

**Speak normal or be damned?**  
**Attitudes of youngsters towards four different accents in Dutch**

*Abstract*

In this study the attitudes of university students (WO-high level of education) and vocational education students (MBO-low level of education) towards four different accents in Dutch are being investigated. A verbal guise test is used to rate the four accents according to the dimensions 'status' and 'solidarity'. The accents concerned include, besides the standard accent, both non-standard and nonnative accents. In particular, the accents are Randstad-Dutch (the standard accent), British-Dutch, Frisian-Dutch and Polish-Dutch. Accents hardly ever are perceived as being neutral. Although, in fact everyone speaks with an accent for an accent is the way in which people pronounce words and sentence. From the side of the listener, accents evoke all kinds of opinions and ideas about the speaker. Especially, non-standard accents including nonnative accents, are associated with negative characteristic features. In a broader perspective, a fair amount of research has been performed on the attitudes towards accents, both on non-standard and nonnative accents. However, these studies primarily focused on accents in English (American-English as well as British-English). Besides, almost all the participants were college/university students, i.e. highly educated people. Whether and how level of education is a factor regarding the attitudes towards accents has not been subject of research yet. While previous studies showed that highly educated people tend to be more open-minded regarding migrants and other cultures than lower educated people, the expectation is that level of education also plays a role in the attitudes towards accents among participants. The research that does have been performed on accents in Dutch, detected that in general, the Randstad-Dutch accent is considered to have high status, but scores low on solidarity. A British accent is considered to both high status and high on solidarity. Frisian-Dutch (and more in general, regional accents) on the other hand, is rated as low status but scores high on solidarity, whereas Polish-Dutch (as an in-migrant accent) is expected to score both low on status and solidarity. Though, the latter accent does not have been subject of research in the Dutch situation before. A brief preliminary analysis of the data collected up until now for this study, slightly indicates that the Randstad accent indeed is rated high on status. Secondly, it hints that the Polish accent indeed is rated low on solidarity. Further data analysis will reveal how all the accents are rated on the features of both status and solidarity and whether there is a significant difference in the rating between university students and vocational education students.

## References

- CBS, % MBO-students derived July 5<sup>th</sup> 2019 from:  
<https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/71450ned/table?fromstatweb>
- Coupland, N., (2011). Voice, place and genre in popular song performance. *Journal of sociolinguistics*, 15(5).
- Dessing, M., (2016). "Sprekend Nederland brengt vooroordelen over accenten in kaart". Retrieved March 13 2019 from <https://taaluniebericht.org/artikel/sprekend-nederland-brengt-vooroordelen-over-accenten-kaart>
- De Bekker, D., (2016). "Marokkaanse Nederlanders structureel gediscrimineerd vanwege accent". Retrieved July 23 2021 from <https://www.dekennisvannu.nl/site/special/Sprekend-Nederland/17#!/>
- Dewaele, J., & McCloskey, J. (2015). Attitudes towards foreign accents among adult multilingual language users. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(3), 221–238.
- Doeleman, R. (1998). *Native reactions to nonnative speech*. Tilburg: Tilburg University Press.
- Easterbrook, M. J., Kuppens, T., Manstead, S.R.J., (2015). The Education Effect: Higher Educational Qualifications are Robustly Associated with Beneficial Personal and Socio-political Outcomes. *Social Indicators Research*, 126(3), 1261–1298.
- El Hadioui, I., (2010). De Straten-Generaal van Rotterdam. Naar een stadssociologisch perspectief op jeugdculturen. *Pedagogiek*, 30(1), 26-42.
- Fuertes, J.N., Gottdiener, W.H., Martin, H., Gilbert, T.C., Giles, H. (2012). A meta-analysis of effects of speakers' accents on interpersonal evaluations. *European Journal of Social Psychology, Eur. J. Soc. Psychol.* 42, 120–133.
- Grondelaers, S. & Van Hout, R. (2010). Is Standard Dutch with a regional accent standard or not? Evidence from native speakers' attitudes. *Language Variation and Change*, 22, 221–239.
- Grondelaers, S., Van Hout, R., Steegs, M. (2010). Evaluating Regional Accent Variation in Standard Dutch. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 29(1), 101–116.
- Garrett, P. (2010). *Attitudes to language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbers, S., (2018). The linguistic and lyrical development of 2Pac in relation to regional hip-hop identity and conflict. In: A. S. Ross & D. J. Rivers (Eds.), *The sociolinguistics of hip-hop as critical conscience: Dissatisfaction and dissent*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gluszek, A., & Dovidio, J.F. (2010). The Way They Speak: A Social Psychological Perspective on the Stigma of Nonnative Accents in Communication. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(2), 214–237.
- Hilton, N. H., & Gooskens, C. (2013). Language policies and attitudes towards Frisian in the Netherlands. *Phonetics in Europe: Perception and Production*, 139–157.
- KNAW: Talen voor Nederland (2018). Amsterdam: Koninklijke Academie van Wetenschappen.
- Jansen, M. (2016) derived from: <https://www.nemokennislink.nl/publicaties/marokkaans-nederlands-accent-heeft-weinig-prestige/>
- Lev-Ari, S., & Keysar, B. (2010). Why don't we believe non-native speakers? The influence of accent on credibility. *Journal of experimental social psychology* 46(6), 1093-1096.
- Lindemann, S. (2003). Koreans, Chinese or Indians? Attitudes and Ideologies about non-native English speakers in the United States. *Journal of sociolinguistics*, 7(3), 348-364.
- Lippi-Green, R. (1994). Accent, Standard Language Ideology, and Discriminatory Pretext in the courts. *Language in Society* 23(2), 163-19.
- Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent: language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States (Second)*. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Loerts, H. (2012). *The uncommon gender. Eyes and brains, native and second language learners, & grammatical gender*. Groningen: Groningen Dissertations in Linguistics 110.
- Rijksoverheid derived February 26<sup>th</sup> 2021 from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/erkende-talen/erkende-talen-in-nl>
- Taalunie derived July 20<sup>th</sup> 2021 from <https://taaladvies.net/wat-is-standaardtaal-algemeen/>
- Weijnen, A. 1991. *Vergelijkende klankleer van de Nederlandse dialecten*. 's-Gravenhage: SDU Uitgeverij.
- Zahn, J., & Hopper, R. (1985). Measuring language attitudes: The speech evaluation Instrument. *Journal of language and Social Psychology*, 4(2), 113-123.