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Holland and Utrecht: Further Developments

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23. Holland and Utrecht: More recent developments

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1. Introduction

According to an urban myth, the North Holland town of Haarlem does not have its own dialect and its inhabitants speak the ‘the purest form of Dutch’. It is usually assumed that the origin of this urban myth is due to Winkler (1874); see, for instance, the Dutch Wikipedia article on the Haarlem dialect (retrieved 03. 10. 2011). (It is not clear to me whether the idea that the urban myth about Haarlem stems from Winkler is not itself, in fact, an urban myth. Despite the similarity between Winkler’s statements and the myth, I have not seen any source which traces the Haarlem myth to its Winkler origin. It could of course also be the case that Winkler was merely reflecting a story that was already widespread.) In fact Winkler himself had made neither of these statements. In his *Dialecticon* – a survey of contemporary Frisian, Dutch and Low German dialects, centered around translations of the biblical story of the prodigal son into each of these dialects – Winkler, who was himself a native of the town, wrote [in my translation]:

Among all Holland and therefore also all Dutch dialects, the contemporary dialect of Haarlem town most closely resembles the standardized Dutch language. Spoken language in

Haarlem is closest to the contemporary written language. Furthermore, the traditional Haarlem dialect, to the extent that it still exists, is only spoken by half of the population of Haarlem; the other half, among which many newcomers, speak a modern Holland Dutch.

Winkler goes on to give two translations of the biblical story: one in the traditional dialect, and the other in what he considers to be ‘modern SD’. He also notes that “as a matter of course, the old-fashioned Haarlem dialect is very gradually changing into modern Holland Dutch, and the most dialectical Haarlem is related to modern Holland Dutch through a series of intermediate and transitional forms” (1874: 354).

Studying twentieth and twenty-first century dialect atlases provides little reason to believe that Haarlem indeed stands out as the dialect closest to the standard language; the region in which it is embedded, however, i.e. Holland and Utrecht (possibly with the exception of some regions in the north of North Holland, such as West-Friesland and the island of Texel), could be said to suffer from the Winkler syndrome. It is generally accepted that these are the regions which have the lowest number of dialect speakers by far, while at the same time it is also usually assumed, at least by the local population, that the regional features we find in the speech of the inhabitants of this region no longer merit the name of dialect. In several monographs, local (city) dialects are actually treated as sociolects (e.g. Elias 1977, Schatz 1986). Although this move may be completely justified, it makes it of course particularly hard to count the real number of dialect speakers. It may also well be one of the causes why dialectological sources are scarce, also on the present state of the dialects. This chapter is therefore mostly based on data from general surveys on the Netherlands as a whole, from which I have isolated the data on Holland and Utrecht, or from some original research done specifically for this chapter.

2. The present state of the Holland and Utrecht dialects

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, about half of the population of the Netherlands – which means approximately one third of all speakers of Dutch – lived in Holland and Utrecht (from now on, I will use ‘Holland’ as a cover term to also denote the dialects of Utrecht, except where explicitly noted). Many of them migrated from other parts of the Netherlands or of the world. Most of these people do not consider themselves to be dialect speakers anymore (Driessen 2006), partly because, traditionally, the Holland and Utrecht dialects are considered to have played an important role in building the standard language. Several dialectometric studies have established that the Holland dialects are the most similar to the standard language today (Hoppenbrouwers and Hoppenbrouwers 2001, Heeringa 2004).

Possibly as a result of this situation, there have been no specialized studies on present-day dialect use in the region. The data that we have come from general surveys in the Netherlands. In a 1998 survey by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (Du. *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek*) and the Meertens Institute for Research and Documentation of Dutch Language and Culture in Amsterdam, a large sample of people ($N = 4,794$, a very high number for linguistic research) provided information about their dialect use. Figure 1 is taken from Jongenburger and Goeman (2009). It shows the results about self-reported use of dialect (CBS-SPDIAL) and dialect use to one’s children (CBS-

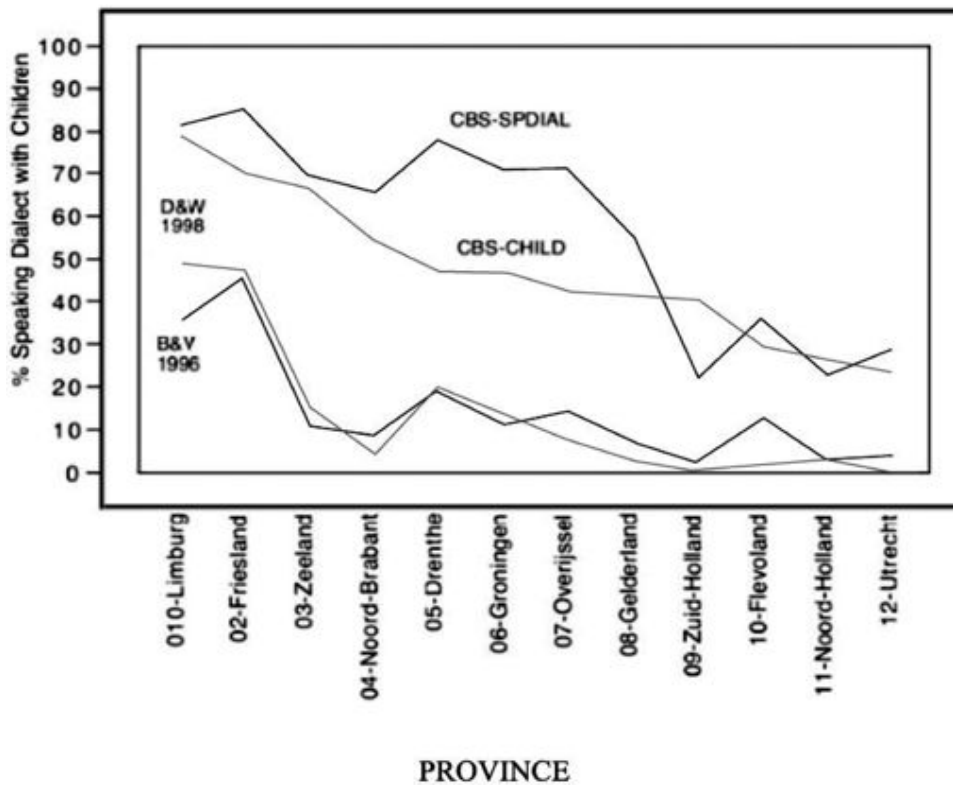


Fig. 23.1: Self-reported use of dialect (CBS-SPDIAL) and dialect use to one's children (CBS-CHILD) per Dutch province

CHILD), as well as the results of two smaller studies (Driessen and Withagen 1998, Boves and Vousten 1996) for each of the provinces (see also Extra 2011).

This figure shows that in every single survey, South Holland, North Holland and Utrecht end up in the lowest regions. Only Flevoland – the newest province, created on land that was reclaimed from the sea in the twentieth century, so with no ‘autochthonous’ dialect to speak of – shows the same characteristics; and Flevoland scores even slightly better at some points.

Driessen (2006) is another relatively large empirical survey of dialect use in the Netherlands in the period between 1995 and 2003. It is based on a large survey among 60,000 pupils, parents and teachers at primary schools in the Netherlands. The picture it shows is rather similar. Table 23.1 represents part of Driessen's results, viz. on the use of dialect between parents, from mother to child and among siblings for Holland (which for Driessen also means Holland and Utrecht) and all of the Netherlands.

So, even though dialect use is on the decline everywhere, even in the last datapoint of the collection there is still a marked difference between Holland and the rest of the Netherlands (the only other regions where dialect use is in the single-digit numbers are Low-Saxonia and Brabant). In a footnote (footnote 4), Driessen (2006) mentions that one reason why the numbers in Holland are low might be the fact that people in this

Tab. 23.1: Percentage of use of dialects between parents, from mother to child and among children in Holland and (all of) the Netherlands

		1995	1997	1999	2001	2003
Holland	parents	4	2	2	1	3
	mother-to-child	2	1	1	0	1
	children	2	1	1	0	3
Netherlands	parents	27	22	20	18	18
	mother-to-child	13	12	10	8	8
	children	12	9	9	7	7

region do not consider their regionally coloured language a 'dialect'; this, of course, does not change the point that the dialect is sharply on the decline in a significant way.

Another interesting aspect of Jongenburg and Goeman's (2009) analysis of the CBS data concerns the number of people who say that they regret the fact that the dialect is disappearing. It turns out that the two smaller regions with the highest percentage are both in Holland, and the percentage of people who say this is overall relatively high in these provinces.

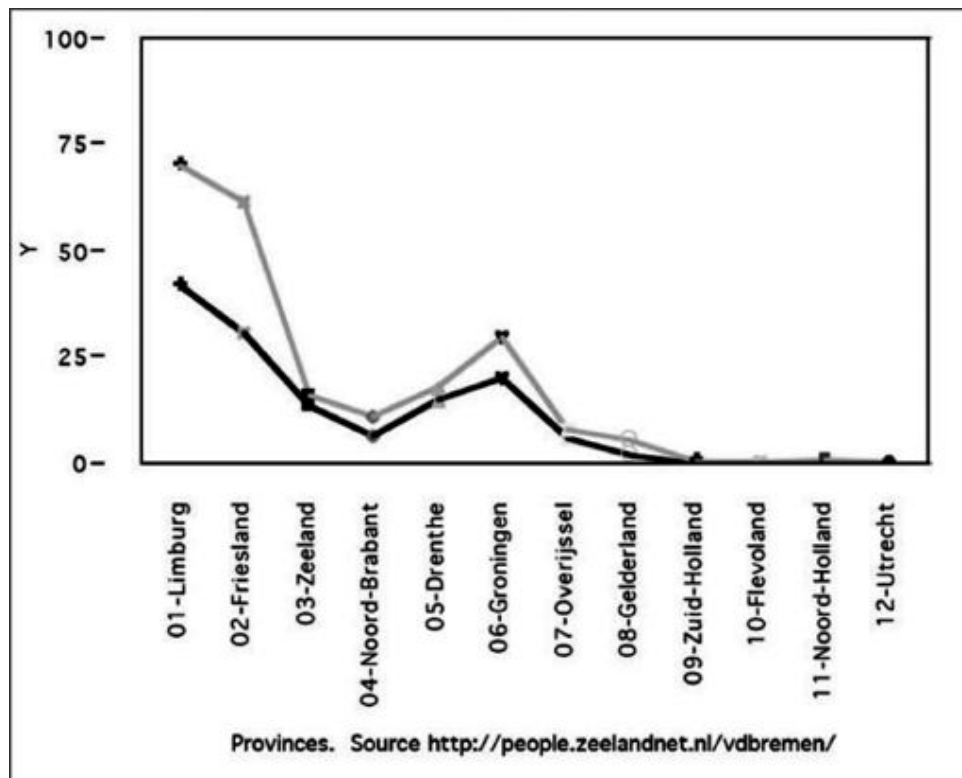


Fig. 23.2: The number of CDs with dialect songs produced in various provinces of the Netherlands

Yet this feeling of loss does not translate into concrete action. All Dutch provinces have a state-financed regional broadcasting service for radio and television programmes; South Holland is the only one which has two, because it hosts two relatively big cities, Rotterdam and The Hague. In most provinces these regional broadcasters pay regular attention to the dialect, often not just in the form of broadcasting programmes in the dialect, but also by conducting interviews in the dialect or otherwise choosing the dialect as the language of presentation. As far as I have been able to establish, this is not the case in Holland and Utrecht: there is at most some occasional attention for regional languages in individual programmes. Similarly, North Holland, South Holland and Utrecht are presently the only provinces in the Netherlands that do not employ a ‘regional language officer’ (Du. *streektaalfunctionaris*), who has the task to stimulate creative use of the dialect, compile dictionaries, etc. (There have been some attempts in this direction in 2010 and 2011, but they have so far not been successful.)

A final indication comes, again, from Jongenburger and Goeman (2011). Based on a large online database on Dutch dialect music (people.zeelandnet.nl/vdbremen), they made a graph of the number of CDs with dialect songs that were produced in various provinces of the Netherlands. Again, it is clear that Holland and Utrecht, together with Flevoland, stand out as being particularly poor in the production of such cultural artefacts (the dark line gives the number of all CD productions until 2000, and the lighter line the number of productions until 2004 – the latter line can thus by definition never be lower than the former).

The overall picture that emerges is of a region in which people consider the dialect as having virtually died out. Many people may regret this loss, but with a few exceptions very little is done to halt this development.

3. Some changes in the dialects

Holland and Utrecht are highly urbanized regions. Therefore, one of the more important recent developments taking place is related to aspects of urbanization, the influence of youth culture, and the emergence of new ethnolectal varieties (discussed in chapter 39 (by Muysken)). Here we will concentrate on two other aspects, one of which has so far not enjoyed a lot of attention in the literature, viz. the ongoing attraction of the four large urban centers on the surrounding areas and in particular the linguistic/structural effects of the ‘expansion’ of (features of) the urban dialect varieties (section 3.1.), and one which has received much more attention, viz. the status of so-called Polder Dutch (section 3.2.), which is not strictly speaking a regional phenomenon.

3.1. The four cities as attractors

An old idea in dialectology is that cities can act as linguistic ‘attractors’ on the neighbouring villages. In Dutch dialectology, the idea was, for instance, quite forcefully argued for by Kloeke (1932). Going through the scarce sources on non-urban dialects in Holland and Utrecht, one gets the impression that the process of urban attraction is still going on in these regions. (As a matter of fact, Driessen 2006 shows that Holland is

different from other regions in that there is no correlation between the extent of urbanization and the level of functional dialect loss, i.e. shift to the standard variety.)

Unfortunately, very little systematic work has been done on this topic so far. One exception is Goeman's (1984) monograph on the dialect of Zoetermeer. This village, which had about 2,500 inhabitants at the beginning of the twentieth century went through an explosive growth in the 1960s and 1970s (10,000 inhabitants in 1960, 22,000 in 1970, 66,000 in 1980; at present, there are 121,000). The large majority of these people came from The Hague, after several large companies and government institutions moved there. The result is that the Zoetermeer dialect was rapidly evaporating when Goeman wrote his study and has all but gone now.

In order to find out how representative Zoetermeer is, I did a small exploratory study. We can compare the volumes of the *Reeks Nederlandse Dialectatlassen* (RND) on the relevant areas (*Volume XI: Zuid-Holland and Utrecht* and *Volume XIII Noord-Holland*) with data from the Goeman-Taeldeman-Van Reenen Project (GTRP, available online at www.meertens.knaw.nl/mand). The former volumes appeared in the late 1960s (1968 and 1969, respectively) and are mostly based on fieldwork that is even older (going back to the 1940s and 1950s in some cases), whereas the latter is based on fieldwork done in the 1980s. This gives us a time window of at least one generation, which we can use to examine changes in individual places. If the idea is justified that cities attract, we would expect towns closer to cities to change in the direction of neighbouring cities in the time in between. The following is an example from morphology which may illustrate this idea. The following data are taken from map number 14 in *RND* and item number 1599 from the GTRP, which both contain the past participle of *to be* ('geweest' in SD):

- (1) RND Map 14 / GTRP 1599
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| RND / Edam: <i>vest</i> | RND / Amsterdam: <i>γəweist</i> |
| GTRP / Edam: <i>xəvɛ:ist</i> | |
| RND / Berkel: <i>γəves</i> | RND / Rotterdam: <i>γəweist</i> |
| GTRP / Berkel: <i>xəvɛ:ist</i> | |
| RND / Scheveningen: <i>əwest</i> | RND / The Hague: <i>γəveis</i> |
| GTRP / Scheveningen: <i>xəvɛ:ist</i> | |
| RND / Houten: <i>χəvɪst</i> | RND / Utrecht: <i>γəwes</i> |
| GTRP / Houten: <i>γəveis</i> | |

For each of the four bigger cities in our region (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, in order of size) we selected a smaller town (between 25,000 and 50,000 inhabitants) which was sufficiently close to it, i.e. between 10 and 30 kms distance: Edam (Kloeke code: E077), Berkel (K008), Scheveningen (D001) and Houten (E227), respectively. (Administratively, Scheveningen is one of the eight districts of The Hague, but nevertheless seems sufficiently different.) A further criterion for the selection of the smaller towns was that they had been collected and processed by the same fieldworker and transcriber as the larger city. Given the fact that these data span different volumes of the RND, it was not possible to make sure that all locations were covered by the same researcher. I took the phonetic transcriptions for each of these towns from RND and GTRP as well as the RND transcription for the neighbouring city; unfortunately, GTRP does not have data on these cities. The transcriptions are simplified a little bit,

mostly as a result of omitting diacritics. The reason was that RND and GTRP do not just use different transcription practices, but also different phonetic alphabets, so that it is necessary to abstract away from many details if we want to make a comparison.

We have to distinguish between various changes we see in this table: (a) the prefix, (b) the final */t/*, (c) the vowel and (d) some of the phonetic details.

Re (a) *The presence or absence of a prefix, and its shape* (fricative plus schwa, or merely a schwa) are well-known points of difference between various dialects (see also Chapter 22, this volume). In our example, both Edam and Scheveningen have shifted between RND and GTRP towards a variant with the fricative. The issue is how to interpret this fact. The form *ge-* (*/xə/* or */ɣə/*) is also part of the standard language, so that we can interpret this shift both in terms of a shift towards the standard and a shift towards the nearby city; all cities had a *ge* form already in RND; the latter in turn may also have been influenced by the standard language. It is thus not entirely clear how this change should be interpreted.

Re (b) *The presence or absence of the final t* is a similarly well-known point of variation which is subject to a complex interaction of morphological and phonological factors. The comparison here may be slightly more indicative, since not all dialects have shifted towards the standard yet (which would have a *t*). It is even the case that Houten seems to have shifted towards the variety used in Utrecht (which is called [*ˈytrɛχ*] in local parlance): it had a *t* in RND, but not any more in GTRP. Of course, such data should be treated with extreme care, since there has probably been a lot of variability for a long time, and it is possible that both forms were present in both stages.

Re (c) *Diphthongization of the vowel* shows a pattern that may be even more interesting. In the GTRP data, all towns have moved towards a diphthongized pronunciation of the mid vowels, even though they did not have this in the RND. With the exception of Utrecht, all cities did have diphthongization in RND – showing that the transcribers were sensitive to it – and furthermore, the diphthongal pronunciation does not count as standard. Notice that Berkel, for instance, has become *less* standard-like and more similar to Rotterdam. This is thus a clear example that the neighbouring towns have all shifted in the direction of the cities, although it does not necessarily show that they have each shifted in the direction of their own neighbouring city, because they make the same shift. Hence, the most plausible explanation is that all (Holland and Utrecht) dialects move in the same direction and most cities seem to be ahead of the smaller towns (in this case).

Re (d) *The other phonetic details* are much more difficult to interpret, mostly due to the differences in transcription system between the two atlases. For instance, shifts in the voicing quality and the place of articulation of the prefix fricative could or could not be due to these differences. The same is true for the different realizations of the labial glide or fricative at the beginning of the stem; I have to admit that I found it difficult sometimes to see the difference between *v* and *ʋ* in the RND maps (especially in the volume on North Holland for some reason). The separate transcriptions are sometimes clearer; however, since no clear picture seems to emerge from this, I have decided not to include this in my study.

In order to quantify these results a little bit more, I repeated this exercise for ten items which were investigated both in the RND and the GTRP (a further criterion was that there should be at least one point where at least some of the dialects under discussion

Tab. 23.2: Dialect distances between four towns in Holland and Utrecht, regional city dialects and the standard language

	RND	GTRP	Difference
Edam-Amsterdam: ^a	10.7	6.4	4.3
Berkel-Rotterdam	8	5	3
Scheveningen-The Hague	11	8	3
Houten-Utrecht	8	11	-3
<i>total</i>	<i>37.7</i>	<i>30.4</i>	<i>7.3</i>
<i>mean</i>	<i>9.4</i>	<i>7.6</i>	<i>1.8</i>
Edam-standard	6	5	1
Berkel-standard	7	6	1
Scheveningen-standard	10	9	1
Houten-standard	6	8	-2
<i>total</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>mean</i>	<i>7.25</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>0.25</i>

^a The RND usually gives three different forms for Amsterdam. In comparing Edam with Amsterdam, the average was taken for each of these forms. This explains why real numbers appear here.

differed from each other; I took the first ten such items, i.e. the ten items in the first 50 maps of RND which satisfied these criteria).

I then calculated the differences by first identifying the relevant variable phenomena/dialect features (in the example above, these would have been *a*, *b* and *c*, but not *d*) and then determining for each point whether there was a difference or not – so in (1) above, Edam differs from Amsterdam in the RND by two points, since there is a difference in the prefix and in the vowel, but not in the *t*. Using this measure, for each town dialect I calculated: (i) how much it differed from the dialect of the neighbouring city in the RND, (ii) how much it differed from the SD form in the RND, (iii) how much it differed from the dialect of the neighbouring city in the GTRP, and (iv) how much it differed from the SD form in the GTRP.

I then calculated the changes with respect to the neighbouring city (by subtracting (iii) from (i)), and with respect to the standard language (by subtracting (iv) from (ii)). The results are displayed in Table 23.2.

This table shows that the relation between the towns and the neighbouring cities has decreased between the two atlases by 1.8 points on average; their difference to the standard has at the same time decreased by only 0.25 points. Although the dataset is too small to draw firm conclusions, this can at least be seen as an indication that the cities act as attractors for neighbouring towns.

One town behaves rather strangely in this set: Houten has grown more *dissimilar* from both the standard language and from Utrecht in the course of time. If we check the data (which I published in a separate electronic appendix which is available on <<http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.92857>>), we see that this difference is due mostly to the mid vowels, which were often written as monophthongs in the RND both for Houten and for Utrecht, but are written as diphthongs for Houten now. It is likely that Utrecht has by now diphthongized these vowels as well (Martens Van Vliet 1997), so that this could be a consequence of the fact that we are comparing ‘modern’ Houten with ‘older’

Utrecht. (Of course, this would be true also for the other regional comparisons. However, the other cities ‘already’ had a diphthong in RND. This may mean that Utrecht has been the most conservative of the four cities – which would fit the general picture, as it is by far the smallest.) It should be noted, on the other hand, that the diphthongization of mid vowels is responsible to a large extent also for the effect we found here; which may be an artefact of the assumption I made that diphthongized mid vowels are substandard. This assumption may not be completely justified for the modern standard language, at least in its more colloquial variety spoken in the northwestern parts of the Netherlands.

3.2. Polder Dutch

Approximately ten years ago, there was quite a lot of attention in the popular press for a phenomenon which was called *Polder Dutch* (Du. *Poldernederlands*) by the dialectologist Jan Stroop (1998, 2010). More recently, it has received more scholarly attention, for instance in Van Heuven et al. (2005), Jacobi et al. (2007), and in particular Jacobi (2009)’s dissertation. The phenomenon is also discussed by Geeraerts and Van de Velde (Chapter 28); here I will concentrate on some aspects which are not discussed there.

According to Stroop (1998), the major change characterizing Polder Dutch is the pronunciation of the diphthongs /*ei*, *œy*, *ou*/. The first part of these diphthongs gets lowered substantially, so that their Polder Dutch rendering is approximately /*ai*, *ay*, *au*/. Furthermore, these changes cause a drag chain shift in that the tense mid vowels /*e*, *Ø*, *o*/ get rather heavily diphthongized and take more or less the position of the old diphthongs /*ei*, *œy*, *ou*/. The following figure is from Stroop (1998: 28) in which the changes have been rendered in Dutch orthography:

Stroop (1998) also notes certain other changes in the vowel system (most prominently, a raising of the lax mid vowels) but most of the literature since then considers these as peripheral for the definition of Polder Dutch. We will ignore it here as well.

The phenomenon is in many ways related to Estuary English in Great Britain (see Altendorf 2003 for a good summary): a phonetic-phonological change in the vowels that has been advancing in the 1990s, and in which upwardly mobile young urban professionals act as the primary agents of change, primarily focused on a geographic area (the Thames Estuary for English; Randstad for the Netherlands). There are several aspects of interest to this phenomenon, but we cannot discuss all of them here. For instance, a lot of debate has centered on Stroop’s (1998) suggestion that the change was led by *women*. Although Stroop (2010) – another study for a wider audience – still defends this claim, Jacobi (2009) carefully studied the issue empirically and does not find evidence in favour of this claim. Another major claim made by Stroop (1998, 2010) is that Polder Dutch will replace the standard language, at least in the Netherlands; this has not been empirically verified yet, as far as I can see.

In Chapter 21 it was argued that the changes mentioned by Stroop (1998) are actually all attested in the original Holland dialects. This was partly verified above, in our discussion of the role of the cities as attractors: the main indication we found was the spreading of the diphthongization of mid vowels to neighbouring towns between the time of the RND and that of the GTRP.

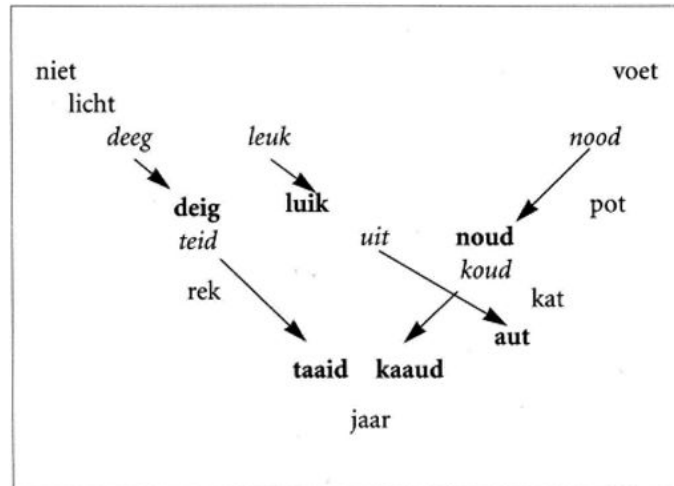


Fig. 23.3: Lowering of the mid vowels and the first elements of the diphthongs (reproduced from Stroop 1998)

Jacobi (2009) distinguishes four regions: Region 1 ('the central region', which comprises Holland except West-Friesland and western Utrecht), Region 2 (which comprises eastern Utrecht, except for the city itself, Gelderland, Zeeland, the Polders, the Veluwe up to the IJssel river, and West-Friesland, i.e. all areas directly neighbouring Region 1), Region 3 (the northeast peripheral region) and Region 4 (the southern peripheral region). For each speaker, Jacobi distinguished between the region of residence and the region of education. However, her corpus was not balanced for the different regions – Jacobi's database consisted of 70 speakers from the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands*, a large corpus of spoken SD (Oostdijk et al. 2002). In her results, Jacobi found very little evidence for an effect of region on the use of SD. The only correlation she found was for 'lowly educated speakers': speakers in this class for whom the 'region of education' was Region 1, showed more signs of diphthongization of the mid vowels than speakers in the southern peripheral Region 4. However, the distinction only reached 'almost' significance ($p = 0.065$), and Jacobi stresses that 'the results are not very representative or reliable'.

4. Possibilities and desiderata

If anything should be clear from this chapter as well as from the two chapters which precede it (Chapter 21 and Chapter 22, this volume), it is that Holland and Utrecht are quite literally white spots on the dialectological map of the Dutch-speaking area: traditional dialectology has assumed for a long time that these areas were less interesting than many other parts of the language area, an observation that may itself not be without interest.

A lot of work remains to be done. Quite obviously, a more fine-grained (phonetic, phonological, morphosyntactic) analysis of the Holland dialects will be able to give us more insight into what variation we still find in this area. One sociolinguistic topic which

seems particularly interesting is the question what happens to a language variety which is considered the ‘standard’ such as ‘Polder Dutch’, even though it has more regional features than previous versions of the standard (while those features might not be recognized as the standard language everywhere).

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24. Low Saxon phonology

1. Introduction: The main literature
2. Low Saxon as a unified whole: A comparison with neighbouring main varieties
3. Low Saxon in all its varieties: The major dialect differences
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1. Introduction: The main literature

There is, both as regards content and quality, a large and varied body of literature on the phonological features of Low Saxon, dealing with its main varieties as well as a substantial number of local variants. It is impossible to describe even a part of these here, and we will therefore only mention the major monographs, restricting ourselves for the rest to references to the most relevant literature describing the differences with the other language varieties in the Netherlands (section 2), and to the internal differences in Low Saxon (section 3). For a comprehensive survey, we refer to L. Kremer's description of the history of Low Saxon linguistics (Kremer 2008) in Bloemhoff, Van der Kooij,