

SINTERKLAAS: A Special Cultural Speech Event.

Master Sociolinguistics University of Amsterdam Ingrid van Alphen

(Guideliness for foreign students to write Sinterklaasgedichten)

0 LOOTJES TREKKEN. = drawing tickets, much like in the World Cup procedure: all names are put on individual pieces of paper and placed in a hat. Everybody picks one. Check that you did not pick yourself – if so: put it back and pick another one. Do NOT show, reveal or tell others the name of the person you picked; only AFTER the celebration people will try to guess and reveal the real Sinterklazen.

PAKJE

1. Everybody buys a nice small (or big) present of no more than 3 euros for the person he or she has picked. Do NOT cross the line of 3 euros because the ideological principle behind this is that ‘every child’ gets the same sort of present. There are no rich or poor children: Sinterklaas is a friend of all the children.

Buying the present (‘pakje’) is a sport itself: be clever and find something nice on sale or on a market! Tip: Hema, Kruidvat, Blokker, Albert Cuyp, Xenos... et cetera

The present could be neutral (pens, useful utensils) or related to something you know about the person (painting, reading, sports). [The present should not be a food item or candy – this is only for in ‘your shoe’, the days before the 5th of December.]

The present must be wrapped in *Sinterklaaspapier* (paper). Ingrid will bring some to her office for those who do not have this at home. She also will bring a *Zak van Sinterklaas* (a bag for the pakjes, historically also the bag in which ‘bad’ children are taken back to Spain.....☺)

GEDICHT

2. The ‘pakje’ is accompanied by a (preferably long) poem (‘gedicht’). The poem is folded (text inside) and glued/taped on the outside of the package, with the name of the lucky recipient clearly written on the outside of the folded poem.

The poem must be typed and not handwritten because *Sinterklaas* gave the present, all human “helpers” - ‘hulpSinterklazen’ - must remain anonymous. The poem always rhymes: aa-bb-aa, a-b-a-b, or whatever, you can be very flexible /creative in your rhyme! See example below.

The poem usually starts with an explicit reference from *Sinterklaas* how difficult (or easy) it was to find this present for the person (or something like that) and then goes on to tell something about the person. You can/are allowed to manipulate reality in it! There is some tradition in a little teasing around the person, but maybe this is reserved for sisters, brothers or lovers... After the intro the poem changes to the content of the present in relation to (qualities of) the person: suppose it is a pen, write about how she can use it: write a book? write down all her complaints about X? (if you accidentally know she complains about someone or something) - you can really use your imagination here! NB: the real content of the gift is NOT revealed in the poem. “with this gift you can handle your complaints” or “this gift helps you with your dream: a book”. Alternatively your poem could end in three dots, where the reader must fill in the final word, which is the content of the pakje. ‘so write down all your quibbles then, with this special moaning ...’. It may end with a wish that Sinterklaas hopes ‘you will like the present’ and that he will no longer tease you because now you may "open the present and have a look/ this is not something out of a book!" (or some other closure/coda)

Signed: Sinterklaas Or: Sinterklaas & Zwarte Piet. Or: Sint & Piet Or: Sinterklaas & Pieterbaas

NB: The receiver of the poem must read it ALOUD – without pre-reading! The ‘receiver’ of the pakje then opens it, is happy and surprised and says out loud: “*Dank u wel Sinterklaas!*” Then this person may go over to the *Zak van Sinterklaas* and pick out – at random - a pakje for another person e.g. “for Frederic!” and hand it over to him.

Example of a Sinterklaas-poem. Rhyme = very free!!

Poem is always dated>> **Madrid¹, 5th December, 2006**

For CLARISSA,

'didactic comments'

**Sinterklaas came this year to Amsterdam
And was surprised, so *goes like* "damn"
What has happened with this city then?
He couldn't find a real Dutch woman!**

Introduction:
=reference to topic paper student

**Instead he found a lot of Greeks,
Danes, Iranians with nonDutch cheeks
It looked as if the town had changed
That everything was wrong arranged**

focussing to setting around person

**But when he took a closer look
He DID find Clarissa in his book
Although she travels quite a lot**

*Sint has a BOOK with information about
children/persons and whether they
behaved: good or bad... this year*

-you really can call her a polyglot!

**Now Clarissa stays in Holland's biggest City
But not her husband... that's a pity!
So Clarissa travels back & forth
From west to east & south to north:**

Something more about the person

**To Belgium to find her loving man
But also to Athens if she can
To find a tiny little new Greek word
That is better seen than heard**

*maybe
something more...*

**So dear Clarissa, you really need a lift
Sinterklaas brought you this little gift
To strengthen you on your many travels
Open up the parcel and the gift unravels!**

hint & end towards "the pakje"

Sinterklaas (en Pieterbaas)

1. *(gentle) Teasing allowed!*
2. *Sinterklaas person: 'He' or 'Sint', never
"I" always refers to himself in third*
3. *Piet (or: Pieterbaas) may feature in the poem:
Helps Sint thinking about present etc.*

¹ Sometimes Sinterklaas reveals his whereabouts by putting 'Alkmaar' or so in the date...