

## The effect of standardization on Dutch psych verb variation.

Standardization affects language variation in both obvious and more subtle ways. An example of an obvious effect is a standard language clearing away geographical variation, while a more subtle way can be found in Grondelaers et al. (2008) and Speelman et al. (2020). They argue that the function of the optional Dutch adverb *er* 'there' is fundamentally the same in the highly standardized Netherlandic variety of Dutch and the comparatively less standardized Belgian variety. In both varieties, *er* 'there' operates as an accessibility marker to ease language processing (also see Grondelaers et al. 2009). However, the way in which it does so is different in both varieties. The long history of ongoing standardization of Netherlandic Dutch would have caused the variation to become increasingly ingrained into lexical biases. Concretely, because of *er*'s initial processing-related motivation, particular verbs and adjuncts would have occurred more often with the variant with *er*, viz. verbs with a 'vague' meaning such as *zijn* 'be', and temporal adjunct such as *morgen* 'tomorrow'. Standardization would have caused these lexical biases to become ever more ingrained in their own right, to the point that they become more powerful than the original processing-related motivation, i.e. better predictors of the variation at issue. This would in turn lead to a straightforward semantic distinction in Netherlandic Dutch, whereby the variant with *er* 'there' is used in temporal clauses, while the variant without *er* 'there' is used in locational clauses. As a result, the variation in Netherlandic Dutch is easier to predict than in Belgian Dutch.

Dutch psych verb variation, as in (1)-(2), presents a case of variation that is very similar to *er* 'there'. Previous research shows that this variation is also determined by an interplay of three types of motivating factors (Pijpops and Speelman 2017). First, there is influence of language processing in that more topical stimuli, e.g. *John* in (1)-(2), and more topical experiencers, e.g. *Elizabeth* in (1)-(2), engender the use of the transitive variant. Second, there are lexical biases in that particular verbs, e.g. *ergeren* 'annoy' in (1)-(2), prefer one variant over the other. Third, there appears to be a subtle semantic distinction, in that the transitive variant is preferred when the stimulus is more agentive.

(1) *John ergert Elizabeth.* [transitive variant]  
John annoys Elizabeth  
'John annoys Elizabeth.'

(2) *Elizabeth ergert zich aan John.* [reflexive variant]  
Elizabeth annoys herself to John  
'John annoys Elizabeth.'

Based on Grondelaers et al. (2008), but also Levshina et al. (2013), two related hypotheses are formulated. The first hypothesis states that the psych verb variation in Netherlandic Dutch will be easier to predict than in Belgian Dutch. The second hypotheses holds that the predictors that relate to lexical biases and the semantic distinction will be stronger in Netherlandic Dutch than in Belgian Dutch. These hypotheses will be tested based on data extracted from the ConDiv corpus (Grondelaers et al. 2000) and the Corpus of Spoken Dutch (Oostdijk et al. 2002), for the alternating verbs *ergeren* 'annoy', *interesseren* 'interest', *storen* 'disturb' and *verbazen* 'amaze'.

## References

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