



A challenge for newcomers: the gap between language use and language-in-education policy in Flanders

Chloé Lybaert

1 March 2016

'Multilingual policies and practices from below. The power of change'



Language use in Flanders



I. Language situation in Flanders: at the **intralingual** level

- Dutch is a pluricentric language: Netherlandic vs. Belgian Dutch
- Belgian Dutch:



Standard Dutch
= VRT-Dutch

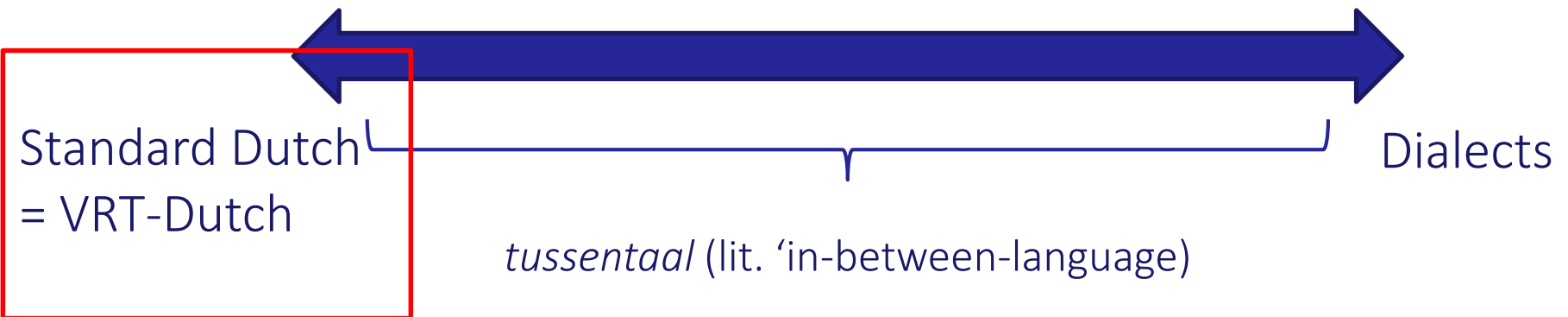
Dialects

tussentaal (lit. 'in-between-language')



I. Language situation in Flanders: at the intralingual level

“an almost unattainable ideal achieved only by a small minority of Dutch speaking Belgians in a limited number of contexts”
(Grondelaers & Van Hout 2011)

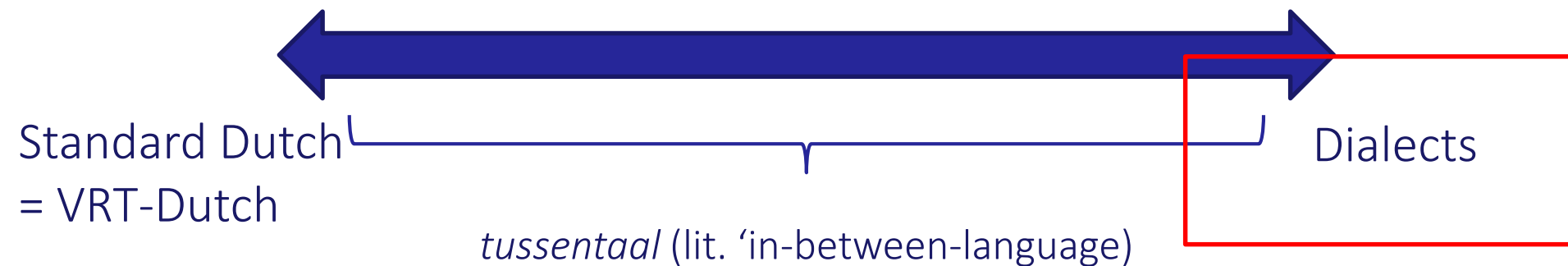




I. Language situation in Flanders: at the intralingual level

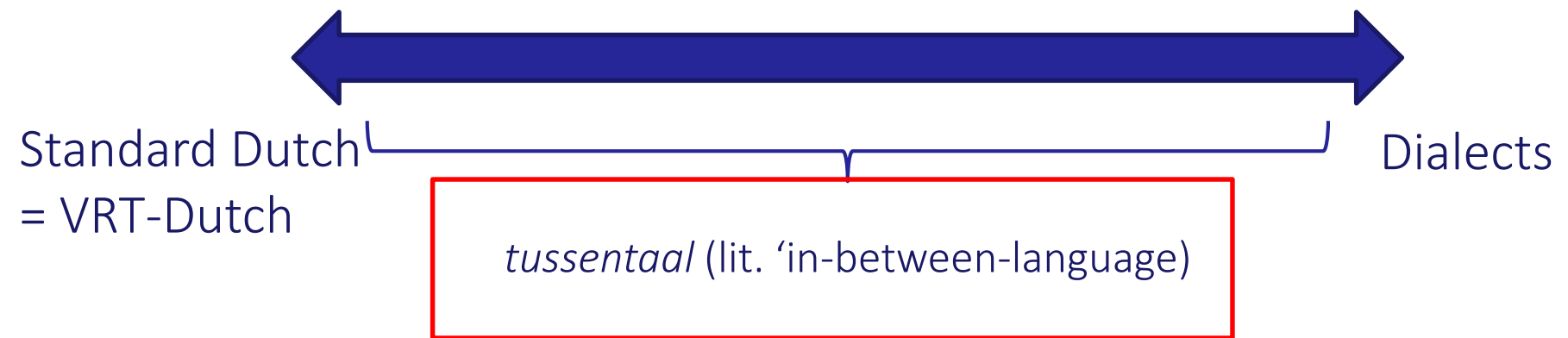
Dialect loss:

- Functional dialect loss
- Structural dialect loss



[T]he standard language is pushed to the extreme formality side of the continuum, whereas, simultaneously, the use of dialects is constantly diminishing. [...]

I. Language situation in Flanders: at the intralingual level

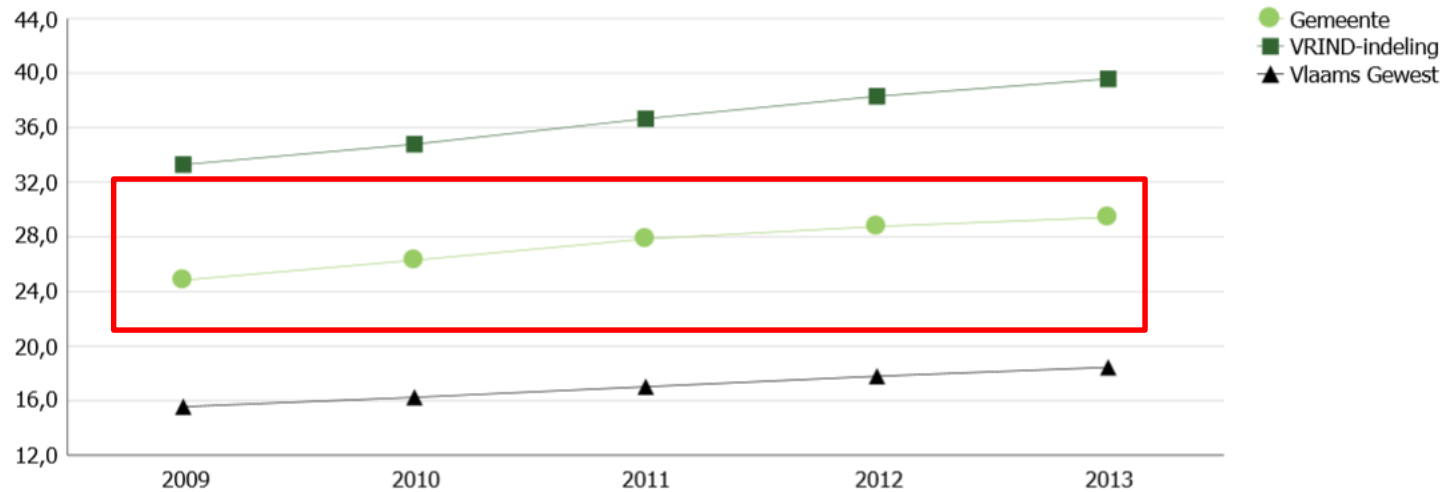


[...] Together, these two developments are responsible for the creation of an enormous amount of space on the continuum scale. That is, the intermediate variety now occupies a huge field, [...] alternatively taking the shape of a more dialectal or a more standard-like intermediate variety (Willemyns, 2007, p. 270).



I. Language situation in Flanders: at the **interlingual** level

- Strong presence of people with a different home language
 - newcomers
 - second generation migrants
 - ...
- For example: people of foreign origin in Ghent:





Language policy in Flanders



II. Language in education policy: **mother tongue education**

Former Flemish Minister of Education **Frank Vandenbroucke**:

There is no room in schools for “inarticulate language use or a vernacular that locks them [the students, cl] up in a small area and undermines their chances of mobility and emancipation. (...) For a lot of students, the use of Standard Dutch is limited to the school and to the classroom. *That’s* the place where it has to happen.” (Vandenbroucke 2008)

“Er is geen plaats op school voor “krom taalgebruik of verkavelingsvlaams of een streektaal die hen in een klein gebied opsluit en hun kansen op mobiliteit en emancipatie ondergraaft. (...) Het Nederlands en zeker het ‘schoolse Nederlands’ beperkt zich voor heel wat leerlingen tot de school en de klas. Dààr moeten we het dus waarmaken.”



II. Language in education policy: mother tongue education

Former Flemish Minister of Education **Pascal Smet**:

“In Flanders, there are still many children growing up for whom the mother tongue is a regional variant of Standard Dutch and thus not Standard Dutch itself. Furthermore, 15% of the children in primary education and 10% of the children in secondary education have a home language different from Dutch. However, a rich knowledge of Standard Dutch is *the* prerequisite for who wants to learn, live, work in Flanders. People who do not learn Standard Dutch, remain in the seclusion of their own family or community and live – in Flanders – outside of Flanders.” (Smet 2011:3)

“In Vlaanderen groeien nog steeds veel kinderen op voor wie de moedertaal een regionale variant van het Standaardnederlands en dus niet het Standaardnederlands is. Daarnaast is voor 15% van de kinderen in het basisonderwijs en 10% van de kinderen in het secundair onderwijs de thuistaal niet het Nederlands is, dus een andere taal dan de omgevingstaal, of de instructietaal van ons onderwijs. Nochtans is een rijke kennis van het Standaardnederlands dé voorwaarde voor wie in Vlaanderen wil leren, wonen, werken, leven. Wie van elders komt, en geen Standaardnederlands leert, blijft in de beslotenheid van het eigen gezin of de eigen gemeenschap leven, en leeft – in Vlaanderen – buiten Vlaanderen.”



II. Language in education policy: **second language education**

In general: tailored to the instruction of Standard Dutch

More specific: Curriculum demands for reading and listening texts

- CEFR Level A (A1 Breakthrough & A2 Waystage):
 - Pronunciation, vocabulary and register: Standard Dutch
- CEFR Level B1 (Threshold)
 - Vocabulary: Standard Dutch or occasionally acceptable variation ('Standaardtaal of occasioneel een aanvaardbare variant')
 - Pronunciation: Standard Dutch or a familiar accent ('geïntoneerd en gearticuleerd in standaardtaal of een over het algemeen vertrouwd accent')
 - Register: occasional variation on the standard style and register ('Taalgebruikssituatie: occasionele varianten op standaardstijl en standaardregister')



II. Language in education policy: **second language education**

- CEFR Level B2 (Vantage)
 - ▶ Vocabulary: Standard Dutch or an acceptable variation ('Standaardtaal of een aanvaardbare variant')
 - ▶ Pronunciation: Standard Dutch or a familiar accent ('geïntoneerd en gearculeerd in standaardtaal of een aanvaardbare variant')
 - ▶ Register: diverse registers ('Taalgebruikssituatie: diverse registers')
- CEFR Level C1 (Effectiveness)
 - ▶ Vocabulary: Standard Dutch or **regional language use** ('Standaardtaal of regionaal taalgebruik')
 - ▶ Pronunciation: Standard Dutch or **regional language use**, with some difficulty if unfamiliar with the accent ('geïntoneerd en gearculeerd in standaardtaal of regionaal taalgebruik, met enige moeite als het accent niet vertrouwd is')
 - ▶ Register: diverse registers ('Taalgebruikssituatie: diverse registers')



III. Integration policy

- Newcomers encouraged to acquire Dutch
- Mastering the national language increasingly considered a *conditio sine qua non* for successful participation in Flemish society and for socio-economic promotion (De Wilde e.a. to appear).
 - the Flemish minister Liesbeth Homans: invest more in the knowledge of Dutch with newcomers (Homans 2014)
 - required level of Dutch which is part of the civic integration programme was raised from level A1 to level A2
 - cf. European trend (Van Avermaet 2009)



Language ideology in Flanders



IV. Language ideology in Flanders

Monolingual ideology

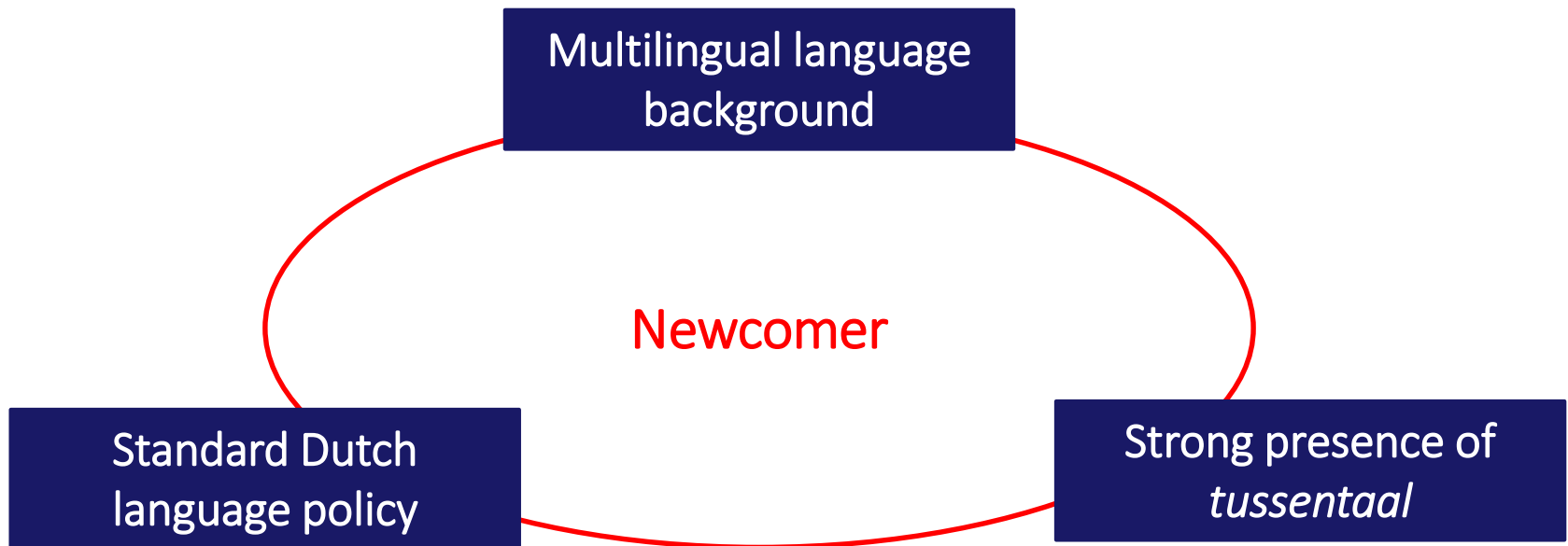
- “It is only natural, then, that within [...] monolingual territories very little tolerance is shown to minorities that deviate from the monolingual norm. Social, cultural and linguistic diversity, consequently, are seen as problematic and deviant” (Blommaert 2011)

Standard language ideology

- “[...] a metalinguistically articulated and culturally dominant belief that there is only one correct way of speaking (i.e. the standard language). The SLI leads to a general intolerance towards linguistic variation, and non-standard varieties in particular are regarded as ‘undesirable’ and ‘deviant’ (Swann et al. 2004:296)



Which Dutch should we teach newcomers?





Which Dutch should we teach newcomers?

- Feelings **of frustration amongst newcomers**: efforts to meet the imposed standard language requirements do not translate into better communication and integration in linguistic reality (as indicated by Bolten 2004; Jaspers 2012; Kloots & Gillis 2012: 227).
- “Sometimes not a lack of standard language knowledge, but a lack of dialect knowledge stands in the way of integration in the job market” (Jaspers 2012: 378, own translation).
“Soms staat niet een gebrek aan standaardtaalkennis iemands integratie op de arbeidsmarkt in de weg, maar een gebrek aan dialectkennis”



V. Research to be done

(1) THE LINGUISTIC RESOURCES AND LANGUAGE PRACTICES OF THE NEWCOMERS AND THEIR TEACHERS

what linguistic resources do newcomers and their second language teachers draw on in interactions in and outside the classroom? Do the newcomers experience communication difficulties when talking to other newcomers or first language speakers of Dutch?

(2) THE SOCIAL MEANING OF THE LINGUISTIC RESOURCES

what are the social meanings of the linguistic resources to the newcomers and their language teachers? How do their language practices relate to societal dynamics affecting all newcomers in Flanders? What are the attitudes of the newcomers towards the Flemish language situation, and towards language policy and education?

(3) THE LANGUAGE NEEDS OF THE NEWCOMERS

what are the language needs of newcomers in Flanders? How can language, education and integration policy be tailored to these needs?

VI. Literature

Blommaert, Jan. 2011. The long language-ideological debate in Belgium. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 6(3). 241-257.

Bolten, A. . 2004. 'Zedde zot!'. Vlaamse inburgeringscursisten struikelen over tussentaal. *Onze Taal* 75(9). 237-238.

De Wilde, July, Ellen Van Praet & Pascal Rilof. to appear. Contesting the monolingual mindset: practice versus policy. The case of Belgium. *Journal of Language and Politics* 15(2).

Homans, Liesbeth. 2014. *Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Integratie en inburgering*. Retrieved on 15/10/2015 from <http://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/beleidsnota-2014-2019-integratie-en-inburgering>

Jaspers, Jürgen. 2012. Het Algemeen Nederlands: uw sociale zekerheid? Taalgebruik en taalopvattingen in processen van in- en uitsluiting. In Kevin Absillis, Jürgen Jaspers & Sarah Van Hoof(eds.), *De manke usurpator. Over Verkavelingsvlaams*, 371-400. Gent: Academia Press.

Kloots, Hanne & Steven Gillis. 2012. Bang voor Babel. De verstaanbaarheid van tussentaal. In Kevin Absillis, Jürgen Jaspers & Sarah Van Hoof(eds.), *De manke usurpator. Over Verkavelingsvlaams*, 225-247. Gent: Academia Press.

Smet, Pascal. 2011. *Conceptnota 'Samen taalgrenzen verleggen' (versie 22 juli 2011)*. Retrieved on 28/03/2013 from http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2011/doc/talennota_2011.pdf

Swann, Joann, Ana Deumert, Theresa Lillis & Rajend Mesthrie. 2004. *A dictionary of sociolinguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Vandenbroucke, Frank. 2007. *De lat hoog voor talen in iedere school. Goed voor de sterken, sterk voor de zwakken*. Retrieved on 28/03/13 from http://www.coc.be/files/publications/.88/talenbeleidsnota_.pdf

Willemys, Roland. 2007. De-standardization in the Dutch language territory at large. In Christian Fandrych & Reinier Salverda(eds.), *Standard, Variation und Sprachwandel in germanischen Sprachen - Standard, variation and language change in Germanic languages*, 265-279. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/volwassenenonderwijs/secundair-volwassenenonderwijs/nederlands-tweede-taal/opleidingen.htm>

<http://aps.vlaanderen.be/lokaal/integratiemonitor.html>