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Dialect en dialectverandering in Katwijk aan Zee

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Summary

Dialect and dialect change in Katwijk aan Zee

This book is about the dialect spoken in Katwijk aan Zee, an old fishing village in the province of South Holland on the West Coast of the Netherlands. Chapter 1 (the introduction) begins with a short sociological description of the town: Katwijk aan Zee has always been a rather closed community and this has contributed to the survival of its dialect. Even today, it is said that the dialect can be clearly distinguished from Standard Dutch. This is the more remarkable because *Katwijks* is spoken in the so-called *Randstad*, an urban conglomerate where Standard Dutch reigns supreme. *Katwijks* is also quite distinct from the neighbouring South Holland dialects. The dialect is conservative, though, just like any other dialect, nowadays, is subject to change. More and more dialect elements are being replaced by standard elements (*structure loss*). The book deals with the precise course of this process.

After a survey of the extant literature in and about *Katwijks*, including Overdiep & Varkevisser 1940 and 1949, used as source material for this book, provisional goals are formulated in a closing paragraph. The rate of change is not the same for all elements, nor do they all remain stable for the same length of time. As appears from earlier research, there is likely to be a hierarchy of stability. The first aim is to investigate the differences in stability further. The second is to find out the extent to which certain factors such as, for instance, frequency, influence these differences.

The theoretical background of structure loss is discussed in chapter 2. Structure loss has to do with the stability of language elements. In this context it is useful to make a distinction between *V-stability*, that is, stability related to the variety, and *S-stability*, that is, stability related to the speaker. *V-stability* has to do with how the dialect (variety) changes from generation to generation, diachronically, from year to year. *V-stability* can be substantially accounted for on the basis of *S-stability*. In *S-stability* the speaker is central and stability can be seen as a psychological phenomenon.

S-stability comes clearly to the fore in the process of second language acquisition. In this process, a dominant L1 and a non-dominant L2 language are distinguished. In the course of second language acquisition, a L1 speaker introduces L1 elements into L2 and vice versa. Elements from L1, such as, for instance, pronunciation characteristics, that a L1 speaker is likely to incorporate while speaking L2, are *stable* elements. The speaker himself is hardly aware of them. Elements which are not likely to be introduced into L2 from L1, but which are likely to be borrowed from L2 and introduced (loaned) into L1, such as, for instance, content words, are *unstable* elements. The speaker is more aware of these. From the point of

view of L1 it is a question of an alternatively slight or strong *take up* of a L2 element. From the point of view of L2 it is a question of alternatively strong or slight *transfer* of a L1 element coupled with a poor or good *acquisition* of the matching L2 element. In other words, transfer and acquisition are complementary and, in this book, we concentrate on both these phenomena.

The basis for the extent of S-stability or the degree of awareness is laid down in the process of first language acquisition. The S-stability resulting from that process is called *inherent S-stability*. That is the stability that the elements have of themselves. The degree of inherent S-stability is determined by a number of *primary factors*. In the second language acquisition process, *secondary factors* also play a role. These factors, in contrast with the primary factors, have to do with the fortuitous characteristics or state of the languages concerned. A combination of primary and secondary factors gives rise to the ultimate, total extent of the S-stability.

We can distinguish at least three primary factors: *the degree of automaticity*, *the degree of abstraction* and *the difference between usage and form*. With respect to automaticity, a distinction is made between strongly automated and not-strongly automated elements. Elements which are said to be strongly automated are those which the speaker is virtually obliged to choose and which virtually cannot be manipulated. For instance, pronunciation characteristics are strongly automated elements. They are more stable than not-strongly automated elements. Elements where the speaker has a certain freedom of choice are not-strongly automated elements. The next matter to claim our attention is the importance of the degree of abstraction. Abstract language elements are more stable than non-abstract, more concrete language elements. For instance, syntactic constructions are to be found at the abstract end, while content words are at the concrete end. Apart from the degree of abstraction there is the difference between usage and form. Usage is more stable than form. One example of a usage difference is the Eastern Dutch construction of the type *ik heb de band lek* [lit. *I have the tyre flat*] (Standard Dutch *ik heb een lekke band* [lit. *I have a flat tyre*]). The construction in itself is also to be found in Standard Dutch but it is recognised as a typically eastern usage where something has happened to the subject. It is a different matter when Eastern Dutch clearly has a variant construction which does not appear in Standard Dutch, for example, *we zijn wandelen geweest* [lit. *we have walking been*] instead of *we zijn wezen wandelen* [lit. *we have be walking*]. We regard this as a difference in form. In addition, we have here a difference in word order, which is simultaneously a difference in form.

The question is how the primary factors should be hierarchically ordered. We can take it for granted that the degree of automaticity is at the top.

However, the relationship between the degree of abstraction and the difference between usage and form is uncertain. For the moment we may assume that the first factor is above the second. Compare figure 3 (p. 34). In this scheme a clear hierarchy of stability can be discerned, that is to say that the various parts of the language differ from each other with respect to S-stability. Previous research has confirmed this scheme in broad outline (Van Bree 1990, 1992).

Primary factors determine differences which occur between the global (sub)categories: content words, syntax (function words, constructions, word orders), morphology, etc. (A further distinction has to be made here between usage and form: usage of content words, form of content words, etc.) Secondary factors determine differences which occur *within* the global (sub)categories. This concerns, for instance, not the proportion of content words to the other categories, but the proportion of the different individual content words with respect to each other. Secondary factors may work in either direction, towards L2, or conversely, towards L1. That is to say they may strengthen the stability of L1 elements or the instability of L2 elements.

Four secondary factors have been investigated: *support from the regional environment*, *frequency*, *structural simplicity* and *absence of competition*. It is a question of regional environment when certain elements have a wider distribution than just the area under investigation. By frequency, token frequency is understood. For structural simplicity, transparency of patterns is meant, in the first instance. Another aspect of structural simplicity has to do with the degree to which a particular pattern can be differentiated. Finally, there is the concept of the absence of competition. We speak of competition when one form has another, equally valid form beside it with which it is in competition. We speak of absence of competition when a form occurs independently and is not in competition with another form.

If we are to understand the process of dialect loss, it is useful to distinguish two prototypical stages: a first stage with the generation for which the dialect is L1 and the standard language L2, and a second stage with the generation for which the reverse is true. That is the generation which has the standard language as L1 and the dialect as L2. This is an extremely sketchy representation of the facts. In reality there are several transitional stages across the generations. In general, it is a matter of more or less simultaneous acquisition of dialect and standard language in which language domination across the generations gradually moves from dialect to standard language.

The first stage is represented by the parents (or, more generally, by the older generation). The dialect is the language they learned as children. Later, the parents acquired the standard language (L2) on the basis of this

dialect (L1). This is how stable elements in the dialect are introduced into the standard language. For the parents it is a question of a second-language acquisition process at school. In all probability this means that the acquisition of the standard language is fairly extensive, which in turn means that only those elements which are clearly stable in the dialect reappear in the standard language: e.g. phonetic elements (pronunciation, intonation, stress) and syntax (function words, constructions, word orders). The parents switch to the standard language when talking to the children because this is the language they want the children to grow up speaking. The underlying idea is that the standard language offers the children more prospects in future social life.

The children (more generally: the younger generation) represent the second stage. The language they acquire in the first instance, the language they are brought up in, is the standard language as spoken by the parents. Later, they acquire the dialect (L2) on the basis of the standard language (L1). They absorb it, not only from their parents, who often communicate with each other in dialect, but probably also from their grandparents and certainly in the street from their own age group (*the peer group*). In contrast with the parents with respect to the standard language then, the children acquire the dialect, not at school, but in a natural second-language acquisition process. Since the children have to acquire the dialect mainly in the street they have an inadequate exposure to the dialect in comparison with the parents. Moreover the corrective example of the parents is missing in the acquisition of the dialect – a situation known as *imperfect learning*. Imperfect learning may be seen as the primary source for the ‘decline’ of the dialect. As the result of it, children become stuck half way through the second-language acquisition process.

What exactly are the consequences of imperfect learning? To begin with it is useful to consider the kind of standard language the children acquire. As the parents have learned the standard language on the basis of the dialect, this will be a dialectally coloured standard language, coloured by stable elements from the dialect. The children acquire the dialect on the basis of the dialectally coloured standard language. They then introduce the stable elements of dialectal origin in their standard language back into the dialect. In this way dialectal phonetics and syntax will end up in the dialect again. So it is that these elements which have a high S-stability will also have a high V-stability.

The remaining dialect elements, the clearly unstable elements and the elements in between do not easily penetrate and have to be acquired by the children. For these, they fall back on their imperfect exposure to the dialect. The expectation is that the clearly unstable elements of the dialect, the content words and lexical phonology will be properly acquired on account

of their prominence. These elements have a low S-stability and will therefore have a high V-stability. This V-stability will be lower than that of the clearly stable elements, which penetrate easily. For the elements in between, the morphology and the adverbs, we can expect that, on the one hand, they do not penetrate easily. On the other hand, because of their lower prominence, they will also be less readily learned than the clearly unstable elements. In other words, those elements which have an average S-stability will also have a low V-stability.

The consequences of imperfect learning in the second stage as described above have been largely confirmed by previous research (Van Bree 1985, 1992). However, it is evident in these studies that two of the (sub)categories end up in anomalous positions. Firstly, word orders, a syntactic component emerged with the lowest V-stability. In all probability, this must be attributed to an unfortunate choice of test items. Secondly, content words also ended up in a very low place. This is remarkable because it is exactly these words that are so important for comprehension that are learned early in the process of second language acquisition. It is evident that this does not happen in the dialect situation. One of the possible explanations is the social dominance of the standard language.

In chapter 3 a number of hypotheses are formulated on the basis of the theory and previous research. The investigation in Katwijk aan Zee had to do with the influence of the standard language on the dialect. In other words, what happens to the dialect in the prototypical situation of the second stage in which the dialect (L2) is learned on the basis of the standard language (L1)? Our focus is on V-stability, on what happens to the dialect across the generations.

The aims proposed in chapter 1 are made more precise in this chapter. The first goal involves a more specific testing of the hierarchy of stability (in this context, the hierarchy of V-stability), the second involves a testing of the secondary factors discussed in chapter 2.

Hypothesis 1 was formulated in connection with the first research aim: (1) The process of structure loss in *Katwijk*s conforms to the following hierarchy of stability, on a cline from more to less stable: phonetics - function words (usage) / constructions (usage) - word orders - adverbials (usage, form) / lexical phonology - morphology (usage, form) - content words (form). (In this context phonetics is confined to striking (primary) pronunciation characteristics. Lexical phonology has to do with sounds which clearly differ from each other, for instance, *Twents* 'hoes' as opposed to Standard Dutch 'huis'.)

Hypotheses 2 to 5 inclusive were formulated in connection with the second research aim:

(2) Elements that are supported by the regional environment are more

likely to transfer or are more easily acquired than elements that are not supported by the regional environment.

(3) Elements that occur (more) frequently are more likely to transfer or will be more easily acquired than elements that do not occur frequently or occur less frequently.

(4) Elements that are structurally simple are more likely to transfer or will be more easily acquired than elements that are not structurally simple. (At a later stage in the investigation, 'structurally simple' is replaced by 'transparent'.)

(5) Elements that do not encounter competition from other elements are more likely to transfer or are more easily acquired than elements which do encounter competition from other elements.

In chapter 4, a contrastive survey of the grammar of *Katwijk*s is given. In this survey a comparison is made between old *Katwijk*s and Standard Dutch. The part played by the above-mentioned secondary factors is determined from the regular differences appearing from the comparison. In other words, for a *Katwijk*s element *x*, it is ascertained whether it was supported by the regional environment, how frequent it was, what part was played by a transparent pattern and whether it encountered competition from another element *y*.

In chapter 5 the set up and results of the investigation are discussed; in chapter 6, the results are again reviewed. In order to establish the degree of dialect loss for the various elements of the dialect, two systems of measurement were used: comparison in apparent time and comparison in real time. To start with, for the comparison in apparent time, two age groups were selected: a younger group from 20 to 30 years old and an older group from 60 to 70 years old. Each group consisted of 24 informants evenly divided over the two sexes. This is how the dialect was compared over a period of 40 years on average. In order to gain an insight into the precise course of the process of structure loss another three middle-aged groups were selected: one from 30 to 40, one from 40 to 50 and one from 50 to 60 years old. Each of these groups consisted of 12 informants, again evenly divided over men and women. A total of 84 informants were involved in the study. For the comparison in real time, language use by the whole group of informants was compared with language use as laid down by Overdiep. In this way a much longer period is covered, namely 103 years. By means of archive research, we established that the dialect described by Overdiep dates back to 1870, while the current informants speak the dialect from round about 1973. Obviously only individuals who clearly spoke dialect, determined with the help of a number of criteria, were chosen for the study.

The interview method was chosen for the testing of hypotheses; informants were required to produce or evaluate forms and sentences in

various tests. For the content of the interview, the contrastive grammar from chapter 4 was used as a basis. The following parts were handled: content words, lexical phonology, phonetics, morphology, function words, word orders, constructions and adverbials. The following subdivisions were distinguished in the morphology: case endings in proper names, plural formation, diminutive formation and verb conjugations. For the function words, prepositions and reflexive pronouns were considered separately. In each case a check was made to see how much of the old original dialect is still to be heard in the speech of the various age groups. For the comparison in apparent time, the results for the younger group (20 to 30 years old) were subsequently divided by those of the older group (60 to 70 years old) (i.e. the ratio J:O = *jong:oud* 'young:old'). For the comparison in real time, the average for all the age groups together was calculated (G = *gemiddelde* 'average'). Statistical tests were applied where appropriate.

For testing hypothesis 1 a ranking order was established for both the results J:O and G. A mean ranking order R was established on the basis of both these ranking orders. It was clear that there are only very small differences between these ranking orders and the hypothetical ranking order. There are two problematic deviations to record. The first thing that didn't match up to the hypothetical ranking order was the surprisingly low place of phonetics. The explanation from this lower than expected place lay in the very low place in J:O (as opposed to a high place expected in G), which could show that the decline has only set in recently. It is possible that in dialect loss, as it were, one part is lost after the other. In that case, it has only recently been the turn of phonetics. However, that phonetics does so badly may have to do with the way it is tested: in fact, the testing was directed at the striking (primary) phonetic differences. If the less striking (secondary) phonetic differences had been included, then phonetics would have come out on top of all the ranking orders, as expected. The second deviation in the ranking order for R was the reversed order for lexical phonology and morphology. The origin of the exchange has to be sought in morphology, in the very strong position of the formation of diminutives. These are characterised by a high degree of transparency. It is this secondary factor which evidently thwarts the expected hierarchy. In R, when compared with the place predicted by the hypothesis, the word orders occupied the expected position, but then, just as for phonetics, a strange discrepancy between J:O and G appeared. In all probability, the high score for J:O and the low score for G had to do with those word orders which Overdiep and Varkevisser, in their time, also registered as rare. Further analysis revealed that, just as we have assumed for figure 3, the degree of abstraction is obviously higher in the hierarchy than the difference between usage and form.

The testing of the secondary factors, obviously for the cases where this was possible, yielded the following results. Hypothesis 2, which has to do with the support of the regional environment, was confirmed by J:O in three of the seven cases and also by G in six of the seven cases, that is, in total, in nine of the fourteen cases. Hypothesis 3, which has to do with frequency, was confirmed by J:O in three of the four cases and by G in all cases, that is, in total, in seven of the eight cases. For hypothesis 4, which has to do with transparency, there is confirmation in one of the two cases for J:O and in both cases for G, which yields a total of three out of the four cases. As we only have a high degree of verification for two (sub)parts, it is important that we do not derive definitive conclusions from the results. Hypothesis 5, which has to do with the absence of competition, was confirmed by both J:O and G. Since the basis is so small, there being only two cases, no clear conclusions can be drawn.

If we look at the results of the age groups, we can report that there is a gradual decline from old to young. The group which gives rise to the most, albeit insignificant, exceptions is the 30+ group. A possible explanation for this is that the group contained a predominance of 'broad' dialect speakers.

Translation: dr. Robin D. Smith