

Abstracts sociolinguistics circle – 27 March 2015

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Linguistic construction of senses of belonging in a nursing home

Jolien Clijisen, Meertens Instituut/Maastricht University

Despite the increasing number of bilingual speakers, there is limited attention for bilingual older people.¹ In the research on linguistic practices of older people, the perspective prevails that language skills inevitably decline with age. This includes negative expectations in vocabulary and understanding and the assumption that bilingual older people cannot maintain all their linguistic repertoires and with time only have the ability to speak one linguistic repertoire. However, these assumptions and expectations may prove false for many older people. This study therefore explores the ways in which older people use their various linguistic repertoires as resources to achieve their goals.

Older people who, through circumstances, move to nursing home have to achieve a sense of home (belonging) again which might be a painful process. Although limited research is done on the linguistic construction of belonging in a nursing home, language is usually considered as the most important cultural factor to construct belonging (Antonsich 2010). Besides that language can demarcate “Us” from “Them”, being surrounded with people who not only understand what you say but also what you mean can also contribute to feeling of being “at home”. My study will take place in a nursing home in Maastricht, capital of the province Limburg in Southeast Netherlands. Here, many older people speak standard Dutch and local dialect. This study will particularly focus on how older people use their bilingual capacity to construct senses of belonging. The question that rises is how people who interact with people in a nursing home deal with their bilingualism and, how people use their linguistic repertoires in their nursing home.

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¹ In this study bilingualism is approached as having linguistic repertoires that include resources from two languages and/or varieties (Johnstone 2000).

Cultural differences and the success of learning a mother tongue

Anneleen Boderé & Koen Jaspaert (KU Leuven, Department of Linguistics, Belgium)

Research in language socialization shows that communities may differ in the way in which children in the world learn their mother tongue (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008). In contrast to Western European families, children in some traditional, non-industrialized cultures are seldom addressed directly by their caregivers, and adaptations or simplifications to the child's language level hardly occur (Keller, 2003). However, all (normal developing) children in the world seem to learn their mother tongue successfully. An explanation for that success may be that children in cultures with an absence of child directed speech draw from early on to a larger extent on other resources to learn their first language: by carefully observing and overhearing other's conversations (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In this study, it was investigated whether children of Moroccan and Flemish origin in Belgium learn equally well by direct interaction and overhearing. Having more insight in the language process of children of Moroccan origin is important, because many of them experience (language) learning difficulties at school (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2010). But also more research about the language development of children of Flemish origin is needed, especially for those who have a low socio-economic background and who run the risk of language (and learning) delay as well.

An experiment was set up in which 110 six-year old children were exposed to a play with 12 non-words in three conditions: Direct Interaction, Overhearing an adult talking to a group of children and Overhearing two adults talking to each other. In the two Overhearing conditions, children were given a distracting activity and were not instructed to watch the play. After controlling for language proficiency, the results show that there is no significant difference between Direct Interaction and both Overhearing conditions concerning learning the content of the play. However, with respect to receptive knowledge of the non-words, children of both cultural groups learn better in Direct Interaction than overhearing the play told by one adult. In addition, there is an interaction effect between origin and condition. In the presentation, the results will be discussed more elaborately, and we seek to explain some results.

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Multidimensional scaling of bilingual children: a new definition of bilingualism

Ryanne Francot

This paper will focus on the ongoing debate between researchers regarding the definition of bilingualism. Whereas some researchers use *language proficiency* as the defining factor (Dixon et. al, 2012; Sumiya & Healy, 2008), others rather choose *language use* (Bialystok, 2013; Grosjean, 2010). The need has emerged for a more comprehensive definition of bilingualism (Gertken, Amengual, & Birdsong, 2014), which recognizes the multidimensionality of bilingualism and includes indicators of both *language proficiency* and *language use*. Baker (2011) stresses that using strict, simple, definitions leads to arbitrary cut-off points when selecting participants and consequently a weak foundation for conducting research.

The challenge is to define and construct a continuum of mono- and bilingualism that optimally reflects the multifaceted nature of bilingualism (Baker, 2011; Grosjean, 1998; Luk & Bialystok, 2013). The first aim of current study is to derive from the extant research a comprehensive definition of bilingualism including several indicators of both *language proficiency*, like accuracy and speed fluency, and *language use*, like contexts and frequency, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Ellis, 2003; Grosjean & Li, 2012; Housen & Kuiken, 2009).

Furthermore, this paper will examine the usefulness of this comprehensive approach and scalability by using an optimal scaling method (*Nonlinear Principal Component Analysis for Categorical Data* or CATPCA; Linting & Van der Kooij, 2011). Therefore, 110 children (5 and 6-year-olds) from different primary schools in The Netherlands participated: Twenty Turkish-Dutch children, 55 Moroccan-Dutch children and 35 Dutch children.

Three tasks were used to collect data on both languages: the *Verbal Switching Task* (VST, Timmermeister et al., 2014), the Dutch version of the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Task* (PPVT, Schlichting, 2005) and a translated equivalent (Turkish or Berber), and the *Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives* (Gagarina et al., 2012). Furthermore, parents were interviewed by means of the *Questionnaire for Parents of Bilingual Children* (COST Action IS0804, 2011), which includes questions on children's language environment.

In this talk we will focus on the emerging need for a more comprehensive definition of bilingualism, the pitfalls of the old applied definitions and the use of statistical methods to design a multidimensional approach.

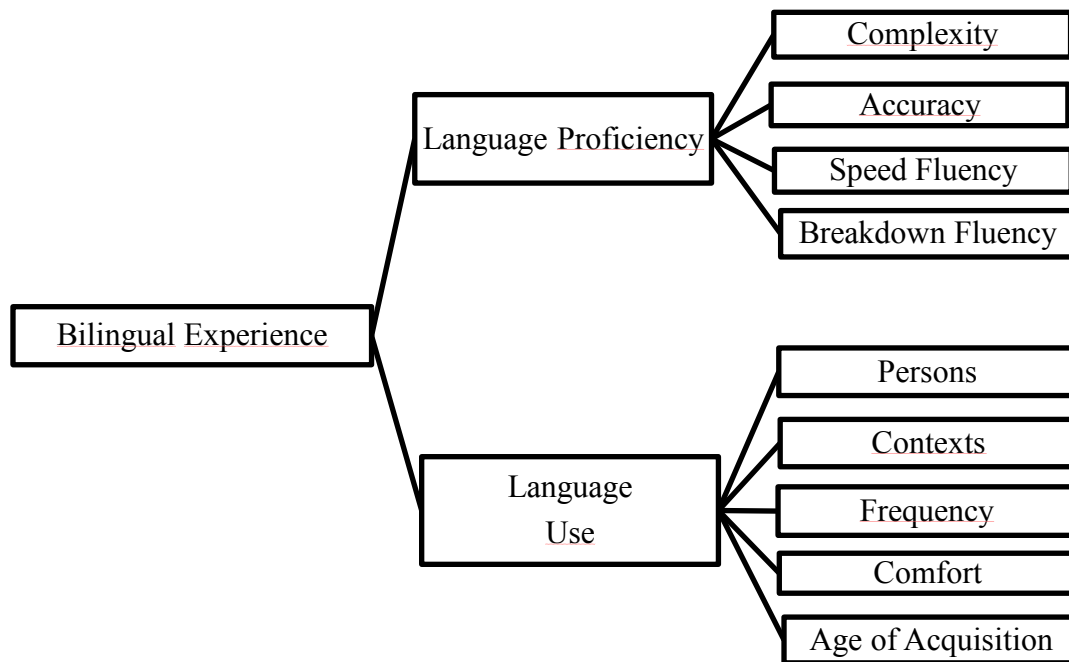


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the bilingual experience.

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¹ References marked with an asterisk indicate studies included in this research abstract.

Not anything goes: perceptual harmony as a coherence criterion in spoken standard language

Stefan Grondelaers & Roeland van Hout (Radboud University Nijmegen)

In theory, the coherence of standard languages – as determined by the systematic co-variation of the prestige variants of linguistic variables – is undisputed and even codified in lexicons and grammars which can be used to decide about “right” and “wrong” (Auer 2011: 490 and Hinskens & Taeldeman 2013: 5). In actual reality, European standard languages are becoming progressively variable (Kristiansen & Coupland 2011 and Kristiansen & Grondelaers 2013), admitting increasingly more “wrong” variants.

Any account which exclusively defines coherence in terms of the variant choices the *speaker* makes is bound to conclude that modern standard languages are incoherent on account of their mix of right and wrong forms. In previous research, however, we have argued that standard languages are *not* incoherent, by demonstrating that

- (1) standard languages are becoming increasingly indexical, allowing speakers to profile social and regional group membership through (some) social and regional accent variation (Grondelaers et al. 2010; Grondelaers & Van Hout 2010);
- (2) prestige attribution is currently in a process of relocation from the schools to the media (Kristiansen 2008, Grondelaers & Speelman 2013), as a result of which many of the wrong forms are becoming at least “dynamically” prestigious.

In this paper, we will demonstrate that there is an additional condition on the exploitation of linguistic variability in standard language. We propose that variant selection in standard language is determined by “perceptual harmony”. In music, harmony pertains to (implicit and explicit) norms on the proportion between consonant and dissonant intervals, in (standard) language to a mostly tacit agreement between interlocutors on which and how many “dissonant” clusters of standard and (indexical) non-standard variants a specific interaction in a specific register or context may contain. Perceptual harmony ultimately governs the tension between the different social forces at work in standard language, viz. norm conformity, identity profiling, and accommodation (a speaker’s inclination to adjust to his or her interlocutors – Turner & West 2010). The weight of these factors will be shown to differ across genres, registers and styles.

Performing American English as a second dialect: acoustic accuracy and listener acceptability

Remco Knooihuizen (University of Groningen)

Analyses of second-dialect performance (e.g., Trudgill 1983) have generally been given relatively little attention in the study of second-dialect acquisition, as the artificial circumstances are not thought to give a realistic view of acquisition (Chambers 1992, Siegel 2010). However, as factors relevant to acquisition, such as motivation and analytical ability, can be excluded for certain types of (coached) second-dialect performance, analysing performance allows us to home in on a speaker's ability to modify their linguistic behaviour.

In this paper, I present an analysis of the short vowel systems in the American English speech of three Australian actors in the television series *Camp* (2013) and compare this to their Australian English speech from the series *Dance Academy* (2010–2012). Auditorily, the speakers aim for an American English accent in *Camp*, for which they need to make significant changes to their speech. Acoustic analysis shows that the speakers successfully lower their realisations of the KIT, DRESS and TRAP vowels to sound more American, but their adoption of American English LOT and STRUT vowels is not as successful. Second-dialect performance shows more variation than first dialect speech, which fits a Dynamic Systems Theory view of acquisition (van Dijk et al. 2011).

Although the actors' accent modification is relatively successful acoustically, their performance has received mixed reviews on internet fora. A foreign-accent rating ($n=150$) shows slightly lower scores for the Australians' American English performance than for most American English controls, although there are intra-individual differences and some Australians receive higher average scores than some Americans.

These results show that even in highly controlled environments, there are limits to a speaker's ability to modify their speech, and that listeners are capable of distinguishing high-level seconddialect performance from first-dialect speech.

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Spoken Dutch in Flanders: Perceptions of the Dutch language situation by non-linguists

Chloé Lybaert (Ghent University)

In recent years, many articles have been published about the spoken language in Flanders, and especially about the use of *tussentaal* (lit. ‘in-between-language’), a mixture of dialect and standard Dutch (e.g. De Caluwe 2009; Grondelaers and Van Hout 2011). In these articles, many postulations have been made about the language behaviour of non-linguists, but often without consulting these non-linguists themselves: “[T]here is an [...] absence of perception data, pertaining to lay evaluations of ongoing change” (Grondelaers and Van Hout 2011). According to De Caluwe (2009) there is even a strong tendency for linguists to project their own knowledge and their own perceptions of variation in Flanders on the knowledge and perceptions of non-linguists.

To fill the need for perception data, I have focused on the perceptions and attitudes of the average language user towards language variation in Flanders, an investigation which fits in with the development of “a general folk theory of language” (Preston 2002). For my study eighty informants with different sociolinguistic profiles were subjected to an interview in which naturally spoken audio recordings were submitted for evaluation. The interviews have yielded insights into the global perception and categorisation of the Flemish language situation by non-linguists, results which were analysed qualitatively (cf. Lybaert 2012).

During my talk, I will focus on the beliefs of these non-linguists on the Flemish linguistic situation. More specifically, I will elaborate on:

- how the informants prototypically define Standard Dutch and dialect.
- the ways in which *tussentaal* was labelled and how the concept *tussentaal* was filled in by the informants.
- the appropriateness of Standard Dutch, dialect and *tussentaal* for several situations.
- the values that were often associated with these varieties by the informants.

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Language contact and intonation patterns: the case of Frisian and Dutch

Amber Nota (University of Groningen), Nanna Haug Hilton (University of Groningen), Matt Coler – (Incas)

Although Frisian is spoken by some 450,000 people in Fryslân (Province of Fryslân, 2011), all speakers of Frisian are, generally speaking, also speakers of Dutch. Previous studies have indicated that contact features from Dutch exist on all levels of the Frisian grammar (de Haan, 1997).

As prosody in Frisian is as yet an under-researched topic, this paper investigates the influence of language contact between Frisian and Dutch on the intonation contours of declarative, interrogative and imperative utterances is investigated. By using an apparent time approach we consider whether Frisian and Dutch (as spoken in Fryslân) prosody is undergoing change in progress. More concretely, we consider to which extent Frisian intonation contours are converging to intonation contours of equivalent Dutch utterances. We also consider to which extent social and linguistic factors constrain this convergence.

Intonation contours for all sentence constructions are elicited from young female speakers (aged 20-30) and older male speakers (aged 55+; 5 bilingual Dutch-Frisians and 5 monolingual Dutch speakers for each group) in a read-aloud task. Intonation contours are calculated using the Melodic Analysis of Speech method (MAS) (Font-Rotchés & Cantero, 2005), which allows for intonation contour standardisation, enabling comparison between speakers regardless of gender, age or other background factors. The MAS is particularly applicable to this language combination, as previous research has successfully employed the method on other closely related language pairs (2013; Font-Rotchés & Cantero, 2005; Planas-Morales & Villalba, 2013).

Preliminary results show evidence of language contact in Frisian and Dutch prosody. These findings are discussed in light of the sociolinguistic theory of language change. Furthermore, we consider our data in light of contact-linguistic work on convergence in the linguistic system (cf. Thomason & Kaufman, 2001) and make some preliminary remarks about the durability of marked prosodic features in situations of intense language contact.

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The evaluation of a sound change in progress: A matched guised experiment

Anne-France Pinget, René Kager & Hans Van de Velde

In this paper we present the results of a matched guised experiment aimed at triggering attitudes towards two variables undergoing sound change in Dutch.

The devoicing of word-initial labiodental fricatives and bilabial stops both show patterns of regional variation in the degree of devoicing, but crucially differ in their degree of completion (advanced change vs. incipient change). Completed changes might result in a merger of /v/-/f/ and /b/-/p/. Five regions in the Dutch language area were selected, geographically representing different stages of sound change (West-Flanders, Flemish-Brabant, Netherlands Limburg, South-Holland and Groningen). For each region, 10 men and 10 women, young and highly educated, were selected (n=100).

All participants conducted a matched guise experiment in which they rated speakers along 7 scales. All /b/'s and /v/'s in the speech of these speakers were phonetically manipulated in order to obtain for each of them two conditions: a voiced and a devoiced one.

On the basis of a PCA analysis, the 7 scales were reduced to three components, corresponding to dimensions of power, solidarity and modernity. The results showed first that devoiced labiodental fricatives are rated more positively than their voiced counterparts, especially on the solidarity dimension. Moreover, there was an interaction between condition and region, showing that the differences in ratings differed across regions. Especially participants from West-Flanders (the region where the fricative change is the least advanced) showed positive attitudes towards the devoiced condition. For the devoicing of stops, results were less clear, with some regions in which devoiced stops were rated slightly more positively, and others in which it was the other way around.

In conclusion, it is shown that the sound change in progress concerning the devoicing of Dutch labiodental fricatives is associated with positive attitudes. In contrast, more evidence is needed to claim that the devoicing of stops is socially indexed.

Policies and perceptions. How do national educational policies influence teachers' perceptions and beliefs?

Reinhilde Pulinx (Centre for Diversity and Learning – Ghent University)

Educational language policies in Flanders – and other European countries – are currently characterized by a clear monolingual approach. It has become commonsensical (doxa) that Standard Dutch language deficiency leads imperatively to low academic achievement. Monolingual ideologies, underlying these education policies, not only impact teacher and student beliefs, but also teacher-student-interactions (Woolard & Shieffelin, 2000; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Armstrong de Almeida, 2006; Wortham, 2008). Hence, student self-esteem, classroom involvement and motivation are affected, and these mutually reinforcing mechanisms contribute to processes of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1990; Ogbu, 1990; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Roosens, 1995, 1998).

In a recent study, Pulinx, Van Avermaet & Agirdag (forthcoming), found that the stronger the monolingual beliefs of teachers are, the less trust teachers have in their students. In teacher discourse, used to rationalize their monolingual beliefs, stereotypes regarding the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their students and their parents become apparent (Pulinx & Van Avermaet, forthcoming). These stereotypes start out by referring to the home language and the language use of the students and their parents, but are then transferred to other ascribed characteristics of the speakers of these languages.

In the literature, such processes of stigmatization, based on the language of a person or group of persons, are labeled as 'linguicism' (Skutnabb-Kangas & Philipson, 1989). Moreover, we also employ the framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine the connections between institutional (school-based) racism, low academic expectations, and the linguicism that our participants describe in terms of their Flemish schooling experiences.

In this contribution, student beliefs regarding the monolingual policies implemented in schools and teacher-student-interactions are examined. How do students experience monolingual policies at school? Do they voice experiences of linguicism in interaction with teachers and peers? Can relations be found between these experiences of linguicism and student motivation and academic involvement?

Data was collected using qualitative research methods in three schools of secondary education in Ghent, Flanders.

The research aims at unraveling the underlying mechanisms of perceptions and beliefs concerning language proficiency and linguistic capital in the Flemish educational context.

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Damsko and Agga: Multicultural Toponymic Nicknames in the Netherlands

Riemer Reinsma (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

In the Netherlands, a multicultural youth slang has emerged since the end of C 20. It is generally called *Straattaal* ('Street Language'). Its elements have been mixed from Dutch, English, Sranan, Turkish, Moroccan Arabic, Berber, and Papiamentu. *Straattaal* is used by young immigrants and immigrants' children, and by autochton youths (APPEL & SCHOONEN 2005).

The Street Language lexicon comprises, apart from common nouns, tens of toponymic nicknames – nicknames for towns, streets, buildings, etc. Most of these are macrotoponyms (a.o. for cities and towns): *Damsko*, for example, is Amsterdam, *Agga* is The Hague. Microtoponyms design, for example, streets and railway stations.

Multicultural nicknames like these differ from traditional Dutch toponymic nicknames like *de Amstelstad* ('The city on the River Amstel', designing Amsterdam), among other things, in that they are rarely descriptive. One of the few exceptions is *Mocrostad* ('Moroccans' city', a nickname for Kanalenwijk, an Utrecht city quarter). Instead, they allude to the official names. For example, many of them refer to orthographic features (like *D-Town*, for Dordrecht), have been translated into English (*Eastwood*, for Oosterhout), are would-be translations with rhyming elements (*Chillburg*, for the city of Tilburg; *chillen* means 'to relax'), or employ a pun by 'interpreting' the orthography of a Dutch name as though it were English (*Hole-10*, for *Holten*).

A collection of street language toponyms has been compiled from an internet Street Language dictionary (<http://www.straatwoordenboek.nl/>), which has been compiled for its part by *Straattaal* speakers. The paper aims to present a typology.

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De woordenschat ontwikkeling van dialect-Nederlands sprekende tweetaligen in Limburg

Kirsten Van den Heuvel, Elma Blom en Leonie Cornips

Trefwoorden: Tweetalige kindertaalverwerving, dialect, woordenschat

Diverse verwervingsonderzoeken tonen dat tweetalige kinderen een cognitief voordeel hebben vergeleken met eentalige kinderen. Zij presteren beter op taken die executieve functies vereisen, nodig bij doelgericht. In deze lezing rapporteren we over een deel van ons onderzoek naar cognitieve voordelen, namelijk woordenschatontwikkeling, bij tweetalige kinderen die naast het Nederlands ook een Limburgs dialect verwerven.

Van 86 kinderen van 4 t/m 9 jaar ($M=6,11; SD=1,01$) in de voormalige Westelijke Mijnstreek in Limburg, is de woordenschat in het Nederlands en het Limburgse dialect onderzocht. De onderzoeksvraag is: belemmert de verwerving van dialectwoorden de Nederlandse woordenschat? De Nederlandse woordenschat is vastgesteld met de *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III-NL* (PPVT). Deze test meet receptieve woordkennis. De dialectwoordenschat is gemeten met een nieuw ontwikkelde woordproductietaak, waarin 30 doelwoorden in het dialect van het Nederlands verschillen in woordvorm (*zjweagel* [ʃwæ:xəl] voor *lucifer*) én woordklank (*kniën* [kni:n] voor *konijn*).

De uitkomsten tonen dat categoriaal onderscheid tussen één- en tweetaligen in de Limburgse samenleving problematisch is. Kinderen wisselen gedurende de dialectwoordentaak van taal, ondanks de opdracht dialect te gebruiken. Bovendien creëren kinderen woordvormen die morfologisch noch fonologisch uitsluitend dialect of Nederlands zijn. Een gedetailleerde analyse naar de systematiek van deze woordvarianten vindt momenteel plaats.

In de dialecttaak is het aantal Nederlandse en het aantal dialectwoorden gemeten. Deze zijn in verband gebracht met de PPVT-scores. Kinderen die meer dan 80% Nederlandse woorden gebruiken in de dialecttaak, scoren toch laag op de PPVT ($r_s = -.22, p < 0.05$). Kinderen die in de dialecttaak meer dan 50% dialectwoorden gebruiken, scoren niet per se lager op de PPVT maar ook niet hoger. Ze ondervinden dus geen voordeel, maar ook geen nadeel van hun dialectwoordenschat ($r_s = .05, p > 0.05$).

In de lezing bespreken we onze bevindingen van de Limburgse woordenschattaak en de problematiek om een- van tweetalige kinderen te kunnen onderscheiden.

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Urban linguistic landscape research: taking stock and developing perspectives

Mieke Vandembroucke & Stef Slembrouck (Ghent University)

This paper addresses the scope and methodology of past and current enquiry into aspects of written language as encountered in the public space - a paradigm commonly referred to as 'linguistic landscape' research (Gorter 2013; Shohamy 2012). By drawing on our involvement in a number of recent case-studies of urban multilingualism in the Belgian context, we develop a commentary on the relevance and scope of a number of "popular" *theoretical* concepts in LLresearch (e.g. linguistic vitality and ethnolinguistic strength, soundscape, language commodification and fetishization, etc.), as well as discuss the specific affordances and constraints that apply to LL's typical *methods*. LL research is quite diverse in its outlooks and orientations, and the research conducted under this umbrella has often and increasingly been interdisciplinary in nature (in our case-studies we have seen interfaces with social anthropology, urban geography, historical linguistics, language politics, architecture, literacy studies, etc.).

The spectre of empirical case-studies covered in this paper includes larger metropolitan 'superdiverse' capital cities (i.e. Brussels), international tourist centres (i.e. Bruges), immigration-affected provincial capitals (i.e. Ghent), urban centres which bear traces of a highly polarized and politicized linguistic climate (i.e. Kortrijk and Aalst), as well as studies which focus on smaller-scale neighbourhood localities. In each of these cases, the specific urban context and focus of enquiry has called for a particular conceptual-methodological configuration, ranging from more 'traditional' LL approaches with quantitative and interpretative surface discussions, to more historicized, diachronic perspectives, mappings with GIS-data, discourse- and scale-sensitive readings of form and function, as well as highly contextualized interpretative descriptions of "typical" instances of language use, as aptly called for by Stroud & Mpendukana (2009) and Leeman & Modan (2009).

In doing so, this paper takes accounts of how the "scenery" of LL studies was gradually "expanded" (Shohamy & Gorter 2009), in theoretical scope and methodological refinement. In other words: time to take stock, state the *status quaestionis* and develop perspectives on future avenues.

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