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*Variation in grammatical gender marking in Turkish and Moroccan Dutch ethnolects.
Findings from the Roots of Ethnolects project*

In our research on ethnolectal variation in present-day Dutch, interactional speech data (from 160 one hour conversations) were collected among 10-12 and 18-20 year old male adolescents with bilingual Turkish-Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch and monolingual Dutch backgrounds who were all born and raised in the Dutch cities of Amsterdam or Nijmegen. Among the speakers with a monolingual Dutch background boys with strong and boys with weak or absent interethnic ties were distinguished. The two cities, which both have multicultural demographic profiles, are located in different dialect areas. All participants except for the participants in the Dutch control group with no inter-ethnic ties took part in three different conversations, interacting with age-matched participants of (1) Turkish, (2) Moroccan, and (3) Dutch descent.

We found many phonological variation patterns (Van Meel 2016). Among the variable grammatical phenomena, the expression of grammatical gender, both in determiners and in adnominal inflection, stands out, as already noted in other literature on Dutch ethnolects. Standard Dutch, as well as the Nijmegen and Amsterdam urban dialects, distinguish common and neuter gender. In our data only neuter gender varies; neutralization is never in the direction of neuter gender, whereas neutralization of neuter into common gender is abundant. This pattern is reminiscent of the behavior of adult L2 learners of Dutch, but we will show that the patterns of variation of the adolescents are far too complex to be taken as a direct reflection of processes of L2 acquisition in the first generations of immigrants.

Mixed models regression analyses (logit) show that gender variation in interactional speech is strongly conditioned by both linguistic and social factors. An important finding is that older adolescents in all groups appear to perform better than the younger speakers, suggesting that the knowledge of what noun carries what gender keeps growing in the teenage period (an acquisition effect). Another strong effect is the distinction between the monolingual and the bilingual groups, as both Moroccan and Turkish Dutch speakers realize neuter gender as common gender, but this pattern does not cross-over to the non-immigrant monolingual groups. For both bilingual and monolingual speakers there appears to be a language-style-as-audience-design effect (Bell 1984), as in our data the 'over-use' of common gender increases whenever the interlocutor is bilingual.

Among the linguistic factors included in our analyses a morphological (diminutivization) and semantic (animacy) factor turn out to subtly interact with the

social conditioning of the variation in gender assignment. We conclude establishing that in Turkish and Moroccan Dutch gender distinctions may be eroding in demonstratives (in contrast to articles) and that biological gender decisively outweighs grammatical gender.

These and other findings (e.g. by Van Meel 2016) from the Roots of Ethnolects project are building blocks for a model of ethnolectal variation which connects language contact, language acquisition and dialect variation.