# *Style, Meaning and Identity*

## *The use of Colloquial Belgian Dutch in "Expeditie Robinson"*

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# Colloquial Belgian Dutch

*Double Dutch*

Two variants of one language:

- Dutch in the Netherlands
- Dutch in Northern Belgium (Flanders)

Dutch in Flanders

- Discrepancy between the formal and the informal use of Dutch
- *Formal use*: not very different from Dutch in the Netherlands
- *Informal use*: markedly different from Dutch in the Netherlands
  → called Colloquial Belgian Dutch (CBD)

→ Variation in the use of CBD?

# Research Questions

- How can we explain stylistic variation in the use of colloquial variants (i.c. in the use of CBD)?

- How can stylistic variation function to construct meaning and identity in discourse?

- What is the importance of this meaning-constructing function of stylistic variation, when compared to the importance of other explanations for the attested variation?

→ a case-study concerning the use of Colloquial Belgian Dutch in three broadcast seasons of "Expeditie Robinson" (*Survivor*)

# Overview

Cognitive Sociolinguistics

Design

Results

Conclusion

# Overview

**Cognitive Sociolinguistics**

- why?
- how?
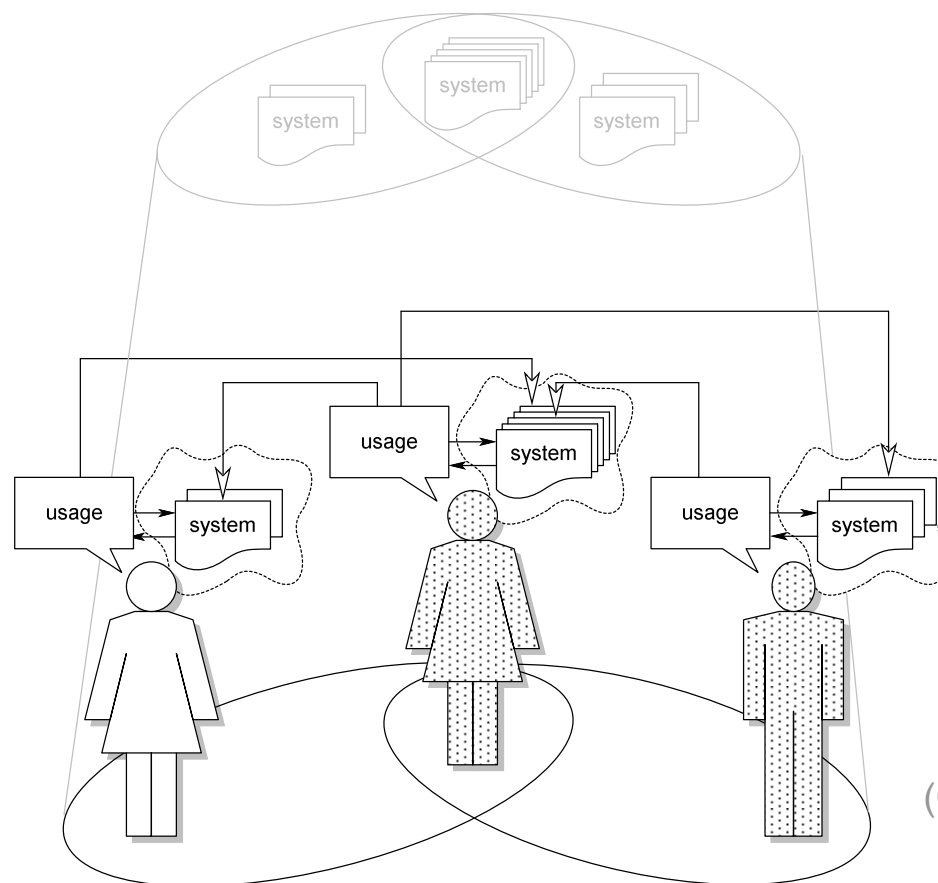- lectal variation and style

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# Cognitive Sociolinguistics: why?

- Recently structured field (Geeraerts & Kristiansen 2008 - LCM)

  ↓

- Starting point: a conceptual analysis of the notion of "linguistic system"

# Cognitive Sociolinguistics: why?

→ The form of the linguistic system:



(Geeraerts & Kristiansen 2008)

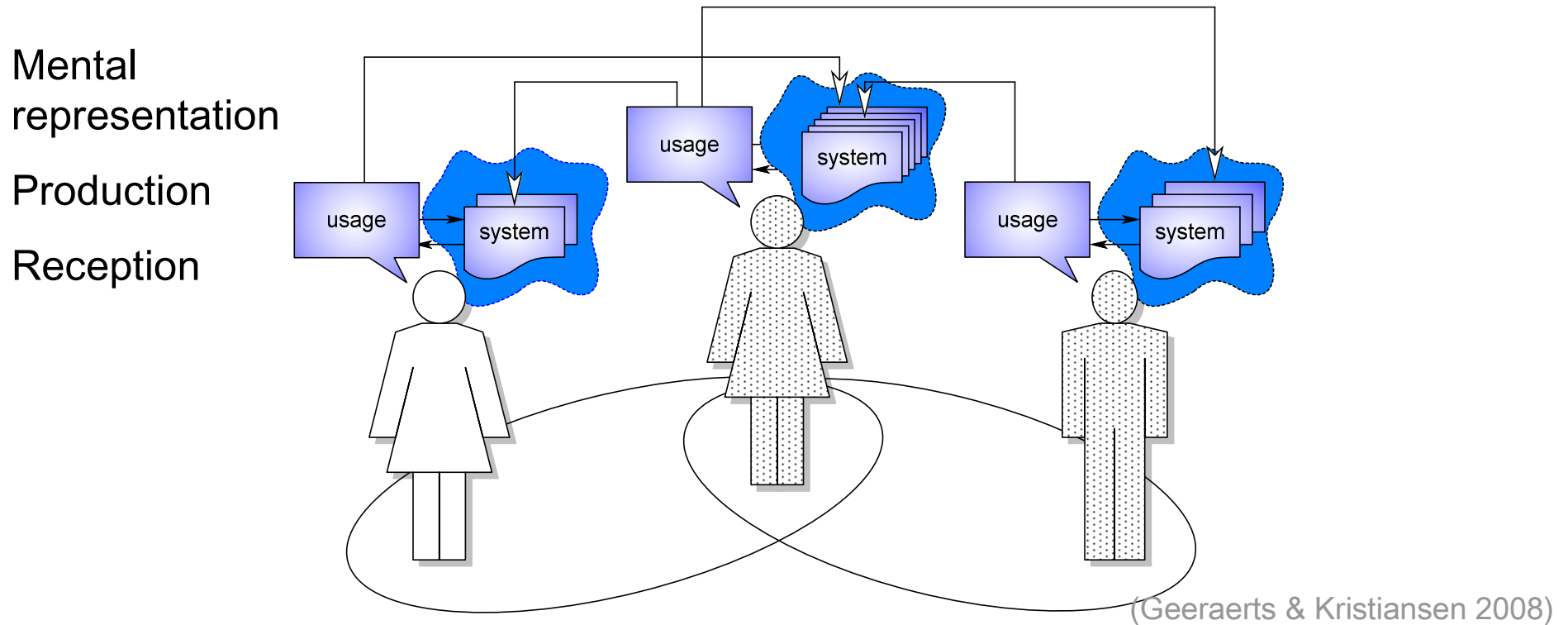# Cognitive Sociolinguistics: why?

→ The form of the linguistic system:

→ Result: the essential question in linguistics is the interaction of cognitive processes and social behaviour
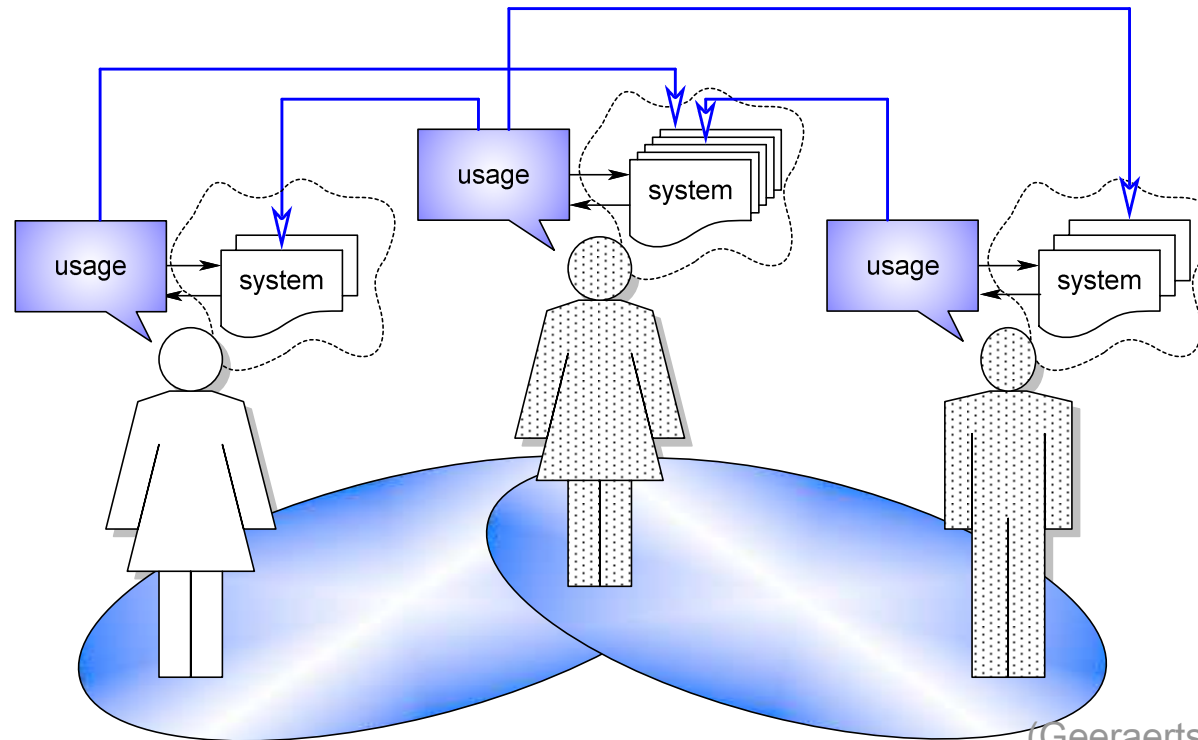
# Cognitive Sociolinguistics: why?

The cognitive aspect: meaning-based

Mental
representation

Production

Reception



(Geeraerts & Kristiansen 2008)

# Cognitive Sociolinguistics: why?

The social aspect: usage-based
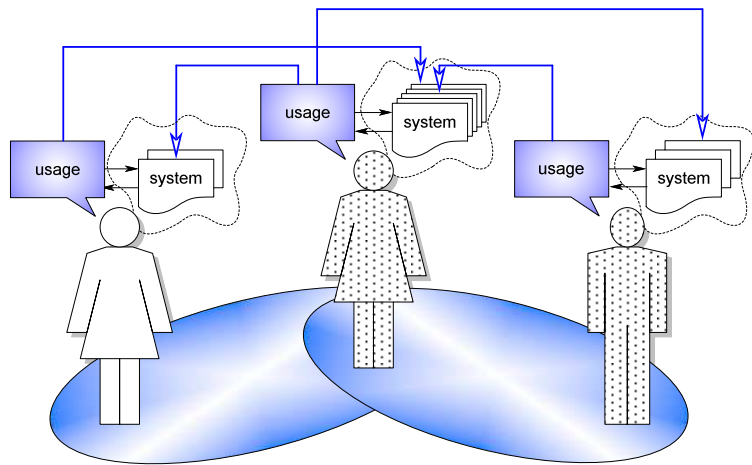


Socially distributed interaction

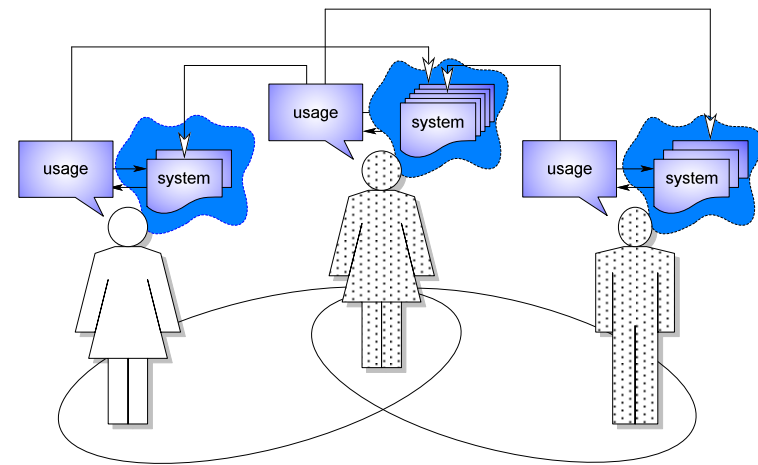(Geeraerts & Kristiansen 2008)

# Cognitive Sociolinguistics: why?

Essential: combine both perspectives

Social Use

Cognitive Meaning

# Cognitive Sociolinguistics: how?

Different research domains following this basic line:

- Foundational statements (theoretical, philosophical, semiotic)
- Dynamism in the system (language acquisition & language change)
- Perception and awareness (Leen Impe's talk)
- Lectal variation (meaning construction in discourse)
- Intralinguistic relativity (cognition in intralinguistic variation)
- Methodological development (QLVL-team in Leuven)

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# Lectal Variation and Style

Social (usage-based)
- language variation
- influence of sociolinguistic variables on that variation?
  - interactional (conversational partners)
  - Labovian (age, sex, gender)

Cognitive (meaning-based)
- How can we explain language variation?
  - Individual: variation & styleshifts create identity & meaning in discourse (cf. Eckert)
  - Social: variation highlights certain characteristics of the variant used
- → importance of both?

# CBD: a useful case-study

Social (usage-based)

CBD has several linguistic features, subject to variation (e.g. h-deletion)

Cognitive (meaning-based): the function of variation?

- Individually: variation & styleshifts create identity & meaning in discourse

  → prototypically, the CBD-user is:

    - Flemish (interaction with Dutch participants?)
    - Young

- Socially: variation highlighting characteristics of CBD

  → CBD is informal (less CBD in formal    registers?)

(compare Van Gijsel *et al*. 2004)

**Methodological Needs**

empirical, corpus-based research, complemented with statistical
analyses of the data

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- the linguistic variable
  - → Colloquial Belgian Dutch (CBD)

- the data
  - → "Expeditie Robinson" (*Survivor*)

- the independent variables
  - → interactional, contextual factors (e.g. dialogue partners)
  - → Labovian, speaker-related features (e.g. age)

- methodological needs
  - → mixed-effect model on an average index of CBD

# CBD: Linguistic Features

| Group | Feature | Standard Dutch | CBD |
|---|---|---|---|
| pronunciation | h-deletion | huis | (h)uis |
| | t/d-deletion | dat paard | da(t) paard |
| adnominal | indefinite article | een appel | nen appel |
| | negative determiner | geen appel | genen appel |
| | definite article | de appel | den appel |
| | proximal demonstratives | deze appel | dezen appel |
| | distal demonstratives | die appel | diejen appel |
| | possessives | mijn appel | mijnen appel |
| nominal | diminutives | stoeltje | stoeleke |
| pronominal | pronominals, 2sing | je | gij |
| | pronominals, 2sing | je | u |
| | reflexives | zich | hem |
| verbal | verbal, 1sing SP | ik ga | ik gaan |
| | imperative | loop | loopt |

# "Expeditie Robinson": format

- **Gamedoc:** social game where the participants have to survive on a 'desert' island

- **Format:**
  1. 2 tribes (cf. infra)
  2. Tribe Switch
  3. Merge
  4. Finals

- **Tribal Council:** formal event where one of the participants is voted out of the tribe (and hence voted home) by the other participants

→ Interesting variety of situations concerning *group make-up*, as well as more traditional contextual variables (e.g. *register*)

# Methodology: Material

- 6047 utterances
- 26 Flemish participants
- 3 broadcast seasons of "Expeditie Robinson" (2003, 2004, 2005)

Transcriptions based on the childes-standard

# Methodology: Independent Variables

Assigned through codes per utterance:

@Situation: <J05.A08.F040.U02.T3.E2>

*MAX: kom mannekes # ge moet is kijke(n) hoe ze deruit zien # ge moet is kijken eh@fp # (h)ier Douwe ziet is man # ge moet da(t) zien jong(en) # schoon eh@fp jong(en).

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Broadcast Season

- – J03: men vs. women
- – J04: Flemish vs. Dutch participants (!)
- – J05: younger vs. older participants

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Making the Code Unique
- – A: number of the episode
- – F: fragment/scene
- – U: number of the utterance within the fragment/scene

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## Conversational Type

- T2: homogeneous informal dialogues (only Flemish participants)
- T3: heterogeneous informal dialogues  (Flemish + Dutch participants) → group make-up
- T1: tv-diaries → more formal
- T4: tribal councils → more formal
- T5: final episode (studio) → more formal

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Emotion
- E0: neutral
- E1: negative emotion
- E2: positive emotion

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Speaker

- – sex
- – age
- – region

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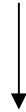
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Dependent variable

The calculation of an average CBD-index starts from the utterance

# Methodology: the average CBD-index

1. Step 1: determine the relative frequency of the CBD-realisations for each of the 14 CBD-features. Do this for every utterance. e.g. how many deleted h's out of the number of possibly deleted h's

2. Step 2: determine the weighted average of the 14 frequencies for each utterances

Weighting, e.g.: when there are more possibly deleted h's than possibly deleted t's, the relative frequency of h-deletion will weigh more heavily in the calculation of the index

3. Step 3: performing statistical analyses (i.c. mixed-effect model, due to small number of participants)

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# Mixed-effect model

| Variable | Estimate | p |
|---|---|---|
| (Intercept) | (-0.265) | 0.0001 |
| Type T2 | 0.533 | <0.0001 |
| Type T3 | 0.326 | <0.0001 |
| Season J04 | 0.220 | 0.067 |
| Season J04:type T2 | -0.166 | 0.037 |
| Season J04:type T3 | -0.110 | 0.099 |
| Emotion E12 | 0.124 | 0.003 |
| Age | … | not sign. |
| Region | … | not sign. |
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T3: "I am part of this team" > "I am Flemish"

CBD is an informal variant

Type
highly significant

importance of:
- formality

→Variation highlights informal character of CBD

- group make-up: accommodation

(a.o. Giles 2001)

→ Variation to construct identity & meaning

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Season

tendency
- J04: *ingroup* tribe
  = *ingroup* Flemish
  participants
- J03/J05:
  accommodation

→ Variation to construct
identity BUT:

J04: "I am part of this team" = "I am Flemish"

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T3: "I am part of this team" = "I am Flemish"

Season-Type

Important for *Season*:

interaction with Type:

T2/T3 are less distinctive in J04 than in all other seasons

→ CBD as the general Flemish language in J04 (less used as marker of team-identity)

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Emotion

very significant

importance of register
(emotion as private &
informal)

→ Variation highlights
informal character of
CBD

CBD is an informal variant

# Mixed-effect model

| Variable | Estimate | p | Speaker-related factors |
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CogLing, Croatia 2008

# Conclusions

Analyzing CBD style-shifts taught us that variation can be explained:

- Individually: CBD-variation helps to construct identity (and hence meaning) in discourse:

    T3:    *"I am part of this team on the island"* > *"I am Flemish"*

- Socially: CBD is used significantly more in informal registers

    Mind: (?) Speaker-Related Features: lack of significance, but due to data sparseness

# Conclusions: Q&A

- The combination of cognitive linguistics and sociolinguistics has shown that both the meaning-constructing function of CBD and its informal nature are important for the explanation of stylistic variation

- The research has shown that accommodation is one way to construct meaning & identity in discourse

- Performing empirical research, complemented with statistical analyses, leads to a bigger insight in stylistic variation

  → Cognitive Sociolinguistics is useful!

For more information:

http://wwwling.arts.kuleuven.be/qlvl

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