

## **Setting the standard: Are teachers the best speakers of standard Dutch?**

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In both the processes of standardisation of language varieties and the maintenance of these standard varieties, education often plays a central role (Haugen 1983; García & Menken 2010). School teachers are for instance expected to be the first-line dispensers of standard usage (Grondelaers & Van Hout 2012), teaching their pupils this propagated standard by remedying their regional accents, denouncing vernacular variants and setting a 'proper' example themselves (Charity Hudley & Mallinson 2011). However, in contexts of destandardisation, following the societal changes ascribed typically to the 'Late Modernity' (Giddens 1991), this also makes teachers the "last guardians of the standard" (Van de Velde & Houtermans 1999).

In Flanders, the northern Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, the formal norm of spoken Standard Dutch appears to be a "virtual variety (...), desired by the authorities, but rarely spoken in practice" (De Caluwe 2009:19). One may then wonder what the 'highest' non-virtual level of Standard Belgian Dutch is. According to Grondelaers & Van Hout (2011:219), that stratum can be equated with the speech of Flemish teachers. In this paper, we set out to test the veracity of this statement, by juxtaposing a corpus of speech data obtained from interviews with Flemish (primary and secondary) school teachers and a comparable corpus consisting of interview data from other highly educated informants. More specifically, it is studied to what degree both informant groups use a set of typical (i.e. often cited in the Flemish linguistic literature) *non-standard* features. Logistic regression analyses are performed to assess whether schools teachers truly are "the last gatekeepers of the standard" (Van Istendael 2008:31).