

Divergence of dialects in a linguistic laboratory near the Belgian–Dutch–German border: Similar dialects under the influence of different standard languages

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with divergence on the lexical, phonological, and morphological levels in three dialects that were the same until the mid-20th century (Maaseiks in Belgium, Susters in the Netherlands, and Waldfeuchts in Germany) and that have changed under the influence of three different standard languages (Belgian Dutch, Netherlandic Dutch, and Standard German). The investigation is carried out among girls aged 14 to 16 years and women aged 35 to 50 years. Due to the unique laboratory-like situation, it was possible to gain a detailed understanding of the role of the structure of the dialect and the dialect–standard language situation in the process of dialect change under the influence of a standard language. The data indicate that the linguistic route of the change is largely the same for all dialects. This means that the receiving dialect plays an important part in the linguistic embedding of a change. However, the rationale of the linguistic road is still far from clear. The divergence of the similar dialects occurred relatively recently. Whereas the women of the three places use the old dialect forms almost exclusively, the girls use forms of the standard languages or “mixed” forms, especially in Waldfeucht. The dialect of Waldfeucht is clearly affected much more strongly by Standard German than are the dialect of Maaseik by Belgian Dutch and the dialect of Susteren by Netherlandic Dutch. This can be explained by a number of factors: the position of the dialect at school, comprehensibility of the dialect, attitude towards the dialect, and the use of the dialect.

The study of dying dialects has been a focus of interest for dialectologists for centuries. In numerous dialectological studies we find alarmist remarks about the loss of traditional dialect forms at the expense of forms of a standard language.

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There are nevertheless only a few detailed studies about the process of dialect loss under the influence of a standard language. For fear that dialects would fade away before being recorded for posterity, dialectologists have concentrated their investigations on the description of the old dialect forms. It is only recently that attention has been paid to the other side of the process of dialect loss: changes in the dialects under the influence of the standard language (see Hoppenbrouwers, 1990; Münstermann, 1989). This part of the process is of interest since it deepens our insight into the stability of linguistic elements by showing us which elements are more susceptible to influence from another variety and which are less so.

There are in principle three ways of investigating processes of dialect change under the influence of a standard language. A first type of investigation is the study of the influence of standard language A on its dialect X compared with the influence of standard language B on its dialect Y. We find this type of investigation in numerous studies on standardization (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Van Coetsem, 1988). Following Weinreich (1953), Van Coetsem (1988) tried to view the stability of linguistic elements in terms of linguistic levels. According to him the lexicon is the least stable language domain, and phonology and grammar (morphology and syntax) are the more stable ones (Van Coetsem, 1988:26). The extent to which a language or dialect is influenced by another language depends on social factors, such as the intensity of contact between the speakers of the two varieties, the degree to which the standard language is used in the linguistic community, and the attitude of the dialect speakers toward the standard language. More or less the same observations about dialect/language change due to language contact were made by Thomason and Kaufman (1988), who presented a hierarchy of stability of linguistic elements similar to Van Coetsem's. In both treatments, the statements about the stability of linguistic elements were based on numerous previous studies of changes in dialects or languages under pressure from another language. A problematic aspect of this type of approach is that both the embedding of a linguistic element in the linguistic structure of the giving and receiving language and the social aspects of the standard dialect situation are important factors in changes under the influence of a standard language. Since in most cases completely different languages in contact are compared (e.g., the influence of Finnish on Lithuanian is compared with the influence of Spanish on the Uto-Aztec language Nahuatl), both of these factors diverge from one dialect-standard language situation to another. Therefore, it is not surprising that the results of this type of investigation are very often not uniform and do not give us insight into general aspects of the process.

A second type of investigation is the study of the influence of one standard language on different dialects: for example, the influence of Standard Dutch on Dutch dialects or the influence of American English on Canadian French, American Dutch, and American German. This approach seems to represent a step forward compared with the approach just described since in this case only the structure of the receiving language differs from study to study, and the dialect-standard language situations are often very similar. Different studies of the influence of a

standard language on its dialects can give us an interesting picture of the process of dialect change under the influence of a particular standard language. However, it gives us no insight into the process in general since it is always the same standard language that is involved.

A third type of investigation into dialect standardization is the study of changes in similar dialects under the influence of different standard languages. In this case the structure of the receiving dialects is the same, but the structures of the giving languages are different, and the dialect–standard situation differs from dialect to dialect. An advantage of this approach is that it can deepen our insights into the process of dialect change under the influence of standard languages in general and the role of the structure of the dialect and the dialect–standard situation in this process.

These three approaches to dialect change under the influence of a standard language have their pros and cons. Theories of standardization are mostly based on the first two approaches. This is because situations in which similar dialects are subject to the influence of different standard languages are rare. It is clear that a study of dialect change in such a situation could help us to obtain deeper insight into the process of dialect change under the influence of a standard language since the disadvantages and advantages of such a situation differ from those of the first two. We happen to have such a situation at hand here in the Netherlands, in an area not far from the University of Nijmegen. The close proximity of such a laboratory-like situation has given me and my students a wonderful opportunity for investigating the mechanisms of dialect change under the influence of a standard language.

The aim of this study is twofold. We hope to obtain more insight into both the linguistic embedding of dialect change under the influence of a standard language and the social factors that play a role in this process. The social factors, especially the attitudinal factors that affect language change due to contact, have been unjustly neglected in recent studies on the linguistic aspects of borrowing, according to Thomason and Kaufman (1988). In their view, this has obscured the linguistic constraints on borrowing.

DESIGN

Nonlinguistic aspects

The study was performed around the area indicated in Figure 1. The Dutch part of this area is called the waist of the Netherlands. It is the narrowest part of the Netherlands, about 7 kilometers wide. The waist of the Netherlands and the area around it in Belgium and Germany formed a unity from a dialectological and political point of view until 1815. From that date on, the area has been separated by political boundaries. The border between Germany and the Netherlands was determined in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna. The border between Belgium and the Netherlands was the subject of long-lasting negotiations that started in 1830



FIGURE 1. The area of research.

and ended in 1839. From that time on, an area in which one and the same dialect was spoken has been separated by political boundaries. This occurred precisely in a period of increasing literacy rates in Europe. The compulsory education law of Napoleon caused nearly all classes of the European population to become acquainted with the standard languages and the standard language to be used in more and more situations at the expense of the dialect. The consequence of the political boundaries determined in this period (1815–1839) was that similar dialects came under the influence of different standard languages: Belgian Dutch, Netherlandic Dutch, and Standard German.

This is an excellent situation for studying the mechanisms of dialect change under the influence of a standard language. The dialects are the same, but the standard languages that affect the dialects are different. Moreover, the three standard languages do not differ from one another to the same extent. Standard German on the one hand and Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch on the other are quite distinct from each other; they are not easily mutually intelligible. This certainly does not hold for Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch, which are very similar, although there are also important differences between the two variants (Van der Velde, Gerritsen, & Van Hout 1996; Willemys, 1987).

The area of research is attractive for the study of dialect change under the influence of a standard language not only because similar dialects have come

under the influence of different standard languages, but also because the dialect–standard language situation has been different in all three areas. In the Belgian part of the area, Belgian Limburg, French was the official standard language until 1898. From then on, on paper, French was no longer the only official language in Belgium. In real terms, however, French remained the language of administration until 1935. Between 1932 and 1935 laws were introduced requiring the administration of every department to use the language spoken in its area: Belgian Dutch in areas where Dutch dialects were spoken and Belgian French in areas where French dialects were spoken. In the same period schools were required by law to teach in Belgian Dutch in the area where Dutch dialects were spoken, and the University of Ghent officially became Dutch-speaking. This made it possible to complete a Dutch education up to the university level (Deprez, 1981; Treffers-Daller, 1994). The influence of Belgian Dutch on the dialects in the Belgian part of our area has thus been relatively short-lived, at least if we compare it with the influence of the standard language in the other areas.

In the Dutch part of the area, Dutch Limburg, the influence of Netherlandic Dutch was not very important at the beginning of the separation: the inhabitants of the area did not want to become part of the Netherlands, and the Dutch king Willem I was not very eager to govern Dutch Limburg. Some of the inhabitants of Limburg wanted the area to become Belgian, while others wanted it to become German. Until 1866 the area was part of the “Deutsche Bund” and had strong ties with Prussia. Due to the problematic political situation, three standard languages were used in Dutch Limburg until 1866: French (there were newspapers in French like the *Journal du Limbourg*), German, and Netherlandic Dutch, which had been influencing the dialects of Dutch Limburg only since 1866.

In principle, the German dialects in our area would have been influenced by Standard German from 1815 on since compulsory education was introduced in Germany at the end of the 18th century. It has been shown, however, that this law was not very strictly followed in rural areas. As a consequence, it is quite possible that the population of our area became acquainted with Standard German somewhat later than the population of urbanized areas (Besch, 1983).

In the area of research we chose three places: Maaseik in Belgium, Susteren in the Netherlands, and Waldfeucht in Germany. As Figure 1 shows, these places are very close to each other. Maaseik and Susteren are 6 kilometers (about 4.5 miles) apart, and although they are separated by the Maas there is a bridge with a road connecting them. The distance between Waldfeucht and Susteren is also only 6 kilometers (about 4.5 miles), but there is no direct road between them. The link by road is 9 kilometers. There is hardly any public transport across either border, but within two hours one can walk from Maaseik to Waldfeucht along idyllic pastures, rich acres, and fairytale woods.

Susteren and Waldfeucht can be called villages. They are very similar in a number of respects, such as the number of inhabitants, schools, and facilities. Maaseik is somewhat larger—what we would call a small borough. Although we tried to find a village like Susteren and Waldfeucht in the Belgian part of the area

of investigation, we were not able to do so. There is ample evidence that the dialects of the three places were the same until about 1900.

We chose to carry out the investigation among female informants. The reason is that women are more inclined than men to adapt their dialect to the standard language. By studying the language of female informants we increased our chance of finding changes under the influence of the standard language. In each place we investigated two age groups: girls aged 14 to 16 years and women aged 35 to 50 years. We decided on the older age range because it has been shown that people use and know less dialect during this period of their life than in other periods (see Chambers & Trudgill, 1980; Gerritsen, 1985; Mattheier, 1980). In examining the language of that group we hoped to increase our chances of finding changes in the dialect in the direction of the standard language. The younger generation was chosen because we wanted to test whether the differences between the dialect of the oldest sources and that of the women could be interpreted as changes and, if so, whether those changes would have become stronger in the language of the girls. In each cell we tried to find eight informants who were born and had grown up in the place of investigation and who belonged to the middle class. We succeeded in this in five of our six cells. We found only seven girls in Waldfeucht.

Linguistic aspects

It is the purpose of this study to obtain insight into both the linguistic embedding of the standardization of the dialects and the factors that could play a part in this process. Therefore, we investigated not only the adaptation of the dialect to the standard languages, but also the domains in which the dialect was used and the attitude towards the dialect and the standard language. We expected that these data would deepen our insight into some of the social factors that affect standardization. As a consequence, the linguistic part of our design consisted of three parts: (1) a study of changes in the dialects under the influence of one of the three standard languages; (2) a study of the use of the dialects and the standard languages in different domains; and (3) a study of the attitudes towards the dialects and the standard languages.

We intended to investigate the process of standardization at all linguistic levels: phonology, morphology, lexicon, and syntax. Therefore we looked for linguistic variables that were realized identically in the three dialects according to the oldest sources available, which included Wenker (1876), Willems (1885), the questionnaire of the Geographical Society (1879/1895), Roukens (1937), Schrijnen, Van Ginneken, and Verbeeten (1914), the questionnaires of the P.J. Meertens-Institute, and the series of Dutch dialect atlases. In addition, we selected variables with a different realization in the three modern standard languages than in the old dialect. Only on that condition was it possible to investigate whether the three dialects had in fact diverged from each other in adapting to the standard languages. It turned out to be rather difficult to find such variables: many dialect el-

ements have turned into elements of one of the standard languages. Some examples for the phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic levels are given in (1).

(1)	Old Dialect	Standard Netherlandic	Standard Belgian	Standard German
a.	[k] in <i>ook</i> 'also' and <i>ik</i> 'I'	[k]	[k]	[x]
	[ʃ] in <i>schat</i> 'treasure', <i>schaap</i> 'sheep'	[sx]	[sx]	[ʃ]
	[ʃ] in <i>staat</i> 'state', <i>stad</i> 'town'	[s]	[s]	[ʃ]
	[p] in <i>paarden</i> 'horses', <i>appel</i> 'apple'	[p]	[p]	[pf]
	[v] in <i>sterven</i> 'die', <i>erven</i> 'inherit'	[v]	[v]	[b]
b.	<i>ik war</i> 'I was'	<i>ik was</i>	<i>ik was</i>	<i>ich war</i>
c.	<i>wie</i> 'how'	<i>hoe</i>	<i>hoe</i>	<i>wie</i>
	Teller	<i>bord</i>	<i>bord</i>	<i>Teller</i>
d.	<i>dass ik es kan maken</i> 'that I can make it'	<i>kan maken</i>	<i>kan maken</i>	<i>machen kann</i>

It was difficult to determine the syntax of the old dialect since hardly any dialect texts from the past exist. For this reason we decided not to consider syntactic phenomena.

We elicited words for the concepts in (2) by presenting the informants with pictures of them.

(2)	Old Dialect	Standard Netherlandic Dutch	Standard Belgian Dutch	Standard German
	'orange'	appelsien	sinasappel	Apfelsine
	'trousers'	boks	broek	Hose
	'fork'	forsjet	vork	Gabel
	'onion'	un	ui/ajuin	Zwiebel
	'matches'	swegelkens	lucifers	Streichhölzer
	'frog'	kwakkert	kikker	Frosch
	'bulb'	peer	lamp	Birne

Because in many cases the original dialect variant has become either Netherlandic Dutch, Belgian Dutch, or Standard German, we were able to find only two phonological variables with variants that were identical in the three dialects, but that differed in all three modern standard languages: (1) old dialect [u], which has [oey] in Standard Dutch and [au] in Standard German in words like *huis* 'house' and *uit* 'out'; and (2) old dialect [ndj], which has [nd] in Standard Dutch and [n] in Standard German in words like *tanden* 'teeth'. We obtained our phonological data by asking the informants to provide an oral translation into their dialect of sentences containing words with the relevant phonemes in the respective standard languages.

A number of morphological items were investigated, but here we only report on pluralization and diminutive formation. The data for the plural forms of the seven nouns investigated are summarized in (3).

(3) Standard Belgian/ Netherlandic Dutch	Standard German	Old Dialect
hoeden 'hats'	Hüte	[høt] (sg. [ho.t])
muizen 'mice'	Mäuse	[my.s] (sg. [mu.s])
buiken 'stomachs'	Bäuche	[by.k] (sg. [bu.k])
steden 'cities'	Städte	[stej] (sg. [ʃtat])
voeten 'feet'	Füße	[vøt] (sg. [vo.t])
schapen 'sheep'	Schafe	[ʃøp] (sg. [ʃoap])
hemden 'undershirts'	Hemden	[humməs] (sg. [hummə])

In the majority of cases the dialects form the plural by means of an umlaut: for example, [mu.s] 'mouse' has the plural form [my.s]. In Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch, the plural of these nouns is formed by the addition of the ending [-ə] to the singular form, and in Standard German it is formed by an umlaut and the addition of [-ə] ([moisə]) or by the addition of [-ə] alone. In one case, the plural formation of the dialect was not formed by an umlaut, but by means of a suffix distinct from those found in the standard languages: [humməs] 'undershirts'.

Diminutive formation concerns the diminutive forms of two nouns. The data are listed in (4).

(4) Standard Belgian/ Netherlandic Dutch	Standard German	Old Dialect
neusje 'little nose'	Näschen	[nɛskə] (sg. nondiminutive [na.s])
handje 'little hand'	Händchen	[hɛntjə] (sg. nondiminutive [hantj])

In both cases the diminutive is formed in the dialect by an umlaut and the addition of the suffix [-kə] or [-jə]. In Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch, the diminutive is formed by the addition of the suffix [-jə] to the singular form, and in Standard German it is formed by an umlaut and the addition of the suffix [-xən] to the singular.

The data for plural and diminutive forms were obtained by presenting the informants with pictures of the concepts and asking them to make a plural and diminutive form.

The use of the dialect in different situations was investigated through a written questionnaire containing 19 questions about the use of dialect by the informant. The informant had to indicate on a 5-point scale whether she would use the dialect in a particular situation and whether she thought it suitable to use the dialect in that situation. The questions were centered on three subthemes: (1) formal situations (doctor, pastor, somebody with whom you are not familiar), (2) solidarity situations (friends, sports club), and (3) family (grandparents, children in the family, parents). We had two parallel lists: one for the women, with situations that were typical for women, and one for the girls, with situations that were typical for girls (Boves & Gerritsen, 1995:181). In order to demonstrate to the informants what we meant by dialect, we played a tape for them with a fragment

of the dialect under investigation before we started with the domain questions. We did this because we suspected that the very divergent results concerning the use of dialect in Germany and the Netherlands—in Germany it would be used less than in the Netherlands (see Hagen, 1986; Macha, 1986; Wegener, 1986)—might be the result of German and Dutch speakers having different ideas about what a dialect is.

Attitude towards the dialect was investigated by means of a matched guise experiment. In each place we let the informants hear six fragments of the same story in different variants: the dialect of Maaseik, Standard Belgian Dutch, the dialect of Susteren, Standard Netherlandic Dutch, the dialect of Waldfeucht, and Standard German. The fragments were spoken by three males, aged about 50, who were born and had grown up in the place under investigation. After each fragment the informants were asked to indicate 13 personality traits of the speaker on a 5-point scale.

PROCEDURE

The informants were interviewed by two students of sociolinguistics from the University of Nijmegen. In Maaseik and Susteren, the interviewers interviewed in Standard Dutch, and in Waldfeucht they interviewed in German (i.e., in the “standard” variety that they had learned in school). The different parts of the interview were ordered as follows: domains, lexicon, phonology, morphology, and attitude. The girls were interviewed at school, and the women were interviewed at home. Informants were asked to speak the dialect in the way that they normally did. All interviews were recorded with a cassette recorder, transcribed, and coded. The data were analyzed using SPSS programs.

RESULTS

In this section, we discuss the results of our investigation. We examine the changes at the lexical, phonological, and morphological levels. Our purpose is to see whether the results of the investigation of the domains in which the dialects are used and of the attitude towards the dialects and the standard languages can explain the changes in the dialects under the influence of the standard languages.

Lexical level

For the seven concepts we investigated only two types of variants seemed to occur: dialect variants or variants of the standard languages. Table 1 shows clearly that, in all dialects, the girls use fewer dialect forms than do the women. This strong age difference seems to indicate that the lexicon of the dialect has given way, or is going to give way, to the standard languages. Moreover, Table 1 indicates that there is less use of dialect variants by the women and girls from Waldfeucht than by those from the other places. The process of adaptation to the standard language on the lexical level has clearly proceeded further in Waldfeucht than in

TABLE 1. *Number of dialect responses for each lexical item, total number of dialect responses, and total number of standard responses*

Concepts	Maaseik (Belgium)		Susteren (The Netherlands)		Waldfeucht (Germany)	
	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 8)	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 8)	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 7)
'orange'	8	7	7	7	6	2
'trousers'	8	7	8	7	8	3
'fork'	7	8	8	6	8	3
'onion'	7	6	7	6	4	3
'matches'	8	4	8	4	7	0
'frog'	6	1	7	2	0	0
'bulb'	1	0	2	0	0	0
Total dialect responses	45	33	47	32	33	11
	80%	61%	87%	65%	60%	24%
Total standard responses	11	21	7	17	22	35
	20%	39%	13%	35%	40%	76%
Missing cases	0	2	2	7	1	3

Maaseik and Susteren. We find this divergence in the language of the women, and it is even more marked in the language of the girls.

It is striking that lexical standardization has not taken place in all the words to the same extent. For example, nearly all the women in each of the three places used the dialect form for 'trousers' and 'matches'. For 'matches' there is a difference between women and girls but not for 'trousers'. This difference in adaptation to the standard language could be due to differences in frequency of occurrence between 'trousers' and 'matches'. According to frequency counts of modern spoken and written Dutch based on 727,302 tokens (Uit den Boogaert, 1975:378, 396), the frequency of 'matches' is 9 and that of 'trousers' is 38. It is well-known from dialectological studies that dialect words for concepts that hardly occur in a speech community are apt to disappear more quickly than dialect words for concepts that occur frequently. Our data confirm this theory; this is apparent from the following hierarchy of adaptation to the standard language of the different lexical items in the language of the girls and the frequency of the lexical items in the frequency list of Uit den Boogaert (1975): 'bulb' (0) > 'frog' (0) > 'matches' (9) > 'onion' (13) > 'orange' (7) > 'fork' (13) > 'trousers' (38).

Phonological level

Only two variants occurred in our phonological data: the dialect variant or the variant of the standard language. Table 2 shows for each phonological item the number of dialect responses, the total number of dialect responses, and the total number of standard language responses. It shows that in Maaseik and Susteren

TABLE 2. *Number of dialect responses for each phonological item, total number of dialect responses, and total number of standard responses*

	Maaseik (Belgium)		Susteren (The Netherlands)		Waldfeucht (Germany)	
	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 8)	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 8)	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 7)
[u] in <i>huis</i>	8	7	8	6	8	3
[u] in <i>uit</i>	7	6	8	6	8	1
[ndj] in <i>tanden</i>	4	5	7	4	0	0
Total dialect responses	19	18	23	16	16	4
	83%	86%	96%	100%	66%	19%
Total standard responses	4	3	1	0	8	17
	17%	14%	4%	0%	34%	81%
Missing cases	1	3	0	8	0	0

women and girls hardly differ in use of phonological dialect forms, but that the difference between the two age groups is very large in Waldfeucht. The table indicates that the speakers from Waldfeucht use far fewer dialect forms than do those from Maaseik and Susteren. There are, however, greater dialect differences between the girls than between the women. The phonological data indicate as strongly as the lexical data do that the dialects of the three places are diverging.

Although the differences between the age groups and dialects in the distribution of dialect and standard variants are similar for all three phonological variables, there is a difference in the extent of adaptation to the standard language. If there is adaptation to the standard language in a dialect, [ndj] is more adapted than [u]. Following Labov (1972:237) and Schirmunsky (1930) we would expect some dialect variants to be more striking ("primary dialect characteristics" in Schirmunsky's terms or "markers" or stereotypes" in Labov's) than others ("secondary dialect characteristics" in Schirmunsky's terms or "indicators" in Labov's). In both theories the most striking variants would be more apt to change in the direction of the standard language than the less striking ones. The difference in adaptation to the standard language between [u] and [ndj] can perhaps be explained in this way. This would mean that [ndj] instead of [nd] is more striking than [u] instead of [oey] and [au]. We doubt this. In our view the difference between dialectal [u] and standard language [oey] and [au] is more striking than the difference between dialectal [ndj] and standard [nd]. It could be that the informants tried to speak their dialect as well as possible (this was exactly what we asked them to do), and that they realized that the [oey] and [au] from their respective standard languages was pronounced as [u] in the dialect, since the difference is so striking. But it could be that they did not realize that [nd] in the standard language was realized as [ndj] in the dialects, simply because the difference is not that striking.

Morphological level

The results of our study of plural and diminutive formation in the dialects show that dialect forms and forms of the standard languages occurred as well as other “mixed” forms. Five different categories were distinguished in all:

1. Complete adaptations to the standard language. In this category, plurals and diminutives are formed with the elements of the respective standard languages. This sometimes means that the dialect word is used, but that pluralization occurs with the elements of the standard language, as in sg. [mu.s] versus pl. [mu.zə] in Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch. Here we have the dialect form in the singular but the plural formation of the standard language.
2. Dialect forms. The form that occurs is the original dialect form according to the oldest sources.
3. Partial adaptations to the standard language. This category is exemplified by a plural formation with both an umlaut and the addition of the suffix *-[ə]* in Maaseik or Susteren ([hətə] ‘hats’), whereas the dialectal forms are sg. [ho.t] versus pl. [hət].
4. Hypercorrections. These are forms with morphological elements that occur neither in the dialect nor in the standard language, but that can be considered an attempt to create a form of the standard language. The only example in our data is [ʃtatə] ‘cities’ in Maaseik and Susteren (cf. dialectal plural [ʃte] and standard plural [ste.də]). The dialect speakers use the Standard and Belgian Dutch process of forming plurals: there is no umlaut and the addition of *-[ə]*. But in Standard and Belgian Dutch the plural of [stat] is an exception, and the form with umlaut, [ste.də], has become the norm.
5. Hyperdialectalisms. These are forms with morphological elements that occur neither in the standard language nor in the dialect, but that can be considered an attempt to create a dialect form. An example is [hantjə] ‘little hand’ in Waldfeucht (dialect [hentje], Standard German *Händchen*).

Table 3 shows the occurrence of the five categories for all of the morphological items. We computed results for the seven plurals in (3) and the two diminutives in (4) after a reliability test involving only the dialect and the standard forms showed a very high reliability for the seven pluralization items (alpha .87), the two diminutives (alpha .81), and the plurals and diminutives combined (alpha .81).

It is apparent from Table 3 that categories other than standard and dialect forms (partial adaptation to the standard language, hypercorrection, hyperdialectalism) are by far in the minority (8% of all occurrences), and that they occur almost only in the language of the girls. The women use mostly dialect forms. As we will see, the spread of mixed forms provides insight into the solidity of a dialect, but we can understand this better after dealing with the differences in the distribution of dialect and standard forms.

It is apparent from the first and second rows in Table 3 that the age and dialect differences are in line with the results for the lexical and the phonological data. Specifically, the younger generation uses fewer dialect forms than the older generation, and the speakers from Waldfeucht use fewer dialect forms than those from Maaseik and Susteren. The age difference again is much larger in Wald-

TABLE 3. *Occurrence of dialect forms, standard forms, partial adaptations to the standard language, hypercorrections, and hyperdialectalisms*

	Maaseik (Belgium)		Susteren (The Netherlands)		Waldfeucht (Germany)		Total
	Women (<i>N</i> = 8)	Girls (<i>N</i> = 8)	Women (<i>N</i> = 8)	Girls (<i>N</i> = 8)	Women (<i>N</i> = 8)	Girls (<i>N</i> = 7)	
Dialect forms	68	44	67	47	51	4	281
	96%	64%	93%	75%	89%	7%	72%
Standard forms	3	21	3	8	2	38	75
	4%	30%	4%	13%	4%	63%	19%
Partial adaptations	0	3	1	2	1	2	9
	0%	4%	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%
Hypercorrections	0	1	1	4	0	0	6
	0%	1%	1%	6%	0%	0%	1%
Hyperdialectalisms	0	0	0	2	3	16	21
	0%	0%	0%	3%	5%	27%	5%
Total	71	69	72	63	57	60	392
Missing cases	1	3	0	9	15	3	31

feucht than in Maaseik and Susteren. The difference in the use of dialect forms between the women from the three places is much smaller than is the difference between the girls. The girls from Waldfeucht use far less dialect forms than those from Susteren and Maaseik. The divergence of the dialects in pluralization and diminutive formation is clearly recent. Whereas we found some clear differences in the use of lexical and phonological dialect forms among the women from the three places, we found no difference in use of the morphological aspects, an issue to which we will return.

Now that we have some insight into the differences between the groups in the use of standard and dialect forms, we can consider the occurrence of the other morphological variants we found—partial adaptations to the standard languages, hypercorrections, and hyperdialectalisms—in the context of the results mentioned earlier.

The occurrence of partial adaptations to the standard languages, hypercorrections, and hyperdialectalisms indicates a rather weak knowledge of the dialect. The persons who utter those forms surely want to use the dialect form. They realize that the dialect forms differ from those of the standard language, but they do not know exactly in which aspects. This poor knowledge of morphological dialect forms indicates that the dialect is in decay in this respect. In view of the fact that the language of the younger generation—and particularly the one from Waldfeucht—is most affected by the standard languages, it is not surprising that we find these mixed forms nearly exclusively in the language of the girls, especially in Waldfeucht (30% of the responses; in Maaseik, 5%; in Susteren, 12%; see Table 3).

It is noticeable that the three types of mixed variants are not evenly distributed among the girls of the three places. Partial adaptations to the standard languages and hypercorrections occur especially in the language of the girls from Maaseik and Susteren, and hyperdialectalisms occur especially in the language of the girls from Waldfeucht. This spread can, in our view, be explained by the differences in knowledge of the dialect. It appears from Tables 1 and 2 that the girls from Maaseik and Susteren use more dialect forms than do those from Waldfeucht. This better knowledge of the dialect is also reflected in the mixed forms that they use; those are the forms that have a certain connection with the dialect. The partial adaptations are a mixture of dialect and standard language forms, and the hypercorrections consist of a wrong application of a rule that relates standard and dialect forms. But the hyperdialectalisms that the German girls use bear no relationship to the dialect. They are in fact the forms of Standard and Belgian Dutch. We believe that the girls wanted to do us a favor and therefore used forms that they held to be dialect forms. Their use of Standard Dutch forms indicates that they have barely any knowledge of their dialect. This is in line with the results of our survey. Moreover, the use of Standard Dutch forms shows that they have the feeling that Standard Dutch is a kind of dialect of Standard German. It is remarkable that the girls from Maaseik and Susteren never use the forms of Standard German. They probably know German too well—because they learn it at school and watch German television programs—to regard German forms as dialect forms.

The question arises: why do partial adaptations to the standard language—specifically hypercorrections and hyperdialectalisms—occur in our morphological data but not in our lexical and phonological data? Maybe morphological adaptation is less a question of either dialect or standard language but is more apt to intermediate forms.

There are hardly differences in adaptation to the standard languages among the women from the three places. They all use the dialect forms frequently. There are, however, important differences between the girls from Maaseik and Susteren on the one hand and those from Waldfeucht on the other. The younger generation in Waldfeucht hardly ever uses true dialect variants. Instead, they use standard forms or hyperdialectalisms. This indicates that the dialect is almost extinct in this group.

DISCUSSION

In this section we summarize the results for all the linguistic levels and attempt to explain them. We begin with the differences between generations and dialects. We then discuss the hierarchy of adaptation to the standard languages.

Differences between generations and dialects

Tables 1, 2, and 3 show that there are differences between the generations in adaptation to the standard language. For nearly all variables in all dialects—the only exception being ‘fork’ in Maaseik—the girls have adapted their language

use to the standard language to a greater degree than have the women. Although the women from Waldfeucht have adapted their language more than have the women from Maaseik and Susteren, the gap between the generations is most evident in Waldfeucht. The dialects are diverging, and this is especially due to the changes in the dialect of the girls of Waldfeucht.

The question to be answered is, why have the girls from Waldfeucht adapted their dialect to the standard language more than the girls from Maaseik and Susteren? In what follows we discuss four possible reasons: dialect in the school, distance between dialect and standard language, domains, and attitude.

Dialect in the school. Waldfeucht is located in Germany, which has a policy of requiring Standard German to be spoken in the schools. The German government promoted this policy in the 1950s and 1960s by appointing teachers from one dialect area to schools in another. As a consequence teachers were forced to require Standard German from their pupils—otherwise they would not have been able to understand them. This German policy is quite different from the one that has been promoted in the Netherlands and Belgium. In these countries teachers are encouraged to speak dialect with the pupils at school, to teach in the dialect, and even to teach reading and writing with the dialect as the point of departure. There are even primers in the dialect of Limburg. This attitude towards the use of the dialect is completely different from the one in Germany.

Distance between dialect and standard language. Another reason for the discrepancy among the girls could be that the dialect of Waldfeucht differs from Standard German far more than does the dialect of Susteren from Netherlandic Dutch or the dialect of Maaseik from Netherlandic Belgian. This is because Standard German is based on the dialects spoken in the south of Germany, approximately 400 kilometers from Waldfeucht, while Standard Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch are based on the dialects spoken in the western part of the area, approximately 150 kilometers from Maaseik and Susteren. As a result, the need to learn the standard language is much greater for the dialect speakers from Waldfeucht than for those from Maaseik and Susteren. It is plausible that, due to the development of modern communications since the 1950s, the younger generation in Germany has felt this need to speak Standard German much more strongly than the older generation. In addition, the women from Waldfeucht may have experienced problems associated with dialect speaking and decided to bring up their children speaking Standard German. This explanation is supported by the evaluations by my informants of the statement, "Dialect speakers have more problems at school than speakers of the standard language." The means of the ratings on a 5-point scale with the poles yes (1) and no (5) showed a significant difference between Waldfeucht ($M = 1.7$) on the one hand and Susteren ($M = 3.6$) and Maaseik ($M = 3.7$) on the other (analysis of variance with Tukey post-hoc tests: $F = 7.22$, $df = 2$, $p = .00$).

Domains. The dialect is used less in Waldfeucht than in the other two places. It is generally assumed that a relationship exists between the function of a dialect

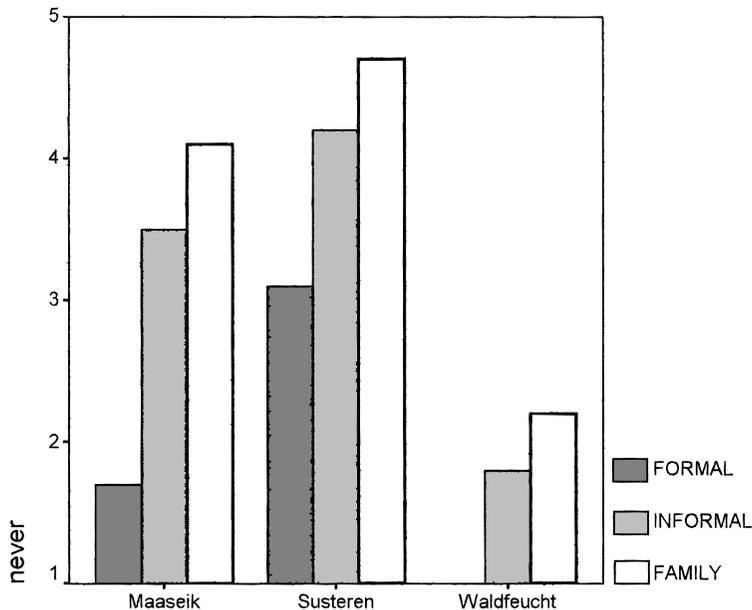


FIGURE 2. Reported use of the dialect and the standard language by girls in three situations (1 = never, 5 = always).

in a speech community and the extent to which the standard language encroaches on it (Aitchison, 1991:197; Dorian, 1981; Dressler, 1981). Figure 2 presents the results of my study of the reported use of dialects and the standard languages by girls in formal, solidarity, and family situations. As is evident from it, speakers from Waldfeucht use their dialect in fewer situations than do those from Maaseik or Susteren. Indeed, speakers from Waldfeucht never use dialect in formal situations. This could explain why the dialect in Waldfeucht has given way to the standard language more than have the dialects of Maaseik and Susteren.

Figure 2 shows a clear hierarchy in the use of the standard language instead of the dialect in all three places: formal > informal > family. This hierarchy is completely in line with findings from other studies of the use of dialects and standard languages in different domains (Fishman, 1972; Münstermann, 1989).

Attitude. The behavior of the girls from Waldfeucht could be attributed to the fact that they have a more negative attitude towards their dialect. It has been shown that a positive attitude towards a dialect results in less adaptation to the standard language than does a negative attitude (Labov, 1963, 1966). The results of our study of the attitude towards the dialects and the standard languages confirm this sociolinguistic generalization.

Only 8 of the 13 personality traits that the speakers were asked to evaluate showed significant differences between the standard speaker and the dialect

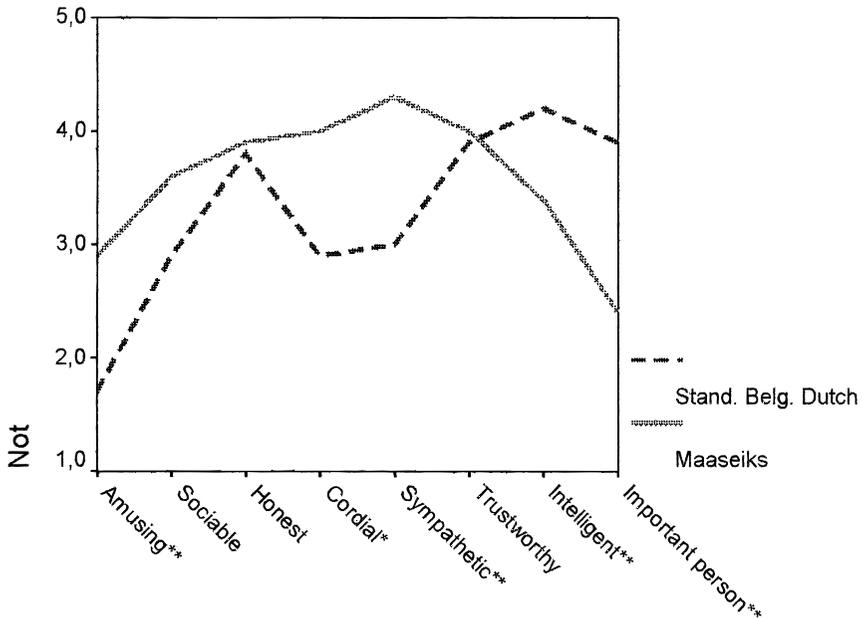


FIGURE 3. Means of the personality trait scores of the informants from Maaseik for the Maaseik guise and the Belgian Dutch guise, with the significance of the differences according to *t* tests (paired samples). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (1 = no, 5 = yes).

speaker. Therefore, only those 8 traits were studied. The other 5 (arrogant, well-organized, smart, self-confident, and cheerful) were left out of consideration. Figure 3 shows the means of the personality trait scores of the informants from Maaseik, for the Maaseik dialect speaker and the Netherlandic Belgian speaker, Figure 4 shows the scores of the informants from Susteren, for the Susteren dialect speaker and the Netherlandic Dutch speaker, and Figure 5 shows the scores of the informants of Waldfeucht, for the Waldfeucht dialect speaker and the Standard German speaker. The data for women and girls were collapsed since *t* tests for independent samples showed no significant differences between them.

The evaluations of the personality traits of the speaker in the Susteren guise are significantly more positive than are those of the same speaker in the Netherlandic Dutch guise, indicating that the women and girls from Susteren have a very positive attitude towards their dialect. Figure 4 shows that the speakers from Maaseik have an almost equally positive attitude towards their dialect. There are, however, two exceptions. When the speaker speaks Standard Belgian, he is considered a more intelligent and a more important person than when he speaks the dialect of Maaseik. The attitude of the speakers from Waldfeucht towards their dialect is completely different, as is evident from Figure 5. There is only one significant difference in the evaluation of the speaker in the Waldfeucht guise and the same

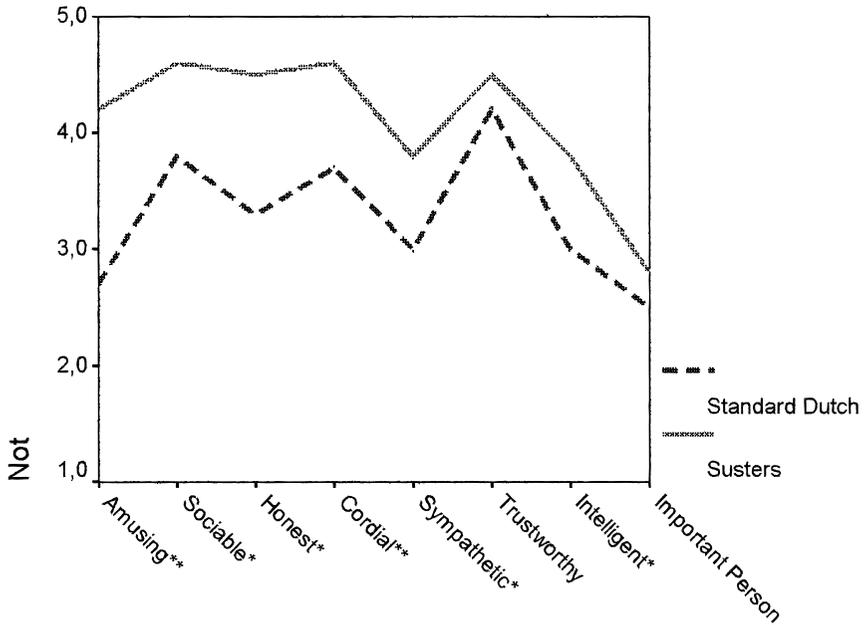


FIGURE 4. Means of the personality trait scores of the informants from Susteren for the Susteren guise and the Standard Dutch guise, with the significance of the differences according to *t* tests (paired samples). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (1 = no, 5 = yes).

speaker in the Standard German guise, indicating that our informants from Waldfeucht have a rather negative attitude towards their dialect. Specifically, in the Standard German guise, the speaker is considered to be more trustworthy than in the dialect guise. Figures 3, 4, and 5 clearly show that the attitude towards the dialect is less positive in Waldfeucht than it is in Maaseik and Susteren. This could account for why the dialect in Waldfeucht is more affected by the standard language.

In this section we have put forward a number of considerations that could explain the differential rate of adaptation to the standard language between the dialect of Waldfeucht on the one hand and the dialects of Maaseik and Susteren on the other. We have some idea of the social factors that influence standardization: tolerance of the dialect in the school, distance of the dialect to the standard language, the domains in which the dialect is used, and attitude towards the dialect. It goes without saying that all of those factors are interconnected.

It is remarkable that we find hardly any differences in adaptation to the standard languages between Maaseik and Susteren because the social history of the dialect–standard language situation in Belgium is quite different from that in the Netherlands in two aspects. First, the influence of Belgian Dutch on the dialects in Belgium is more recent than the influence of Netherlandic Dutch on the dia-

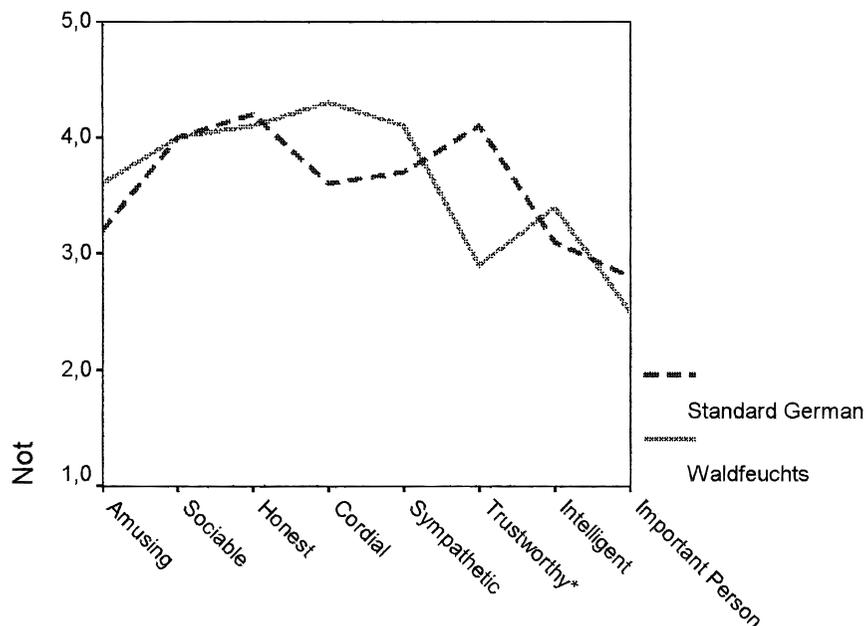


FIGURE 5. Means of the personality trait scores of the informants from Waldfeucht for the Waldfeucht guise and the Standard German guise, with the significance of the differences according to *t* tests (paired samples). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (1 = no, 5 = yes).

lects in the Netherlands. Second, Belgium has had a linguistic conflict since its emergence as a nation. It has not one but two standard languages: Belgian Dutch and Belgian French. It would be plausible to assume that dialect speakers who have had to struggle for the official use of a standard language related to their own dialect might have adapted their dialect to the standard language more than dialect speakers who have not had to struggle for its use. However, our study shows that this consideration is apparently outweighed by the four factors just discussed.

Hierarchy of adaptation to the standard languages

In this section we discuss the linguistic embedding of the changes in light of general theories concerning the influence of one variety on another. There is an enormous adaptation to the standard language on nearly all levels, but there are great differences in adaptation among different variables. Table 4 indicates for each element the percentage of standard language responses. We have tried to arrange the data in such a way that the adaptation to the standard languages decreases from top to bottom.

Table 4 shows that the linguistic route of the adaptation to the standard language is largely the same for all dialects and both age groups. 'Lamp', 'frog', 'matches', and the pronunciation [ndj] in *tanden* have adapted to the standard

TABLE 4. *Adaptation to the standard language by different linguistic elements (based on Tables 1–3)*

	Maaseik (Belgium)		Susteren (The Netherlands)		Waldfeucht (Germany)	
	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 8)	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 8)	Women (N = 8)	Girls (N = 7)
'lamp'	88%	100%	75%	100%	100%	100%
'frog'	25%	88%	12%	71%	100%	100%
'matches'	0%	50%	0%	43%	0%	100%
[ndj]	50%	29%	12%	0%	100%	100%
[u] in <i>uit</i>	0%	14%	0%	0%	0%	85%
'orange'	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	71%
'onion'	12%	25%	0%	14%	50%	57%
'fork'	12%	0%	0%	14%	0%	50%
morphology	4%	30%	4%	13%	4%	63%
'trousers'	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	40%
[u] in <i>huis</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	57%

languages more than have the other items. It is striking that not all the items of a certain level are adapted to the same extent. Earlier we mentioned the hierarchy of instability of linguistic elements proposed by Van Coetsem (1988), which corresponds largely to the one proposed by Thomason and Kaufman (1988:74): lexicon > syntax and phonology > morphology. According to this hierarchy, lexical elements are the most unstable, followed by syntactic and phonological elements. Morphological elements are the most stable linguistic elements. Our data are not consistent with this hierarchy. The morphological elements are not in fact the most stable ones: 'trousers' and the [u] in *huis* have adapted even less to the standard language. Both Van Coetsem and Thomason and Kaufman based their hierarchy on studies of the influence of one language on another. It is plausible, however, that the hierarchy of stability would be somewhat different in a situation in which a dialect is influenced by its associated standard language. For one thing, the structural resemblance between dialect and standard is apt to be greater than the structural resemblance between one language and another. In addition the dialect–standard language situation is different from the standard language–standard language situation. In this connection, it is interesting to compare our data with the hierarchy of instability of dialect elements found by Van Bree (1985) in a study of the adaptation of two dialects in the Netherlands to Netherlandic Dutch: word order > lexicon (content words) > morphology (3 sg. pret.) > morphology (plural formation) > morphology (diminutive formation) > lexicon (function words) > morphology (3 sg. pres.) > lexical/phonological aspects > syntactic constructions resembling their Netherlandic Dutch counterparts. His hierarchy differs considerably from that of Van Coetsem and of Thomason and Kaufman, but our data are just as inconsistent with the former as with the latter.

In particular, the content words are expected to be the least stable elements and the phonological aspects the most stable. But Table 4 shows clearly that this holds neither for all the dialects nor for either of the age groups. Our data instead seem to support the contention that there are so many factors involved in language change due to contact that it is impossible to set up a universal order of decay of linguistic elements (Dressler, 1981; Hagen & De Bot, 1990).

Table 4 indicates relatively strongly that the hierarchy we found is correct since it holds well for the three places as well as for the two generations. This indicates that the structure of the receiving language plays an important part in standardization, apparently determining to a high degree which elements are apt to change in the direction of a standard language and which are not. It is the unique laboratory-like design of our study that has enabled us to gain insight into the role of the receiving dialect in the process of standardization.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have shown that three places that are situated within less than 12 kilometers (about 8 miles) of each other and that shared the same dialect up to 1900 have diverged under pressure from different standard languages. Close study of the linguistic changes that have taken place in the dialects reveals that the linguistic embedding of the change is the same in all three dialects, but that the dialects differ from each other in the rate of standardization. This process has proceeded much faster in Waldfeucht than in Maaseik and Susteren, which can be explained by a number of factors: the position of the dialect at school, comprehensibility of the dialect, attitudes towards the dialect, and frequency of use of the dialect. The fact that there are not so many differences among the women of the different places but a large number among the girls (cf. Tables 1–3) indicates that the separation took place relatively recently. Hardly any dialect forms are used by the girls of Waldfeucht, where the dialect seems to have died out almost completely. This is apparent not only from the low occurrence of dialect variants, but also from the fact that the dialect is hardly ever spoken in any situation and it is regarded with a negative attitude.

The political boundary between the Netherlands and Germany has led to a dialect boundary. It is therefore necessary to revise statements about this area in sociolinguistics textbooks such as the following: "In the border area speakers of the local varieties of Dutch and German do still remain largely intelligible to one another" (Wardhaugh, 1986:28). Whereas some decades ago the inhabitants from both sides of the border could indeed communicate with each other in their own dialect, this is now impossible, especially for the younger generation. The dialects have separated on all linguistic levels, but it is divergence on the lexical level (particularly regarding words for modern concepts such as 'retirement pay', 'television', and 'unemployment insurance') that especially hampers communication (Gerritsen, 1993). These results show that political factors can have a strong effect on dialect change.

The border between the Netherlands and Belgium, however, has not led to a sharp separation of the dialects. Although we find changes in the direction of the standard languages in both Maaseik and Susteren, these dialects have hardly died out. Indeed, given that we investigated the group that generally shows the greatest adaptation to the standard language (i.e., women aged 35 to 50 years), we can even state that the dialect is fully alive. It is therefore plausible that in other groups in these places the dialect is affected even less by the standard language.

The hierarchy in linguistic elements of adaptation to the standard languages does not corroborate other studies on language change due to language contact. This is consistent with the idea that there are so many factors involved in the standardization of dialects that a universal order of loss of dialect elements cannot be set up. The fact that the hierarchy we found holds for both generations as well as for the three places shows that the structure of the receiving language plays an important part in standardization. It is evident that more research in this field is needed in order to obtain insight into patterns of borrowing and the causes of the patterns. I hope that the laboratory-like situation of our study, in which three similar dialects are influenced by three different standard languages, has contributed to our understanding of the complex relationship between social and linguistic factors in dialect change under the influence of standard languages.

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