonbergqvist4@gmail.com

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