

# Standardizing and destandardizing practices at a Flemish secondary school

*A sociolinguistic ethnographic perspective on Flemish pupils' speech practices*

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## Abstract<sup>1</sup>

For a couple of decades now, in Flanders, the functional elaboration of what is generally called *tussentaal*, i.e. mesolectal language use situated in between ('tussen') acrolectal Standard Dutch and basilectal Flemish dialects, has caused increasing concern about the position of Standard Dutch relative to other recognized ways of speaking. This has provoked intense debate about the proper characterization of this evolution. In this paper I focus on the daily language practices and overt attitudes of six girls at a Flemish secondary school to illustrate that it is relatively easy to find evidence that suggests the mentioned evolution is properly characterized as a type of destandardization. Yet by zooming in on the covert attitudes of the girls, which are influenced by the Standard Language Ideology (SLI), I will argue that a close ethnographic study of daily language use is able to go beyond the surface appearances of larger-scale ideologies and can demonstrate the continuing influence of standardization. Sociolinguistic ethnography may therefore have a vital role to play in the ongoing debate about language variation in Flanders.

**Keywords:** standardization, destandardization, Flanders, Dutch, *tussentaal*, sociolinguistic ethnography

## 1 Introduction

In Flanders – the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium – the position of Standard Dutch is said to be changing due to the functional elaboration of so-called *tussentaal*, i.e. language use situated in between the standard

language and the traditional Flemish dialects. Although this is not an exclusively Flemish phenomenon (many other European standard languages are undergoing similar changes, cf. Deumert & Vandebussche, 2003), this has been the cause of much unrest among Flemish linguists and policy makers who interpret this as a sign of destandardization or an impending end of standardization (see Absillis, Jaspers, & Van Hoof, 2012; Grondelaers & van Hout, 2011; van der Horst, 2008) and it has invited a distinct increase in scholarly attention. Linguists have tried to capture the necessary and sufficient characteristics of *tussentaal* (see among others De Decker, 2014; Rys & Taeldeman, 2007; Taeldeman, 2008). Using this set of features, other researchers have produced descriptions of the specific contexts where *tussentaal* is used (De Caluwe, 2009; De Caluwe, Delarue, Ghyselen, & Lybaert, 2013; Plevoets, 2008) and of how Flemish language users perceive linguistic variation in Flanders (De Caluwe et al., 2013; Ghyselen & De Vogelaer, 2013; Grondelaers & Speelman, 2013; Grondelaers, van Hout, & Speelman, 2011; Lybaert, 2014). While Grondelaers & van Hout (2011) are convinced that *tussentaal* ‘cannot easily be characterized in terms of necessary and sufficient features’, they equally admit it is ‘immediately recognizable to Belgian listeners’ (2011, p. 222) and suggest there is a growing consensus about where it is spoken and by whom. As to the question why Flemish language users choose *tussentaal* in situations in which they used to or were supposed to employ the standard, the answers, however, have been much more inconclusive.

In trying to answer the latter question, many researchers rely on quantitative analyses of the distribution of so-called *tussentaal* features (see Plevoets, 2008; Van Gijssel, Speelman, & Geeraerts, 2008) or on the elicitation of covert language attitudes (see Grondelaers & Speelman, 2013). These analyses are highly insightful, but they provide distinct and even contrastive conclusions. For example, while *tussentaal*'s alleged rebelliousness (cf. Van Gijssel et al., 2008) might not be too far off from its trendy and assertive image (cf. Grondelaers & Speelman, 2013) and from hypotheses that project young people as the driving force behind the standardization of *tussentaal* (cf. Van Gijssel et al., 2008), such findings are difficult to reconcile with the hypothesis that the hypocorrect linguistic behaviour of economic elites (who are usually not so young or rebellious) drives *tussentaal*'s popularity (cf. Plevoets, 2008). Even more problematic perhaps is that the methodology of many studies may stand in the way of finding an answer to the above questions. Coupland (2007, p. 9) at least points out that ‘[q]uantitative analysis of the distribution of speech variants among groups of speakers is an abstraction away from the social process of speak-

ing and of making meaning in context'. In a recent paper, Jaspers & Van Hoof (2015) similarly argue that the meaning of *tussentaal* 'needs to be identified relative to the unfolding interaction in particular contexts of use' (2015, p. 1). Furthermore, the anthropologist Asif Agha warns us that if we want to understand 'macro-level changes' – like the changing position of the standard in Flanders – we need to attend 'to micro-level processes [...] in interaction' (2005, p. 38). Thus, if we need to take into account micro-level processes in particular contexts of use in order to understand what the meaning of *tussentaal* is and why Flemish people are so attracted to it, we may have to turn to other methods to at least complement, or alternate with, approaches that shy away from small-scale interaction. I suggest in this paper that (socio)linguistic ethnography may have an important role to play in this regard and may provide useful insights into why particular Flemings such as secondary school pupils use *tussentaal* rather than Standard Dutch, and whether or not their choice can be taken as a sign of a process of destandardization.

Hypotheses of destandardization need to be understood in the frame of what is called a 'Standard Language Ideology' (SLI), that is 'a bias toward an abstract, idealized and homogeneous language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and which has as its model the written language' (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 64). In the 'standard language culture' (Milroy, 2001, p. 539) of Flanders, this means a bias towards Standard Dutch. This ideology is more and more seen to come under a lot of pressure as a result of processes of destandardization.

According to Coupland & Kristiansen (2011, p. 28) destandardization is the process whereby 'the established standard language loses its position as the one and only best language'. In 2009 the LANCHART Centre in Copenhagen established SLICE, a European network and research programme on the nature and role of language standardization and standard languages in late modernity. By looking into the overt and covert attitudes of language users, the researchers of the SLICE-programme investigated changes in the position of standard languages in a range of European countries, including Belgium. The studies of the Flemish context have pointed towards the diminishing power of standardization processes, i.e. the diminishing importance of Standard Dutch according to school teachers (Delarue, 2013), university and university-college students (Gronde-laers et al., 2011) and a sample of the Flemish population in general (Gronde-laers & Speelman, 2013). Using the preliminary results of a sociolinguistic ethnography of pupils' speech in a secondary school in East-Flanders, I will demonstrate the complexity of (de)standardizing processes in Flanders,

arguing that, while language use and overtly expressed language attitudes at first sight seem to point toward a process of destandardization, a closer look at small-scale (meta)linguistic behaviour appears to suggest the opposite. In this way, the current study simultaneously connects with and adds to the valuable insights presented by the above-mentioned SLICE studies.

Since social processes of speaking always take place in a wider context, I shall first give a brief overview of the language situation in Flanders. In the third and fourth paragraph, I will go into the ethnographic approach I have used and describe the specific methods employed for data collection and analysis. In addition, on the basis of the analysis of a selected part of the collected data, I will demonstrate how sociolinguistic ethnography is capable of revealing the complex co-occurrence of standardizing and destandardizing processes and how it may contribute to a more nuanced discussion on *tussentaal* and Standard Dutch in Flanders.

## 2 Current attitudes toward *tussentaal* from a language-historical perspective

To a large extent the discontent of Flemish academics, policy makers, journalists, educators and the general public with the success of *tussentaal* (cf. §1) can be explained by the difficult standardization process in Flanders. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dispute between the ‘integrationists’ – who advocated a linguistic unity with the Netherlands – and the ‘particularists’ – who aimed for a separate Flemish standard – had been settled in favour of the former (Janssens & Marynissen, 2008, p. 145-152). Standard Dutch was imported from the Netherlands and from the 1950s onwards, schools and mass media went to great efforts to teach this language to the Flemish people (see for example Van Hoof, 2013 for an overview of the ‘standardization ardour’ in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). In theory, Standard Dutch advocates aimed for a ‘harmonious co-existence’ of dialects and the standard (Van Hoof & Jaspers, 2012, p. 106), seeing dialects as ideal for use in the intimate sphere (family and leisure time) and Standard Dutch for all other contexts. In practice, however, the continued existence of the dialect, even in this limited amount of contexts, was seen to hinder the full acquisition of the standard. So in real terms, the striving for a linguistic unity with the Netherlands turned into a purist campaign in which all non-standard elements were targeted for elimination (Van Hoof & Jaspers, 2012, p. 102-104).

During this era of ‘hyperstandardization’ (Van Hoof & Jaspers, 2012) – i.e. approximately from the 1950s until the 1980s – a strong Standard Language Ideology (SLI) was developed in Flemish society. Although this very particular and forced standardization process in Flanders only led to limited use of the standard (Jaspers & Brisard, 2006, p. 43), the SLI is still omnipresent in Flanders (cf. Delarue & De Caluwe, 2015; Grondelaers et al., 2011; Van Hoof & Jaspers, 2012). Today, the use of *tussentaal* in situations where formerly Standard Dutch was the norm, conflicts with the deeply rooted and widespread Flemish SLI. This brings about the many emotionally expressed negative feelings about *tussentaal* in the public debate (cf. 1).

### 3 A sociolinguistic-ethnographic perspective

Although the initial steps in *tussentaal* research were of a more discursive-analytic kind (De Caluwe, 2002; Jaspers, 2001; Slembrouck & Van Herreweghe, 2004), subsequent descriptions of *tussentaal* and research on the perception of different kinds of informal (supra-regional) language use have mainly come from a variationist perspective, some discursive-analytic exceptions notwithstanding (Delarue & De Caluwe, 2015; Van Hoof, 2015). As argued above however, it may be useful to add an ethnographic perspective to current sociolinguistic *tussentaal* research given ethnography’s potential to elicit a local rationale for the use of either standard or non-standard features while at the same time maintaining a holistic view that situates the local context in its wider sociocultural surroundings. The potential of linguistic ethnography to investigate (meta)linguistic practices in context has already been demonstrated in international (e.g. Creese, 2008; Madsen, Karrebaek, & Spindler Møller, 2013; Rampton, 2006; Snell, 2009) and national (e.g. Jaspers, 2005) studies.

Using a combination of both primary (e.g. observations, recordings) and secondary data (e.g. interviews), ethnographers aim at ‘a holistic understanding of communicative resources at play’ (Hornberger, 2013, p. 111). Besides, they aim at investigating both the linguistic behaviour of language users (and their motives for that behaviour) in situ and at the same time they focus on history and context. In other words, they simultaneously zoom in and out (Nicolini, 2009, p. 17). Thus, despite a reputation of its very or exclusively local point of view, ethnography does not lose sight of the broader picture. In this way, the results stemming from ethnographic studies could serve as a starting point for further variationist research in which distinct settings are investigated at a larger scale.

An additional advantage of ethnography is that because it operates in a specific setting, it can dig deeply into observable language use and attitudes of the language users in that specific context (cf. Agha's micro-level processes in §1 and Rampton's metaphor of the 'worm's eye' (Rampton, 2001)). In this way, (socio)linguistic ethnographies 'allow us to get at things we would otherwise never be able to discover' (Heller, 2008, p. 250).

Furthermore, (socio)linguistic ethnography is highly appropriate for obtaining what is called an emic perspective on the situation. It allows us to 'see how language practices are connected to the very real conditions of people's lives, to discover how and why language matters to people in their own terms' (Heller, 2008, p. 250). Eckert (1997, p. 58), for example, praises the ethnographic data-collection methods of observation and interviews by saying that

[s]urveys, questionnaires, and experiments all have their place in the study of language in society. But all of them presuppose and test categories and meanings, rather than discovering them. Observations and interviews come closer to providing access to kids' meanings.

In other words, ethnographers try to look at the phenomenon under investigation both through the eyes of the people they are investigating and through his or her own eyes. Given that local meaning-making is argued to play an important role in the production of what we call *tussentaal*, a linguistic-ethnographic perspective may be able to provide useful insights into language users' motives for the observed linguistic practices.

It is important to note that such explanations are not exclusively tied to the local context in which the data at issue were collected. As Rampton et al. (2004, p. 15) argue, linguistic ethnographers 'may only have data on a limited number of institutional situations, [...] [but] they encounter huge quantities of language, and if they narrow their units of analysis from *situations* to *particular language practices* [my emphasis, IVL], the scope for generalisation is substantially increased'. In other words, an ethnographic analysis of language use which zooms in on the micro level of particular linguistic practices (for example the stylization of dialect, cf. *infra*) instead of on situations (for example a pupil giving an oral presentation in class), uncovers aspects of language use which could also be retrieved in completely different contexts of use.

#### 4 A sociolinguistic ethnography of pupils' speech practices in Flanders

This paper is based on an on-going sociolinguistic-ethnographic research at a secondary school in Oudenaarde, a city in the province of East-Flanders with about 30,000 inhabitants. The study focuses on an educational setting since there, the functional elaboration of *tussentaal* stands in sharp contrast with the Flemish education ministry's demands that all teachers and pupils speak Standard Dutch (Smet, 2011). The aim of the research is to describe and analyse the language use, perceptions and attitudes of 37 pupils of seventeen and eighteen years old. Data were collected from November 2013 to June 2015, which means that the pupils have moved from fifth to sixth grade during data collection. The pupils all follow so-called 'general' secondary education,<sup>2</sup> but in a range of study trajectories (e.g. humanities, mathematics and sciences or classical languages).

The analysis presented below is guided by two research questions:

- 1 Which linguistic repertoire do the pupils have at their disposal?
- 2 How do the pupils use that repertoire to produce social meaning and why?

With regard to the first research question, my intention is not to define the necessary and sufficient characteristics of *tussentaal*. The aim is to provide a description of these 37 pupils' repertoires in day-to-day interaction in a school context. Which pool of linguistic features do they have at their disposal, which features do they pull from that pool in different situations and how do these features cluster together to form styles with specific (social) meaning (cf. Coupland, 2007)? In order to answer the second question, I will investigate (a) how pupils perceive linguistic variation and which (social) meaning they attach to the variation they hear and see; and (b) how pupils organize variation, i.e. what meaning they produce through engaging with linguistic variation.

In the ethnographic tradition of collecting different types of data in order to gain a holistic view on the context at hand, I collected various instances of language use and metalanguage. The collected data now consist of a combination of extensive field notes originating from participant observations (100 hours), 35 hours of audio recordings of pupils' speech practices in different situations, nearly 23 hours of whole class recordings, observations of linguistic behaviour of pupils on Facebook, semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews in small groups (11 hours) and feedback interviews (5 hours) with the aim of 'checking the data' with the partici-



pants (cf. Kaplan-Weinger & Ullman, 2015, p. 150). All the recordings have been transcribed using the transcription software *Praat*.

## 5 Case study: (de)standardizing linguistic practices of a girls' squad

In the following paragraphs I focus on the linguistic behaviour of six of the adolescents under investigation, who are very close friends. First, a description of this group of girls and of their school orientation is given (5.1). Then I discuss their overtly expressed language attitudes (5.2) and in the third subsection (5.3), I analyse their language use: what is their linguistic range and how do they use it? I argue that the overtly expressed language attitudes and the language use of the girls may signal destandardization, but in 5.4 I try to demonstrate that the omnipresent SLI also influences the girls' linguistic attitudes and behaviour, nuancing the destandardization hypothesis.

### 5.1 Lore & co as a community of practice

The six girls in the centre of this paper are Lore, Nadia, Kayleigh, Veerle, Caren and Frances.<sup>3</sup> They present themselves as a friendship group with poor ties to other (groups of) pupils. Inside this group of girls, Caren and Frances set themselves aside as a kind of subgroup and Veerle's membership is also sometimes questioned, which leaves Lore, Nadia and Kayleigh to form the core of the group. In extract 1 ('RS' stands for 'researcher'), these three girls comment on Caren's and Frances' membership of the group.

#### Extract 1<sup>4</sup>

9 May 2014 – INT 11 Kayleigh Lore Nadia

- |   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | Nadia    | Vanaf dat zonder ja vanaf als euh Kayleigh en Frances in ons klas gingen komen en 'k wist dat gunder allé dat gij bij ons ging wel ging komen en euh dat Frances en Caren ja dat dat twee ging worden. |
| 2 | Kayleigh | Ik wist dat ook.   |
| 3 | Lore     | Maar dan als Caren er niet is komt Frances wel bij ons omdat ze dan niemand anders heeft en m' maar omgekeerd vind ik dat wel minder.  |
| 4 | Kayleigh | Ja.  |
| 5 | Lore     | Ik vind dat omgekeerd wel minder.  |
| 6 | RS       | Gunder gaat nooit bij Frances gaan staan of bij Caren?   |



- 7 Nadia Nee.
- 1 Nadia From the moment that they from the moment that uh Kayleigh and Frances were going to come in our class and I knew that you I mean that you would come with us and uh that Frances and Caren yeah that that would be two.
- 2 Kayleigh I knew that too.
- 3 Lore But then when Caren is not there, Frances comes with us because she doesn't have anybody else then and b' but that's less the case in the opposite direction.
- 4 Kayleigh Yeah.
- 5 Lore I think it's less in the opposite direction.
- 6 RS You never go stand with Frances or Caren?
- 7 Nadia No.

From extract 1 we can conclude (a) that Frances and Caren form a sub-group inside the bigger group of the six girls and (b) that Frances seeks the company of the three central girls more than the other way around.

As can be seen in extract 2, the three central girls equate their friendship with female friendship ties in American high schools, which they probably know through popular American TV-series.

### Extract 2

9 May 2014 – INT 11 Kayleigh Lore Nadia

- 1 Kayleigh (Lacht) Wanneer was 't dat we door de gangen liepen dat gij zei 't Is gelijk in Amerika' zo drie op een rij zo door gang (lacht).
- 2 Lore (Lacht) Ja-a-a.
- 3 Nadia (Lacht) 't Is zo.
- 1 Kayleigh (Laughs) When was it that we were walking through the hallways and you said 'It's like in America' like three on a row like through hallway (laughs).
- 2 Lore (Laughs) Yea-eh-eah.
- 3 Nadia (Laughs) It's like that.

United around the common enterprise of attending school, these girls have developed and share 'ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values – in short, practices' (Eckert, 2000, p. 35); therefore, I consider this group of six girls as a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The group is

labelled 'Lore & co', since Lore is one of the central girls in the group and since the other pupils in the study often name these girls like that.

Apart from dressing alike, they love the same things in their free time, they share some friends outside the school and they have the same ideas about boys and relationships. But the value and belief that these girls definitely share, is their attitude towards school and school life. During fieldwork, I often observed them breaking the school rules and acting fairly rebelliously. For example, they secretly smoked in the playground, they used their mobile phones during class, they shouted in class instead of asking permission to speak (sometimes with the purpose of giving an answer), and they asked the teachers embarrassing questions. And although some of them (especially Kayleigh and Lore) managed to get rather good grades, they generally found it inappropriate to be seen to perform well, and they kept each other well in check in this regard. This pro-education – in the sense that succeeding is important – but anti-school stance (cf. Rampton, 2001) can be observed in extract 3, where Kayleigh is accused for showing too much effort by Nadia who calls her a *strever* ('a swot, someone who's trying too hard') in line 5.

### Extract 3

25 April 2014 – WI Petra

- |   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | Lerares  | Hier moet ge ook zoeken wanneer is heel dat boelke gelijk aan nul? A awel ofwel is dat eerste stuk van mijn product gelijk aan nul ofwel is dat tweede stuk van mijn product gelijk aan nul. |
| 2 | Kayleigh | Dus 't is negen en drie.   |
| 3 | Lore     | Wat?   |
| 4 | Lerares  | Ja als ge 't al vlug hebt uitgerekend inderdaad.   |
| 5 | Nadia    | Jongen gij vuile strever.  |
- 
- |   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | Teacher  | Here you also have to search for when is all of this equal to zero? Well either that first part of my product is equal to zero or that second part of my product is equal to zero. |
| 2 | Kayleigh | So it's nine and three.  |
| 3 | Lore     | What?  |
| 4 | Teacher  | Yes if you have already calculated it quickly indeed.  |
| 5 | Nadia    | Boy you dirty swot.  |

Through this anti-school stance, Lore & co distinguished themselves clearly from the other pupils in the classroom, who often disapprove of the girls' disrespectful attitude during class. What language attitudes these

girls overtly express during the interviews and how these attitudes fit into the construction of their identities as rebellious pupils, is described in the next paragraph.

## 5.2 Overtly expressed language attitudes of Lore & co: destandardization

At first sight, Lore & co do not seem to be biased towards Standard Dutch, i.e. their attitudes are starkly negative towards Standard Dutch. In the interviews, they tell me that Standard Dutch is dull, stiff, impersonal, less fluent and difficult. For example, in extract 4 Veerle admits that she finds it hard to express herself in Standard Dutch (AN stands for *Algemeen Nederlands* (i.e. 'Standard Dutch')).

### Extract 4

14 March 2014 – INT 4 Caren Frances Veerle

- 1 Veerle [A]ls ge zoiets wilt zeggen dat gaat vlotter gaan in 't dialect dan in 't AN en als ge dan zo in 't AN zo iets moet zeggen zoals zo die recensie van hermitage dat moet ook zo volledig in 't AN zijn e gaat ge daar eigenlijk niet zo veel over zeggen want 'k weet niet ik kan gelijk meer in 't dialect praten dan in 't AN ze.
- 1 Veerle [I]f you want to say something it will be easier in dialect than in Standard Dutch and if you have to say something in Standard Dutch like this review of hermitage that has to be completely in Standard Dutch then you are not going to say as much about it because I don't know I can talk more in dialect than in Standard Dutch.

The girls also question the use of Standard Dutch in those situations where it is expected by Flemish policy makers. For example, they do not like the use of Standard Dutch by school teachers (cf. extract 5), although the Flemish Ministry of Education promotes the use of the standard in every school context (Smet, 2011). They also disapprove of the use of the standard in the media (cf. extract 6), while Standard Dutch still serves as the language norm in Flemish broadcasting (Hendrickx, 2012).

### Extract 5

14 March 2014 – INT 4 Caren Frances Veerle

- 1 RS [E]n en mevrouw Smets die spreekt dan (.) zeer.
- 2 Frances Deftiger.
- 3 Veerle Volledig AN.

- 4 Frances Ja dat wel.  
 5 RS [...] En dat vindt ge dan niet wijs?  
 6 Veerle Ma pf dat komt zo gewoon saaier over vind ik.

- 1 RS [A]nd and Ms. Smets speaks (.) very.  
 2 Frances Posher.  
 3 Veerle Completely standard.  
 4 Frances Yeah she does.  
 5 RS [...] And you don't think that's cool?  
 6 Veerle But pf it comes across as more boring I think.

### Extract 6

#### 14 March 2014 – INT 4 Caren Frances Veerle

- 1 Veerle Aa aa ja topradio inderdaad maar dat is zo bij mijn pépé dat ik dan in de auto zat en dan stond dat zo op radio één of zo radio nostalgie en ze praten daar dan soms zo deftig en dat is dan echt zo van 'zet die zender af'.  
 2 RS Ge vindt dat ze te...  
 3 Veerle Ja dat is gewoon ik kom daar echt ambetant van van mensen dat zo volledig AN praten kan daar echt niet tegen.  
 4 RS ... mooi.
- 1 Veerle Aa aa yeah topradio indeed but it's like with my granddad when I was sitting in the car and it was tuned on radio one or like radio nostalgia and sometimes they speak so posh and then it's really like 'turn off that channel'.  
 2 RS You find it too...  
 3 Veerle Yeah it's just I get annoyed by by people who talk completely standard I really can't stand it.  
 4 RS ... clean.

To summarize, these girls display negative attitudes about Standard Dutch in general and, more specifically, they question the suitability of the standard in the more formal situations of usage (like education and broadcasting). In this sense these girls only seem to confirm hypotheses of destandardization. But since attitudes cannot simply be taken as a transparent indication of speakers' language use, I will explore in the next paragraph to what extent the girls' observable language use points in the same direction.

### 5.3 The language use of Lore & co

In 2009 De Caluwe already stated that ‘[f]or the vast majority of the Flemish youth [...], what is called *tussentaal* by linguists, is their *mother tongue*, their language of daily interaction, their language to text and chat with’ (De Caluwe, 2009, p. 17, my translation, emphasis in the original). Not surprisingly, in general, the whole linguistic repertoire of all the pupils in the study can be categorized as *tussentaal*. The pupils’ deviations from standard Dutch consist mainly of what Taeldeman (2008) calls ‘stabilizing *tussentaal* features’:

- a. morphological divergences
  - diminutives; e.g. *filmke* for *filmpje* (‘small video’), *mijn oorkes* for *mijn oortjes* (‘my earphones’)...
  - personal pronouns; e.g. *ge* for *je* (‘you-subj.’) and *u* for *jou* (‘you-obj.’)...
  - adnominal flexion; e.g. *nen tekst* for *een tekst* (‘a text’) and *d’n dag* for *de dag* (‘the day’)...
  - ...
- b. reductionist practices
  - deletions; e.g. *omda*’ for *omdat* (‘because’), *to*’ for *toch* (‘still’), *da*’ for *dan* (‘then’)...
  - aphaereses; e.g. *ier* for *hier* (‘here’), *oofd* for *hoofd* (‘head’), *oren* for *horen* (‘to hear’)...
  - syncope; e.g. *a’s* for *als* (‘if’), *eilijk* for *eigenlijk* (‘actually’)...
  - ...

These deviations are more or less prominent depending on the specific situation in which the pupils find themselves. So although the pupils use more *tussentaal* features on the playground than when answering a question in the classroom, their routine speech style in most of the observed situations can still be labeled *tussentaal* or substandard language use.<sup>5</sup> The absence of the use of standard Dutch appears to be a confirmation of the hypothesis of destandardization. That hypothesis is confirmed even more strongly if we look at the particular language use of Lore & co.

Although their language use mainly matches the overall picture of the use of stabilizing *tussentaal* features, there are also two remarkable divergences from the dominant pattern. First, the girls use much more dialect features in their default speech than the other pupils, both in their pronunciation and in their vocabulary, as can be seen in extract 7 (dialect features marked in bold), in which Nadia and Kayleigh are talking about an outburst of Ms. Vande Wiele the day before.

**Extract 7**

9 May 2014 – INT n Kayleigh Lore Nadia

- |   |                |  |
|---|----------------|--|
| 1 | RS             | Da 's eem 'm blijkbaar eem beetje 'n ee' strenge.  |
| 2 | Nadia          | Geloof mij a'sde die teegn u krijgt e.   |
| 3 | Kayleigh [...] | Zij kan der de <b>freign</b> opzett'n.   |
| 4 | Nadia          | 'k Zeg et u ik was <b>doodschui</b> giste' toen da se zij uitvloog.                          |
| 5 | RS             | Is 't waar?  |
| 6 | Kayleigh       | Zot e.   |
| 7 | Nadia          | Ik echt ik sliktege 'k kreeg <b>kiekiesvel</b> dervan ik iedereen was me' éé' keer [tsjoef]. |
- 
- |   |                |  |
|---|----------------|--|
| 1 | RS             | That's a 'n apparently a bit of a strict one.  |
| 2 | Nadia          | Believe me if you get her against you.   |
| 3 | Kayleigh [...] | She can 'put the brakes on it'.  |
| 4 | Nadia          | I tell you I was terrified yesterday when she was telling us off.                                  |
| 5 | RS             | Really?  |
| 6 | Kayleigh       | Crazy huh.   |
| 7 | Nadia          | I really I swallowed I got goose bumps I everybody was suddenly [sound indicating sudden silence]. |

All the forms marked in bold in extract 7 have a standard counterpart (*rem* for *freign*, (*doods*)*bang* for (*dood*)*schui*, the form on *-e* for the simple past instead of the form on *-tege* (thus *slikte* for *sliktege*) and *kippenvel* for *kiekiesvel*) which are used at least once by the other pupils in the data.

Secondly, Lore & co tend to use more vulgar language than the other pupils. They frequently use words like *kloten* ('testicles'), *hol* ('ass'), *kut* ('cunt') and compounds with *schijt* ('shit') and they like to talk about sex-related topics. I was not the only one noticing this: the frequent occurrence of profane language and subject matters was also clearly noticed and condemned by the other pupils, who complained that Lore & co's 'topics were always so sexual' which 'in the beginning [...] could be funny but if it's like that in every class it starts to become annoying'. The other pupils also frowned upon Lore & co 'asking Ms. Bouillaert about her sex life'.

The girls' dialectal and vulgar language use in a school context can be interpreted as an expression of their unwillingness to live up to the school's (linguistic) expectations, i.e. their rebellious stance. The school regulations namely proclaim:

Tegenover alle medeleerlingen en personeelsleden gedraag je je rustig en beleefd. Ook spreek je iedereen altijd in een verzorgd Nederlands aan.

You behave calmly and politely towards every fellow pupil and member of the staff. You also address everybody in a **decent Dutch**. [School regulations, my emphasis]

Observations and recordings show that teachers try to impose these rules by responding negatively to all kinds of non-decent language – such as swearing, shouting and the use of vulgarities – expressed by pupils. So observably or etically (i.e. as seen from the researcher’s perspective) Lore & co do not comply with the expectations and this is also confirmed emically (i.e. as seen from the perspective of the subjects under investigation) by their fellow pupils. Although most of these pupils have a fairly open view on what ‘decent Dutch’ is (including *tussentaal* in a lot of situations), they are convinced that dialect does not fit the definition. For example, in extract 8, when asked how Arlena, Kasper and Lars evaluate their own language use, Lars explains that using dialect in a school situation would be quite ‘extreme’ (line 8):

### Extract 8

12 May 2014 – INT 12 Arlena Anne-Sophie Kasper Lars

- 1 RS En hoe vinden jullie dat jullie zelf spreken op school?  
 2 Lars Tussentaal.  
 3 RS Goed? Niet goed?  
 4 Arlena Ik vind dat (.) goed genoeg (lacht).  
 5 Lars (Lachje) Niet echt dialect maar ja.  
 6 RS Niet echt dialect Lars?  
 7 Kasper Uhu.  
 8 Lars Nnnee maar ja dialect is al redelijk extreem ook e.

- 1 RS And how do you think you guys speak at school?  
 2 Lars Tussentaal.  
 3 RS Good? Not good?  
 4 Arlena I think it’s (.) good enough (laughs).  
 5 Lars (Laughs) Not really dialect but.  
 6 RS Not really dialect Lars?  
 7 Kasper Uhu.  
 8 Lars Nnno but yeah dialect is pretty extreme huh.

Based on the kinds of topics Lore & co address (sex, other taboo subjects), their interactional behaviour (interrupting), their overall stance (anti-school), their linguistic attitude (anti-standard) and in terms of language



use, it seems reasonable to qualify this girl group as relatively anti-institutional (cf. Eckert, 2003). Since Standard Dutch is the institutional language, the anti-institutional identity of the girls contributes to what is generally called destandardization.

It stands to wonder however whether Lore & co's language use and that of their fellow pupils must not be seen as variations on the same destandardization theme. After all, they all deviate from the standard, although to various extent. My reasons for qualifying Lore & co's language use as a prime example of the evolutions sketched in the introduction have to do with linguistic distance and effort. First, the use of vulgarities and dialect is seen – both etically and emically – as linguistically and behaviourally far more distant from the propagated ideal of 'decent Dutch' than the use of non-vulgar *tussentaal*. Therefore, the girls' language use can be interpreted as a movement away from the standard. Besides, from the point of view that 'what is *socially* peripheral' is 'frequently *symbolically* central' (Stallybrass & White, 1986, p. 5, emphasis in the original), the choice for dialect – a peripheral variety in the Flemish linguistic landscape in general and in school contexts in particular – is symbolically loaded. In other words, by using a dialectal voice in school situations, Lore & co express their anti-institutional and anti-standard attitude. Conversely, by using a kind of tidied-up *tussentaal* in different school contexts, the other pupils demonstrate their willingness to make an effort in order to meet the propagated language ideal. Again, the unpreparedness of Lore & co to involve in the same act of accommodation suggests that they do not agree with Standard Dutch as the norm. Moreover, the girls express negative feelings about Standard Dutch; they think the standard is dull, stiff, impersonal, and so on (cf. §5.2). They do not like the standard and their linguistic behaviour demonstrates a movement away from the standard; therefore we might conclude that the girls are involved in a process of destandardization. Yet, as I wish to argue now, also Lore & co's language use cannot be taken as a straightforward example of that process, given the instances of SLI-influenced (meta)linguistic behaviour of Lore & co in the collected data.

#### 5.4 SLI-influence on the linguistic behaviour of Lore & co

SLI in Flemish society (cf. 2.) is prominently present in every language in education policy document in Flanders (see Smet, 2011; Vandenbroucke, 2007). Convinced of the idea that only Standard Dutch can guarantee equal opportunities for all pupils, successive Flemish Ministers of Education have propagated the use of Standard Dutch in every school context (Delarue & De Caluwe, 2015). Other research has already indicated that the main message

of these documents has had a profound impact on teachers' self-perceptions (Delarue, 2014). Furthermore, Jaspers' ethnographic study in a Flemish secondary school has shown that also pupils can be deeply influenced by this policy, even while at the same time opposing it (Jaspers, 2011). Therefore, it might be expected that even Lore & co – although presenting themselves (overtly) as opponents of the Flemish SLI – will be influenced by the omnipresent SLI in their school and in Flanders at large. The following extracts demonstrate that this may indeed be the case. This SLI-influence is not only deduced from a couple of fragments of metadiscourse of the pupils drawn from the interviews (e.g. extract 9, 10 & 11), but also from the way in which Lore & co engage in stylization processes (e.g. extract 12).

In the two interviews I held with them, Lore & co in general portray themselves as pupils who do not like and who do not use the standard (cf. §5.2 and §5.3). All the same, in these interviews, some instances can be found in which the girls briefly leave that stance and tell me positive things about Standard Dutch. In extract 9, this inconsistency becomes clear:

### Extract 9

14 March 2014 – INT 4 Caren Frances Veerle

- |   |               |  |
|---|---------------|--|
| 1 | RS            | [Z]ij spreekt zeer zeer veel dialect volgens jullie en wie staat er dan aan de andere kant? Zijn er zo mensen die wreed? |
| 2 | Caren         | Jorien (lacht).  |
| 3 | Veerle        | Ja o my god.   |
| 4 | Frances [...] | Ja o my god zij neemt dat te serieus o-o-op (lacht).   |
| 5 | Frances       | Maar zij spreekt wel mooi Nederlands dat wel.  |
| 6 | Veerle        | Ja dat wel maar...   |
| 7 | RS            | Uhu dus ge vindt het wel mooi?   |
| 8 | Veerle        | ... gewoon sommige dingen iets te veel.  |
| 9 | Frances       | Ja ja dat wel.   |
- 
- |   |               |  |
|---|---------------|--|
| 1 | RS            | [S]he uses a lot a lot of dialect according to you and who is on the other side then? Are there people who really? |
| 2 | Caren         | Jorien (laughs).   |
| 3 | Veerle        | Yeah oh my god.  |
| 4 | Frances [...] | Yeah oh my god she takes it too seriously (laughs).  |
| 5 | Frances       | But she speaks beautiful Dutch indeed.   |
| 6 | Veerle        | Yeah that's true but...  |
| 7 | RS            | Uhu so you do think it's beautiful?  |
| 8 | Veerle        | ... just some things a little bit too much.  |
| 9 | Frances       | Yeah that's true.  |

Extract 9 comes from the interview with Caren, Veerle and Frances and we have been talking about Lore's language use, which according to these girls is fairly dialectal. Then the researcher asked 'who is on the other side then?' (line 1), meaning 'who uses a lot of Standard Dutch?'. Caren immediately answers 'Jorien' (line 2) and she starts to laugh. Veerle and Frances confirm ('Yeah oh my god', line 3 and 4) and Frances evaluates the use of Standard Dutch by Jorien as 'taking it too seriously' (line 4). This negative evaluation fits in with their negative attitude towards the use of Standard Dutch in specific situations (cf. 5.2). However, almost a minute later, we are still talking about Jorien's speech and suddenly Frances admits that she finds it beautiful. One could wonder whether *mooi Nederlands* ('beautiful Dutch') in line 5 can be considered as a pure aesthetic judgement of Jorien's language use, or just as a categorization of that language use as standard, since Lybaert (2014, p. 121) found that linguistic laymen tend to use *mooi Nederlands* as a synonym for Standard Dutch. However, I interpret the use of *mooi* by Frances here as a value judgement for two reasons. First because it is framed by Frances as contrasting the negative evaluation of Jorien's language use in the previous and omitted lines. When Caren identifies Jorien as a speaker of Standard Dutch in line 2, a minute of negative judgements of that language use follows: using Standard Dutch is 'taking it too seriously', it is the object of mockery and it serves to express the identity of 'a swot' (not in the extract). After this characterization of Jorien's language use, a pause of one and a half second (not in the extract) and Frances' use of *maar* ('but') demarcates a shift in framing: it is clear that Frances is now saying something positive about Jorien's language use. So even if she uses *mooi* ('beautiful') in line 5 as a synonym for *Algemeen* ('Standard'), the pause and her use of the contrastive conjunction *maar* ('but') indicate a shift from a negative value judgement toward a positive one. Second, Frances' positive confirmation in line 9 of the question I asked her in line 7 confirms my interpretation: she literally admits that she thinks Jorien speaks beautifully. However, one could doubt as to whom Frances is responding in line 9: to the interviewer (line 7) or to Veerle (line 6 and 8). The recording points toward the first possibility, since Frances actually interrupts Veerle. Besides, Frances' repetition of the researcher's use of the adverb of confirmation *wel* suggests that she is responding to the researcher and not to Veerle. So although the concrete use of Standard Dutch by a pupil in a school context is condemned as 'taking it too seriously', this does not stand in the way of an aesthetic appreciation of that standard (exactly as was propagated during the era of standardization in

Flanders). The same effect is working on Nadia in extract 10, but in the opposite direction.

### Extract 10

9 May 2014 – INT 11 Kayleigh Lore Nadia

- 1 RS Uhu en wat vindt ge van under eigen taalgebruik?  
 2 Nadia [...] Ja niet zo goed e ja (lacht).  
 3 RS Vindt ge 't niet goed?  
 4 Nadia Maar ja nee bedoel zo wreed plat.

- 1 RS Uhu and what do you think about your own language use?  
 2 Nadia [...] Well not so good huh (laughs).  
 3 RS You don't think it's good?  
 4 Nadia But well no I mean so awfully broad.

Extract 9 is taken from the interview with Lore, Nadia and Kayleigh and the girls have just been explaining that they often use dialect and that they love it. But when the researcher asks them 'What do you think about your own language use' (line 1), Nadia answers 'Well not so good huh' (line 2) and she laughs. That answer surprises the researcher, who then looks for confirmation ('You don't think it's good?', line 3). And Nadia explains that she thinks her accent is 'so awfully broad' (*plat*, line 4); with *plat* being a common derogatory term for dialect. So here she evaluates her own language use according to the traditional 'Standard-is-good-and-dialect-not'-bias, i.e. the Flemish SLI.

This SLI-influence is sometimes even more explicitly manifest in what the girls tell me, but they always immediately nuance or downplay the importance of Standard Dutch. In extract 11, for example, the girls admit that they will need Standard Dutch in a job interview and on the work floor (cf. the Moroccan boys in Jaspers, 2005), but only in the beginning. It only serves to make a good first impression, and once that goal is achieved, you can go back to talking normal.

### Extract 11

14 March 2014 – INT 4 Caren Frances Veerle

- 1 Veerle [...] [D]at is nog handig toch als gij zo gaat gaan werken en ge komt bij uw baas voor voor sollicitatiegesprek en begint daar alles zo in 't dialect te zeggen gewoon van de stress.  
 2 RS Ja.  
 3 Veerle 'k Weet niet denk niet dat je dan ook zo goed gaat overkomen ze.

- 4 RS [...] A nee.  
 5 RS Ja en is dat dan enkel belangrijk in uw latere leven als ge moet gaan solliciteren algemeen Nederlands?  
 6 Veerle Maar ja erna ook nog tegen uw baas en in 't begin tegen uw collega's als ze u zo nog niet echt kennen.  
 7 RS Ja efkes.
- 1 Veerle [...] [I]t's kind of handy when you go to work and you see your boss for a job interview and you start saying everything in dialect just because of the stress.  
 2 RS Yes.  
 3 Veerle I don't know don't think that you'll come across that well then.  
 4 RS [...] Ah no.  
 5 RS Yes and is Standard Dutch only important in your future life then when you have to apply for jobs?  
 6 Veerle But yeah still afterwards talking to your boss and in the beginning talking to your colleagues if you don't know them that well yet.  
 7 RS Yes for a little while.

This – again – is in line with the propagated division of Standard Dutch and dialect over respectively formal and informal situations – although clearly, as a result of wider informalization tendencies (cf. Davies, 2012; Fairclough, 1992; Giddens, 1991), these girls mainly associate Standard Dutch with extremely formal or ritual situations (like a job interview or the first contact with your boss and/or your colleagues).

A second indication of the influence of an SLI on the linguistic behaviour and attitudes of Lore & co can be found in their stylization practices. According to Coupland (2001, p. 345) stylization is 'the knowing deployment of culturally familiar styles and identities that are marked as deviating from those predictably associated with the current speaking context'. It could be deduced from the interviews (cf. *infra*) that the pupils in the investigation are culturally familiar with a style continuum ranging from fairly standard on the one extreme to dialect on the other. Their default style is situated somewhere in the middle of that continuum (cf. 5.2). This makes it possible for the pupils to use the extremes of the continuum – thus Standard Dutch and dialect – to 'be studiedly artificial or to put on a voice' (Coupland, 2001, p. 346), i.e. to convey a special meaning. Stylizing a particular kind of language makes it possible for people to speak *in altera persona*, that is by 'exploiting linguistic resources normally not considered familiar, the speaker [can] project a different, often inauthentic and hy-

pothetical identity that the speaker detaches from the indexical meaning of his or her default speech style' (Jaspers, 2005, p. 30).

While most of the other pupils in the research perform stylizations in Standard Dutch once in a while, the stylizations that Lore & co produce usually target the local dialect rather than Standard Dutch. In light of the knowledge that these girls also use a fair amount of dialect features in their routine speech (cf. 5.3), and considering the abovementioned definition of stylization practices, this is a remarkable observation. What might be going on here, is that the pupils draw a line between their ordinary dialect-like language use and a kind of exaggerated dialect used for stylization purposes (a comparable distinction was made by Jaspers, 2011 in his account of Antwerp vernacular used by Moroccan adolescent pupils). I analysed an example of the former in extract 7 (cf. supra) and extract 12 shows an instance of the latter. In extract 12, Lore is talking to her friends about the microphone she is wearing.

### Extract 12

15 January 2014 – AA ENG Lore

1 Lore A's 'k et nie a's a's se 't nie mag oorn moe' 'k et afzettn e.

2 Nadia Ja?

3 Frances Nu staa' ta af?

4 Lore Moe' 'k da naar beneedn doen en op stop zettn.

5 Caren A en e' j' et al gedaan?

6 Lore Nee

7 Lore Ma hast.

8 Nadia En dan gaa' s' ons gaan aangeevn bij de fliekn hast.

9 Lore (12') [**'grappig stemmetje'**] Nie wor wan' dan is s' aar joppe kwijt.

1 Lore If I don't if if she is not allowed to hear it I have to switch it off.

2 Nadia Yeah?

3 Frances Now it's off?

4 Lore I have to put this down and put it on stop.

5 Caren And have you done that already?

6 Lore No.

7 Lore But dude.

8 Nadia And then she will turn us in dude.

9 Lore (12') [**'funny voice'**] No because then she loses her job.

In this extract, Lore has been wearing the microphone for almost an hour now and she explains the 'rules' to her friends. She tells them that she can

switch the microphone off at any time, but Nadia still seems to be worried. In line 8, she says that she thinks the researcher will ‘turn them in’ (for an unknown reason). Lore answers in a stylized dialect voice that the researcher cannot do that without losing her job (line 9). They remain silent for twelve seconds and then the conversation turns to another topic. That the utterance in line 9 can be called stylized is first of all due to the fact that it is a dialectal rephrasing of a non-dialectal statement made earlier by the researcher ‘that she would lose her job’ if she did not anonymize the pupils in any public report about the study or divulged any sensitive information found on the recordings. The pronunciation of *niet waar* (‘not true’) as *nie wor*, with a backed and closed articulation of the vowel in *waar*, also is distinctly more vernacular than Lore’s earlier speech in this extract and than her default speech style which features the standard open, fronted [a]. Moreover it is remarkable that Lore adds a schwa to the word *job* (‘job’) which is then pronounced as *joppe*. In the East-Flemish dialects it is not unusual for nouns to receive a schwa-ending, but that generally does not occur with masculine nouns such as *job* (Taeldeman, 2005, p. 60). Presumably, Lore unintentionally overgeneralizes the dialectal use of the schwa after a noun here to make her utterance even more dialectal. Another indication of an exaggerated turn is that she also transforms the quality of her voice to pronounce the sentence. Lore often does that and this voice is interpreted by the other pupils as her ‘funny voice’. But in extract 12, something else is going on rather than Lore just being funny. Here she uses her ‘funny voice’ to disambiguate her use of dialect to voice the researcher’s utterance (cf. what Goffman, 1981 calls a ‘say-foring’). Thus, if the audience would have missed the cue of the exaggerated use of dialect to identify Lore’s utterance as inauthentic, they can deduce this by noticing that she alters the voice quality. Hence, by rephrasing the statement of the researcher in stylized dialect and by putting on a voice, Lore shows that she speaks *in altera persona* (cf. supra).

In the conviction that a ‘stylisation is [...] metaphorical’, that ‘it brings into play stereotyped semiotic and ideological values’ (Coupland, 2001, p. 350), and in the light of the current discussion on (de)standardization, it is worthwhile investigating the social meaning produced by the stylization of dialect in extract 12 and in the complete data set. A quick count in the recorded data of Lore & co, delivered 25 instances of dialect stylizations. Most of these stylizations were produced by Lore and Kayleigh and they were always used to insert ridiculization, humour, vulgarities or levity in the interaction. In extract 12, for example, the stylization is induced by a situation in which the hierarchical organization of school life is salient (cf.



Rampton, 2006): Lore has been told by the researcher to wear the microphone and Lore has obeyed.<sup>6</sup> The stylization of an utterance of that researcher in an exaggerated dialectal way, may serve to ridiculize (the words of) the latter. In other words, by voicing the words of the researcher in a stylized manner, Lore critically responds to the situation that is perceived as a unequal situation. Some of the other dialect stylizations in the data come into play at similar occasions where 'aspects of educational domination and constraint [...] become interactionally salient' (Rampton, 2006, p. 27). Other stylizations serve as means to align with peers in the classroom or to say something silly. What the exact social meaning of the different dialect stylizations is, is not of supreme importance. What is interesting here, is that these stylizations always 'draw on a set of binary high-low, mind-body, reason-emotion oppositions' (Rampton, 2006, p. 27). By using these dialect stylizations, the girls thus represent the traditional SLI in which the standard is seen as the high variety associated with the mind and with reason, while dialect is to be associated with a low categorization (peer-to-peer interaction), non-seriousness (humour), the body (vulgarity) and emotions (ridiculization and critique).

In conclusion, in spite of the girls' overall anti-standard language attitude expressed in the interviews, a closer look at the collected data shows that these girls are nevertheless influenced by a Standard Language Ideology in the SLI-dominant context of a secondary school. This influence is discovered in some rare instances of overtly expressed positive attitudes towards the standard (cf. extracts 9, 10 and 11), but also in the recurrent stylization of dialect (cf. extract 12) which reaffirms the functional divide between standard and non-standard speech styles propagated by advocates of standardization (cf. 2).

## 6 Conclusion

What has this analysis of the language practices and attitudes of Lore & co shown us about the possible contribution of sociolinguistic ethnography to the ongoing (scientific and public) debate about language variation and standardization in Flanders? I hope to have shown that an ethnographically inspired study of language prevents us from making generalizations at two levels. First, by the use of an extensive period of participant observations, informal chats with the informants and feedback interviews, I managed to discover the differences in social and (meta)linguistic behaviour between a group of six girls and the other pupils under investigation.

Although all the pupils have plenty in common – they go to the same school, live in the same region, have the same teachers, learn the same subject material, have the same age... – these six girls can be clearly distinguished from the rest in terms of (social) behaviour, speech style and language attitude.

Second, sociolinguistic-ethnographic analysis of the language use and attitudes of Lore & co also prevents us from making generalizations at a more fundamental level. At first sight, the girls' practices and opinions come across as typical outcomes of a destandardization process, expressing an anti-standard stance. But upon a closer look, the influence of the school environment or even more broadly of the Flemish context which is saturated by a Standard Language Ideology, would be hard to deny. Such complexities often fail to materialize in approaches that collect data at a larger scale or that exclusively rely on interview data, but it is the typically ethnographic combination of different types of data that helps us to tap into them and that demonstrates the 'dynamic interplay between [on the one hand] the social, conventional, ready-made in social life and [on the other] the individual, creative and emergent qualities of human existence' (Bauman & Sherzer, 1989, p. xix). In this particular context, it shows that ideological processes – in this case (de)standardization – may not be as clear-cut as is often assumed. Taken together, these findings seem to suggest that any hypothesis of destandardization in Flanders will need to account for speakers' simultaneous investment in standard and non-standard speech, rather than assuming their exclusive investment in either one of these.

## Notes

1. I wish to thank Johan De Caluwe and Jürgen Jaspers as well as two anonymous reviewers and the editors of this special issue for their careful reading and useful comments and suggestions.
2. In Flanders, pupils at the age of twelve can choose between general secondary education (aso), technical secondary education (tso), secondary arts education (kso) and vocational secondary education (bso). In general secondary education the focus is on a broad general formation with the aim of preparing the pupils for higher education.
3. All names are pseudonyms.
4. In all the extracts, except for 7 and 12, the transcription of the recordings has been adapted slightly. Since in the analysis of these extracts the sole focus is on the content of what is said, deletions (e.g. *t*-deletions or *h*-aphaereses) and other phonological deviations from the standard (e.g. *der* for *er*) have been adjusted to fit Standard Dutch spelling. However, substandard morpho-syntactic or lexical forms are represented in

their original form. This may give the false impression that the language use of the girls is fairly standard. This impression is counterbalanced in extracts 7 and 12.

5. The only situations in which some pupils use a fairly standard speech style, is in staged performances (like giving an oral presentation in the classroom).
6. When I offered the microphone to the pupils, they could always refuse wearing it. That only happened once, which demonstrates the fairly dominant or authoritative position of a researcher (despite all my efforts to install a horizontal relationship between me and the pupils).

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