

Sociolinguistics Circle 2021



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Conference programme

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Abstracts – presentations

The body as prison, machine, or battleground: perspectives on the body in chronic pain consultations

Jana Declercq & Lotte van Poppel
(University of Groningen)

This paper analyzes perspectives on the body in consultations between doctors and chronic pain patients in a pain clinic, using interactional and metaphor analysis. In Western societies, health and illness are predominantly seen from the perspective of mind-body dualism: the mind and body are constructed as functioning independently, and as requiring separate and different forms of health care. Scholars in biomedicine and medical humanities, however, argue that mind-body dualism is no longer tenable, especially in health care contexts. Current biomedical paradigms on the body and illness conceptualize the body as an interplay of the physical and the mental, and also include a third dimension: the social. This is called the biopsychosocial model and is the gold standard for treating chronic pain.

It remains unclear, however, how these different, contradictory perspectives on body, mind and illness play into health professional-patient consultations in health care settings; whether currently, different health professionals and patients (consistently) construct the body from this biopsychosocial perspective when (the patient is) suffering from an illness; or whether some form of a more dualistic perspective is perpetuated; or whether both co-exist and/or compete and cause interactional tensions. Therefore, this study uses metaphor analysis as an entry point to learn more about how the body is constructed, and interactional analysis to uncover the different constructions of the body play a role in health care communication. As a case focus, chronic pain was chosen, as, when dealing with pain, psychosocial factors are of increased importance. Pain patients are likely to struggle with stigma, with (feeling like they are not) being believed, alienation, and a sense of betrayal by their bodies.

Driving-forces for rapid linguistic diffusion. From survey to social media

Stefan Grondelaers, Stefania Marzo, Karlien Franco, & Tom Ruetten
(Radboud University Nijmegen & KU Leuven)

It has recurrently been demonstrated that rapidly diffusing linguistic features are boosted by social meanings pertaining to cool youth and urban toughness (Snellers & Roberts 2018; Grondelaers & Van Gent 2019), and by broadcast media support (Stuart-Smith et al. 2013). In this talk we demonstrate that the micro-blogging platform Twitter is a promising data source for investigating both the actual diffusion, its social meaning triggers, and the impact of mediatization.

We focus on Citétaal, an urban vernacular which originated on multi-ethnic housing estates in the eastern-most Flemish province of Limburg. In the past decade, features of Citétaal have left their original habitat to conquer most of (endogenous) Flanders.

We extracted all tweets in a time frame from 2012 to 2016 which featured the lexeme *stijl* and its variant spellings which orthographically represent the palatalized pronunciation [tʃeɪl]; the latter is the best known Citétaal shibboleth, which was widely mediatized in Flanders through television. Crucially, the production data reveal gradual, interactionally determined spreading of the palatalized production rather than nation-wide media impact, and the diffusion also appears to be drying up”.

In the second part of the study, we focus on social meaning triggers for the diffusion. We first report a speaker evaluation experiment which finds outspoken “urban cool” support for the diffusion, but we also attest this boost in the Twitter data. While modern prestige is a hearer category – to the extent that whether or not a speaker is considered cool or dynamic depends on the listener –, speakers can of course try to enact an urban cool personality (a process known as “stylisation”, Coupland 2007), which listeners may subsequently interpret as such. If we can prove that speakers who stylise themselves as streetwise and cool dudes and gals manifest a higher preference for the Cité-features in the enactment of this style, then it is a specific social meaning which triggered the feature...

The greetings of the dairy cow(s): Ideologies and methodological issue in interspecies communication research

Leonie Cornips
(Maastricht University & KNAW)

This presentation focusses on my quite new research project examining interspecies communicative practices. Drawing on fieldwork in Dutch dairy farms, the aim is to find out how human and non-human animals, that is, farmers and cows, communicate with each other to make successful farming possible with wellbeing for both 'specie(s)'. Research into interspecies communicative practices provide a new lens on the concept of language and speaker/hearer: instead of asking which species have language, the question rises of how may language actually work? (De Waal and Ferrari 2010).

In this presentation, I will report on a verbal speech act by dairy cows, namely the cow's greetings (Duranti, 1997) of humans, machines and other cows which is context-situated (Mondada, 2018; Schegloff, 1972).

This project is part of the animal turn in the posthuman enterprise (Cederholm, 2014; Haraway, 2016) that questions 'the assumed universality of human experience and asks how and why we draw particular distinctions between humans and other animals (Pennycook, 2018). Language sciences, in particular, contribute(d) deeply to the construction of difference between human and non-human animals. In Western notions of mind and self (Argent, 2012, Meijer, 2017), language is considered as what makes us human. However, as Kulick (2017:373) argues, research into interspecies communication "expands what can count as language, beyond grammar and words" and will challenge the ideology that humans are better in language than animals and that animals are deficient language users (see also Meijer, 2017). In a broader context, research into interspecies communication questions our treatment of animals which presents "a range of ethical and political concerns that are deeply interconnected with struggles around neoliberalism, racism, gender equity, forced migration and many other forms of discrimination and inequality" (Pennycook 2018: 3, see also Pedersen, 2014).

Does hormone replacement therapy alter the vowel space in transgender men?

Remco Knooihuizen & Max Reuvers
(University of Groningen)

It is well-known that transgender men experience voice change resulting from hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Most notably, their pitch drops to the level of cisgender men (Zimman, 2017). But there are other gendered differences in pronunciation, and to what extent these are influenced by HRT is not always clear.

One such difference is the size of the vowel space, indicated by the formant frequencies of vowels. Women's formant frequencies are roughly 15% higher than those of men (Hillenbrand & Clark, 2009). Also after normalisation, women have a larger vowel space than men, the difference being predominantly in the height dimension (Henton, 1995). It is believed that the higher formant frequencies allow women to make better use of the more widely spaced harmonic frequencies of their fundamental frequency (pitch). Formant frequencies contribute to speaker gender recognition, including in transgender — in this case transfemale — speakers (Menezes et al., 2019).

While there is a clear physiological cause for the pitch drop in transgender men during HRT, there is less evidence that a similarly automatic change will happen in formant frequencies. Vowel height (F1) and frontness (F2) are related to vocal tract shape and size, which remain stable with the administration of testosterone. However, a lower pitch does allow transgender men to reduce the size of their vowel space.

In this paper, we present results of a longitudinal study into voice change in two transgender men during the first two years of HRT (cf. Knooihuizen & Reuvers, 2019). We analyse change in vowel formant frequencies in both Dutch and English using different measures: raw values, formant dispersion (Df), and formant position (Pf) (Puts et al., 2012). By comparing the different measures in both languages, we aim to understand better how formant frequencies may contribute to expressing an authentic (trans)masculine voice.

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The perception of L2 Dutch spoken by Francophone learners

Anne-France Pinget
(Utrecht University)

In Belgium, Dutch spoken by Francophone learners is relatively frequent in political, business or educational contexts. While the characteristics of this L2 variety have been studied extensively (e.g., Hiligsmann, 1997; Michaux, 2016; Rasier, 2006), there is to date no systematic report of how this L2 variety is perceived. Previous studies conducted in other language contexts have found that nonnative speakers tend to be very critical towards the own L2 accent (e.g., van den Doel & Quené, 2013). Native speakers are known to adapt relatively easily to L2 variation by means of perceptual adaptation (Cutler, 2012). The goal of the present study is to investigate the extent to which the native language influences the perception of L2 Dutch spoken by Francophone learners.

Ratings were collected through a web-sourced questionnaire among three listener groups: Francophone learners of Dutch (Francl2) (n=80), native speakers of Belgian Dutch (BelgDutch) (n=70) and native speakers of Netherlandic Dutch (NethDutch) (n=86). These listeners were asked to rate the fluency, accentedness and intelligibility of L2 Dutch spoken by Francophone learners. Moreover, they had to identify the speakers' L1.

The results showed that both the Francl2 and the native listeners (NethDutch and BelgDutch) recognized the native language of the speakers (French) quite easily. The Francl2 listeners perceived L2 speech as less fluent, less intelligible and more accented than the natives did, which confirms the previously reported critical attitudes towards the own L2 accent. Moreover, subtle differences in accent and fluency ratings could be found between the NethDutch and the BelgDutch listeners. Further analyses will show whether these differences can be related to the amount of individual experience with this L2 variety.

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Reconciling a multilingual language policy with English as the only official language: A case study of an international school in Flanders

Anne-Sophie Bafort
(University of Antwerp)

International schools have become more prominent since the 1950s as a result of globalization and an increased demand to cater to expatriate families' needs for transnational forms of education (Heyward 2002; Hayden 2011). These schools have not, however, received much attention of sociolinguists. Those scholars who have analyzed these contexts, on the one hand point out that these schools claim to celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity (Heyward, 2002) in a spirit of egalitarianism, yet on the other hand, various studies criticize their continuing elitist and prestigious character (Sunyol & Codó, 2020). According to Sunyol & Codó (2020), these schools' claims of egalitarianism and inclusion of mother tongues is merely perfunctory. This case study demonstrates that not all international schools can be described as such, and that the investment in mother tongue support is met with various difficulties which are not necessarily related to an elite or prestigious character. Data were collected through on-site fieldwork, and comprise multiple data types and corresponding methods of analysis. Our analysis demonstrates that teachers actively sought to attend to students' mother tongues notably via posters and strategic translanguaging in the classroom. At the same time, it appeared that this attention for mother tongues was constrained by central International Baccalaureate exams being in English, a lack of managerial trickledown effect of the language policy regarding mother tongues and the use of English as 'a language of inclusion'. As such, this study does not only yield further insights in the under-studied concept of international schools, but also aims to add to current sociolinguistic research by further mapping the complex manner in which linguistic diversity is mediated in multilingual educational communities of practice.

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Gender accommodation in teenagers' spelling of regular verb homophones on social media

Hanne Surkyn, Reinhild Vandekerckhove, Lisa Hilte, & Dominiek Sandra
(University of Antwerp)

The present study investigates the effect of the interlocutors' gender on the production of persistent verb spelling errors in adolescents' private online communication. Specifically, we examine whether boys adapt to the – more 'correct' – spelling practices of girls and whether girls produce more errors in mixed-gender conversations compared to same-gender conversations. The data were extracted from a unique corpus of private, informal online conversations produced by Flemish teenagers on Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. Unlike previous research on the same database, the present study does not focus on prototypical and attractive markers of the genre that may render social capital, but on (presumably) unintentional spelling errors on regular Dutch verb forms, i.e., 'features' one would rather avoid since they tend to be highly stigmatized. The results reveal a pattern of unilateral accommodation: They point to downward convergence on the part of the older girls, who converge towards the less standard spelling style of their male interlocutors, but not to upward convergence in boys' writing. The maintenance pattern in boys' and the norm relaxation in girls' mixed gender writing give an interesting clue with respect to the subtle mechanisms of both accommodation and norm perception, related to the informal social media context.

Keywords: spelling errors, gender accommodation, verb homophones, social media

What's love got to do with it? Gender accommodation versus flirting in teenagers' online conversations

Lisa Hilde, Reinhild Vandekerckhove, & Walter Daelemans
(University of Antwerp)

The present study analyzes the phenomenon of linguistic accommodation, i.e. adapting one's language use to one's conversation partner, which is under-researched for (written) online interactions. In a large corpus of private and spontaneous instant messages, we compare Flemish teenagers' language use in two conversational settings: same-gender (including only boys or only girls) and mixed-gender online conversations (including at least one girl and one boy). We examine whether boys adopt a more 'female' and girls a more 'male' writing style in mixed-gender talks, i.e. whether teenagers converge towards their conversation partner, specifically with respect to expressive/emotional writing. The analysis covers two distinct repertoires that the teenagers have at their disposal to express emotionality: a 'digital' repertoire including several typographic chatspeak markers (e.g. emoticons) and a 'traditional' repertoire consisting of verbal expressions of sentiment (e.g. emotion words). We compare both types of expressive/emotional writing in the teenagers' online interactions and look for potential patterns of gender convergence. Finally, we tackle a theoretical challenge and try to distinguish between 'general' linguistic gender accommodation and flirting strategies from a quantitative as well as a qualitative perspective.

Keywords: accommodation, adolescents, social media, gender, emotionality

The effects of emoji in webcare with and without CHV on company evaluations

Lieke Verheijen & Christine Liebrecht
(Radboud University Nijmegen & Tilburg University)

Emoji have become ubiquitous in computer-mediated communication (CMC). Yet little is known about their usage and effects in professional CMC. This presentation will report on two studies to investigate the impact of emoji in webcare messages, i.e. responses to online consumer messages directed to an organization.

The first study was a large-scale online experiment with 601 participants, recruited via Prolific. This examined the effects of different kinds of emoji in webcare messages on consumers' company evaluations and their perceptions of conversational human voice (CHV – an engaging and natural style of organizational communication that fits the register of social media), social presence, and professionalism. We made a distinction between two kinds of emoji: emotional emoji (faces, gestures, hearts) and other emoji (objects, symbols). In a between-subjects experiment with three conditions, we exposed participants to four online consumer-company interactions, visualized as Facebook posts, in which carefully constructed webcare messages contained (a) emotional emoji, (b) other emoji, or (c) no emoji. The findings revealed that emotional emoji in webcare messages are more beneficial for companies than other emoji (through increased CHV and social presence), but also showed some detrimental effects of emoji compared to webcare messages without emoji (via professionalism and, again, social presence).

The amount of CHV was high in the first study's webcare messages, through personalization, informal language, and inviting rhetoric. Therefore, the second study – another large-scale online experiment – examined the effects of emoji in webcare messages without any CHV, as well as with selected aspects of CHV in webcare messages. The results of this second study will be revealed in my talk, and implications will be discussed.

The impact of non-standard language on the perceived credibility and usefulness of Facebook reviews: A closer look at old and new vernacular features

Mathias Seghers
(Ghent University)

We investigate the impact of deviations from Standard Dutch in the form of *old* (e.g. *tussentaal*) and *new* (e.g. chatspeak and emoji) *vernacular features* (cf. Androutsopoulos 2011, Vandekerckhove 2017) on consumer perceptions of the credibility and usefulness of Facebook reviews in a 2 (positive, negative) x 2 (old vernacular features or not) x 2 (new vernacular features or not) between-subjects experiment with 483 Flemish Facebook users. Additionally, we probe into our respondents' attitudes towards these non-standard features in this communicative setting. The results show that the use of old vernacular features is associated with slightly higher message credibility ratings (compared to strict adherence to Standard Dutch), although these features are evaluated fairly negatively. In terms of perceived usefulness, no difference was found between Standard Dutch reviews and reviews that contain old or new vernacular features, though ratings were lower when both types of features occurred simultaneously. While the use of Standard Dutch is evaluated positively and generally associated with the highest credibility and usefulness ratings, there does seem to be a certain tolerance towards non-standard language, especially new vernacular features. The review author's credibility predominantly seems to depend on other consumers' perceptions of their personality (in terms of prestige, dynamism and integrity), which are not significantly influenced by the use of non-standard language features. Our findings suggest that Standard Dutch is the norm in this communicative context, but the expression of one's creativity and emotions via new vernacular features appears to be acceptable as well.

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Macho or hipster? Pinpointing the essence of dynamic prestige in an advertising experiment

Stefan Grondelaers & Paul van Gent
(Radboud University Nijmegen)

Although the crucial role of dynamism – the type of modern prestige which pertains to young urban cool – is increasingly recognized in studies of linguistic diffusion (see Stuart-Smith et al. 2013; Sneller & Roberts 2018), it remains unclear whether it represents one integrated type of social evaluation, or whether it should be broken down in hipster dynamism and macho dynamism. Whereas investigations into the social meaning boosts of neo-standards such as Tussentaal have found evidence for the former type (Grondelaers & Speelman 2013; Rosseel 2017), investigations into the evaluation of diffusing ethnolects (see Grondelaers & Van Gent 2019) typically confirm the second.

In order to validate the claim that hipster dynamism and macho dynamism are best viewed as instantiations of a more encompassing dynamism dimension, we designed an experiment with two television commercials, one for a gentleman's dress shoe (Gentleman Shoes), one for an urban sneaker (Rebel Runners). These were played with a slogan produced in either a Randstad accent (Randstad) or a fairly broad Moroccan accent. While the Randstad accent turned out to agree with both commercials, it was the *Moroccan* accent which boosted the purchase intent for the dress shoe whereas it reduced the purchase intent for the sneaker.

We account for this finding by proposing an indexical field of dynamic social meanings for the Moroccan accent, which contains both hipster and macho traits. While the macho traits amplify the negative features conjured up by the badass image of the sneaker, its young traits are claimed to enhance the trendy overtones of the formal shoe, making it more attractive for a young audience.

On a methodological level, our evidence has important repercussions for the experimental scale set(s) that can be used to elicit dynamism, which continues to be notoriously difficult to extract experimentally.

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“Access rituals” in tourist offices in Flanders, the Netherlands, France and Wallonia: A cross-cultural analysis

Els Tobback & Margot Van den Heede
(University of Antwerp & Ghent University)

Since Goffman (1967) "access rituals", which characterize both ordinary conversations and service encounters, have received quite some attention in the literature (e.g. Aston 1988, Placencia 2004, Kerbrat-Orecchioni & Traverso 2008, Félix-Brasdefer 2015 (and references therein)). The opening and closing of interactions have, indeed, been shown to entail complex cognitive (e.g. recognition and identification of the other person) and social activities. At the social/psychological level, openings and closings serve to establish or to strengthen social relationships, to reduce uncertainty or even anxiety (Firth 1972) and to negotiate “social identity and discourse roles” (Andersson 1988: 100). In Firth’s (1972: 31-32) terms, “a basic function of greeting [...] rituals is in creating occasions for establishment of relative status positions, or providing a code (a ‘vocabulary’) in which status relations can be expressed”.

This paper focuses on opening and closing rituals in service encounters from the broad perspective of ‘Politeness theory’. More specifically, it will offer a cross-cultural analysis of the relational work that is performed in the opening and closing phases of 400 conversations recorded in 13 different tourist offices in the north of France, the south of the Netherlands, Wallonia and Flanders. Based on the analysis of the prototypical speech acts and their concrete linguistic realisations, and following previous studies (e.g. Márquez-Reiter & Placencia 2004, Félix-Brasdefer 2015), the aim is to describe the (different) ways in which participants (service providers and service seekers) belonging to these four regions interpret their social roles in this specific kind of institutional interactions. We will show, among other things, that the interactions show cultural differences that are in line with the opposition, proposed by Scollon & Scollon (1995(1)/2012), between strategies of "involvement" and strategies of "independence".

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Veiled insults: Discourses about burqas during the COVID-19 pandemic

Janet M. Fuller & Emily E. Davis
(University of Groningen)

This presentation provides a background of discourses about burqas in the Netherlands based on cartoons, and then presents an analysis of newspaper articles which illustrate how these discourses have developed in the COVID-19 era. In particular, the juxtaposition of the so-called burqa ban and a requirement to wear face masks has given rise to a focus on the issue of religious symbolism.

Since August 2019, a law has dictated that people with their faces covered – with ski masks, motorcycle helmets, or burqas – may not use public transportation or enter certain state facilities. The official justification for this is about public safety, as it is necessary to be able to see people's faces to identify them.

Previous research on media discourses about burqas have noted that dominant themes are freedom and oppression (Baker et al 2019). On the one hand, those who support a burqa ban view veiling as oppression of women; this position assumes that women do not themselves choose to veil but that it is imposed by patriarchal religious institutions. On the other hand, those opposed to the burqa ban support women's right to choose what they wear, thus assigning women agency in their choice to veil. This position also recognizes that if there are cases in which women are forced to wear burqas, forbidding the burqa will not increase their freedom but may mean that they will not be able to go out in public at all.

Our preliminary analysis of cartoons about burqas from the Netherlands showed that until the COVID-19 era, these discourses about freedom and oppression are rarely the topic in the quest for humor; instead, the burqa is most often a symbol of misplaced political priorities. One common theme is the confusion of a woman in a burqa with non-animate entities – a tent, a parking meter, a shower curtain. These cartoons make fun of burqas, which belittles the importance of a ban. There are, however, a small number of cartoons which do frame the burqa ban as discrimination, showing other types of face coverings which are allowed, such as beekeeper's suits, a nun's habit, or a surgeon's face mask. These cartoons imply that the real issue here is not safety but the burqa as a marker of religion. Yet equally present are cartoons which attempt humor with body-shaming jokes, indicating the desirability of burqas in covering unattractive bodies.

During the Covid-19 crisis, requirements to wear face masks and the discourse about the so-called burqa ban as discrimination came into sharp focus in the Netherlands. Our analysis focuses on discourses about burqas in the second half of 2020 with an examination of a corpus of newspaper articles, selected with a Nexis search for articles in Dutch newspapers which contain the word *boerka* and *mondkapje*. This critical discourse study shows that the pandemic context has given rise to a more pointed discourse of discrimination even as other voices have emerged which more explicitly endorse the ban on burqas and niqabs as legitimate precisely because they are religious symbols.

“I’d like to hear what I said”: How entextualisation shapes legal service provision in the asylum procedure

Marie Jacobs
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Mobility characterises every aspect of the life of asylum seekers. People who apply for international protection have often been “on the run” for a long time after fleeing their home countries. Accordingly, the biographical accounts of asylum seekers are characterised by geographical references and by details of their travel routes. These stories, in turn, travel through the asylum procedure and they pass several bureaucratic institutions along the way (Maryns 2006). In this presentation, I argue that the institutional contexts in which asylum seekers and other stakeholders tell (and retell) asylum narratives leave a mark on the form and the content of the narrative. Focusing on a particular segment of the Belgian asylum context, I aim to shed light on the textual trajectory, which I will call “the entextualisation”, of asylum narratives. In doing so, I will draw upon audio-recordings of legal consultations, which were gathered during linguistic-ethnographic fieldwork at law firms specialised in immigration law. Data from asylum encounters are almost inherently of a multilingual nature: my corpus contains consultations in a lingua franca (English, French or Dutch) as well as interactions in which an interpreter is present.

The sociolinguistic analysis of lawyer-client interaction reveals how much of the early interaction between client and lawyer is centered around one written document, an official report constituted on the basis of the first asylum interview. In focusing on the pivotal status that this written record occupies, it becomes clear that entextualisation shapes legal service provision during the asylum procedure. The entextualisation complicates the local lawyer-client interaction, creates discursive ambiguity about speaker roles, and in this way, evokes questions of authorship. Interestingly, the analysis shows that asylum seekers display an emic awareness around the transformative nature of the entextualisation as well as about the dangers it entails. In some cases, the asylum seekers question (or even resist) the power imbalance, that speaks from the way in which institutional actors have the authority to reformulate their asylum narrative (Briggs & Bauman 1990; Silverstein & Urban 1996).

To conclude, I will reflect on how entextualisation disqualifies and sometimes even erases asylum seekers’ voice, a practice which raises questions about the way in which the procedure considers asylum seekers to be the sole responsible for their testimony (Jacobs & Maryns 2021).

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Variation in vowel-[t] transitions between Northern and Southern Standard Dutch: how can we reliably measure it, and what does it tell us about the diachrony of sound change?

Cesko C. Voeten
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Two salient sociolinguistic variables between the two major varieties of Dutch spoken in the Low Countries are the realizations of (e:,ø:,o:) and of (ei,œy,ou). Received wisdom (e.g. Van de Velde 1996, van Oostendorp 2003) holds that the former are realized as upgliding diphthongs [ei,øy,ou] in the Netherlands and as monophthongs [e:,ø:,o:] in Flanders. The latter vowels, in turn, are realized as light diphthongs in Flanders, while they diphthongize much more extremely in the Netherlands, in recent times to the extent of being realized as [ai,øy,au] (Stroop 1998). Thus, in Flanders one predicts to hear [e:,ø:,o:,ei,œy,ou], while in the Netherlands the expectation is to be surrounded by [ei,øy,ou,ai,øy,au].

The present paper reports on an interaction of these regional differences with a following coda /l/. Phonologies of Netherlandic Dutch acknowledge that coda /l/ influences the realizations of the six aforementioned vowels, in that it blocks upgliding diphthongization, but interpret this as details of the phonetic implementation. For Flemish Dutch, this is likely correct, as this variety does not have strong upglides anyway. In Netherlandic Dutch, however, the situation is somewhat different, in that the Netherlandic diphthongs [ei,øy,ou,ai,øy,au] have clear allophones [e:,ø:,o:,a:,p:,ɑ:]. On top of these regional differences in the vowel realizations, the realizations of coda /l/ itself also differs between the two varieties, with Flemish Dutch realizing it as [l] and Netherlandic Dutch realizing it as [t] with optional vocalization (van Reenen & Jongkind 2000). Thus, there is an interaction between social factors (viz. regional differences in realizations) and system-internal factors (viz. the blocking of diphthongization before coda /l/). What is the synchronic status of these differences, and how have they historically spread across the Low Countries?

The Dutch Teacher Corpus (van Hout et al 1999) provides the perfect dataset to answer this question, containing recordings of 160 speakers of Standard Dutch from eight regions in the Low Countries ranging from Groningen to West Flanders. However, the acoustic-phonetic analysis of the pre-/l/ vowel realizations is faced with a problem, namely that – especially for the Netherlandic realizations of coda /l/, which are more vowel-like than their Flemish counterparts – are impossible to segment, due to the perfect gradient of the vowel-/l/ transition. This paper presents a solution to this problem, using a by now widely accepted new branch of statistics called *Generalized Additive Mixed Models* (Wood 2017). This new approach to this age-old phonetic problem makes it possible to quite simply model the vowel-/l/ trajectory as a whole, drawing statistical comparisons between trajectories and peaks of trajectories before /l/ versus before /s,t/. In this way, I investigate regional differences in the realizations of (e:,ø:,o:) and (ei,œy), and also the regional differences in the effect of coda /l/ on these vowel categories. (The vowel (ou) had to be excluded for technical reasons.) Regional variation in coda /l/ is also investigated. Finally, under the assumption that the regional variation is due to historical sound change, I also consider the diachrony of these effects, using a new method based on the chi-square statistic to quantify the lexical diffusion of the observed differences across the words in the corpus.

The results show that all five vowel categories are quite homogeneous within the Netherlands and within Flanders, but that the differences between these two major regions are significant. There are also some noteworthy deviations, which I will present in more detail. Synchronically, these differences are all phonetically gradual. The lexical-diffusion results show that the more “phonetic” changes in the realizations of (e:,ø:,o:,ei,œy) are lexically abrupt (i.e. Neogrammarian changes). However, the “phonological” change whereby diphthongs are blocked before coda /l/ is lexically diffuse, and hence a change by exemplars per Bybee (2002). In sum, the present study shows how recent innovations in both linguistic and statistical methodology make it possible to answer new questions. This has implications for our analysis of linguistic data, but also for our knowledge of the processes underlying language variation and change.

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Ziej of het? An experimental perspective on the variation in pronouns for women in Limburgian dialects

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In Limburgse dialecten wordt, naast het vrouwelijke pronomen *ziej*, regelmatig de onzijdige vorm *het* gebruikt om te verwijzen naar vrouwen. Wij onderzochten in hoeverre de variatie tussen deze pronomina gestuurd wordt door eigenschappen van de referent. Enerzijds kan er een effect zijn van semantische informatie, zoals leeftijd (Bakker 1992; Nübling 2015); anderzijds kan de variatie ook gestuurd worden door grammaticale factoren, zoals congruentie met het woordgeslacht van een bijbehorend nomen. We hebben dit onderzocht in twee experimenten.

In de eerste studie vroegen we 41 sprekers van een Limburgs dialect om plaatjes te beschrijven uit bekende sprookjes, waarop zowel oudere als jongere vrouwelijke personages afgebeeld waren. Participanten gebruikten *het* vaak voor jonge personages, maar bijna nooit voor oudere. De tweede studie bestond uit een beoordelingstaak, waarmee we de rol van congruentie onderzochten (zie Piepers & Redl 2018). 72 participanten beoordeelden audiofragmenten van zinnen waarin een vrouw werd beschreven met nomen gevolgd door een pronomen (zie (1)). De nomina verwezen naar vrouwen van dezelfde generatie als de spreker (“zus”), of naar duidelijk oudere vrouwen (“oma”), en kwamen voor in hun gebruikelijke vrouwelijke vorm, en in de verkleinde, grammaticaal onzijdige vorm. Ook bij de pronomina werd het woordgeslacht afgewisseld.

(1) *mien zus/zusje heltj van katten, en lets haet ze/het eine kater oet het asiel gehaldj*

De resultaten lieten een duidelijke voorkeur zien voor zinnen met een vrouwelijk nomen en een bijbehorend vrouwelijk pronomen wanneer de referent ouder was. Voor jongere referenten daarentegen vonden we geen verschil in waardering tussen zinnen met elke mogelijke combinatie van woordgeslacht van nomen en pronomen.

We concluderen dat de variatie tussen *het* en *ze/ziej* voornamelijk gestuurd wordt door semantische informatie over de vrouw in kwestie. Door *het* te gebruiken kan een spreker affectie voor een (jonge) vrouw uitdrukken, terwijl *ze* meer afstand of respect uitdrukt (Bakker 1992; Nübling 2015).

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Abstracts – posters

Practice, management, and beliefs: A historical reconstruction of an international firm's corporate language policy in Belgium

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The over-arching topic of my PhD project is the multi-faceted role played by language in the quotidian workings of the internationally oriented corporate setting located in Belgium. The empirical focus lies on the corporate language policy which, following Spolsky (2004), comprises the interconnected fields of language management, language beliefs, and language practices. This poster summarizes the first case study of my PhD research, in which I retrace the historical genesis of a corporate language policy in an international, multilingual firm in Brussels from the end of the 20th century until the present. Given that Belgium has three official languages (Dutch, French and German), in addition to the presence of a number of other languages spoken by its population (amongst which English as an international lingua franca), the multilingual nature of Belgian society provides a particularly complex backdrop for such a sociolinguistic inquiry.

The research focuses on a multinational bank-insurer which has its headquarters in Brussels and which currently has a strictly Flemish language policy. I examine whether its language management is influenced by ideological convictions and how this manifests itself in practice throughout different periods of time, focusing specifically on the growing influence of English as part of an increasingly neoliberal value system in an outspokenly Flemish corporation. The goal is to connect the contemporary linguistic configuration of the firm to its historical development, and to consider how socio-economic and political factors have influenced the development of how the firm functions on a linguistic level today.

In doing so, I adopt a linguistic ethnographic approach (Rampton 2006; Copland & Creese 2015), which entails the collection of a diverse set of data from multiple sources. First, I collected archival photos, press announcements, policy documents, and other historical data that enable a reconstruction of the firm's linguistic past. More recent data was collected by examining progressive versions of the firm's public website throughout the years, so as to provide an overview of how the virtual linguistic landscape of the firm has changed (Berezkina 2018). These datasets are then analyzed in light of semi-structured interviews with the language managers of the corporation, so as to nuance and explain the previously collected data. The combination of these datasets provides an overview of the development of language practice and language management of the firm and hence facilitates a detailed contextualized study of the language ideology and beliefs behind the perceived changes.

Further case studies in this PhD project will investigate the role of language and language policy within the institutionalized corporate context from different angles, including a sociolinguistic investigation of the neoliberal professional who navigates these corporate spaces on an international scale, and a pragmatic-interactional analysis of face-to-face interactions amongst corporate employees.

The Database of the Southern Dutch Dialects: New opportunities for digital lexicographical research

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The Southern Dutch dialect area consists of four dialect groups; the Flemish, Brabantic, Limburgian and the Zeeland dialects, partly found in the Netherlands, in Belgium and in Nord-Pas-de-Calais (France). Each of these dialects has been described in a separate dictionary. The Flemish, Brabantic and Limburgian dialect dictionaries are similarly constructed onomasiological dialect dictionaries, whereas the Zeeland dialect dictionary is semasiologically arranged.

The [Database of the Southern Dutch Dialects \(DSDD\)](#) project, initiated by Ghent University and undertaken in close collaboration with the Dutch Language Institute, aimed to combine the onomasiological dictionaries into one platform accessible for both dialect researchers and a wider audience. Following the launch of the [DSDD platform](#) in 2020, dialect researchers can now make use of extensive search functionalities and geo-visualise their results on an interactive map.

The DSDD enables searching for individual dialect words (e.g. *puut* 'frog'), for all dialect words from a certain municipality or region (e.g. all dialect words from the city of Antwerp) or for all dialect words belonging to a certain concept (e.g. 'frog') or theme (fauna). Filters are available to make the search query as accurate as possible.

Based on the search results, interactive maps can be compiled, visualising the data in its geographical setting. The results can be clustered in various ways, using, for instance, frequency or etymologically related entries. The maps are flexible enabling the user, for example, to select the required level of detail to be visualised for the chosen region. A set of symbols and colours is available and can be arranged according to the user's needs. The area map can be enlarged or reduced in size and printed or downloaded as a PDF file. In the future, the alphabetical dialect data from the [Woordenboek der Zeeuwse Dialecten](#) will be added to the platform.

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No elbows on the table, and no colloquialisms either! How Flemish caregivers' choices in child-directed speech reflect broader linguistic ideologies

Lars Naborn, Dorien Van De Mieroop, & Eline Zenner
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When competing language varieties co-occur, it is enlightening to study their uses **in the family home**, particularly in Child-Directed Speech (CDS). CDS teaches children community norms more generally, and linguistic norms and ideologies more specifically (Ochs & Schieffelin 2014:7; Foulkes et al. 2005). In adopting this perspective, the aim of the project presented in this poster is to determine how and to what extent language choices in the Flemish home reflect language ideologies in Flanders.

The **language situation in Flanders** is interesting, as language ideologies exert a strong influence on private life. After *hyperstandardization* of Dutch in Flanders by importing standard Netherlandic Dutch (SD) (Geeraerts 2001; Van Hoof & Jaspers 2013), a local vernacular norm, Colloquial Belgian Dutch (CBD), emerged. However, the high prestige attached to the exogenous standard persists, creating tension between the exogenous standard and the endogenous informal norm (Grondelaers & Van Hout 2011).

We study the manifestation of this tension between competing norms in the Flemish home. The **data** consist of dinner conversations between 16 Belgian-Dutch caregivers and their children, and metalinguistic interviews with caregivers about language attitudes. The data are analyzed through quantitative variationist analyses, focusing on four sociolinguistic variables that alternate between their SD and CBD forms (Lybaert 2014): (1) second person singular pronouns *gij/jij* (2) diminutive – *ke/-je* (3) word-final t-deletion on function words (4) adnominal flexion on definite and indefinite articles *de/den* and *ne(n)/een*.

To explain variation between SD and CBD in the data, **inferential statistical analyses** examine the effect of speaker and addressee age and gender, as well as the effect of specific local contexts on the use of SD and CBD.

The **results** show significant variation in the use of the two varieties within and between families, which reflects variation in language attitudes and ideologies, as seen in our metalinguistic interviews and previous research.

Syntactic variation in German: Horizontal, vertical, and diachronic perspectives. Results from Regionalsprache.de (REDE)

Jeffrey Pheiff
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In line with the goals of the project *Regionalsprache.de*, we are conducting multi-part questionnaire surveys to document and analyze the morphosyntax of the entire variative spectrum of the regional languages of German between the two poles dialect and standard (Schmidt & Herrgen 2011). To this end, we document the regional syntactic variants that speakers of any sociodemographic profile actually use, be they dialectal, regiolectal or colloquial standard variants similar to the approach taken by projects such as AdA (Elspaß & Möller 2015). At the same time, similar to dialect-syntactic projects such as SyHD (Fleischer et al. 2012), we control for variety (with the important difference, of course, that we are surveying data for other varieties than dialect).

In this poster, we will present three sets of (initial) results, by way of example, from our ongoing questionnaire surveys with regard to passive formation, the loss of the preterite, and the use of relative pronouns in varieties of German. Some of our results include the following. With regard to passive formation, the results show that the GET-passive with *bekommen* 'get, receive' is becoming increasingly established in higher varieties, while the GET-passive with *kriegen* 'get' is becoming increasingly restricted to dialect over time. Further, the results for the preterite show that the preterite is disappearing across all varieties over time at the expense of the perfect in line with Fischer (2020). With regard to the use of relative pronouns, we can observe a marked increase in two variants *welch-* 'which' and *was* 'what' in higher varieties of German.

These results are particularly interesting because we are able to compare them with what is known about these phenomena in order to judge the validity of our method.

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Children's social evaluation of speakers who (don't) use English words in Dutch: An experimental approach

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Background: The emerging field of developmental sociolinguistics, which studies the acquisition of socially meaningful patterns of linguistic variation (see De Vogelaer & Katerbow, 2017; Holmes- Elliott, 2016), is so far dominated by research focusing on children's production of phonetic variation (e.g. Chevrot, Nardy & Barbu, 2011; Docherty, Langstrof & Foulkes, 2013). This study aims to extend the focus in two ways. Firstly, targeting the alternation between English loanwords and heritage alternatives in the globalized Western European context foregrounds children's acquisition of socially meaningful lexical variation (e.g. Zenner, Rosseel & Calude, 2019). Secondly, children's evaluation (rather than production) of the social meaning of English vs. heritage lexical variants is placed centre-stage with a perception-centred experimental approach.

Research aim: This study sets out to chart the evolution of children's social evaluation of speakers who (don't) use English words in Dutch in order to gain insight into how children acquire variation and drive contact-induced language change (Labov, 2007).

Respondents and design: 300 monolingual Belgian Dutch children from the same dialect area are included in a sample balanced for gender and age (including 8-9, 10-11, 12-13 and 13-14-year-olds). A base study elicits children's evaluation of speakers who produce sentences containing either an English or a Dutch concrete noun. The core design is varied on to provide insight into the influence of (1) the type of linguistic form (substituting artificial neologisms, compare Samara et al., 2017) and (2) speaker characteristics (e.g. adult/child voice, male/female voice) on the children's social evaluations of the speakers.

Results will provide new insights into the acquisition of the social meaning of lexical variation in children with a window on the transition to adolescence, while the specific focus on lexical resources captures the heterogeneous linguistic reality of European language communities.

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Een land van twee mentale minderheden. Een vergelijkend corpusonderzoek naar het discours over meertaligheid in de Nederlandstalige en Franstalige geschreven pers in België (1995-2018)

Ilias Vierendeels
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Als steeds zichtbaarder gevolg van de huidige intense fase van globalisering en superdiversiteit problematiseren verschillende vormen van meertaligheid de diepgewortelde één-taal-één-natie-ideologie. Daardoor komt ook de territoriaal eentalige en communautair gevoelige taalsituatie in België onder druk te staan (Blommaert 2011). Rekening houdend met de taalpolitieke en socio-economische geschiedenis van beide gemeenschappen (Hambye 2009), bespreekt deze presentatie daarom hoe de notie ‘meertaligheid/multilinguïsme’ de voorbije twintig jaar (1995-2018) geconceptualiseerd, gerepresenteerd en gevaloriseerd werd in het discours van de Nederlandstalige en Franstalige geschreven pers. Concreet leggen we zowel kwantitatief als kwalitatief de concrete frames, perspectieven, taalideologieën en machtsstructuren van het Belgische meertaligheidsdebat bloot.

Met de persdatabank GoPressAcademic werd een tekstcorpus samengesteld van Nederlandstalige (n=1085) en Franstalige (n=625) kranten- en tijdschriftartikels waarin de termen ‘meertaligheid’, ‘multilinguïsme’ of hun allomorfen voorkwamen. Een concordantieanalyse van die termen (Mautner 2016) vormde de basis voor een beschrijvend statistisch *entry-level* van het onderzoek. Daarin valt vooral de structureel negatievere valorisatie op van maatschappelijke tegenover individuele en van plebejische tegenover prestigieuze meertaligheid. Een kritisch-kwalitatieve tekstanalyse volgens de principes van de *Discourse Historical Approach* (Reisigl en Wodak 2016) verdiepte zich daarna in die patronen. Daaruit blijkt dat de voornaamste argumenten over meertaligheid sterk samenlopen met de socio-economische ontwikkelingen die beide gemeenschappen doorgemaakt hebben. Op die manier wijst het onderzoek op de symbolische waarde van taal en meertaligheid en op de ideologisch simplificerende logica van een in wezen veelzijdig debat.

Keywords: meertaligheid, critical discourse analysis, taalideologie, België

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A Paris, on ne sort jamais sans son accessoire tendance: A mixed-methods linguistic landscape study of signs used in France, Italy, and the Netherlands during the COVID-19 pandemic

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The construction of signs in the linguistic landscape (henceforth LL) of a given territory is driven by different reasons, and it can reflect upon an area's cultural, social, political, and economic circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic that influenced all countries in the year 2020 has kept a common and stable topic for many signs, which provides a unique opportunity to conduct a comparative LL study. The current study investigates COVID-19 related signs displayed on public transport, shop windows, city noticeboards, inside museums and churches in France, Italy, and the Netherlands. By conducting a mixed-method comparative study in three European countries that were (and still are) affected by the pandemic to different degrees, this study contributes to detecting how their multilingual status, identities, cultural values, and socio-political differences are constructed through a combination of linguistic and visual/multimodal representations, using LL signs as a relevant dataset. The data include 766 COVID-19 related signs collected from July to September 2020, in densely populated, urban areas of France, Italy, and the Netherlands. The quantitative and qualitative results show that monolingual ideologies prevail in France, in line with the country's long-lasting "one nation, one language" policy known as "the Toubon Law". The French signs heavily emphasized the importance of following the rules for the sake of safety and public health as well as illustrated the Parisian identity as a fashion hub. France also had the highest number of multimodal signs, showing a greater focus on visual representation to get important messages across during the pandemic. Italy featured a fair amount of English influence on LL signs, which may reflect the importance of tourism to economic recovery in the summer of 2020. A trademark of the Italian data were the many unique and humorous signs, which, alongside the low percentage of government-created signs used during COVID-19, reflect the cultural values of the country (use of humour in response to adverse conditions, preference for individual efforts, distrust of government). The Netherlands featured the highest proportion of English influence in LL signs, in line with the country's high proficiency in English. Minority languages spoken by large immigrant communities were better represented in the Netherlands, showcasing its linguistic and ethnic diversity. Solidarity, collective action and cooperation were emphasized in many COVID-19 related signs, illustrating Dutch cultural values and the fact that people in the Netherlands may have more trust in their government compared with France and Italy.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, COVID-19, sociolinguistics, multilingualism

Speaker accommodation with non-standard language in online conversations

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Our behaviour in interactions depends on our interlocutor: people often adapt their behaviour to match that of their communication partner, in order to reduce social differences. This is called 'alignment' or 'accommodation'. Speakers can accommodate on different levels, both linguistically (e.g. through pronunciation, word choice) and non-verbally (such as with gestures). Yet in the context of written computer-mediated communication (CMC), research into accommodation is scarce. This presentation reports on several online experiments to investigate whether speaker accommodation takes place in Dutch online written conversations. My focus is on accommodation with non-standard language at the levels of spelling, lexis, and visuals: specifically, the use of textisms (non-standard abbreviations characteristic of 'WhatsApp language'), English elements (common in 'digi-talk' among Dutch youths), and emoji (small ideograms representing faces, objects, etc.). In five between-subjects experiments ($N = 577$ in total) with two conditions each, the experimental groups were presented with WhatsApp messages that deliberately contained multiple instances of non-standard language elements, while the control groups saw the same WhatsApp messages but without any textisms, emoji, or English. Participants were asked to type responses to these messages. These responses were analysed for their relative frequency of textisms, emoji, or English respectively. The presence of such non-standard language elements was consistently higher in the experimental groups' responses. The five experiments all confirm the presence of accommodation/alignment in Dutch written CMC. Moreover, one of the experiments found an interaction with age: adolescent participants (12-17 years old) accommodated more with their interlocutors in textism use than young adults (18-25 years). The other four studies did not show interactions with age or gender. The implications of these findings will be discussed.