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The adoption of sound change : synchronic and diachronic processing of regional variation in Dutch

Voeten, C.C.

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Cesko Voeten

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Synchronic and diachronic processing of regional variation in Dutch

This dissertation investigates how sound change is adopted by speakers and listeners, based on a currently-ongoing cluster of changes in Dutch termed the 'Polder shift'. The main aim of the dissertation is to form a bridge between five key areas of linguistics: historical phonology, sociophonetics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, and quantitative linguistics. A unified account of these different angles to the study of sound change is not trivial. This dissertation uses psycholinguistic experiments combined with detailed quantitative analysis to study the contributions of the different components to the adoption of sound change in the medium and long term.

The population studied in this dissertation is *sociolinguistic migrants*: in this case, Flemish speakers of Dutch who have migrated to the Netherlands, and thereby migrated from a non-Polder-shift area to a Polder-shift area. The methods adopted in this dissertation include a corpus study of regional variation, longitudinal psycholinguistic experiments over nine months' time, cross-sectional psycholinguistic experiments spanning multiple decades of apparent time, and two neurolinguistic studies using EEG. Results show that the sociolinguistic migrants rapidly acquire allophonic variation at the phonological level (albeit not necessarily the associated sociolinguistic knowledge), but that it takes a long time (more than nine months, up to multiple decades) for this to carry forward to their behavioral production and perception, and moreover is subject to significant individual differences. The contributions by this dissertation show how the fundamentally sociolinguistic phenomenon of sound change can be studied empirically using psycho- and neurolinguistics, and profit from recent innovations in statistics.

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Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics
Landelijke Onderzoekschool Taalwetenschap



Universiteit
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Centre for Linguistics

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