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## **Says who? Language regard towards speaker groups using English loanwords in Dutch**

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**Abstract:** This paper contributes to the ongoing Cognitive Linguistic turn in research on lexical borrowing: rather than searching for objective and universal linguistic criteria to demarcate different contact phenomena, we prioritize language users' subjective perception of contact-induced change. In particular, combining insights from folk linguistics and social role theory, this paper presents the results from a survey targeting 177 Belgian Dutch respondents' expectations on the use of English loanwords. The survey uncovers variation in these expectations, depending on the age of the projected speaker (RQ1), on the social role of the projected speaker (RQ2), and whether (unexpected) use of English by projected social role actors leads to negative evaluations (RQ3). Results reveal shared expectations regarding the use of English loans by age, with a perceived peak in late adolescence. Regarding the use of English by social role actors, we find high anticipated use of English loans for modern roles (e.g. rapper, gamer), whilst the expectation on English use for public (e.g. primary school teacher) and traditional roles (e.g. farmer) is significantly lower. Finally, our results indicate that role violation only seems to trigger negative evaluations when the role actor is a public figure with social responsibility. The discussion reflects on the implications of the results, contrasting the top-down or bottom-up emergence of shared beliefs on speaker groups and contact-induced variation.

**Keywords:** Dutch, English, language regard, lexical borrowing, social roles

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## 1 World, mind and regard in lexical borrowing research

Lexical borrowing concerns the introduction of (part of) a form-meaning pair from a donor language into a receptor language (Winter-Froemel 2011; see also Winter-Froemel, this issue). Researchers studying the phenomenon have long focused on the systemic impact of the borrowing process on the receptor language, tallying the number of imported words per part of speech or semantic field (Field 2002), describing the integration of the borrowed form into the morpho-syntax of the receptor language (Onysko 2007), and identifying criteria to establish as of which point a source-language form-meaning pair can be considered to have become part of the receptor language lexicon (Poplack 2017).

The perspective of the speaker importing and diffusing these new form-meaning pairs has only recently received attention in loanword research (cf. Winter-Froemel et al., this issue, but see Poplack et al. [1988] for an early exception). Particularly the Cognitive Linguistic turn in contact linguistics insists that more fine-grained analyses are needed of the way language users produce, process and store information on the formal structure, the linguistic origin, and the socio-cultural value of form-meaning pairs in contact settings (Backus 2021; Hakimov and Backus 2021; Quick and Verschik 2021; Zenner et al. 2018). Studying this connection between world and mind (Docherty and Foulkes 2014; Evans and Green 2006: 158) backgrounds the quest for objective linguistic criteria to demarcate the official entrance of a source-language form-meaning pair in a given receptor-language lexicon. Instead, the question becomes whether and for how long speakers mentally retain information on the foreign origin of the word, and how this is connected to the social attributes speakers index or derive from this information. As such, the subjective perception of contact-induced change in society should be combined with, or minimally complement, information on the actual use of contact phenomena (Vaattovaara and Peterson 2019). Aggregating this information across speakers then provides a way to assess how community-level shared beliefs and stereotypes about contact-induced variation and change emerge step by step, token by token, context by context.

This is true particularly for the study of lexical borrowing as a highly salient type of contact-induced variation and change. Targeting language users' perceptions and expectations directly can help assess the societal convictions concerning the source language and its users in the receptor language community. A relevant framework for this endeavor is Niedzielski and Preston's (2000) folk linguistics, which aims to uncover 'language regard', viz. the "complex network of ideas, relations, and stereotypes" (Preston 2018: 378) that non-linguists presuppose about people and their language use (Preston 2011). Crucial in this respect is attention for the relationship between sociolinguistic perception (who is thought to say what) and evaluation (what is considered good and bad language). Despite the insistence on the potential of folk linguistics to include a diverse range of data types, levels of awareness, and methodologies, the paradigm has so far mainly materialized in perceptual dialectology studies. In that line of work, non-linguists are asked to share their beliefs and opinions on the language used in particular geographic regions, typically by pinpointing on a map where they feel people sound "funny" or "different" (Niedzielski and Preston [2000]; see also Bijvoet and Fraurud [2016] for an urban take; and Kristiansen [2010] for a developmental perspective).

Our aim here is to uncover language regard pertaining to lexical borrowing as a salient contact-linguistic phenomenon rather than looking at regional varieties, and to target expectations on the language use of socially rather than geographically defined groups of speakers. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to gauge directly (i) whether language users in dynamic contact settings have and share expectations on the loanword use of specific social groups of speakers, (ii) whether this depends on the nature of the social categorization under scrutiny, and (iii) whether linguistic expectations and social evaluations align. Specifically, the remainder of this paper reports on a survey targeting variation in 177 Belgian-Dutch respondents' expectations and evaluations concerning the use of English loanwords

of various social groups. Section 2 describes the English-Dutch contact setting in more detail, and distills social groups that we anticipate to be more or less expected to use English loanwords in Dutch. Section 3 then proceeds to the research questions and main hypotheses. The methodology is included in Section 4, after which Section 5 presents the results. The implications of our findings are discussed in Section 6.

## 2 English loanwords in (Belgian) Dutch: From semantic fields to social roles

The English-Dutch contact setting in the Low Countries generally resonates findings for other (Western-)European regions, such as Germany (Onysko and Winter-Froemel 2011), Norway (Andersen and Graedler 2020) or Spain (Balteiro 2014). Although English does not hold an official status in Belgium or the Netherlands, it is the default *lingua franca* in many domains, including international business, tertiary education and tourism (cf. Edwards [2016] for the Netherlands). Furthermore, English is a primary source for lexical borrowing. English form-meaning pairs have found their way into Dutch since the start of globalization in the early twentieth century, further fueled by the general admiration for the American lifestyle and culture that followed the American liberation of Europe by the end of World War II (Van der Sijs 1996). This is the case both in Flanders, the Northern part of Belgium where Dutch is the official language, and the Netherlands. Despite some notable differences in the linguistic history of the two regions (Geeraerts and Grondelaers 2000), research typically does not find synchronic differences in the use of English loanwords (see Zenner et al. 2013). Hence, we synthesize findings and approaches from research on English loanwords in both Dutch-speaking regions in this overview.

Scholarly attention to borrowing from English initially predominantly aimed to provide lexicographic inventories of English loanwords across (De Vooy 1951; Posthumus 1986; Zandvoort 1964) and within semantic fields (e.g. van Iperen 1980 on football terminology). Further, the aforementioned systemic impact of the borrowing process on the receptor language was assessed mainly with respect to the assignment of grammatical gender to borrowed forms (Gerritsen 2001). Following the usage-based turn in research on contact-induced variation and change more generally, research in the past two decades shifted attention to *speakers* rather than *speech* and to *use* rather than *system*. Relying on a broad range of quantitative and qualitative methods, three goals were pursued. First, a series of studies has aimed to describe lexical variation and change in Dutch under influence of English through usage-based principles. Rather than emphasizing the number of loanwords per part of speech, the emphasis is placed on the way each token and each speaker contribute to incipient change. For instance, based on survey data, Franco et al. (2018) describe patterns of individual variation and community-wide agreement in gender assignment by 45 students to 178 new imports from English into Dutch. Further, following Höder's Diasystematic Construction Grammar (Höder 2012), De Pascale et al.'s (2022) corpus study of over 4,500 Dutch tweets account for the way in which the MTV show *Pimp my Ride* resulted in the new verb *pimp* through progressive semantic and structural detachment of the verb *pimp* from the construction [*Pimp* POSS N].

Second, researchers have attempted to determine the social meaning potential of English loanwords by assessing their occurrences and usage patterns in particular communities of practice. Through quantitative approaches, De Decker and Vandekerckhove (2013) and Verheijen and Van Hout (2022) reveal the frequent and varied use of English in keyboard-to-screen communication (Jucker and Dürscheid 2012) for Belgian Dutch and Netherlandic Dutch youth respectively (see also Zenner et al., this issue). Relying instead on discourse analyses, Zenner and Van De Mierop (2021) describe the near absence of English in family dinner-table conversations, and Zenner and Van De Mierop (2017) indicate how English loanwords are used to index specific ingroup/outgroup boundaries in one season of the reality TV show *Expeditie Robinson* (known as *Survivor* in other countries). Starting from a

mixed-method approach, then, Schuring and Zenner (2022) focus on preadolescents' use of English insertions in Belgian Dutch for which they found an intermediary frequency of usage, situated in between previously reported English use of preschoolers and adolescents; and influenced by a topic and identity effect related to both gaming and stereotypically girl-oriented activities. Furthermore, business communication specialists have revealed the special position of English in marketing research, showing the strong foothold of English loans in both product (Gerritsen et al. 2007) and job (van Meurs 2010) advertising. For job advertising, research indicates how particular branches of industry (such as IT or finance) are more prone to use English than others (such as governmental agencies or public office; Zenner et al. [2013]).

Third, researchers have aimed to complement the focus on the production of English loanwords with attention for the way that they are being perceived and evaluated. For instance, research not only established that English is used frequently in advertising, but experimental methods also indicated how English loans cue attributes such as globalization, internationalization and modernity rather than attributes stereotypically linked to countries where English is spoken, as is the case for more traditional uses of the Foreign Language Display strategy in marketing (Hornikx and van Meurs 2020). Additionally, Zenner et al. (2021) assessed how preadolescents of different ages evaluate a cartoon superhero who uses English in Dutch differently compared to a Dutch-only counterpart, progressively tuning in with the use of English as a youth-language marker. Finally, Crombez et al. (2022) targeted the context sensitivity of over 1,500 respondents through a forced-choice design, revealing how a stronger preference for English words over Dutch alternatives is expressed in conversations with friends compared to what is used in newspaper language, further indicating a significantly lower preference for English words in participants aged 51 to 70 than in participants under the age of 50. Within the younger group, a higher preference for English words was found for respondents aged 30 to 50 than for respondents aged 18 to 29.

This growing body of research allows us to pinpoint a number of social categories and domains that can be linked up with the use of English loanwords. First, in terms of macro-social characteristics, previous work predominantly points to age as a relevant factor, with research on production (De Decker and Vandekerckhove 2013; Schuring and Zenner 2022; Verheijen and Van Hout 2022; Zenner et al., this issue), reported use (Crombez et al. 2022) and evaluation (Zenner et al. 2021), linking the use of English to (pre)adolescents and young professionals. Second, research shows that certain societal hotspots can be identified for the use of English in Dutch, including the domains of marketing, media and fields such as sports (van Iperen [1980], and specifically soccer, cf. Hiel and Zenner [forthcoming]), IT or finance (see van Meurs 2010). When insisting on approaching these hotspots of English from the perspective of the *speaker* rather than the *speech*, and the *use* rather than the *system*, social role theory provides a relevant framework. A social role is “a comprehensive pattern of behavior and attitudes constituting a strategy for coping with a recurrent set of social situations” (Lynch 2007 on Turner 1990: 379, and see Biddle and Thomas 1979; Biddle 1986). Individuals take up various roles in society, such as ‘mother’, ‘doctor’, or ‘volunteer’. Crucially, these roles come with expectations concerning the behavior of the individual social role actors (Lynch 2007 on Montgomery 1998, and see Koenig and Eagly 2014), which in themselves reveal the cultural values of a society. This not only concerns dress codes or work-life balances, but can also include expectations or predictions on language use. As such, the anticipated linguistic behavior of an ‘IT specialist’ could be different from a ‘mayor’, with the former being expected to use more English than the latter. It is these expectations we wish to uncover in this paper.

### 3 Research questions

This paper aims to uncover expectations of Dutch-speaking Belgians pertaining to the use of English loanwords for a variety of socially defined groups of speakers. Assessing the expectations of language users on lexical borrowing as a highly salient societal phenomenon can help us better understand how mental representations and stereotypes of language use are shaped and shared within the community (thus contributing to RQ2 of this special issue, cf. Winter-Froemel et al., this issue). Three research questions and hypotheses can be formulated.

- The first research question (RQ1) aims to measure expectations of language users on the use of English loanwords for a fairly objectively delineable macro-social category, viz. ‘age’. The hypothesis is that expectations align with the empirical results discussed above and will portray a perceptual peak for the use of English in adolescence.

***RQ1:** To what extent do Belgian Dutch language users have and share expectations on the use of English loanwords depending on the age of the speaker?*

- The second question (RQ2) turns to expectations regarding the use of English loanwords for social roles, as less tangible social categories. We hypothesize that social role expectations will align with previous findings, and that more English will be expected in the language use of social role actors who are associated with empirically identified hotspots of English usage, such as IT or sports, than in the language use of social role actors who are not.

***RQ2:** To what extent do Belgian Dutch language users have and share expectations on the use of English loanwords depending on the social role of the speaker?*

- The third question (RQ3) aims to assess reactions to role adherence or rather role conflict. The hypothesis is that role conflict leads to less favorable evaluation: when expectations are not met, for instance when an alleged non-English-prone role actor uses English loans, the use of English by the social role actor will be negatively evaluated (cf. language expectancy theory, Burgoon 1995).

***RQ3:** To what extent do we see signs of Belgian Dutch language users downgrading the use of English by social role actors who are not expected to use English loanwords?*

### 4 Methodology

The three research questions are addressed by means of a questionnaire directly gauging language expectations on and evaluations of the use of English loanwords by groups of speakers, stratified by age and social role (Section 4.1). The questionnaire was completed by 407 respondents, from which we distilled a homogenous sample of 177 highly educated Belgian Dutch-speaking women (Section 4.2).

#### 4.1 Questionnaire

We designed an online questionnaire that was operationalized in Qualtrics and was disseminated in January 2021 for a two-week period. It included an introductory part, three question blocks and a concluding section. In the introductory part, we instructed respondents to freely name examples of English loanwords in Dutch, as a means to steer them away from English as a *lingua franca* (a full switch to English) and instead gear them towards contact-induced variation (the use of English words and expressions in Dutch) when answering the survey questions (see Appendix 1.1). The concluding



Of course, Block 2 hinges on the social roles presented in the Likert scale question. For our social role stimulus selection, we started from a distribution of rather English-prone and rather Dutch-prone semantic fields. Based on the literature review of Section 2, we retained ‘IT’; ‘finance’; ‘music, film and entertainment’; ‘sports’; and ‘fashion’ as English-prone semantic fields, whereas ‘public service news broadcasting’; ‘manual labor and trades’; ‘education’; ‘public office and law’, and ‘childcare’ were included as Dutch-prone counterparts. As such, a total of 10 semantic fields (see Table 3 below) were retained for further stimulus selection.

In a next step, in the shift from speech to speaker, we created an inventory of possible social roles in these fields, including both professions like ‘doctor’ or ‘IT specialist’ and more sociocultural personae such as ‘mother’ or ‘volunteer’. This inventory was composed relying on English and Dutch person reference nouns from Zenner et al. (2012), supplemented with person reference nouns retrieved from Wikipedia’s Dutch ‘People by occupation’ names list and from *Encyclo*’s word lists with search queries of words ending on *-eur* (*euse*), *-er* (*-ster*, *-in*), *-ist*, *-man* (*-vrouw*), the main Dutch person-indicative suffixes. The initial inventory included up to four roles per semantic field. The selection was made factoring in (1) a broad target audience, and (2) further applications in developmental sociolinguistics (De Vogelaer and Katerbow 2017) involving roleplay (Schuring and Zenner forthcoming). Thus, we excluded vague or non-specific roles (e.g. *rookie*, *allrounder*, *guest*), evaluative roles (e.g. *wise guy*, *babe*), taboo roles (e.g. *call girl*, *drug dealer*) and roles whose characteristics are less likely to be part of common and child knowledge (e.g. *chancellor*, *meteorologist*). The latter were proxied by age-of-acquisition ratings (see Brysbaert et al. 2014) and a social role pretest based on semi-structured interviews with 13 preadolescent children. This resulted in a sample containing 19 social role stimuli, each matched to one of the semantic fields.<sup>1</sup> The selected roles and their respective semantic fields can be consulted in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Sample of 19 social roles, grouped by semantic field

	Semantic field	Social role
English-prone	IT	<i>gamer</i> ‘gamer’ <i>vlogger</i> ‘vlogger’
	finance	<i>bedrijfsleider</i> ‘business manager’
	music, film & entertainment	<i>superheld</i> ‘superhero’ <i>filmster</i> ‘film star’ <i>rapper</i> ‘rapper’
	sports	<i>voetballer</i> ‘soccer player’
	fashion	<i>topmodel</i> ‘top model’
Dutch-prone	public service news broadcasting	<i>nieuwslezer bij de VRT</i> ‘news reader at VRT’ <sup>2</sup> <i>Ketnet-wraper</i> ‘children’s TV presenter’
	manual labor and trades	<i>boer</i> ‘farmer’ <i>slager</i> ‘butcher’ <i>kok</i> ‘chef’
	education	<i>leerkracht lager onderwijs</i> ‘primary school teacher’ <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The matching of the roles to the semantic fields was annotated by two linguists, with an interrater agreement of 90%. The remaining 10% were discussed and assigned to one field by mutual agreement.

<sup>2</sup> ‘VRT’ was added to the role of news reader since it is the public service broadcaster in Belgium. VRT has published multiple versions of an official language charter and is therefore considered to be more conservative and likely less English-prone than commercial broadcasters (e.g. VTM Nieuws).

<sup>3</sup> We specified the educational role as ‘primary school’ since in Flanders, English tuition only starts in secondary school, at the age of 13. Hence, the educational role could not be interpreted as someone teaching English.

	public office & law	<i>dokter</i> ‘doctor’ <i>politieagent</i> ‘police officer’ <i>eerste minister</i> ‘prime minister’ <i>burgemeester</i> ‘mayor’
	childcare	<i>grootouders</i> ‘grandparents’

With regard to the final sample, three comments are in order. A first comment relates to the social role of *Ketnet*-wrapper; ‘a TV personality who appears on the Belgian public youth channel *Ketnet*’. For clarity reasons, we refer to this role as ‘children’s TV presenter’ from here on. A second comment concerns the envisaged gender of the social role stimuli: we opted for the default Dutch person-indicative suffixes (e.g. on *-er*) that are used and accepted to refer to both masculine and feminine social role actors in (Belgian) Dutch,<sup>4</sup> and therefore seem to be the neutral option. Finally, we signal the possibly problematic, though unavoidable, priming effect of the roles *gamer*, *vlogger*, *rapper*, *Ketnet-wrapper*, *filmster* and *topmodel*. These English-sourced or hybrid role names could subconsciously steer respondents to award higher ratings of anticipated English use for the corresponding social role actors. Yet, we decided to keep these roles in the sample in their present form, considering the lack of Dutch alternatives to refer to these roles and the unnatural character of longer Dutch lexicalizations reported during the social role pretest (e.g. *vlogger: iemand die filmpjes maakt op sociale media* – ‘someone who makes videos for social media’).

#### 4.1.3 Block 3: social role evaluation (RQ3)

In our third and final question block, we aim to verify to what extent the use of English is evaluated more negatively for social role actors who are not expected to use English in Dutch than for those who are. In order to reach this goal, we presented the respondents with the same randomized sample of 19 social roles used for RQ2 (see Table 3) and measured evaluations towards the use of English by means of a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) ‘English words in Dutch by these social roles don’t bother me at all’ to (7) ‘English words in Dutch by these social roles bother me very much’. Again, respondents had the option to select ‘I don’t know’ for role actors they were unfamiliar with. We refer to Table 4 for the instructions and questions as presented in Block 3.

**Table 4:** Example Block 3, original Dutch Likert scale question translated into English

**Block 3:** What do you think of English words in Dutch when used by the following social roles when performing their role?

	don’t bother me at all	don’t bother me	don’t really bother me	neutral	bother me a little	bother me	bother me very much	I don’t know
[social role]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 4.2 Respondent sample

In total, 407 respondents completed the questionnaire, out of whom 322 remained after filtering out inadequate answers to attention checks included in the Likert questions (e.g. ‘please indicate *never* here’) and eliminating native speakers of English. Given various skews and resulting data sparseness

<sup>4</sup> The singular neuter form (*grootouder* – ‘grandparent’) was reported as sounding unnatural during the pretest, as opposed to the plural (*grootouders*) and to gendered and therefore less suitable alternatives like *grootmoeder* (‘grandmother’) and *grootvader* (‘grandfather’). Therefore, we chose to present the plural form *grootouders* (‘grandparents’) in the survey.

in the sample regarding the socio-demographic background of the speakers, we further trimmed the respondent group to a socially homogeneous sample, limiting the respondents' gender (only retaining women due to a gender skew), age range and delimiting their socio-economic backgrounds.

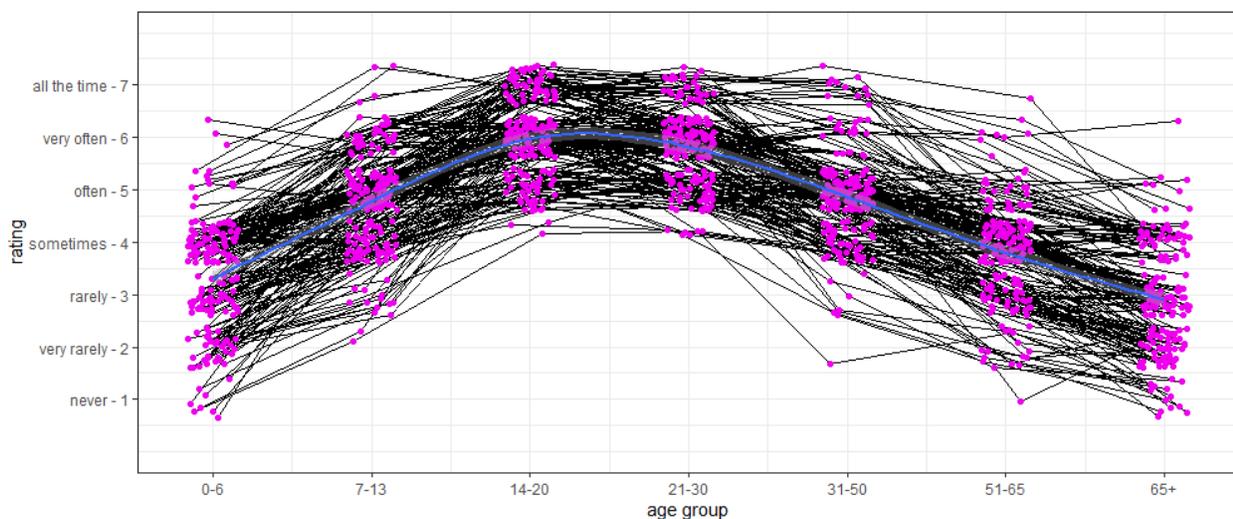
The resulting sample for this study consists of 177 professionally active women, with ages varying from 18 to 64 ( $M=32.5$ ,  $SD=11.5$ ). The respondents are all highly educated (above 5 on the ISCED) and self-report an English proficiency level above 50 on a 100-point scale ( $M=79.3$ ;  $SD=10.9$ ). Moreover, they indicate to regularly use English words in Dutch themselves ( $M=5.1$ ,  $SD=1.1$  on a 7-point frequency Likert Scale, see Appendix 1.2). All of the respondents are L1 speakers of Belgian-Dutch, four of whom were raised bilingually, in Dutch and French ( $N=2$ ), Italian ( $N=1$ ) or Berber ( $N=1$ ).

## 5 Results

The results of this study are presented following the three research questions and the questionnaire's build-up in three blocks. All statistical inquiry for this study was performed in R. Given the characteristics of the trimmed sample, we do not include socio-demographic parameters in the analysis presented below.

### 5.1 Addressing RQ1: age expectations

Figure 1 presents the results of the perceived frequency of English use depending on the age of the projected speaker. The x-axis portrays the seven age groups, for which the ratings on the 7-point Likert scale are represented on the y-axis. For each respondent ( $N=177$ ), the ratings for the seven age groups are plotted (pink points) and connected through lines (black curves).<sup>5</sup> Lastly, a smoothed GAM-line (in blue) was added as an extra layer, to illustrate the sample trend.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 1:** Scatterplot of perceived English use depending on age group

<sup>5</sup> We applied R's `jitter()` function to both points and lines to avoid overplotting of the data. This function allows us to add a small amount of random variation or noise to the location of each point and line so that the individual respondent answers can be identified and do not overlap on the graph.

<sup>6</sup> See Baayen and Linke (2020) for more information on GAM models: General Additive Models are particularly useful for “coming to a detailed understanding of nonlinear patterns” [2020: 563] in data. Note that we here only present a GAM-line following default parameters, which runs the risk of overfitting and hence should not be overinterpreted. At the same time, the GAM-line fits an intuitive interpretation of the visual patterns.

Figure 1 indicates a clear relationship between the perceived use of English and age. The curve starts relatively low for the youngest age group (babies and preschoolers, age 0–6;  $M=3.32$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ), after which we see an upward trend for preadolescents (age 7–13;  $M=4.77$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ), leading to a notable peak in adolescence (age 14–20;  $M=6.00$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ) that extends to the early starters (age 21–30;  $M=5.82$ ,  $SD=0.76$ ). Then, the curve slightly bends down for the active population with first-degree family life (age 31–50;  $M=4.86$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ), followed by a continuous downward trajectory for the remaining age groups (active population with second-degree family life, age 51–65,  $M=3.80$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ; and retirees, age 65+,  $M=2.90$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ). An ANOVA test reveals a significant relationship between age and expected use of English ( $F(6)=293.2$ ,  $p<.001$ ), with a large effect size ( $\eta^2=0.59$ ). As for the pairwise differences between the age groups, a Tukey HSD test confirmed significance ( $p<.001$ ) for all comparisons, except for the ratings of ‘7- to 13-year-olds’ to ‘31- to 50-year-olds’, and for ‘14- to 20-year-olds’ to ‘21- to 30-year-olds’.

A closer inspection of the lines in Figure 1 shows that within this respondent sample, the expectations about English use with regard to age are shared across respondents. This is apparent in the individual respondent rating trajectories, which run parallel and are found close together. This minimal dispersion is, furthermore, reflected by the small standard deviations on the mean ratings for the different age groups. Note that these standard deviations are situated around 1 for the outer age groups (0–6 and 65+) and are reduced to .78 and .76 when closing in on adolescents (14–20) and early starters (21–30) respectively. English use is thus not only perceived to be highest in adolescents and early starters, but is also most agreed upon for these age groups.

To answer RQ1, we can state that the respondents in this study have and share expectations on the use of English loanwords depending on the age of the speaker. A clear trend can be observed in the perceived use of English over the lifespan, with a peak for adolescents and early starters. For these age groups, the standard deviations are found to be the smallest and the most agreement in the sample can be observed.

## 5.2 Addressing RQ2: social role expectations

In a bid to uncover social role expectations on the use of English in Dutch, we verified to what extent language users expect more English loanwords for social role actors who are associated with English-prone hotspots or semantic fields than for social role actors who are not. To that end, we check whether any underlying structure can be found in the ratings for the 19 social roles offered to respondents by means of factor analysis (FA). Factor analysis is an explorative statistical dimensionality reduction technique used when attempting to reduce a number of items (typically evaluative Likert-like scales) to a number of latent dimensions that capture the variance and reduce the redundancy of the initial scale items (Thompson 2004). Following Thompson (2004), an iterative procedure was followed to arrive at a factor solution, in which stepwise poorly fitting or ambiguous scale items are discarded. The FA was conducted on a sample of 144 respondents; 33 respondents were omitted because of missing values in their responses.

The outcome of the factor analysis is presented in Table 5. We did not find the anticipated two-factor solution that distinguishes between English-prone and Dutch-prone roles. Instead, three factors are found, which together result in a saturated model that explains a reasonable 47.6% of the variation in the ratings. The items ‘grandparents’ and ‘children’s TV presenter’ had to be removed from the analysis since the former presented double loadings<sup>7</sup> (F1 and F3) and the latter did not load on any factor.

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<sup>7</sup> An item is considered to load on a factor when the *eigenvalue* for that factor is equal to or surpasses 0.400 (cf. bold values in Tables 5 and 6).

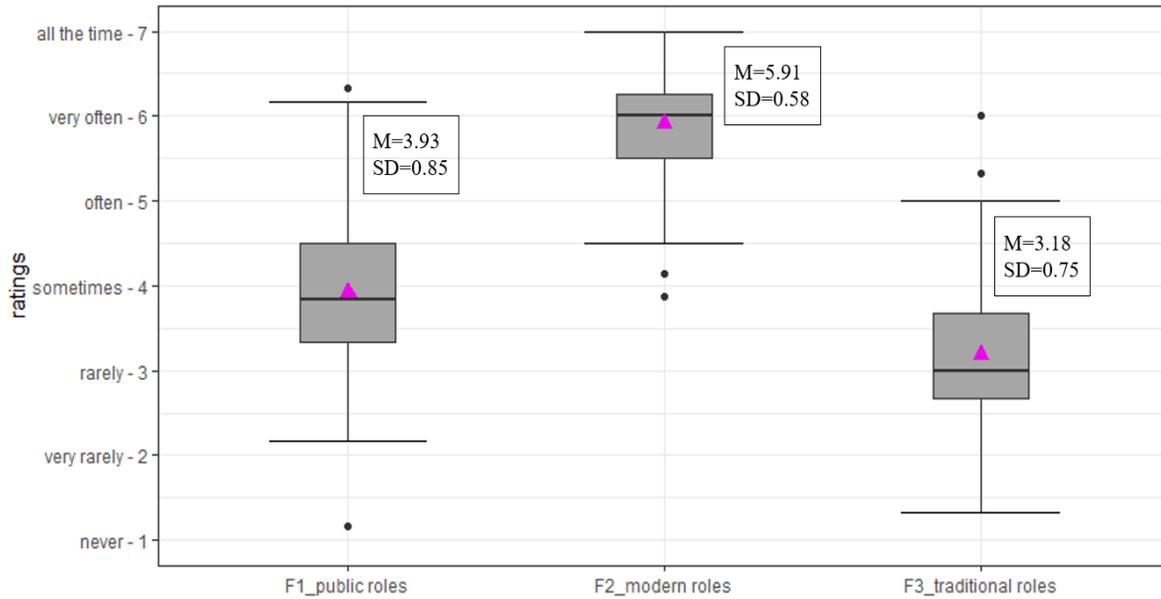
**Table 5:** Factor loadings of 17 social roles on 3 factors

Social role	F1	F2	F3
	Public roles	Modern roles	Traditional roles
<i>nieuwslezer</i> ‘news reader’	<b>0.784</b>	0.160	0.102
<i>leerkracht lager onderwijs</i> ‘primary school teacher’	<b>0.560</b>		0.284
<i>eerste minister</i> ‘prime minister’	<b>0.787</b>	0.235	
<i>politieagent</i> ‘police officer’	<b>0.613</b>	0.143	0.327
<i>dokter</i> ‘doctor’	<b>0.551</b>	0.139	0.354
<i>burgemeester</i> ‘mayor’	<b>0.671</b>	0.272	0.312
<i>gamer</i> ‘gamer’		<b>0.814</b>	
<i>vlogger</i> ‘vlogger’		<b>0.682</b>	
<i>voetballer</i> ‘soccer player’	0.262	<b>0.436</b>	0.216
<i>rapper</i> ‘rapper’		<b>0.742</b>	
<i>bedrijfsleider</i> ‘business manager’	0.311	<b>0.533</b>	
<i>superheld</i> ‘superhero’	0.187	<b>0.419</b>	
<i>filmster</i> ‘film star’	0.212	<b>0.491</b>	-0.109
<i>topmodel</i> ‘top model’	0.196	<b>0.441</b>	
<i>kok</i> ‘chef’	0.297	0.224	<b>0.401</b>
<i>slager</i> ‘butcher’	0.149		<b>0.888</b>
<i>boer</i> ‘farmer’	0.314		<b>0.673</b>

Test of the hypothesis that 3 factors are sufficient: the  $\chi^2$  statistic is 108.45 on 88 degrees of freedom. The p-value is 0.07.

The 17 remaining social roles each clearly and unambiguously load on one of the three factors. The labeling of these factors hinges on interpretation and is hence performed manually by the researcher. Considering the communal and governmental nature of the social roles included in Factor 1 (*news reader*, *primary school teacher*, *prime minister*, *police officer*, *doctor* and *mayor*), we chose to label this factor ‘public roles’. Factor 2 was allocated the label ‘modern roles’, given the contemporary image the roles it groups portray (*gamer*, *vlogger*, *soccer player*, *rapper*, *business manager*, *superhero*, *film star* and *top model*). Finally, the third factor, including *chef*, *butcher* and *farmer* receives the label ‘traditional roles’, since these roles all include the mastering of long-established trades.

In a next step, mean scale scores were calculated per factor, taking the average score for each of the factors’ roles per respondent. Figure 2 presents boxplots of these scores for perceived use of English, grouped by factor on the x-axis (public roles, modern roles and traditional roles). The corresponding frequency ratings can be consulted on the y-axis, with triangles representing the mean. Figure 2 shows clear differences between the ratings for the three factors: for the modern social roles (Factor 2) we observe a ceiling effect with high expected English use ( $M=5.91$ ,  $SD=0.58$ ), whilst public roles (Factor 1) are seen to use less English in Dutch ( $M=3.93$ ,  $SD=0.85$ ), and traditional roles (Factor 3) are rated even lower ( $M=3.18$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ), though without floor effects. Overall, the low standard deviations indicate considerable agreement between respondents. A Kruskal-Wallis test reveals a significant relationship between the perceived frequency of English and the factor role ( $H(2)=358.19$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), with a large effect ( $\eta^2=0.68$ ). Dunn’s test further confirms significance ( $p<.001$ ) for all pairwise comparisons between the factors.



**Figure 2:** Boxplots of perceived English use by social role factor

From this, we conclude that a clear delineation of English-prone roles (F2 ‘modern roles’) versus other roles (F1 ‘public roles’ and F3 ‘traditional roles’) can be identified. Public roles and traditional roles thus can be seen as more Dutch-prone, being closer together in their means while still significantly differing from each other with traditional roles being the least English-prone.

### 5.3 Addressing RQ3: Social role evaluation

Our third and final research question measures to what extent respondents negatively evaluate the use of English by social role actors who are not expected to use it. In order to perceive whether the respondents react to role conflict, we performed a second factor analysis on the results of the Likert scale question targeting negative evaluation, starting from the sample of the 17 roles we retained in the factor analysis conducted for RQ2 (see Section 5.2, removed roles: *grandparents* and *children’s TV presenter*, removed respondents due to missing values: N=33). In this FA, we additionally removed *business manager* from the data because of double loadings (F1 and F2). We found an acceptable three-dimensional solution, although the model was not saturated ( $p < .05$ ).<sup>8</sup> Together, the three factors explain 70.7% of the attested variation. Table 6 presents an overview of the factor loadings for all social roles retained.

**Table 6:** Factor loadings of 16 social roles on 3 factors

Social role	F1	F2	F3
	Public roles	Modern roles	Traditional roles
<i>nieuwslezer</i> ‘news reader’	<b>0.807</b>	0.320	0.143
<i>leerkracht lager onderwijs</i> ‘primary school teacher’	<b>0.693</b>	0.210	0.227

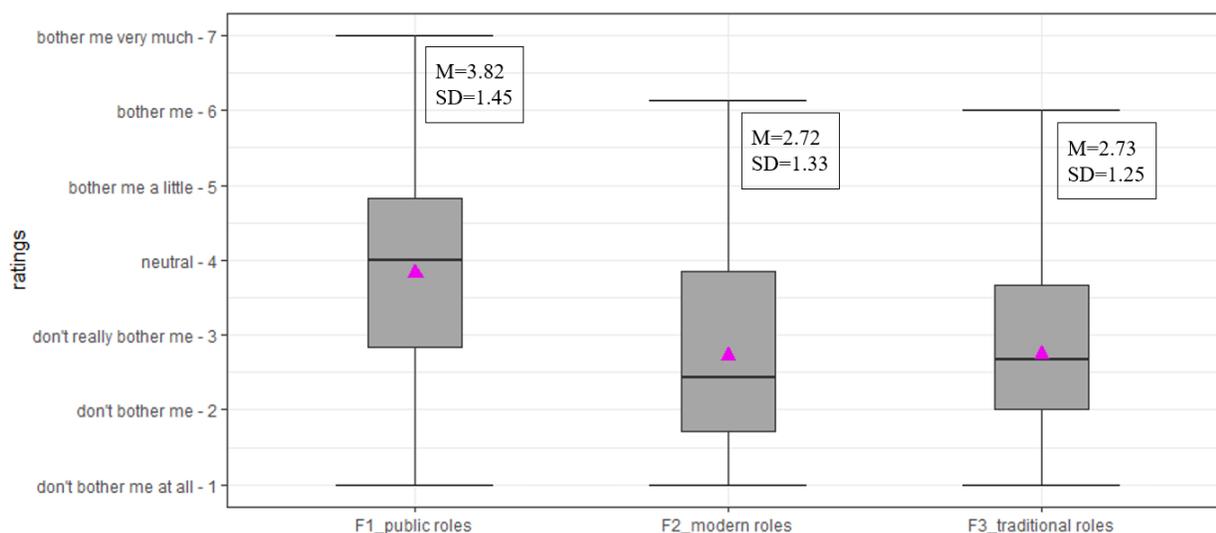
<sup>8</sup> In a four-factor solution, the fourth factor only contains one social role item (viz. *vlogger*) that presents a double loading (F4 and F2) and therefore needs to be removed. This leads to another three-factor solution. The loadings presented in Table 6 thus configure the best possible, although unsaturated, model.

<i>eerste minister</i> ‘prime minister’	<b>0.772</b>	0.323	0.150
<i>politieagent</i> ‘police officer’	<b>0.778</b>	0.151	0.368
<i>dokter</i> ‘doctor’	<b>0.736</b>	0.179	0.350
<i>burgemeester</i> ‘mayor’	<b>0.867</b>	0.286	0.121
<i>gamer</i> ‘gamer’	0.205	<b>0.720</b>	0.234
<i>vlogger</i> ‘vlogger’	0.309	<b>0.771</b>	0.109
<i>voetbalspeler</i> ‘soccer player’	0.273	<b>0.629</b>	0.373
<i>rapper</i> ‘rapper’		<b>0.803</b>	0.220
<i>superheld</i> ‘superhero’	0.329	<b>0.689</b>	0.298
<i>filmster</i> ‘film star’	0.325	<b>0.814</b>	0.171
<i>topmodel</i> ‘top model’	0.245	<b>0.749</b>	0.334
<i>kok</i> ‘chef’	0.310	0.375	<b>0.634</b>
<i>slager</i> ‘butcher’	0.318	0.287	<b>0.774</b>
<i>boer</i> ‘farmer’	0.229	0.338	<b>0.719</b>

Test of the hypothesis that 3 factors are sufficient. The  $\chi^2$  statistic is 149.36 on 75 degrees of freedom. The p-value is smaller than .0001.

Turning to the dimensions, we find that these perfectly tie in with our previous three-dimensional solution for social role expectations, with the exception of *business manager*, which was removed from the analysis. As such, the same six social roles instantiate Factor 1 (*news reader, primary school teacher, prime minister, police officer, doctor* and *mayor*), the same seven roles (minus *business manager*) instantiate Factor 2 (*gamer, vlogger, soccer player, rapper, superhero, film star* and *top model*) and the same three roles instantiate Factor 3 (*chef, butcher* and *farmer*), which led us to assign identical factor labels, ‘public roles’, ‘modern roles’ and ‘traditional roles’.

In order to check for role violation and possible downgrading of English use for certain social role actors, we turn to Figure 3 below, which presents boxplots of the mean ratings for evaluation of English use for each role (with triangles representing the mean) grouped by factor. The x-axis of Figure 3 portrays the three factors, with corresponding evaluative ratings on the use of English loanwords portrayed on the y-axis. The higher the rating on the y-axis, the more the use of English words by the corresponding social roles is said to bother the respondent.



**Figure 3:** Boxplots of evaluated English use by social role factor

Based on Figure 3, we conclude that the overall evaluation of English use by the roles instantiating the three factors is predominantly neutral, even tolerant. Yet, the mean ratings for the factors differ significantly ( $H(2)=64.181$ ,  $p<.001$ ), with the public roles (Factor 1,  $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=1.45$ ) being evaluated more negatively than the modern roles (Factor 2,  $M=2.72$ ,  $SD=1.33$ ) and traditional roles (Factor 3,  $M=2.73$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ). This is confirmed by Dunn's test, which only reports significant differences between Factor 1 and Factor 2, and Factor 1 and Factor 3. However, compared to the results for social role expectations, the standard deviations are considerably higher, viz. 1.45, 1.33 and 1.25 on the 7-point Likert scale for Factors 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

The comparison of Figure 2 to Figure 3 indicates that our hypothesis regarding social role violation is only partly supported by the data. If social role actors who are strongly expected to use English words in Dutch (Factor 2 "modern roles", Figure 2) do indeed use them (role adherence), our respondents evaluate this use as neutral, hence taking a tolerant stance (Factor 2, Figure 3). If social role actors use English in Dutch against the expectation (role violation, for Factor 1, 'public roles' and Factor 3, 'traditional roles') we observe two trends. First, the use of English by traditional roles is not downgraded and is evaluated as neutrally as English use is by modern roles. Second, for English use by public roles we do find downgrading since they are evaluated more negatively than are modern and traditional roles. Note, however, that the standard deviation for the evaluative ratings in this factor is by far the largest.

## 6 Discussion and conclusion

This paper aims to promote the perspective of the language user, rather than language use, to the forefront of research on contact-induced variation in general, and on the use of English loanwords in (Belgian) Dutch in particular. Three questions on language regard towards the use of English by various social groups were addressed.

The first research question verified to what extent Belgian-Dutch language users share expectations regarding the use of English by our sample of different age groups. Results reveal that, as hypothesized, a perceptual peak is found in adolescence. Additionally, standard deviations indicate more agreement in the sample for the use of English in adolescence than in the other age groups. At the same time, the perceptual peak of English use is flatter than expected: no significant difference is found in the perceived use of English for the 14- to 20-year-olds compared to the 21- to 30-year-olds. In light of the tension between age grading (Labov 1994: 84), which involves the occurrence of age-group associated linguistic differences, and incrementation (Labov 2001: 455), which predicts that an adolescent peak is found in apparent-time assessments of ongoing language change from below across a community (see also Holmes-Elliott 2021), three interpretations can be put forward.

First, seen through the lens of age grading, we could consider the results to be indicative of the fact that English is perceived as a youth-language marker, a cue of youthful identity (see De Decker and Vandekerckhove 2013). Second, results could indicate that our respondents experience ongoing community change, with English progressively finding a solid place in society. The adolescent peak then supports the change following the incrementation hypothesis. In both scenarios, it is surprising to see that the 21- to 30-year-olds are included in the peak. This could mean that we have misplaced the boundaries of our age bins, and that part of the 21- to 30-year-olds might still be considered to belong to the previous age group of adolescents. Relatedly, the ceiling effect attested in Figure 2 could also indicate that the 7-point rating scale did not allow respondents to add sufficient nuance to their answers. At the same time, our finding that the use of English is also strongly associated with post-adolescent participants is reminiscent of the results found in Crombez et al. (2022). The latter study found a peak in reported use of English words in an even older age group. More specifically, Crombez et al. (2022) verified whether age patterns were found in a forced-choice test that allowed respondents to select

either an English word or a Dutch alternative. A mixed-effects regression analysis revealed that respondents aged 30 to 50 were most likely to select the English word, followed by respondents aged 18 to 29, with respondents aged 51 to 70 least likely to prefer English variants. This difference in peak between our study and Crombez et al. (2022) could be explained when considering the type of English used by various age groups, which brings us to our third interpretation of the present data.

Different types of English (e.g. exclamative multi-word units such as *what the hell* versus domain-specific jargon such as *bandwidth*) likely serve different functions in Dutch for different age groups (see Zenner et al., this issue). The use of English in Dutch is then both a youth language marker and part of an ongoing community change, depending on the type of English insertions. English exclamatives are likely typical youth language markers, but using English jargon in specific domains is part of ongoing community change. No such nuances on the type of English inclusions (*what the hell* vs. *bandwidth*) were factored into our survey design and may well be conflated in our results. Follow-up research could insist on these nuances. At the same time, this will make instructions more cumbersome, potentially hindering intuitive reactions on behalf of the respondents. A final consideration regarding the results for RQ1 is that an adolescent peak has been particularly associated with change from below, while borrowing is typically seen as a change from above (Tagliamonte 2012). It remains unclear whether the adoption of English words in Belgian-Dutch is not currently manifesting as a change from below as well. This alternative account is certainly worthy of further attention.

The second and third research questions turn the attention away from the traditional macro-social variable ‘age’ to ‘social roles’, targeting both expectations (RQ2) and evaluations (RQ3) on the use of English by social roles related to semantic fields that previous research has shown to be more or less English-prone. The factor analyses that were performed to uncover latent structure in the answer patterns for the social roles revealed three dimensions, contrasting ‘public roles’ (e.g. *mayor*), ‘modern roles’ (e.g. *vlogger*) and ‘traditional roles’ (e.g. *farmer*) both for perceived use and for evaluation. The ‘modern roles’ factor is clearly associated with more perceived use of English, and the ‘traditional roles’ factor with the lowest anticipated use of English. However, both types of roles come with an equally high tolerance towards the use of English. A significantly more negative evaluation of the use of English is found for the ‘public roles’, who in terms of use are located in between the traditional and the modern roles.

A methodological note concerns the potential priming effect for modern roles, where six out of eight roles are labeled with an English or hybrid term (*gamer*, *vlogger*, *rapper*, *Ketnet-wrapper*, *filmster* and *topmodel*). The effect of priming should likely not be overstated, given that the factor still includes two Dutch terms (*voetbalspeler*, *bedrijfsleider*) and that the hybrid terms *filmster* and *topmodel* are nativized to the extent that they likely are no longer felt to be English (compare Onysko’s [2007] grapheme-phoneme rule, see also Nederstigt and Hilberink-Schulpen, this issue, on the processing and identification of English loanwords).

Returning to the comparison of perception and evaluation of the use of English from the perspective of role adherence and role violation, two crucial concepts appear to be ‘public appearance’ and ‘social responsibility’. Although most of the roles we presented to our respondents are to some extent ‘public roles’, with *film stars* occurring in the media and *butchers* serving customers, there is a notable difference in the social responsibility of these figures. Roles with high social responsibility are usually seen as ‘linguistic role models’. This is neatly captured by one of our respondents in the open comment field, as revealed in Excerpt (1).

- (1) *Waarom het me stoort: In functie moeten publieke figuren/directieleden verstaanbaar zijn voor iedereen. Ook voor diegenen die enkel Ndl spreken: Klare taal.*  
[‘Why it bothers me: everybody should be able to understand public figures/board members in office. Also those who only speak Dutch: clear language.’]

Still, despite the significantly more negative evaluation of the use of English by these public roles, in absolute terms only a minority of respondents claim to be truly bothered by the use of English by these social roles, with the mean and the median still located on the left side of the Likert-scale ('not bothered') and the third quantile located under 5 ('bothers me a little'). This general lack of purist reactions may result from our methodological choices in two ways. First, as we are probing language regard directly, some social desirability might be at play, and respondents might want to avoid cognitive dissonance in light of their own behavior; self-reported use of English loanwords is fairly high in our respondent sample ( $M=5.1$ ,  $SD=1.1$ ). Second, as one respondent noted in the comment field (see Excerpt 2), it may not always be straightforward to isolate judgments on language use from overall evaluation of a particular social role. Again, these are matters that should be addressed in follow-up research, for instance by resorting to more indirect or automatic evaluation methods (see Rosseel and Grondelaers [2019] on the use of implicit measures in language attitudes research).

(2) *De vragen over hoe storend het gebruik van Engelse woorden voor de verschillende beroepsgroepen vond ik moeilijk omdat ik automatisch mijn appreciatie van die beroepsgroepen op zich liet meespelen*

[I found the questions on how much the use of English words bothers me for different professional categories difficult because I automatically let my appreciation for those professional categories interfere]

A final reflection on the results for our second and third research questions concerns the peculiar behavior of three of the social roles that were presented to our respondents: *Ketnet-wrapper* 'children's TV presenter' and *grootouders* 'grandparents' could not be assigned unambiguously to one factor, and *bedrijfsleider* 'business manager' behaved differently in the factor analysis for evaluation than in the factor analysis for perceived frequency of use. For each of these three roles, it is obvious how conflict can arise in assessing their use of English: children's TV presenters are public figures with high social responsibility, yet address a target audience known for their use of English; grandparents do not qualify as public figures but carry social responsibility and have exemplary roles; business managers are likely associated with English jargon on the shop floor, but because of their association with the private industry fall in between roles with higher and more moderate social responsibility. These findings align with Lynch's (2007: 385) socio-cognitive reflections on the importance of studying "the tension between individual level negotiations and the constraints of normative traditions and institutions simultaneously". Lynch (2007: 388) insists on the interaction of automatic processes (cold cognition) and deliberate reflection (hot cognition) in multiple role enactment: "role players are likely to be perpetually preparing, encountering, and adjusting role states as part of their daily experiences".

This then brings us to the overarching question of the origin of the shared beliefs and language regard that we uncovered in this paper. Overall, clear, significant and intuitive patterns emerge in the data with small standard deviations throughout. Two hypotheses can be put forward when trying to explain these results. On the one hand, language regard could result from bottom-up processes, with exemplar theory providing a likely account of the interaction between individual usage experiences and mental representations. Exemplar theory posits that mental representations of linguistic elements consist of traces of the linguistic form stored together with its denotational meaning and, crucially, with social information on the context of use. These traces can then cluster into more abstract categories ('exemplars') based on the resulting socio-linguistic web of information created by the repeated contextual encounters with language use (Docherty and Foulkes 2014; Foulkes 2010). In this scenario, our respondents have each independently encountered sufficient members of the age groups under scrutiny in RQ1 and of the social role actors in RQ2. These members then each insert English elements to a sufficiently similar extent to arrive at sufficiently similar exemplars that capture the indexical link between the social category and the anticipated use of English. A bottom-up account is also consistent

with social role theory, which posits that stereotypical beliefs about social groups derive from the observation of behavior typically presented by those groups in roles they frequently assume (Koenig and Eagly 2014). An alternative hypothesis considers the responses we saw as indicative of ideologies and community-level stereotypes on the use of English by certain social groups, which are passed on top-down through mass media, socialization processes or education (Drager and Kirtley 2016). It is not possible to decide on either scenario based on the data we have at hand. Quite likely a combination of the two perspectives is at play, with micro-level usage events providing bottom-up reinforcement for top-down ideologies and convictions, and vice versa. If anything, the fact that agreement is lower for the evaluation than for the perception of the use of English by social actors (as reflected in the standard deviations) could provide some indication that actual experience with language use weighs more strongly than top-down community-based ideologies on language use. This being a preliminary conclusion, alternative accounts are plausible and further investigation is needed.

Needless to say, follow-up research is required on different and larger samples of respondents, other contact phenomena and different social roles, with additional and more indirect methodologies to target the assessment of role violations. We do believe that our results show that targeting perceptions and evaluations on language-contact phenomena can help us understand the relation between speech and speaker, between production, perception and evaluation, between world and mind.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1.1: Introductory section of the questionnaire (translated from Dutch)

Dutch regularly borrows words and expressions from English. Some examples: *check*, *lunch* and *Oh my God*. In this survey you will find a number of questions and statements which gauge your impressions of and opinions on English words in Dutch.

Can you give some examples of English words/expressions that are used in Dutch?

[open comment field]

### Appendix 1.2: Concluding section of the questionnaire (translated from Dutch)

	never	very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	very often	all the time	I don't pay attention
How often do you use English words in Dutch?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How well can you express yourself in English? Give yourself a score from 0 (I don't know a word of English) to 100 (I am a native speaker)	0 ————— ● ————— 100							
What is your age?	[     ] years old							
Tick of the box that fits	<input type="radio"/> F <input type="radio"/> M <input type="radio"/> X							
What is the highest level of education you have completed?	<input type="radio"/> higher education – master's degree <input type="radio"/> higher education – academic bachelor's degree <input type="radio"/> higher education – professional bachelor's degree <input type="radio"/> secondary education <input type="radio"/> primary education <input type="radio"/> other: [     ]							

Is Dutch your mother tongue?	<input type="radio"/> yes, exclusively <input type="radio"/> yes, in addition, I have one or more other mother tongues, namely: [    ] <input type="radio"/> no, my mother tongue is / mother tongues are: [    ]
When I speak Dutch, this is:	<input type="radio"/> Belgian Dutch <input type="radio"/> Dutch Dutch <input type="radio"/> Surinamese Dutch <input type="radio"/> Other
Do you have any remarks on this survey?	[open comment field]

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