‘We don’t need another Afrikaans’. Adequation and distinction in South-African and Flemish language policies

Abstract
It has long been recognised that the similarity or difference between ways of speaking and their possible institutionalisation as ‘languages’ is an ideological matter, a matter of social opinions, rather than one of objective systemic relatedness. In this paper we wish to emphasise that such social opinions (‘language ideologies’) in any society are always to some extent competitive, that such lack of consensus is not a temporary or functional stage in between phases of shared opinion but a fundamental aspect of the social life of language, and that the expansion or decline of particular social opinions on language is interactive with cultural changes, metacultural discourses, as well as political agendas. We argue this through a discussion of the valorisation and countervaloration of linguistic practices in Flanders (Belgium) and South Africa. Drawing attention to discrepancies between articulated and embodied ideologies, we suggest it is the complex interaction of language ideologies with other factors, rather than the mechanical outcome of structural conditions, that drove the eventual recognition of Afrikaans in South Africa and the continuing absence of such a process with respect to ‘Flemish’ in Flanders.

Keywords: adequation, distinction, Afrikaans, Dutch, Flemish, language ideology

1. Introduction
In November 2014 literary author and language purist Benno Barnard published an op-ed in a Dutch-medium Belgian newspaper (De Standaard) in response to a questionnaire that this newspaper had been distributing. In that questionnaire, titled ‘How Flemish is your Dutch?’, the newspaper asked Flemings how acceptable they would find a number of typically Flemish, non-standard lexical and grammatical items, among which a range of so-called gallicisms, that is, French-influenced idioms or calques. Compare for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flemish</th>
<th>French origin</th>
<th>Standard Dutch</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ik ben akkoord met</td>
<td>Je suis d’accord avec</td>
<td>Ik ga akkoord met</td>
<td>I agree with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iets op punt stellen</td>
<td>Mettre qqch au point</td>
<td>iets afwerken</td>
<td>To update something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De eerste zorgen</td>
<td>Les premiers soins</td>
<td>De eerste hulp</td>
<td>The first aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rond punt</td>
<td>Rond point</td>
<td>Rotonde</td>
<td>Roundabout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De duimen leggen</td>
<td>Mettre les pouces</td>
<td>Het onderspit delven</td>
<td>To give in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outcome of this questionnaire by and large was that many Flemings had no qualms about using a number of these gallicisms (although some were found more acceptable than others) and have thus become relatively indifferent to traditional advice that such idioms must be avoided. In response to this news, Barnard wrote:

You, the average Fleming with a decent education, are too miserable to learn appropriate Dutch. You hardly read, and your great writers of yesteryear you read even less. You probably won’t even recognise the gallicism in the remainder of this sentence since you refuse to replace your patois with the general cultural language […] With an, in itself, enviable stubbornness […] you refuse to remember that ‘of them who …’ is a grammatical monster. […] Dutch is a house with many rooms. There’s nothing against Flemish or Surinam words and expressions that enrich our common language, on the contrary. […] But it is, of course, useful if that language,
with more than 20 million speakers […] indeed remains common. **We do not need another Afrikaans.** You do not have to like the Dutch; you can find their accent non-melodious and their humor unfunny. […] but you had better keep an eye on our mutual interest. (4 November 2014, De Standaard)

Salient about this comment is its derogatory, sarcastic tone. Yet this is only one example of the ongoing public indignation that literary authors, leading journalists, culture experts, language specialists and other intellectuals have in the last decades been pouring on, in Barnard’s words, ‘the average Fleming’ on account of their dwindling susceptibility to distinguish ‘vulgar’ from ‘civilised’ language use. This indignation is not intended to be informative but hoped to be instructive: its receivers are meant to heed the advice and refrain from using inappropriate Dutch. In his account of the fading impact of intellectuals on publicly sanctified taste and value, Bauman argues that such vituperative language characterises the crisis of modernity: when intellectuals realise that alternative criteria for public taste and value operate independently of their approval, they intensify the rhetorical power of their advice and launch into ‘rage and condemnation’ (Bauman, 1987:135). Typical of this denunciation strategy is that it does not anymore accuse the uneducated of vulgarity and indolence, but now targets ‘the petty bourgeois, the philistine, the middle class daring to make [linguistic] judgments in practice, by the act of selecting between [linguistic] offers, but without, however, recognizing the authority of the [linguistic elite]’ (Bauman, 1987:135; cf. Plevoets, 2012). Even sociolinguists have recently been ending up in the line of discursive fire (Jaspers, 2014). Whether such accusations are characteristic of a contemporary crisis can be doubted though on the grounds that Barnard’s comments add to a long tradition, at least since the 19th century, of often scathing complaints about the critical state of language use in Flanders (Absillis and Jaspers, 2016; Jaspers and Van Hoof, 2013; Willemyns, 2013). Indeed, rather than an acute phenomenon, the perception of crisis may be ‘a way of thinking about one’s moment, and not inherent in the moment itself’, as literary critic Frank Kermode argues (2000 [1965]:101) in his analysis of how apocalyptic myths translate into secular art and literature, a way of thinking that may be ‘as endemic to what we call modernism as utopianism is to political revolution’ (2000:98). In this view modernity does not enter into crisis, as Bauman suggests, but consists of perceiving one’s own era as transitional between more stable periods. This may explain the co-occurrence, next to the heated remarks of public intellectuals, of much more detached observations of crisis in ample scientific hypotheses that currently posit the end of linguistic standardisation.

In referring to Afrikaans Barnard at the same time adds to another, equally venerable tradition, namely that of mutual comparison between Flemings and South-Africans as they debated their language political options in the face of the threats posed by, respectively, French and English (Meeuwis, 2015). In this case the comparison serves the evocation of a nightmare scenario where Flemings, decades after the recognition of Afrikaans as separate from Dutch (see below), are on the verge of dissociating a popular Flemish from Standard Dutch and of cultivating the former variety as their own standard. In counterpoint to this scenario and to the inevitable end of standardisation evoked in sociolinguistic literature, we underline below that what Afrikaans and Flemish are, and what their relation to Dutch might be, is subject to continuous (r)evaluation processes that ‘adequate’ or ‘distinguish’ (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004) these varieties and subsequently set them off or align them with others. We suggest that even though certain trends of adequation or distinction may emerge and become predominant, they are always vulnerable to change, erosion and revision. This naturally holds as well for Dutch in relation to English, the relation between English and other named varieties, and so on. We base this argument on the long-standing insight that the similarity or
difference between ways of speaking recognised as languages ‘has little to do with structural distance, but a lot with language ideologies’ (Auer, 2005:33). In this paper we wish to emphasise however that social opinions on language in any society are “‘normally” (or unmarkedly) multiple within a population’ (Kroskrity, 2004:503):

by viewing [language-ideological] multiplicity, and its attendant contestations and debates, as the sociological baseline, we are challenged to understand the historical processes employed by specific groups to have their ideologies become the taken-for-granted aspects of cultural life for a larger society (2004:503)

Agha similarly argues that ‘[t]he central and inescapable fact about human societies is the diversity of reflexive models of behaviour that co-exist within each society’ (2007:2) and draws attention to the co-existence, in space and time, of competing metadiscourses. Consequently, differing opinions on the positive or negative value of a particular variety are not a sign of acute crisis but a fundamental aspect of the social life of language. All periods are mixed, then, in terms of language ideology, reason why it is ‘more useful to have an analytical device which captures diversity rather than emphasising a static, uniformly shared culture’ (Kroskrity, 2004:496). From this angle, making sense of the official recognition and institutionalisation of new varieties thus requires an investigation into the expansion c.q. decline of the metalinguistic discourses (‘language ideologies’) that identify and valorise them. But it also necessitates attention to the contingent interaction between such language ideologies on the one hand and, on the other, cultural changes (for instance in media landscapes), metacultural discourses that construct ‘others’, ‘self’, identity, or history in not necessarily linguistic terms, as well as political agendas in which these constructed entities are used to further or fight inequality.

We argue this through a discussion of the valorisation and countervalorisation of linguistic practices in Flanders (Belgium) and South Africa, suggesting it is this interaction, rather than the mechanical outcome of specific structural conditions, that drove the eventual recognition of Afrikaans in South Africa and that continues to impact on the relation between Dutch and ‘Flemish’ in Flanders. We will do so by drawing attention to discrepancies between articulated and embodied ideologies (Kroskrity, 2004:496), i.e. between explicitly reported valorisations and valorisations implicit in practices, as well as to the fact that any type of ideology, whether articulated or embodied, always lives side by side with its antipodes. We first illustrate the evolution of this in Flanders (section 2), before turning to the case of Afrikaans (section 3) and summing up our point in the concluding discussion (section 4).

2. Flanders

Barnard’s criticism of Flemings’ acceptance of formerly unacceptable language use dovetails with numerous observations of and complaints about the increasing acceptability of a nonstandard, distinctly Flemish type of speaking in mainstream audiovisual entertainment, social media, and advertising (Jaspers and Van Hoof, 2015). This growing acceptability is unintended, historically speaking, because it diverges from the decision that (standard) Dutch, not Flemish, was to be Flemings’ preferred variety. This decision was the outcome of heated debate in the 1840s and 1850s between proponents of the importation of Netherlandic Dutch as the official standard language for Flemings (the so-called ‘integrationists’) and their opponents (the ‘particularists’) who, eventually unsuccessfully, advocated a Flemish-oriented standard or a Standard Dutch with a significant share of Flemish input (Vandenbussche et al., 2005; Vosters, 2013). These debates need to be seen against the background of the independence of Belgium (1830) from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815-1830).
For some, a straightforward choice for Dutch – the language of the former ruler – ran the risk of being seen as unpatriotic. They therefore called for a Flemish or Belgian type of Dutch arguing that this would symbolically consecrate the existence of the young Belgian state. Defenders of this line were soon represented by their counterparts as provincial, pursuing particular rather than universal goals, and as less ambitious in terms of Flemings’ emancipation. This other side, the ‘integrationists’, was inspired by three arguments that up to the present day continue to legitimise close agreement with Netherlandic Dutch (Deprez, 1999): (1) a separate Flemish was argued to be a too meagre competitor for French in Belgium on account of the latter’s political and cultural calibre; (2) Flemish varieties were claimed to be too tarnished by French loanwords and calques and hence unworthy of expressing Flemings’ emancipation; (3) a choice for Netherlandic Dutch would reseal a bond that had been severed by the 80 Years War (1568-1648) that led to the separation of the Low Countries. Hence in the 1840s already, it was decided that the official spelling for Belgian Dutch would (some exceptions notwithstanding) tally with that for Netherlandic Dutch. Before long this first step heralded the particularists’ defeat and paved the way for a policy of total unification (including grammar and lexicon) between Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch (Willemyns, 2013).

Between the 1950s and 1980s, this predilection for Netherlandic Dutch culminated in a propagandistic, scientifically supported, nation-wide standardisation campaign that set out to erase ‘Flemish’ (with some exceptions, notably with regard to pronunciation) in order to create one transnational Standard Dutch space in which the Netherlands and Flanders would be equal, and equally ‘civilised’, partners (Jaspers and Van Hoof, 2013). This campaign has contributed to widespread dialect loss, it has had a sweeping effect on formal written language, and it has also affected spoken language in that it has led to what Britain (2009:122) calls a ‘compromise’ variety that is ‘shaped by contact between local, regional, interregional, and other, including standard, varieties’ (Britain, 2009:122). In principle this compromise type of speech – henceforth, for the sake of convenience, ‘Flemish’ – was only there to be tolerated for a while, as an ‘interlanguage’ before Flemings would come to master Standard Dutch also in spoken language (Jaspers and Van Hoof, 2013:348-349). Increasingly though, since the late 1980s and 1990s, this Flemish type of speaking has invaded domains that were intended to be the home of Standard Dutch: the audiovisual media, TV-fiction, language use at work, and so on.

The rising popularity of Flemish has fed into various propositions that standardisation in Flanders is coming to an end (van der Horst 2008), and that the ‘standard variety of Belgian Dutch ... is in any case losing ground’ to Flemish (Grondelaers and van Hout, 2011:221). Since standardisation propaganda petered out in the 1980s, and even looks quaint from a contemporary viewpoint, it indeed looks as if standardisation as an ideology and plan of action has finally punched the clock. Such hypotheses echo with other postulations of destandardisation (Coupland and Kristiansen, 2011; Deumert and Vandenbussche, 2003; Kristiansen and Grondelaers, 2013) that are formulated across Europe. Alternatively, a process of demotisation has been proposed, in which ‘the ‘standard ideology’ as such stays intact, while the valorization of ways of speaking changes’ (Coupland and Kristiansen, 2011:28). Accordingly, Flemish has been typified as an ‘emerging standard’ (Grondelaers et al., 2016) or an autonomously standardising variety (Plevoets, 2012) that will eventually replace Standard Dutch in Flanders. Such hypotheses chime in with attitudinal changes that have been noticed among respondents asked to evaluate Flemish fragments, who do so in more positive terms than before (Grondelaers and Speelman, 2013; Willemyns, 2013:245-246).
In spite of the above, we suggest there are few signs that Flemings will soon be sanctioning their Flemish as a distinct language from Dutch, as the Afrikaners did (see below). Indeed, apart from the intellectuals who are explicit about the importance of Standard Dutch as a beacon of civilisation and high culture, discourse-analytic studies show that Standard Dutch continues to be accentuated in Flemish language education policy, which is explicitly critical of nonstandard language use (Delarue and De Caluwe, 2015; Jaspers, 2015). Mainstream media are likewise strongly focused on the notion of a modern standard language when reporting on sociolinguistic research (Jaspers, 2014). Ethnographic, interactional and usage-based approaches do not report ample use of Standard Dutch but a strong metalinguistic awareness of its importance. Thus, teachers are regularly observed stating that Standard Dutch is important (at least as an abstract goal), praising colleagues who speak it, frowning upon those who speak dialect, and correcting pupils who speak dialect (Delarue, 2016; Jaspers, 2005, 2015; Van Lancker, 2016). Pupils in their turn often underline the value of Standard Dutch (Van Lancker, 2016), routinely style shift between a relatively more standard and a relatively more dialectal style (Jaspers, 2011), while their playful, exaggerated language use outside of teachers’ earshot displays a sensitivity to higher vs. lower speech styles (Jaspers, 2005, Van Lancker, 2016). Outside education, actors who speak nonstandard in fiction state that they find Standard Dutch highly important (Van Hoof, 2015), while linguistic variation in fiction series responds to and reproduces a framework of linguistic standardisation (Van Hoof, 2015). These outcomes testify to a continuing appreciation of Standard Dutch, in spite of its sometimes negative image, even if it is not spoken as much as it is appreciated and sanctioned. It also indicates that Standard Dutch serves as a continuous backdrop for everyday activity, and for more spectacular interactional moves without which these moves would not make much sense. In addition to this it is clear that there is no wholesale shift to dialect by those who shy away from Standard Dutch, but to something that is neither standard nor dialectal.

All the evidence thus seems to point out that there is widespread appreciation for Standard Dutch and simultaneously for a more endogenous Flemish or ‘dialect light’. Such paradoxical findings can be explained if we accept that rather than functioning as single-value systems, all periods consist of linguistic variation, competing cultural metadiscourses, and individual vacillation and inconsistency about this variation (Agha, 2007; Jaffè, 2009:246; Meeuwis and Brisard, 1993; R. Williams, 1977; Woolard, 2004). Rather than assuming a golden age of uncontested standardisation which is irrefutably nearing its end, it is necessary therefore to attend to competing evaluations for all ways of speaking within any period, or to ‘recognise the complex interrelations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance.’ (R. Williams, 1977:121).

Looking at the relative significance of the metalinguistic discourses that (counter)value (what is recognised as) Dutch and nonstandard Dutch in Flanders, there are few signs that Flemings will soon be officialising ‘Flemish’ as a separate category. Indeed, bearing in mind that the awareness of a particular register is as much a sign of its vitality as its actual production (Agha, 2007), there are clear indications of the continuing valorisation of Standard Dutch and the negative evaluation of its counterpart, in spite of the implicit ratification of Flemish in a range of contexts. While the growing ratification of ways of speaking can thus certainly play a role in its eventual institutionalisation (as we will argue for Afrikaans below), or may indeed be a necessary condition, it is hardly ever a sufficient condition, since it can co-exist with powerful discourses that frame it as an exception to the rule, a sign of informality, a temporary digression. Any attempt at institutionalising Flemish would, in fact, still have to face up against the deep-seated views that Flemings need a ‘strong’ language to compete with French in Belgium. Such views might only start to erode when what is perceived as the ‘threat
of French domination’ evaporates, which could depend on a further disintegration of the
Belgian state, on the identification of a common threat, or on growing rapport between
Flemings and Walloons, and above all on metacultural discourses about these issues, all of
which fall outside the strict scope of metalinguistic commentary.

3. South Africa

If it is at all possible to date the acceptance of Afrikaans as a linguistic category separate from
Dutch, one must name the year 1925, when the ‘Official Languages of the Union Act’ for the
first time identified it as one of South Africa’s official languages. Before this, only Dutch
(sometimes with English) was mentioned when languages were declared official (e.g., in 1854
in the Orange Free State, in 1888 in the Transvaal, in 1909 in the Union of South Africa Act),
and Afrikaans was at best considered to be part of it. But the movement that engendered this
1925 dissociation of Afrikaans began at least in the late 19th century, and it also took time to
settle in after 1925, as we will see. Stell (2007:90) summarises the broad history of the
dissociation well when he writes: ‘from the mid 19th century up to the mid 20th century […]
there was a gradual transition from Dutch to Afrikaans as the official norm.’

Dutch had been present in South Africa since at least 1652 (or earlier, cf. Nienaber, 1994; van
Rensburg, 2016) when a first permanent Dutch settlement was established in the Cape. The
emergence and development of Afrikaans out of Dutch has been the object of much debate,
with hypotheses ranging from postulations of a purely internal, if accelerated development of
dislocated Dutch, to analyses in terms of deep creolisation and adstrate influence from
Khoesan languages, South-African Malay, Bantu languages, and Portuguese Creole, and
various positions in between (see Roberge, 2002; van Sluijs, 2013 for overviews). Our
concern, though, is not the history of the observable linguistic features of Afrikaans, but the
competing metadiscourses sanctioning it, or not, as a separate linguistic category and as a
standard language fit for governance, written administration, and ‘high culture’. It is
important to mention that, in the racist logic around which South-African society was being
modeled, this process of the institutionalisation and distinction of Afrikaans away from Dutch
was, as we will indicate, a prerogative of white speakers, who in this process ignored any of
the other, non-white varieties that had been emerging. As Deumert (2004:42) explains, this
racialised hegemony of the process eventually made standardised Afrikaans in the 20th
century the mark of white ethnicity and the regime of apartheid.

Institutionalisation and distinction always require naming. It took until the mid-18th century
before labels suggestive of its perceived deficiency, such as ‘broken’ and ‘kitchen’ Dutch,
were replaced by ones that indexed the geographical dislocation from the Netherlands, such as
*Kaaps Hollandsch* ‘Cape Dutch’ (i.a. Deumert 2004:65). In the early 19th century, the latter
glossonym was gradually, but at first timidly, replaced with *Afrikaans Hollandsch* (‘African
Dutch’), which was later shortened and generalised as ‘Afrikaans’ after the 1870s (i.a., van
Rensburg 2015:338).

In terms of use, diglossic patterns endured from the 17th century until at least the late 19th
century (i.a., Ponelis, 2005), with Dutch as the ‘High’ language used in written
communication, jurisdiction, the administration, the Reformed Church (including the Bible,
see below), and for most creative literature, while Cape Dutch (or whichever language name
was used) was the ‘Low’ language used for informal communication types, written only
occasionally. With the arrival of the British in 1806, this simple diglossia was replaced by a
more complex, double-headed type, ‘with Afrikaans as the vernacular and both standard [i.e.
European] Dutch (in the church, in private education and in the media) and English as languages of culture’ (Ponelis, 1993:50).

Throughout the 19th century British rule in the Cape worked hard to ensure only limited contacts between Afrikaners and the Netherlands, hoping to eradicate their memories of a Hollandic past and Dutch kinship (Steyn, 1996:8). By the end of the 19th century, for some Afrikaners these Dutch links had indeed faded away (Steyn, 1996:9). It is in this context that in 1875 the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (GRA, ‘Society of Real Afrikaners’) was founded, starting what was later called the ‘First Afrikaans Movement’ that set out to make Afrikaans a High language (i.a., Pienaar, 1943; Kannemeyer, 1974; du Plessis 1986:70-71; Ponelis, 2005; Kriel, 2013; Steyn, 1980, 2014). Emphasising the linguistic distance that had grown between white Afrikaners and Dutch and stressing that too many Afrikaners were unschooled and thus insufficiently proficient in the latter (i.a., Ponelis, 1993:69ff), they suggested a specific variety of Afrikaans as the standard norm – a variety spoken by Afrikaner farmers in the interior rather than around the Cape – and devised a spelling for it. In this process, they only oriented towards white varieties of Afrikaans, bluntly ignoring, in a racist mindset, any of the non-white varieties that had been developing since the late 17th and 18th centuries, such as Arabic, Malay and Cape Malay Afrikaans (Stell et al., 2007), Griqua Afrikaans/Orange River Afrikaans (i.a. Webb, 2010; McCormick, 2002), and others (see also van Heerden, 2016).

The GRA applied the selected variety in their newspaper Die Afrikaanse Patriot (‘The Afrikaans Patriot’), as well as in grammars, dictionaries, and religious publications. Some of them also proposed to translate the Bible into Afrikaans (Steyn, 2009; 2014:175ff). The majority of Afrikaners, however, considered the GRA-variety regionally and socially unacceptable as the new standard (Steyn, 2014) and generally viewed Afrikaans as unfit for ‘high’ functions. They were outraged too by the idea that it would be used in religious matters, including a Bible translation, and found the GRA-spelling too radically deviant from what they were used to from their reading of Dutch texts (Steyn, 2009:137). In response, several counter-associations emerged, such as the Zuid-Afrikaanse Taalbond ‘South-African Language Union’ (1890), which insisted on maintaining Dutch as High language and on including Afrikaans ‘in’ Dutch. Eventually, the GRA’s language movement failed (i.a., Pienaar 1943; van Rensburg 2015; van den Berg 2005:146ff; Kriel 2013:227ff). (Remarkably, some of its linguistic suggestions have survived in present-day Afrikaans, such as the double negation (e.g., hy kan nie Afrikaans praat nie ‘he cannot talk Afrikaans’), which was introduced in the standard as one of the marks distinguishing Afrikaans from Dutch, and which never left the language again; van Rensburg, 2015:334, see also Grebe, 2009:25-27.)

After the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), the British launched an aggressive policy of Anglicisation: Dutch schools were closed and English became the sole medium of instruction (i.a., Giliomee, 2010). This led to an even weaker knowledge of Dutch among Afrikaners. At the same time, the number of non-white, especially ‘coloured’ speakers of the language, which had been integrally contributing to the linguistic development of varieties of Afrikaans since the earliest years, continued to grow, a reality which also pushed the white Afrikaners into heightened forms of nation building. The linguistic pendant of this white Afrikaner nation building, known in South African sociolinguistics as ‘the Second Language Movement’ (i.a., Kannemeyer, 1974), bifurcated into two factions. One still considered the Afrikaans-Dutch diglossia the best weapon against the pressure of English and non-white varieties of Afrikaans, on account of Dutch having a stronger tradition, an admired literary background, and a firm position in the Church (still holding on to the Dutch Bible, rejecting a translation
into Afrikaans: van den Berg 2005; Steyn, 2009; 2015:175ff). Thus, like the integrationists in Belgium, this faction argued that the struggle against a ‘significant other’, i.e. French in Belgium and English and non-white Afrikaans in South Africa, called for a ‘strong’, transnational, not a separate, local, contender. The Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap, founded in 1905, for instance, espoused this view. But in the first 10 years after the War others gradually began to argue, similar to the First Afrikaans Movement, that the many unschooled Afrikaners were too unfamiliar with Dutch, if it had not yet become a ‘dead language’ for them (Steyn, 1996:18). Other arguments were that linguistically speaking the Afrikaans of white speakers had grown too far apart from Dutch, that many Afrikaners consequently knew English better than Dutch and would turn to the former as the language of ‘high culture’ and formal communication, a risk that would be disastrous in the struggle against Anglicisation and the loss of the white prerogative over Afrikaans.

The long-standing perception of Afrikaans as a sign of underdevelopment gradually subsided, accelerating, more than had been possible in the 19th century, the belief that it could be revalorised as an institutional and ‘high culture’ language. Contributing ideas to this were that if the Afrikaners were to be united and their self-esteem as a nation boosted, this could only be achieved by making their (spoken) language a ‘High’ variety, not by imposing a ‘foreign’ one like Dutch, an attempt considered ‘wrong and hopeless’ (Steyn, 1996:19). Activists also argued that only the ‘eigen taal’ (‘own language’) was able to help the nation of Afrikaners affirm their own identity.

In the first decade of the 20th century, much inspiration was also drawn from the Flemish Movement’s fight against the domination of French in Belgium. But the inspiration was always contrastive, underlining that Afrikaners had to refrain from importing a prestigious language from abroad (Steyn, 1996:14). It was argued, along ‘integrationist’ lines, that the great regiolectal variation in Flanders often obliged Flemings to have recourse to a French word for a given object in order to be understood everywhere, necessitating the importation of Netherlandic Dutch. Variation in Afrikaans, again interpreted in purely ‘white’ terms, ignoring any of the other varieties (see above), was believed to be much smaller, and such importation therefore unnecessary (Steyn, 1996:16). Another contrastive argument was that both English and Afrikaans had a ‘simple’ morphology, while Dutch and French morphology was ‘complex’. Consequently Dutch would be able to face and confront French well, and Afrikaans English. But if Dutch rather than Afrikaans was to withstand English in South Africa, it would lose, because English would be easier to learn and attract more interested Afrikaners (Steyn, 1996:16).

A major turning point in the recognition of Afrikaans was the foundation in 1914, and the immediate appeal among Afrikaners, of the Nasionale Party (du Plessis, 1986:72), a nationalist organisation opposing British linguistic and cultural domination. The NP almost from the start used Afrikaans as its working language, not Dutch, a practice it would officialise in 1917 (du Plessis, 1986:72-76). Many of its founding members, with exceptions such as the leader J.B.M. Hertzog, were convinced that the realisation of the Afrikaner nation would fail if it was to rally around Dutch as a common ancestral language, given its by now remote identity for the Afrikaner Volk. Another crucial backing for Afrikaans was the NP’s successful persuasion of other political parties that each civil servant needed to be bilingual if every white citizen was to be helped in their own language in the administration. This begged the question which bilingualism was to be demanded, Dutch-English or Afrikaans-English. Since Dutch was considered to be insufficiently accessible, that is present, in South Africa – an idea only possible in a conceptual framework that dissociates Afrikaans from Dutch – the
argument was that the only bilingualism that could possibly be requested from English South Africans was Afrikaans-English. Interestingly, in Belgium, Dutch – as an inclusive category, containing all Flemish varieties – was considered to be sufficiently present for Walloon Belgians to learn and become bilingual.

In the same year 1914, Afrikaans was made medium of instruction in the Cape; the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State would follow soon (du Plessis, 1986:72-76; Steyn, 1996:21). This was agreed on the condition that the Zuid-Afrikaanse Akademie voor Taal, Letteren en Kunst (founded in 1909 and later renamed Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kunste ‘South African Academy for Science and Art’) would suggest a new orthography specifically designed for Afrikaans (i.a., Kriel 2013:243). The Academy accepted this task, which implicitly and probably unintentionally constituted a first step towards the dissociation of Afrikaans. It fulfilled its mission very cautiously, however: the old GRA orthography was consciously disregarded because of its radical difference from Dutch, and it was decided to steer as closely as possible to Dutch orthography (Odendaal, 2014; Uys, 1983). The new rules were ready as early as 1915, and a word list followed soon; both were published in 1917 and revised again in 1919 (du Plessis, 1986:76).

In addition to this, in 1916 the Reformed Church in the Orange Free State overcame its long-standing hesitations over an Afrikaans Bible translation (du Plessis, 1986:76; Steyn, 2009, 2014:175), which was finalised by 1933 and which marked another major turning point in the perception of Afrikaans among a deeply religious community. The Bible, expressing the word of God, and therefore long considered to require the hieratic solemnity of non-spoken, non-everyday, non-‘vulgar’ language forms, was the last bastion to fall in the process of the institutionalisation of Afrikaans.

These and other developments led to the Official Languages of the Union Act of 1925. This Act offered a reinterpretation, with retrospective force of law, of section 137 in the founding text of the Union of South Africa of 1909, in which Dutch had been proclaimed co-official language of the Union alongside English. The 1925 Act mentioned:

the word ‘Dutch’ in section one hundred and thirty-seven of the South Africa Act, 1909, and wheresoever else that word occurs in the said Act, is hereby declared to include Afrikaans.

Although, in order to satisfy all sides, Afrikaans was still presented as an integral part of Dutch, by using the glossonym ‘Afrikaans’ for the first time in an important law text, it is here in the entire history of South Africa that it began to exist as a legally recognised linguistic category, i.e. that is was institutionalised. In Flanders, such a categorisation of a local variety never took place.

After 1925, a further step in the emancipation of Afrikaans from Dutch was taken in the South-African constitution of 1961. This text for the first time declared Afrikaans, not Dutch, official language alongside English, i.e. by virtue of its section 108:

English and Afrikaans shall be the official languages of the Republic, and shall be treated on a footing of equality, and possess and enjoy equal freedom, rights and privileges.
A legal definition (section 119) was added stating that “‘Afrikaans’ includes Dutch”, completely reversing the earlier relation of inclusion.

Section 108 from the 1961 constitution was copied word-by-word into the new constitution drawn up in 1983 (where it became section 89). But at this stage in the political-linguistic history of Afrikaans, it was considered undesirable and unnecessary to make any reference to Dutch. The definitional statement was not simply omitted from section 119, it was explicitly mentioned not to be in force anymore: ‘amendment of section 119 by the deletion of the words “Afrikaans includes Dutch”.’ The language, at least as whites represented it, had thus finalised its process of secession that began in the last quarter of the 19th century and catalysed in 1925, and now stood entirely separate from its ancestor, in a relation of full, coeval equivalence. This secession process was, of course, partly racially motivated: it was carried out by white speakers of Afrikaans only, who denied other speakers participation in the process and eschewed all existing non-white varieties. As van Heeden cogently puts it “standard Afrikaans does not represent Afrikaans in its entirety” (2016:15). Its distinction from Dutch obfuscated the denial of equivalence issued to non-white varieties.

One of the many marks of the completion of the secession has been the gradually increasing objection to so-called ‘neerlandisms’ or ‘hollandisms’ among language-aware Afrikaners to refer to loanwords or calques from Dutch deemed inappropriate, unnecceary, and ‘oversophisticated’ (e.g., de Voos, 1970:223; van den Berg, 2005; Meiring and Saal 2006:225-226; Odendaal, 2014). Another is the resistance against suggestions, voiced repeatedly between 1908 and 1927, to introduce a simple past (imperfectum) into Afrikaans in the same way as it existed alongside a perfect in Dutch grammar (van Rensburg, 2015:333) – suggestions that speakers of Afrikaans ignored.

Discussion and concluding remarks
While Afrikaans was eventually dissociated form Dutch in 20th century South Africa, there are few signs that a distinct Flemish variety will soon meet the same fate. Disregarding the geographical proximity between Flanders and the Netherlands as well as the significant differences in literacy and media use in early 20th century South Africa versus early 21st century Flanders, theoretically the structural conditions would, however, seem to be ripe for such a dissociation. The increasing koineisation of a Flemish speech style, in combination with the receding use of Standard Dutch in a range of settings formerly destined as its exclusive territory, not to mention its widespread recognition as stiff, alien and ‘Hollandic’, would all seem to pave the way for an impending recognition of Flemish alongside Dutch. That such an outcome can be scarcely expected underlines our starting point that ‘what matters is social opinions on similarity, not objective, quasi-mathematical determinations of systemic relatedness’ (Haas, 2002:111).

Yet we also emphasise that social opinions in any given era are always multiple and competitive, and that this is not a contingent but a chronic aspect of the social life of language (cf. Agha, 2007; Kroskrity, 2004; Woolard, 2004). So rather than assuming that the 19th century debate between advocates of a markedly Belgian Dutch or standard Flemish and those campaigning for the importation of Netherlandic Dutch was definitively resolved and that the resulting consensus is now under threat by the forces of destandardisation c.q. demotisation, we suggest this conflict has never really subsided. One view became hegemonic, marginalising its opponent ideology over a long period of time. Similarly, while there can be little doubt that Afrikaans today is one of the republic’s official languages and that Dutch does not play an active role in South Africa anymore, the dissociation of the former from the
latter is still not completely uncontested, even if the voices to this effect are marginal. Language activist Petrus van Eeden (1998, 2015), for example, keeps the debate alive by advocating a return to the situation prior to its institutionalisation, i.e. to the inclusion of Afrikaans in Dutch and to a diglossia along Flemish lines with Dutch and not Afrikaans as the High, official language. This contestation equally manifests itself in relation to the purely ‘white’ character of the history of the institutionalisation and standardisation of Afrikaans, as is clear from current destigmatisation campaigns in favour of Cape Afrikaans (Hendricks, 2012; Hendricks and Dyers, 2016; van Heeden, 2016), efforts which have appropriately been labeled the ‘Third Afrikaans Movement’ (i.a., Webb, 2010).

There are two points we want to make in relation to these observations. First of all, a useful way of approaching the continuation of these two debates is by attending to discrepancies between articulated and embodied language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2004:496), i.e. between reported and practiced valorisations. While conflicting statements about the type of Dutch that was to be Flemings’ standard variety in the 19th century were explicitly articulated by so-called ‘particularists’ and ‘integrationists’, the eventual choice for Netherlandic Dutch soon implied that articulating the former position became taboo. As we described above, this reported valorisation of Netherlandic Dutch as the standard for Flanders stands firm until today. This goes to show that standardisation campaigns in Flanders have been successful, if not at the level of language use, than certainly ideologically, at the level of the hierarchisation of linguistic varieties. Yet, in contrast to but alongside this unwavering reported valorisation, a form of ‘particularism’ has always continued to be widely practiced (and, in minor cases, reported, cf. Jaspers and Van Hoof, 2013:338; also see Deprez, 1999, and the existence of a website like www.vlaamsetaal.be) and has observably impacted on the Flemish linguistic landscape. The current dissemination of this practiced valorisation, that is, the growing use of a decidedly Flemish Dutch in a range of commercial processes and communication technologies (social media, televised fiction, and the like), has merely made the discrepancy between reported and practiced valorisations of language more intense and observable than before. In South Africa, language-ideological conflict about the similarity or difference between systemically related varieties started off as one between a general explicit adherence to Dutch versus a mostly embodied valorisation of Afrikaans for daily business. After the Second Anglo-Boer War gradually the embodied adherence to Afrikaans and doubts over the usefulness of Dutch were increasingly articulated, before culminating into the eventual consecration of Afrikaans and the exit of Dutch from the official stage. Yet, the continuing existence of some articulated valorisations of Dutch, like van Eeden’s, illustrate that the debate can always be revived, depending on other factors. More substantial competition can be observed, moreover, in the embodied valorisations of non-white varieties of Afrikaans on social media, in soap series, in tabloid newspapers, and in Hip Hop music (see, among others, Q. Williams 2016; Q. Williams & Stroud 2013).

This brings us to our second point, which is that shifts in and outcomes of language-ideological debates on linguistic distinction or adequation are complex to pinpoint. In both cases we discussed, it would be perilous to identify a single responsible factor. Van Keymeulen (2010), for example, argues that social class explains why Afrikaans was institutionalised in South Africa while Dutch was preferred in 19th century Flanders. In the former case, the movement was mainly led by a less-educated class with little or no access to Dutch which was therefore prone to institutionalise its spoken variety. In Flanders, language activists were mostly middle class and did not think highly of spoken varieties. We argue though that while such backgrounds may play a significant role, they need to be seen as interactive with a range of other, often highly contingent factors. The eventual dissociation of
Afrikaans from Dutch, apart from the metalinguistic evaluations that recognised it, equally well depended on factors such as the low accessibility of Dutch in South Africa, the looming threat of Anglicisation after the Second Anglo-Boer War, racism and the exclusion of non-white varieties of Afrikaans, and the fact that the Second Language Movement was much better organised, had better funding, and disseminated its views more effectively and persuasively than the opposite camp (Steyn, 1996:18-19). In Flanders, the choice for Dutch did not only depend on its promotion by ‘integrationists’, but also on the relative indifference of the Belgian francophone government for a Dutch variety that would express a Belgian identity after independence from the Netherlands, and on the fact that all participants in the debate shared the view that ‘real’ languages needed to be authentic, pure and carriers of high culture (Absillis and Jaspers 2016). The outcome of linguistic debate and the possible institutionalisation of varieties, in conclusion, does not follow mechanically from specific structural conditions, such as patterns of use and the correlations of speech styles with independent variables such as class, gender or other, nor does it solely depend on the growing appeal of a particular language ideology. It is also a function of the evaluation of language in relation to culturally changing communication habits, to metacultural discourses on identity, self, group, and the locally contrastive other (speakers of English and non-white speakers of Afrikaans in the South African case, speakers of French in Belgium) as well as to attendant political ambitions with respect to that self and other.

References


