

## ONLY STANDARD DUTCH AT SCHOOL? PERCEPTIONS OF FLEMISH TEACHERS

In the Flemish linguistic landscape, a remarkable shift has come about over the past few decades, from a typically diglossic to a diaglossic constellation. Diglossia is characterized by intermediate forms between standard and dialect (Auer 2011), in Flanders typically lumped together under the generic term *tussentaal* ('intermediate language'). In spite of the increasing use of *tussentaal* in a wide range of situations and the assumed stabilization of this intermediate variety (De Caluwe 2009, Taeldeman 2008, Plevoets 2009), it is still subject to vigorous hostility, in the media as well as in the Flemish linguistic literature.

As *tussentaal* is on the rise as *Umgangssprache*, the (spoken) standard variety is subject to growing pressure: it has always been considered as a largely virtual (and exoglossic) norm, reached only in artificial settings (e.g. news broadcasts) or highly formal situations. In a non-artificial setting, Belgian teachers are (perceived as) the speakers of "[t]he highest nonvirtual stratum of Belgian Dutch" (Grondelaers & Van Hout 2011:219). Indeed, teachers are often said to serve as an example, and students should emulate their language use. Most teachers also acknowledge that role: they proclaim themselves guardians of the standard language (Van de Velde & Houtermans 1999), and assert they always speak Standard Dutch when addressing students (Delarue 2011).

To put that confidence of a lot of teachers in their standard language competence to the test, our research analyses the actual language use and perceptions of 80 teachers in elementary and secondary schools in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking northern part of Belgium), with data gathered from participant observation (audio recording of one class per teacher) as well as a qualitative sociolinguistic interview. In this paper, we focus on the latter, to shed some light on the perceptions of teachers towards Standard Dutch, dialect and *tussentaal*. How do teachers perceive the Flemish linguistic landscape? How important is standard language use, and how do they interpret their role as "last guardians of the standard"?

### References

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