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Matching the evaluation and stratification of Moroccan-flavoured Dutch

Since Labov's (1963) iconic Martha's Vineyard study, some sociolinguists claim that prestige evaluations stratify patterns of speech, while others maintain that there is no causal relation between accent evaluation and the stratification of speech. The case of ethnic accent variation in modern Netherlandic Standard Dutch (NSD) seems to constitute evidence for the second camp: it is difficult to construe any causal relation between the harsh and global downgrading of Moroccan-flavoured Dutch (Grondelaers et al. 2015) and the noticeably increasing tolerance for the Moroccan accent in (youth) entertainment, but even in traditional status sectors (a Moroccan accent no longer is an impediment to becoming mayor of large Dutch cities or president of the House of Representatives).

In this paper, we argue that the failure to find a causal relation between evaluations of the Moroccan accent and the growing tolerance for that accent, is largely due to problems in the methodology of Grondelaers et al. (2015). We report on an improved design to investigate the evaluation of Randstad-, Limburg-, and Moroccan-accented NSD. As in Grondelaers et al. (2015), both traditional superiority evaluations (pertaining to high birth, fine education, high income, ...) and modern dynamism considerations (pertaining to media cool) were extracted, but in the new experiment we validated adjectival scales in a pre-test. In addition, we implemented an accent strength dimension in the speech stimuli, including broad, mild, and zero accent guises.

Crucially, weakly-accented Moroccan-Dutch speech was deemed more superior than its strongly-accented counterpart (though not as superior as any indigenous speech), and Moroccan-flavoured speech was found to be the *most dynamic* of all. It is argued that the new data stratify the increasing vitality of, and tolerance for Moroccan-Dutch accented speech much better than the findings in Grondelaers et al. (2015).

Works cited

Labov, W. (1963). The social motivation of sound change. *Word*, 19 (3), pp. 273-309.

Grondelaers, S., Van Gent, P., & Van Hout, R. (2015). Is Moroccan-flavoured Standard Dutch standard or not? On the use of perceptual criteria to determine the limits of standard languages. In A. Prikhodkine & D. Preston (eds.), *Language attitudes: Variability, Processes and Outcomes (Impact. Studies on Language and Society 39)*, (pp. 191-218). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.