THE ROCKY ROAD TO DUTCH-MEDIUM HIGHER EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

Student Satisfaction of Syrian L2 Speakers

Word count: 14,178

FADWA FARES
Student number: 01704715

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Chloé Lybaert

A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Multilingual Communication
Academic year: 2023-2024

THE ROCKY ROAD TO DUTCH-MEDIUM HIGHER EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

Student Satisfaction of Syrian L2 Speakers

Word count: 14,178

FADWA FARES
Student number: 01704715

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Chloé Lybaert

A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Multilingual Communication
Academic year: 2023-2024

ABSTRACT

The current study explores the experiences of Syrian students at Dutch-medium higher education in Flanders. Between 2015-2022, the numbers of Syrian refugees increased significantly. Among them were young prospective higher education students who pursued, or are in the process of pursuing a diploma. Learning Dutch as an L2 is a crucial step in that journey. In this study twelve Syrian L2 higher education students at Flemish universities and university colleges were interviewed about their experience with the new language and how they cope with the academic demands of higher education and the language reality in Flanders. A list of suggestions is given based on the students' challenges and suggestions, however, more research is needed to confirm the effectiveness and feasibility of these suggestions in practice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

The endeavour of learning a new language on a professional level is, for many people, one that takes an extensive amount of effort, planning and preparation. The learner takes a personal journey in the different layers of the new language and its culture. Some are well-prepared for that journey, and others simply have to trust the process and see where the road takes them.

I set my first steps on that road nine years ago when I started learning Dutch as a second language myself. The road to learning Dutch as a second language and obtaining a degree in Dutch was, like the title of this thesis concludes, rocky. For years I had wondered how do other non-native students cope with the academic demands of higher education in Flanders while still in the process of acquiring a second language. Although my personal experience was my greatest inspiration to work in this thesis, it also created a challenge. After years of talking about how difficult it was to understand and speak Dutch during reunions with old classmates from my language school, now was the time to forget all of that and listen with fresh ears to my correspondents' experiences. It was time to listen to the challenges of non-native higher education students in Flanders and to do my part in documenting their experiences and attempting to look into how it could be improved.

With that being said, my motivation behind this topic is both personal and professional. After experiencing the process of learning Dutch as a second language and pursuing a higher education programme that gave me the vocabulary to describe that experience, it only seemed right to use that vocabulary, but this time to describe experiences and tackle problems other than mine.

By writing this thesis, I hope I could contribute to a better understanding of the experience of L2 learners of Dutch at higher education and that I could inspire future research and improvements regarding Dutch learning trajectories for L2 students at Dutch-medium higher education in Flanders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Chloé Lybaert for her support and patience with me throughout the writing process. I would also like to thank the participants for their valuable answers, discussions and suggestions. I was honoured to speak with you and listen to your stories. Congratulations to those who graduated recently and best of luck for the ones who are still studying.

Writing this dissertation was full of ups, downs and other dark places that we prefer to avoid because we like to look and sound professional. Yet, I am thankful for the people who made this process easier with their motivational talks and moral support. Thank you, Prof. Petra Campe for your valuable support. Thanks to those who do not remember the title of my dissertation, even though I have told them a thousand time, but still believe in me anyway, to my friends and siblings, I know you love me, and I love you too.

I would also like to thank the three most important people in my life, my parents for always being there, no matter what the circumstances are, and Vicky, my cat, for tolerating my hugs even though hugs are not her favourite thing in the world.

Finally, thank you, to whomever (has to) read this dissertation. I hope you find my research insightful and easy to read. And I look forward to listening to your comments in the future.

13 August 2024

Fadwa Fares

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the 'refugee crisis' in 2015 (Spindler, 2015), the numbers of refugees in Belgium rose significantly compared to previous years (see appendix 2). Among these refugees there were many young people who chose to pursue a higher education degree (see section 2.1). Most prospective students in Flanders, the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, had to learn Dutch as a second language in order to enter higher education.

One of the largest groups of refugees who sought refuge in Belgium between 2015 and 2022 was Syrian refugees (Spindler, 2015). According to Eurostat, nearly 12.000 Syrian refugees between 18-34 and an additional 800 between 14-17 arrived in Belgium between 2015-2022. Since this age group is considered more likely to pursue a higher education degree, they formed the first guideline to decide the target group of this study. This research is concerned with the experience of Syrian higher education students who learned Dutch as a second language between 2015 and 2022 for the purpose of obtaining a higher education degree.

International studies about the acquisition of a second language (L2) by Syrian refugees list a number of factors that affect the acquisition process from the learners' point of view. Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash (2020) interviewed Syrian refugees in Türkiye and Europe (primarily Germany and Sweden) and asked them about the acquisition process of the second language. Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash then listed the following factors that affected their correspondents' acquisition of the new language: these were related to *"pronunciation, word formation and length, grammar, vocabulary, and the gap between the standard language and the dialect"* (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). However, this study did not cover Syrian asylum seekers learning Dutch in Flanders. Rosseel (2021) also noted that research related to refugee students' experience in general is limited.

This shows some gaps in the literature regarding the experience of Syrian and other refugees at higher education in Flanders. To bridge this gap, more research is needed to document this group's experience during the process of learning and acquiring Dutch as a second language and then starting their academic career at a Dutch-medium Flemish university. By gaining more knowledge about L2 students' experience, it would be possible to further analyse and determine the positive and negative aspects of this experience and to identify the working points for universities and language schools.

One of the factors that affected the L2 acquisition of Syrian refugees according to Al Masry & Abu-Ayyash (2020) was *the gap between the standard language and the dialect*. The language

situation in Flanders can relate to this factor, as we will see in *section 2.4*. Flanders is home to numerous regional dialects in addition to the emerging *Tussentaal* (= the language in between); a dynamic variety that shows characteristics from both Standard Dutch and regional dialects[1]. Despite the presence of different varieties of Dutch in Flanders, L2 learners at Flemish language schools primarily learn Standard Dutch (Lybaert & van Hest, 2020). Although Dutch is the official language in Flanders, other colloquial varieties are also present and widely used by native speakers in day-to-day life. According to language coach Sofie Begine, learning colloquial Dutch in addition to Standard Dutch could provide L2 learners with better understanding of L1 speakers and make the L2 learners' integration in Flanders easier[2]. Whether this is also the case for Syrian L2 learners at Flemish higher education, is a subject that requires more exploration. This study aims to help us understand the experience of Syrian L2 speakers at Dutch-medium higher education in Flanders in addition to the affect of language variation in Flanders on their academic journey.

The data collection started with contacting Syrian students from different Flemish universities and university colleges. They were informed about the topic of the study and the different stages (questionnaire and interview). A communication officer working with Syrian students helped with reaching out to Syrian higher education students through their personal network. Thanks to acquaintance and university staff from Ghent and Antwerp, it was possible to reach out to twelve Syrian students from different Flemish universities and university colleges. For a summary of the number of participants per higher education institution see *Table 1.*

The following chapter discusses the journey of Syrian refugees as L2 students at Dutch-medium higher education in Flanders. The target group is Syrian students who started learning Dutch between 2015-2022 and were between 15 and 25 when they started learning the language. This group of L2 learners was chosen because they would be able provide more recent insights into their language acquisition and academic career. Chapter 3 presents the Research Questions that we will attempt to answer in the course of this study, followed by an explanation of the methodology used to gather data in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the results and findings, which by turn lead us to the discussion and conclusions in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively.

[1] https://www.dialectloket.be/tekst/tussentaal/
[2] https://www.goestingintaal.be/about/

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The number of international students in Flanders increases by the year. According to annual reports published by the Flemish Ministry of Education, the number of international students at Flemish higher education institutions has increased by 30% between the academic years 2015-2016 and 2021-2022 (*Statistisch jaarboek van het Vlaams onderwijs*, 2023). International students are not to be confused with incoming exchange students who study for a limited period in Flanders while remaining bound to their home university abroad. International students are either foreign nationals who come to Flanders to complete a higher education programme, or residents in Flanders with a foreign (or double) nationality who decide to acquire a higher education degree from an institution in the Flemish part of Belgium. International students study at Flemish universities as regular students and benefit from the same facilities as students who speak Dutch as a native language (with additional facilities for L2 speakers), moreover in *Section 2.3*.

The following subsections will discuss different dimensions of the journey of Syrian students who seek asylum in Belgium, and more specifically in Flanders. Starting with the number of Syrian students at Flemish universities, followed by the language requirements and the current discussions regarding these requirements. The third subsection will be dedicated to the Dutch language situation and the existing language attitudes in Flanders, and finally, the fourth subsection will discuss the higher education stage, the needed language skills and language facilities at Flemish higher education institutions.

2.1. Syrian Students in Flanders: 2015-2022

In 2015, the European Union witnessed a strong rise in the number of refugees and asylum seekers: hundreds of thousands of people crossed the EU borders in order to seek asylum in EU countries. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reports, 75% of those asylum seekers had fled conflict and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq (Spindler, 2015). Belgium received almost 40.000 asylum applications in 2015 alone, 21% of which were submitted by Syrian asylum seekers (Asylum Statistics - Survey 2015, 2016). In 2016, more than 7000 Syrians were granted asylum in Belgium (Asylum Statistics - General Overview 2016, 2017). Syrians started fleeing from their country in 2011 due to the continuing aggression by the Syrian government (Spindler, 2015). The number of Syrian refugees entering the EU reached its peak in 2015 and Belgium was, and still is, one of the countries hosting Syrian

refugees. Between 2015-2022, almost 12.000 asylum applications were submitted to the Belgian Commissariat General by Syrians aged 18-34 and an additional 800 between the age of 14-17 (*Statistics | Eurostat*, 2023). Both age groups are relevant because these age groups are more likely to pursue a higher education degree after settling in the hosting country. According to the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), most of the applications submitted by Syrian asylum seekers are approved by the CGRS due to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria (*Asylum Statistics 2022*, 2023). The aggressions by Assad regime and its allies left one third of the schools in the country out of service (Hadi & Chaiban, 2021). Children and young adults who sought refuge in Syrian cities or in neighbouring countries live under conditions that prevent many of them from continuing their school or university education (Christophersen, 2015; Dolapcioglu & Bolat, 2021). It is therefore not unthinkable that these students would want to continue their education once they settle in a safe and stable community. Although the demographic of this study are adult learners of Dutch, it might also be interesting to take into account those who were forced to leave school and/or who arrived in Belgium at the age of 16 or 17, before receiving a high school diploma, and therefore still have a couple of years of compulsory secondary education (Vlaanderen.be, n.d.). Considering that they will need one to two years of learning Dutch at the mandatory OKAN programme, as will be explained in *section 2.2*, they will have turned 18 before finishing their secondary education. In addition to this group, we have adult asylum seekers who arrive in Belgium after finishing their secondary education and have the intention of acquiring a higher education diploma. Regardless of how these students ended up studying at a Flemish higher education institution, this paper will look into their experience with Dutch-medium higher education in Flanders.

This brings us to Syrian student numbers in Flanders. The number of Syrian students at Flemish higher education is gradually increasing (*Statistisch jaarboek van het Vlaams onderwijs*, 2023): in the academic year 2015-2016 an estimated 61 Syrian students were enrolled at a Flemish university or university college. This number more than doubled in 2021-2022 to reach 143 students (*see appendix 3*). A newspaper article published by the Flemish public-service broadcaster (VRT) noted that these are estimated numbers, as it is not mandatory for international students to state their nationality when they enrol at Flemish universities (De Schutter, 2020). In addition to that, before October 2021, the nationality of the asylum seeker

was not stated on the person's residence permit ID. [3] It is therefore likely that there are more Syrian refugees studying at Flemish universities than the numbers published by the Flemish government suggest.

2.2. Possible Dutch Learning Trajectories for Prospective Higher Education Students

Newcomers in Flanders are offered different Dutch learning trajectories based on their age, level of education and their purpose of learning the language. Prospective learners who are also potential university students can be divided into two groups: learners younger than 18 and learners older than 18. Flanders offers special Dutch and Integration trajectories for each group. Children younger than 12 go to regular schools where they either participate directly in Dutch-medium classes, or are taught in separate classes for Dutch-learners, when the number of non-Dutch-speaking children exceeds class capacity. In both cases, schools have the autonomy to decide the form of language support these pupils receive, which can range from working in groups to individual support according to the pupils' needs (*Onthaalonderwijs - voor ouders,* n.d.).

Those between 12-18 participate in what is called *OKAN programme*, the "Reception classes for children with a different mother tongue", also known as "Onthaalonderwijs voor anderstalige kinderen" in Dutch. These types of classes in Flanders are widely referred to as *OKAN*. For the sake of brevity, the Dutch acronym (OKAN) will be used in the rest of this article to refer to this type of classes. OKAN is an introductory programme to the Dutch language and the Flemish society given at the level of secondary education and it takes between one to two years after which pupils become prepared to enter secondary education when they reach the required level of fluency. The OKAN trajectory is defined by the Flemish government as *"The […] Programme […] organised for young people [adolescents] with nationalities other than Belgium and the Netherlands who come to our country and do not have sufficient command of the Dutch language. These pupils can learn Dutch as quickly as possible through the Reception Education Programme."*[4]

---

[3] https://www.agii.be/thema/vreemdelingenrecht-internationaal-privaatrecht/verblijfsdocumenten/elektronische-vreemdelingenkaarten/elektronische-a-kaart#0

[4] https://www.vlaanderen.be/onderwijs-en-vorming/zorgondersteuning-en-begeleiding-in-het-onderwijs/onderwijs-voor-leerlingen-met-specifieke-noden/onthaalonderwijs-voor-anderstalige-kinderen-okan

The OKAN programme is created to provide pupils with sufficient Dutch language skills to complete their secondary education successfully. While schools have a margin of autonomy when it comes to the organisation of their OKAN classes, they still have to stick to the guidelines offered by the Flemish Ministry of Education for the OKAN development goals.[5] These development goals focus on the growth of each individual pupil's receptive, productive and interactive skills in Dutch. Interestingly, the official documents and guidelines almost always focus on the acquisition of Dutch skills that facilitate the completion of secondary education. However, less attention is paid to the skills which may be needed beyond secondary education, for instance, higher education. Pupils at the age of 12 may have enough time to acquire enough Dutch skills enabling them to have higher chances of succeeding in higher education, but what about those who are closer to higher education and only have one or two years before finishing their secondary education? As a way to mediate this gap between school-Dutch and Dutch used in higher education, Flemish universities and colleges started offering a one-year preparatory course for prospective students who speak Dutch as a second language (after finishing their secondary education). This course can be taken by anyone who wants to follow a higher education programme, including ex-OKAN pupils. It requires B1 level on the CEFR[6] as a starting level and builds further on that with more complex language and academic education, including formal academic Dutch, studying skills, student counselling in addition to optional regular courses offered by the organising university. The latter gives the prospective L2 student a taste of the real university or college experience and may help them with deciding the topic they want to study after the preparatory year. The preparatory programme is offered by Ghent University, Ghent University of Applied Sciences (HoGent) and University College of Leuven and Limburg (UCLL) in partnership with other universities and institutions in the Limburg Province[7]. The essence of the programme is the same across the abovementioned institutions, so we could take Ghent University's Preparatory Training of Higher Education for Foreign Speakers (VTHO)[8] as an example. The programme focusses on the following pillars: 1) advanced Dutch for non-native speakers, 2) academic language and learning skills, 3)

[5] https://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=13123#1

[6] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Www.Coe.Int (retrieved 30/09/2023)

[7] https://www.integratie-inburgering.be/nl/voortraject-hoger-onderwijs-voor-anderstalige-nieuwkomers (retrieved 14/12/2023)

[8] https://uct.ugent.be/en/dutch-for-speakers-of-other-languages/detail-2/A006000 (retrieved 15/12/2023)

brushing up on Academic English, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, 4) an optional module of maximum 6 ICTS-credits[9] from an academic programme of choice.

Newcomers who arrive in Flanders at the age of 18 or older and already hold a diploma of secondary education from another country follow a different trajectory. They learn Dutch at centres for adult education or at schools of languages associated with Flemish universities and university colleges. Newcomers are advised to consult their local Flemish Integration Agency office to find a suitable Dutch learning programme in their area. Students are advised to take language courses that suit their current level of education and their purpose of learning the language. This is all part of a larger "social integration programme", which is offered by the Flemish Integration Agency, *Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering.* The programme consists of different components: *social orientation, language learning, work, and social participation and networking*.[10] Newcomers are guided by a personal consultant through the programme, from choosing the appropriate school to finishing their Dutch learning trajectory at level A2 or B1-oral.

Prospective students who wish to pursue a university degree are advised to take academic language courses that prepare them for the *Interuniversity Test for Dutch as a Second Language*, also known with its Dutch abbreviation: the ITNA test. This test is developed by Antwerp University, Free University of Brussel, Ghent University and Leuven University (*Interuniversitaire Taaltest Nederlands voor Anderstaligen*, n.d.) and it aims to measure L2 students' level of Dutch. Universities and university colleges in Flanders accept this test as an official indicator of language level for non-native speakers. According to the ITNA[11] website, there is no fixed book to use for test preparation, however, the universities that partnered up to develop this test offer academic language courses for L2 learners to prepare them for the ITNA test and for the language requirements of future Dutch-medium academic programmes. The list below gives an overview of the preparatory programmes at Flemish universities which prepare students to pass the ITNA (B2 or C1) test:

---

9 https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system (retrieved 12/12/2023)

10 https://www.vlaanderen.be/begeleiding-van-inburgeraars-het-inburgeringstraject (retrieved 12/12/2023)

11 https://www.itna.be/

Antwerp University's language centre, Linguapolis, offers online and on-campus Dutch as a Foreign Language courses for prospective students for levels A1 up to C1 on the CEFR (*The CEFR Levels - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, n.d.) and the courses vary in length for each level. Additionally, Linguapolis offers the Dutch Preparatory One-Year Programme (Linguapolis | UAntwerpen, 2023) which ends with the ITNA test. The latter programme focuses on Dutch in academic contexts in addition to practicing academic skills. The Dutch Prep Year also includes a language tandem system that pairs L2 students with L1 speakers to help them practice their language skills.

Ghent University offers academic language courses and preparatory programmes at its University Language Centre (UCT | UGent, 2023). They give standard language courses, from level A1 to C1. Each level takes up to 4 months. The more intensive courses take less time (+/- 4 weeks/level) and rely highly on self-study. Additionally, two one-year programmes are offered with more focus on academic Dutch (both need prior knowledge of Dutch): 1) the Preparatory Training of Higher Education for Foreign Speakers (VTHO), this programme starts from level B1 and it tackles academic language, studying techniques and optional non-language-related modules and/or regular courses at the university. 2) the Preparatory Year of Dutch, this one is more Dutch-oriented and starts at level A2 (UCT | UGent, n.d.).

Leuven University: the Leuven Language Institution (ILT) also offers preparatory courses for prospective L2 students. The courses cover levels 1-6 (A1-C1 on the CEFR) and they offer other courses related to specific language skills like pronunciation and vocabulary. The duration of each level varies from Intensive (+/- 1.5 months/level) to Regular (+/- 3 months/level) (ILT KU Leuven, 2023). The intensive courses also highly rely on self-study.

University College Leuven-Limburg (UCLL): similarly, UCLL offers a preparatory programme for students who wish to study (or continue their academic career) at a higher education institution; the Preparatory Year (IVAN). This programme consists of Dutch language courses for non-native speakers, basic IT courses and additional elective classes according to the learner's needs. The IVAN programme starts at level B1 and prepares non-native speakers to start their academic journey to obtain an Associate Degree, a Bachelor's Degree or a Master's Degree (*Voortraject hoger onderwijs voor anderstalige nieuwkomers*, n.d.).

Alongside the OKAN programme and the academic language programmes, students also have the option of learning Dutch as a second language at an Adult Education Centre (CVO schools). CVO schools seem to be the most available option, as you can find at least one in every city.

They are also more affordable than the academic language programmes at universities. These schools offer courses for different levels, from basic to higher levels of (formal) Dutch and (less frequently) Dutch for academic or professional purposes (*Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering*, n.d.). These centres, referred to by the Dutch abbreviation (CVO), focus more on the practical part of the language and help students learn the language skills they would need for their daily lives, like work, doctor's appointments, a chat with the neighbours, etc. These courses still teach formal Dutch, however, they contain very limited academic language. Each CVO school has its own testing system and hands out diploma's per CEFR level. These diploma's do not substitute the ITNA diploma, but as we will see in the next section, their diploma's are accepted by many higher education institutions. To give an example of this type of schools, a CVO school in Ghent offers Dutch courses for different purposes; there is the standard programme (120 hours per level), the fast-track programme (80 hours per level) or an extended programme (the same as the standard but taught over a longer period, giving students more time to process and practice the language). In an experiment by Deygers and Frijns (2021), comparing the comprehensibility and fluency of NT2 learners from levels A1 and A2 in the standard, fast-track and extended programmes, students from the fast-track programme scored significantly higher than the other two programmes. The same experiment also compared the scores of learners from different age groups; students between 18-24 scored significantly higher than those between 24-39 (Deygers & Frijns, 2021). Additionally, the fast-track programme includes more individual work and self-study compared to the standard and extended programmes (*NT2 Verkort Traject | CVO Gent*, n.d.). This is an interesting insight for prospective students preparing for a higher education programme at a university college, since they can enrol in a college programme directly after receiving their B2 certificate. The fast track is in fact designed for learners who are literate in Latin script and who *"have attended university, or are planning to do so at a Dutch-medium university"* (Deygers & Vanbuel, 2022).

2.3. Language Requirements for Prospective Higher Education Students

In the previous section we have discussed language learning offer for prospective students. In this section we will list and discuss the language requirements at Flemish universities and university colleges.[12]

[12] https://www.onderwijskiezer.be/v2/hoger/hoger_studies_nederlands.php?var=EN

People older than 18 are encouraged to learn Dutch as a part of their Integration Programme. Those who choose to pursue a degree in higher education can learn Dutch at different language schools, depending on which type of higher education institution they want to study in.

As of academic year 2022-2023, Flanders has a total of 6 universities and 16 university colleges, in which Dutch is used as language of instruction. Prospective students are expected to have a certain level of fluency and understanding of the language before being accepted to study in a Dutch-medium programme. Dutch is the official language of education in Flanders and it is also the official language for 80% of all higher education programmes offered in the Flemish side of Belgium.[13] Non-native students who want to enrol in a Dutch-medium programme must therefore present a proof of fluency in Dutch (*Onderwijskiezer*, 2023).

Non-native speakers with a foreign high school diploma enrolling for the first time in a Dutch-medium university or college programme in Flanders must present a language certificate or a diploma stating their Dutch language level according to the CEFR guidelines.[14] When it comes to language requirements, there are differences between university and university college admission requirements. They both require a B2 level on the CEFR, wh4ich is considered an acceptable level that enables students to participate in academic activities and communicate with their instructors and classmates in Dutch. Deygers et al. (2018) questioned the extent to which the B2 level covers the challenges of Dutch-medium higher education and found that passing the B2 test does not necessarily mean that the student is prepared for (all of) the language requirements of higher education.

The differences between language requirements at Flemish *universities* and *university colleges* as they are published on the official websites of each institution are the following: *University colleges* accept B2 certificates presented by CVO schools, certificates acquired from one of the four Academic Language Centres in Flanders (by taking the ITNA test[15]), a CNaVT certificate from the Dutch Language Union (type STRT or PROF; Educational Start Competence or Business Professional, respectively) or a Diploma of the State Exam Dutch as a Second Language, which is awarded by the Netherlands.[16] The CNaVT certificate is provided by the

[13] www.vlaanderen.be/onderwijs-en-vorming/werken-in-het-onderwijs/taalkennis-voor-onderwijspersoneel

[14] According to language requirements for non-native speakers of Dutch for academic year 2022-2023

[15] The Interuniversity test of Dutch for speakers of other languages, developed by the InterUniversity Testing Consortium.

[16] https://www.staatsexamensnt2.nl/English (retrieved 10/12/2023)

Dutch Language Union, an institution that develops and stimulates Dutch language policies in the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname, and provides CNaVT certificates for learners of Dutch across the globe (*Over de Taalunie*, 2023). *Universities*, on the other hand, do not accept certificates from CVO schools. Students need to present a B2 certificate acquired by passing either the ITNA B2 exam, the official B2 State Exam Dutch as a Second Language, or the CNaVT-STRT exam. University programmes that need a higher level of fluency in Dutch, such as Dutch Literature or Applied Linguistics, require a C1 certificate presented by one of the authorities mentioned above.

Universities and university colleges require a B2 level from non-native students. This should mean that students holding a B2 level of Dutch are ready to start at a higher education programme. To test whether level B2 is sufficient for L2 students at the start of their higher education, Heeren et al. (2021) asked L1 students enrolled at a university programme to take the same ITNA test L2 students have to take for the B2 level. By doing so, they aimed to test the level of L1 speakers at the start of their higher education, compare the overall test scores of L1 and L2 speakers and finally compare the scores of each of the two groups on the different skill tests (reading, listening and language in use). The ITNA test has two parts: *"The testee first takes a digital test with different question types (e.g. multiple choice questions, gap-fill questions, dictations, ordering questions) that assess language in use, reading and listening. Afterwards, testees who passed the computertest take an oral test, which comprises a presentation and an argumentation task."* (*InterUniversity Testing Consortium*, n.d.). L1 students only took the first part of the ITNA test and their results were compared to the results of L2 students on the same part. This experiment showed that the average score for L1 speakers is significantly higher than that of the L2 speakers, which is expected since it is their native language. The computer test examines three language skills: *reading, listening and language in use*. The *Reading* questions test students' understanding of language structures, their ability to deduce information from given texts and their ability to put information in a logical order. The *Listening* section tests their understanding of the content of a spoken audio clip in addition to a spelling test. Lastly, the section *language in use* tests vocabulary and grammar in the form of fill-in-the-gap or multiple matching questions (Heeren et al., 2021). L1 students scored the highest on the section *language in use* compared to their scores on *reading* and *listening*. L2 students scored the lowest on *language in use* compared to *reading* and *listening*. The section *language in use* tested the students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary using sentences from magazine and newspaper articles (Heeren et al., 2021). It is no surprise that L1 speakers

would generally score higher than L2 speakers on such tests, however, these results might indicate that language schools need to pay more attention to practicing and applying the information taught in the classroom.

The preparatory programmes offered by Flemish universities prepare students for taking the ITNA test (level B2 or C1) and for studying at a Dutch-medium university or university college. These programmes offer language training in academic formal Dutch and the content of the courses goes in line with the requirements of the ITNA test and/or the linguistic requirements of higher education in general (see list of university language centres in *section 2.2*). Does this mean that students who pass the B2 exam are fully ready to start their Dutch-medium higher education journey? Interviews with international L2 students at Flanders' three largest universities show that L2 students struggle with receptive language skills more than productive language skills during their studies (Deygers et al., 2018). The results of the interviews showed that L2 students' understanding of spoken Dutch during lectures was hindered by factors such as *pronunciation, intonation, pace, regional accents, jargon, idioms, and jokes*. The article concluded that there is very little evidence that students who pass the university acceptance test with a B2 level have the required receptive competence to cope with the demands of academic education (Deygers et al., 2018), confirming the outcomes of a previous research which suggested that students with a B2 level are unlikely to have a sufficient understanding of university lectures (Field, 2011; Lynch, 2011). Deygers et al. (2018) therefore question the validity of the current requirements regarding receptive skills and suggest implementing different CEFR-requirements for receptive and productive skills as a first step, for example, requiring level C1 for receptive skills. The downside of this suggestion is that, if implemented, it may increase the time required to prepare for the test. Additionally, language schools may need to adjust their courses according to new regulations. Another important note is that, in the case of the ITNA test, the C1 test is a written examination. While the B2 test consists of the four components: reading, writing, speaking and listening, the C1 test only focusses on writing skills (*Testonderdelen – Interuniversitaire Taaltest Nederlands voor Anderstaligen*, n.d.). Suggesting new requirements will therefore need thorough consideration of the available language assessment tests and how new regulations may affect the status quo of Dutch language education and testing.

Universities and colleges in Flanders seem aware of the gap between the admission requirements and the academic demands of higher education. This can be observed from the language facilities that L2 students can benefit from to bridge some of the difficulties they may

experience at the start of their higher education. Ghent University, for instance, offers facilities for L2 students in their first year at Flemish higher education, these facilities could even be extended for two extra years as long as the student can prove that they still need them. These facilities include being given extra time during exams (+1/4 of the original exam duration), having access to a bilingual dictionary during exams and evaluations, and being allowed to ask for "explanation" for exam questions[17]. An analysis carried out on behalf of the Dutch Language Union explored the usefulness of such facilities from the students' point of view. The L2 students who benefited from special facilities stated that they experienced less stress during the evaluations, because they *knew* they had the advantage of extra time or the ability to use a dictionary (Thieme & Vander Beken, 2020, p. 10).

Language facilities attempt to bridge the gap between the formal linguistic requirements and the real-life requirement of Dutch-medium higher education, but there is more to the story than that. The next two sections will present two more factors that come into play when it comes to learning Dutch in Flanders. *Section 2.4* briefly explains the language situation in Flanders and the different spoken Dutch varieties in the area. Then in *section 2.5* we will discuss language attitudes of both native and non-native speakers towards those different varieties.

2.4. Language Variation in Flanders

Prospective university students will learn Standard Dutch to be prepared for their journey in higher education as previously explained. However, it is not the only variety of Dutch non-native speakers will encounter in Flanders.

Dutch is indeed the official language of education in the country, however, the history of Standard Belgian Dutch is different compared to that of Netherlandic Dutch. This study is concerned with the current language situation of Belgian-Dutch in Flanders and L2 university students' experiences regarding language variation in the area, but to get an overview of how the Dutch language gained its official status in the Flemish territory and why it is (or isn't) important, a brief visit to its history is needed:

At the beginning of the 19th century, Flanders had gained its independence from the French and questions were raised about which language to choose as the official language of the country. People in Flanders spoke Flemish regional dialects, however, the long presence of French as the language of the elite in the region had its influence on those dialects. Flemish still contained

[17] https://www.ugent.be/student/nl/administratie/flexibel-studeren/bijzonder-statuut/anderstaligheid.htm

many common characteristics with Netherlandic Dutch, which made Dutch a more reasonable option, as will be explained hereafter. At the end of the 19th century Belgium became a federal state and both Dutch and French became official languages of the country, followed by German after a few years (Marynissen, 2017). The choice for Dutch – instead of Flemish – was supported by historical, political, demographic and purist reasons; Flanders did not have the chance to choose or develop its own standard language until the end of the 19th century. Flemish was considered "too weak" against the prestigious French, so Dutch was seen as a stronger choice than a Flemish language, since there was no such thing as *the* Flemish language but rather different Flemish dialects (De Sutter, 2017). As Grondelaers & Van Hout (2011) explain:

> *"While the history of Netherlandic Dutch is characterized by a spontaneous domestic standardization, Belgian Dutch "imported" Netherlandic Dutch as its standard because language planners of the 19th century believed that the best way to beat the dominance of French - the actual prestige variety in the Belgian territories at the time - would be to adopt the prestige variety of Dutch already available in the North."(p.200)*

The current language situation in Flanders is as unique as its history: after introducing, or "importing", an external standard language, it needed to be implemented in society through education and media. An example of the steps taken by the Flemish government at the time was propagating Standard Dutch on television. For instance, a famous show called *"Hier spreekt men Nederlands"* (People speak Dutch here) was broadcasted on national television to teach people how to speak "proper Dutch" i.e. Netherlandic Dutch (*Hier spreekt men Nederlands*, n.d.). It was one of the numerous attempts to enforce the new language variety in 20th-century Flanders, and although these attempts did succeed in making Standard Dutch the official language of the country, Flemish dialects and regiolects did not completely disappear from the spoken language (Marynissen, 2017). Standard Dutch gained more importance in Flanders in the fifties and sixties, especially among highly educated people, but even then, it was still limited to formal situations; people would still speak their own dialect in daily informal situations. Between the spoken dialects on the one hand and formal Standard Dutch on the other, a new variety grew in Flanders, carrying features from both sides. This emerging variety is called *"Tussentaal"* (Marynissen, 2017).

"Tussentaal" can be translated as "the language in-between": it is a language variety that emerged in Flanders in the last few decades as the result of dialects and Standard Dutch growing towards each other (Lybaert et al., 2019), hence we cannot consider *Tussentaal* as one single distinct language. What started as a stigmatised variety has later gained more acceptance

in the Flemish territory, especially in urban areas where Tussentaal became widely spoken (Lybaert & Delarue, 2017; Vancompernolle, 2012). We should however note that, according to Lybaert & Delarue (2017), the extent to which a speaker's Tussentaal leans towards the dialect of the speaker or towards Standard Dutch depends on the following sociolinguistic factors: context (speaking with friends vs. giving a lecture), social background of the interlocutors (social class, degree, etc.), age and personal preferences. Meaning that the more formal the context is, the more the speaker's Tussentaal leans towards Standard Dutch, and the other way around in less formal situations.

L2 learners in Flanders should therefore expect dealing with different varieties of the language: written (and spoken) Standard Dutch, spoken regional dialects and spoken *Tussentaal*. Still, there is little research into how this mix of spoken Dutch varieties in Flanders affects the journey of non-native higher education students as a sub-group of NT2 learners and the challenges it imposes on them.

Although Standard Dutch has been implemented in the educational system across Flanders, the other varieties such as regional dialects and *Tussentaal* are still present in day-to-day life. This calls for discussions among academics, educators and policy makers about which language variety/varieties should be prioritised in the Dutch as a Second Language courses (NT2) in the Flemish region. For example: are Tussentaal and regional dialects needed at NT2 courses and is it feasible to include them in the school curriculum? (Lybaert et al., 2018) Or would this complicate the process of acquiring the new language (Rooms, 2017)?

2.5. Dutch Varieties: Use and Attitudes of L1 and L2 Speakers

In Flanders, Standard Dutch is considered more prestigious compared to other spoken varieties. Research regarding language attitudes in the Flemish area show that, despite the prestige Standard Dutch carries, other varieties are more prevalent in day-to-day situations. For example, observations of Flemish primary and secondary schools by Delarue (2013) showed that (more-or-less formal) Tussentaal is the most prevalent spoken variety in the classroom by school teachers. In only 3% of the 122 observed classes did the teacher speak Standard Dutch (Delarue, 2013). The same study also observed code-switching[18] by teachers in classroom contexts according to the situations. For instance, they would lean more towards Standard Dutch in formal classroom situations, like giving instructions, referring to the textbook or slides

[18] Code-switching occurs when the speaker switches between two or more language systems to mark a new meaning or added purpose to their utterance (Zenner, 2017).

or teaching a theoretical subject, and would use the less formal Tussentaal in more informal teaching situations like illustrating an abstract concept in plain words, telling anecdotes related to the subject matter or in situations where they want to bond with their pupils or get their attention (Delarue, 2013). Other researchers also observed the same inclination to switching between Standard Dutch and Tussentaal by teachers in classroom settings (see De Caluwe, 2006).

The fact that schoolteachers are using Tussentaal implies that L1 pupils will also be exposed to this variety at least during some of their school hours. Van Lancker (2017) presents numerous examples of recorded interactions between secondary school pupils in the province of East Flanders using colloquial Dutch or Tussentaal in the classroom. It is therefore not unrealistic to think that they may be using some form of Tussentaal in their interactions during higher education instead of Standard Dutch. De Decker (2015) asked Flemish pupils about their attitude towards Standard Dutch, dialects and Tussentaal. The correspondents found Standard Dutch more difficult to use. They preferred Tussentaal in their daily interaction and considered it a more dynamic variety compared to Standard Dutch.

Theoretically speaking, Standard Dutch is considered the official language of education, but the previous paragraphs already showed that other varieties are likely to be used by L1 speakers in different contexts. This makes it more likely that L2 students will find themselves in situations where varieties other than Standard Dutch are spoken. They will also need to interact with their classmates and with people outside the university walls, for example during an internship. However, there is still little research into how the different spoken varieties affect NT2 learners, and more specifically L2 students at higher education. One of the few studies that presented the learner's perspective of this matter is Lybaert & van Hest (2020). In their interviews with NT2 students about the difficulties they face when communicating with L1 speakers, all of the participants said that they would like to learn more about non-standard varieties of Dutch in Flanders because it would make it much easier to understand L1 speakers, however, they still find Standard Dutch essential for their life in Flanders. Although they struggled with understanding non-standard Dutch, some got the hang of Tussentaal after a while, but regional dialects remained a challenge for them (Lybaert & van Hest, 2020). Whether non-standard varieties should also be included in NT2 courses is also a dilemma for teachers; in interviews conducted by Lybaert et al. (2019), teachers at a language school in Ghent acknowledged the challenge imposed by the presence of non-standard Dutch, however

they expressed their worries that, if incorporated in the regular Dutch courses, students may mix up standard and non-standard Dutch.

Nevertheless, L2 students will, at one point during their higher education, speak with L1 classmates, for instance during group projects or social activities. In situation where L1 speakers do not use Standard Dutch, an L2 speaker with a fresh B2 or C1 diploma may not be able to follow up with the conversation. This is for instance the argument language trainer Sofie Begine uses to advocate for teaching Tussentaal to L2 speakers. She suggests that students should be introduced to Tussentaal during their NT2 courses, or later on in their language acquisition journey, to be able to understand L1 speakers outside the classroom walls (Begine, n.d.).

The available literature raises a number of questions related to the perspective of L2 speakers, especially (prospective) students. Research investigating L2 students' perspective is scarce and more research is needed to understand how they experience the language situation in Flanders; do they feel the need to learn non-standard Dutch formally in NT2 courses? And how does language variation in Flanders affect their academic career?

This literature review addressed the numbers of Syrian L2 learners of Dutch in Flanders between 2015-2022 (section 2.1), specifically prospective higher education students. We also went through the possible learning trajectories offered to learners of Dutch as a second language (NT2) in section 2.2, and the linguistic requirements of Flemish higher education and their effect on the journey of L2 speakers in section 2.3. Finally, sections 2.4 and 2.5 briefly addressed the language situation and language attitudes in Flanders, respectively. Section 3 represents the Research Questions of this qualitative study, and is followed by the Methodology in Section 4 and the Results, Discussion and Conclusions in sections 5, 6 and 7, respectively.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Since 2015 Syrian higher education student numbers in Flanders have more than doubled. While there is a number of studies regarding the general experience of learning and acquiring a second language by Syrian refugees in Türkiye and Europe, primarily Germany and Sweden (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash, 2020), research related to refugee students' experience in Flanders is limited (Rosseel, 2021). Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash (2020) found that the linguistic-connected factors that affected Second Language Acquisition for refugees were *"related to pronunciation, word formation and length, grammar, vocabulary, and the gap between the standard language and the dialect"*. Since it is not achievable for the scope of this article to

focus on each individual factor in the existing literature, the focus will be directed to spoken Dutch in Belgium and how it affects Syrian higher education students. This study will investigate L2 students' experience at Dutch-medium higher education in Flanders and how it affected their educational journey from their own point of view. Twelve students at Flemish universities and university colleges were subjected to interviews about their personal experience. Seeking an answer for the following questions might be a first step to navigate through the difficulties L2 students encounter during their higher education journey.

> *RQ1: How do Syrian L2 students feel language variation in Flanders affected their academic career at Dutch-medium universities and university colleges?*
>
> *RQ2: What were the good and bad practices in the Dutch language courses according to Syrian L2 students?*
>
> *RQ3: How could academic language schools, universities and university colleges improve L2 learners' experience during Dutch-medium higher education journey, from the learners' perspective?*

The aim of these questions is to deliver an exploratory account into Syrian students' experience at Flemish higher education and to search for fields of improvement in the second language education programmes they are offered as well as in the facilities higher education institutions offer to L2 students.

4. METHODOLOGY

Previous research provided a number of factors that may affect L2 students' experience at higher education, such as the high linguistic demands, the amount of practicing opportunities provided by language schools (and other organisations) and the differences between Standard Dutch, Tussentaal and regional dialects (Deygers et al., 2018). This research aims to obtain information about the experience of Syrian L2 speakers at Dutch-medium higher education in Flanders from the student's perspective. To answer the research questions presented above, 12 Syrian students were interviewed and asked about their Dutch learning experience and the following years as a bachelor's degree student.

Institution	Number of students
Ghent University	5
HoGent University College	3
Thomas More University College	2
Leuven University (KU Leuven)	1
UCLL University of Applied Sciences	1

Table 1: Number of participants per higher education institution

4.1. Participants

After contacting Syrian students from different universities and university colleges, they were informed about the topic and stages of the study. In the first stage the twelve participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire that primarily collected background information and gave indirect prompts related to the interview topics. For the full questionnaire, see Appendix 5.

Since the target group is adult Syrian L2 speakers of Dutch at Flemish higher education, and in order to narrow down the target group, the initial age criterium was: people who started learning Dutch between 18-25. However, during the participant recruitment process, and after a first (informal) encounter with each participant, two of them stated that they were younger than 18 when they started learning Dutch and that they had taken the OKAN programme as a first step of learning Dutch (S3 & S5). After a quick chat about their current studies and level of Dutch, they did seem to offer interesting insights, which will be discussed in the results section, so we decided to include them in our study. The age at which the target group started learning Dutch was therefore expanded to 15-25. The participants were between 21-32 when the interviews were recorded.

In total, 12 Syrian L2 speakers of Dutch were interviewed (8 females and 4 males). They all speak Syrian Arabic as a native language and they currently study at, or have recently graduated from, a Flemish higher education institution in order to obtain a bachelor's or a master's diploma. They learned Dutch at, at least, one of the language schools or programmes listed in *section 2.2.* These are: centres for adult education (CVO), university language centres (ULC) and the Reception classes for children with a different mother tongue (OKAN). For more details about the (combination of) programmes which students attended, see *Appendix 4*.

Table 1 above shows the higher education institutions the interview subjects study at and the number of participants per institution. For a full summary of the participants, please see table

in *Appendix 4: Participants Overview*. The table provides detailed information about the participants' age, gender, residency, field of study, institution, NT2 trajectory and whether they took/passed the ITNA (B2) test.

4.2. Questionnaire, Semi-Structured Interviews and data analysis

Before the interviews were conducted, each participant was asked to fill in a questionnaire about their history of learning Dutch and enrolling at a higher education programme. This gave them a head start to the main ideas of the interview. This way they were also given the opportunity to think about their experience without taking away from the spontaneity of the interviews. The questionnaire contained background questions, short-answer questions about the participants' satisfaction with their language programme(s) and whether there are elements in their Dutch learning programmes that they would like to change. This questionnaire (see *Appendix 5*) served three purposes:

a) a consent form to use the information they provide via the questionnaire, consent to give an interview after filling in the questionnaire and consent to record the interview (at the start of the recordings, participants were asked again to confirm their consent to record the interview through an audio recorder.)

b) a means to collect basic information about each participant, such as age, school, type of education, etc. in order to save time during the interview.

c) a pre-interview prompt to prepare the participants for the discussion and to give direction to the interviews through questions related to their personal Dutch learning trajectory and the start of their higher education journey. The "prompts" were given in the form of questions on how much they would rate their Dutch learning experience and whether they would change any element of their Dutch language courses. The participants were then asked to elaborate on their answers during the interviews.

The questions were organised in four groups: *general background information, Dutch learning trajectory, Dutch in higher education, and personal experience after entering Dutch-medium higher education*. The questions were kept short for the convenience of the participants as well as the analysis of the answers. On the one hand, this reduced the time dedicated for the interviews, and on the other hand, it gave an understanding of the participant's experience and provided a basis to be built upon during our conversation in the next stage.

The interviews took place after filling in the questionnaire. The participants were initially contacted in Arabic and were asked which language they preferred for the interview. They all preferred to use Syrian Arabic and so the interviews were all conducted in Syrian Arabic. In hindsight, this gave the interviews a less formal nature. The participants expressed themselves openly and gave extensive details about their experiences.

The interview questions were broadly formulated as the goal was to invite students to share in-depth information about their experiences and elaborate upon given answers. The interview questions were formulated using advice from Jiménez & Orozco (2021) for qualitative in-depth interviews; they suggest that the questions should give prompts to the interviewee so they can freely express their story and ideas without going too far off-topic that their answers do not serve the purpose of the interview anymore. The interviews covered three major topics: Learning Dutch, Higher Education and Personal Difficulties. By creating these three major sections, participants were able to go through their experience step by step and this also facilitated the understanding of each student's story separately. For the full question list, see *Appendix 7*.

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed word-by-word. Since content was the main concern of the study and since they were one-on-one conversations, the transcription protocol was kept simple. Everything was noted down as it was said. Since the interviews were conducted in Arabic, the transcriptions were also written in Arabic. When the participant used Dutch or English vocabulary, it was transcribed in the language it was spoken in, and not translated to Arabic. Additionally, interviewer notes and other nuances were also noted in the margins later on. In the transcriptions as well as the rest of this article, participants are referred to by the letter S (Student) and their number in the participant overview in *Appendix 4*.

The analysis process was organised with the help of insights provided by the Qualitative Analysis Guide of Leuven (QUAGOL) by Dierckx De Casterlé et al. (2012). They gave a step-by-step method for qualitative data analysis, which inspired the data analysis process for this study. Their instructions were not taken literally, however, some of the insights they provided were quite helpful in the data analysis stage. The list below summarizes the steps of their guide of qualitative data analysis. The paragraphs following the QUAGOL list explain which elements were adopted and which were left out and why.

The Qualitative Analysis Guide of Leuven in ten steps:

1. Thorough reading and holistic understanding of the data

2. Narrative interview reports
3. Conceptual interview schemes
4. Fitting-test of the conceptual schemes (are they relevant and do they answer my RQs?)
5. Constant within-case and cross-case comparison
6. Non-hierarchical concept list (based on step 3)
7. Coding (linking fragments to concepts)
8. Concept analysis (description of meaning, dimensions and characteristics of each concept)
9. Essential structuring of the concepts in a meaningful framework
10. Describe results and essential findings

The authors suggest handling each interview as independently and avoid cross-case bias i.e. letting data from one interview affect our observation of data from other interviews. Following their advice, each interview was carefully read and analysed separately. The interview transcriptions were read and reread, adding notes between the lines during each reading stage. The notes included comments on the data, possible codes to be used in a later stage and indications of possible quotes which may be useful in answering our Research Questions. Although Dierckx De Casterlé et al. (2012) provided useful insights for qualitative data analysis, the instructions they provided were utilised with caution to make sure the analysis helps us understand the data and give meaningful answers to our research questions.

The next stage, following the note-taking stage, would be summarising each interview into a *narrative interview report*. However, after summarising the first two interviews into narrative reports, it became clear that these reports might become too restricting for gathering, coding and comparing the data. For this reason, the decision was made to deviate from some of the instructions provided by Dierckx De Casterlé et al. (2012) in order to retain as much of the original data as possible. Deviating from step 2 of the QUAGOL guide meant that steps 3 and 4 also need to be adjusted. Instead of individual *conceptual interview schemes*, a larger conceptual scheme was drawn from the interview discussions, notes and annotations.

Despite the uniqueness of the participants' stories, there were core themes which reoccurred during the interviews. This concept scheme takes us a step further into understanding the interviews on a conceptual level; moving from the individual stories of each participant to

concepts that help us code the data and answer our research questions (Dierckx De Casterlé et al., 2012). This step was also helpful in organising the process, sectioning the data into manageable chunks of information and preparing them for coding and interpretation. The data was analysed using an inductive approach to gather the key-themes of the interviews. First, the core concepts of the interviews were gathered. Secondly, they were put in mind maps and connected to related opinions and insights. The mind maps and concepts were non-hierarchically gathered to narrow down the data into basic concepts. In an article by Vaismoradi et al. (2016), they suggest that theme development has a crucial role in qualitative content analysis. Their advice includes creating concrete themes and describing them in detail before starting the coding process. Stage 8 of the QUAGOL guidelines also suggests describing the core concepts in detail, however, their guide suggests doing this further in the analysis process. Vaismoradi et al.'s advice was followed for sketching the first, general, concept list and creating mind maps to link information, opinions and experiences to these concepts. *Appendix 8* contains a list of the mind maps that were created for that purpose.

By gathering the concepts into mind maps, it became easier to pinpoint the concepts that are related to the research questions and could potentially offer answers to those questions. The rest of the data analysis was a back-and-forth movement between the transcriptions and the conceptual scheme in order to gather insights and compare them with the available literature. Unfortunately, since the transcriptions were written in Arabic and since most data coding programmes do not support Arabic text, the coding process was done on paper, with written annotations in the margins.

In the next chapter, the core concepts of the interviews are discussed and put into context in order to provide an answer to our three Research Questions, followed by the discussion and limitations of this study in Chapter 6 and finally, the conclusions in Chapter 7.

5. RESULTS

The interviewees explained their Dutch learning and higher education journey generously. The interviews provided unique insights as well as recurrent themes on the topic. Each student had their own trajectory; some learned at the same language school throughout all levels but most of them tried different (types of) language schools. The data provided different stories, insights and points of view on the different stages of learning Dutch as a second language and studying at a Dutch-medium higher education institution.

Most of the participants had learned Dutch at one of the four university language centres that were listed in *section 2.2*. They were all required to have level B2 in order to enter a university or university college. None of them took the CNaVT test and only half of them took the ITNA test. The rest needed either a B2 certificate from a CVO school, or a secondary education diploma from a Flemish school. Ten out of the twelve interview subjects learned Dutch at a University Language Centre (ULC). However, only two of them studied only at a ULC. The other 8 students studied at least one level at a CVO school before or after studying at a ULC.

5.1. Listening Difficulties

The conversations with the L2 students touched upon different aspects of learning the Dutch language and using it as a language of education during their higher studies. Most students experienced, or still experience difficulties in listening and comprehending scientific content, especially during the first year of university or university college. Listening formed a challenge due to the heavy load of new vocabulary in addition to the initial load of learning new information. Participants spoke about the high intensity of the first year in particular, as they were not only attending classes, but they also had to listen and pay attention to the new language they were exposed to. So, it was a multiplied challenge.

S1 spoke about the "intensity of university lectures where some lecturers rush through the material in order to complete a chapter on time" to this she added "the accent is not an issue by itself, it was rather the intensity and speaking pace that made it the lecturer difficult to understand." However, all of the participants saw an improvement in listening and understanding after their first year. Most students had more to say about their experience in their first year.

5.1.1. First Year Is the Toughest

During their first year, L2 students are exposed to new vocabulary. Almost all participants expressed they had difficulties with understanding new professional terminology. The lecturer may use a new word or term that the L2 speaker does not understand. If these words and terminology are crucial for the understanding of the sentence or even the concept that is being explained, not understanding them might obstruct the rest of the lecture. Student S10 had this problem during his first year, and decided to solve it by only counting on the syllabi and lecture notes. This can work when the syllabus is created as a substitute for the lectures, which may not always be the case. Students who faced difficulties understanding new vocabulary and comprehending the content of the lectures mostly reported using the same solution to bridge

the listening and understanding gap: making voice recordings. It was surprising to hear that almost all of the interviewed students used this technique during, at least, their first year. They recorded the lectures on their own devices and used them for learning purposes, however, according to the Flemish Union of Students (VVS), recording lectures without the lecturer's consent is not allowed and breaks the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (VVStudenten, 2021). With the presence of voice recorders in almost all smartphones and other electronic devices in the classroom, it has become virtually impossible to know whether students are recording lectures without consent from the lecturer. This is applicable for all students, not only L2 speakers. Although it is against the rules to record lectures without consent, tackling this issue is beyond the scope of this study. When the interviewees were asked why they felt the need to record lectures, their answers were (a combination of) the following reasons:

1. It was not easy to understand some of the expressions and vocabulary in Dutch, so they needed to re-listen and translate new words and expressions from Dutch into Arabic or English.
2. Listening to (already new and difficult) materials in a newly-learned foreign language resulted in brain fatigue and difficulty in listening and understanding. By recording the lecture, the student could go back to the bits they did not catch in the first time.
3. Note-taking while listening was too intensive and restricted the understanding of the explained material. Replaying the lecture bridged that gap in understanding and helped students process the information more effectively.

S4 found recorded lectures to be her "saviour" through university. On that she said: *"I would repeat the lecture over and over again to take notes [….] I would not have survived university without these recordings …"*

Many of the interviewees started their higher education before the Covid-19 years, so before lectures were recorded and adapted for online learning. Pre-Covid, when some L2 students asked the lecturer whether they could record their lecture, they refused and asked the L2 students not to record anything. Some of the L2 speakers recorded the lectures anyway, because, in their opinion, it was the only solution that worked. Fast forward after the first lockdown, all students received lecture recordings. Most of the interviewed students found the recorded lectures quite helpful while learning and studying for their exams. Some of them even expressed the need to continue facilitating lecture recording to first year L2 students even after going back to the usual on-campus activities.

Interviewees who were recording some lectures on their own devices pre-covid admitted that the recorded lectures made processing new information much easier, since they were not faced with the time pressure they had during lectures on campus. It was also helpful that the recordings provided by the lecturer contained slides and sometimes even lecture notes. They considered it more helpful than their own recordings. Despite the positive comments on recorded lectures, they also had their downsides: studying them was quite time-intensive. S4 said she used to spend almost an entire day to study one lecture during her first year. Other students (S7 and S10) did not use this method for this exact reason. They had a preference for looking up alternative lectures on online platforms such as YouTube (S7) or reading the textbook and/or syllabus (S10) to prepare for their exams.

By recording lectures, students were able to pause and replay the lecture, take notes, look up words in the dictionary and take their time to understand the content. The interviewees who used this technique noted that it was very time consuming, but it helped them more than anything else. Student S3, who had learned Dutch at an OKAN school and then attended secondary education for three years before university, also needed extra time to study her lectures. In her case it took her approximately an entire afternoon to listen and take notes on one lecture recording.

Many of the interviewees started their higher education before the Covid-19 years, so before lectures were recorded and adapted for online learning. Pre-Covid, when some L2 students asked the lecturer whether they could record their lecture, they refused and asked the L2 students not to record anything. Some of the L2 speakers recorded the lectures anyways, because, in their opinion, it was the only solution that worked. Fast forward after the first lockdown, all students received lecture recordings. Most of the interviewed students found the recorded lectures quite helpful while learning and studying for their exams. Some of them even expressed the need to continue facilitating lecture recording to first year L2 students even after going back to the usual on-campus activities.

Just a reminder that we are still in the section *Listening Difficulties*. There is one last point that was mentioned repeatedly during the interviews and is both relevant to the challenges L2 students face during their first year: professional terminology or jargon.

Higher education prepares students to become professionals in their field of study. This also entails the ability to use specialised vocabulary in their field. The participants repeatedly mentioned that they struggled with new terminology during classes because not understanding

the meaning of these words, their understanding of the section, or even the entire lecture was hindered.

S11: *"I chose to start at university directly after I received my university acceptance, without the preparatory year. Unfortunately, I did not pass my first year, because I was faced with a tremendous amount of new vocabulary. I did not understand the simple math terminology, like 'square root' or other physics and chemistry terms."*

S1 and S2 also felt the need for subject-related vocabulary lists for non-native speakers so they can memorise them beforehand. In their opinion, this would make it much easier to keep up with lectures.

5.1.2. Speaking Pace & non-standard Dutch

Speaking pace and non-standard Dutch were two topics that the students mentioned repeatedly during the interviews. It was mostly one of these two aspects that affected their understanding of spoken language. Since standard Dutch is the variety they were most familiar with from the Dutch NT2 courses, they found standard Dutch more comfortable to listen to compared to other varieties. When comparing the interviewees' answers regarding what impaired their understanding of spoken Dutch by L1 speakers, students always preferred one of the two aspects above. One part of the students answered that non-standard Dutch was not an issue as long as the speaker spoke slowly; when the L1 speaker's pace increased, L2 speakers became less likely to understand what the person is saying. Another group of interviewees had a different opinion: as long as the speaker is using clear standard Dutch, speaking pace made no big difference.

One student said he had no problem with "dialect" as long as the speaker is speaking slowly "the issue was not the accent [when the lecturer uses non-standard Dutch] as long as they are speaking slowly" (S1), while another student did not consider pace a huge issue as long as the L1 speaker is *"speaking clearly and has good articulation"* (S10). So this may be considered an indicator that personal differences are highly present among L2 speakers, even those who speak the same native language.

Revisiting and comparing the interviews and interview transcriptions also brought a new question to the table: what do students consider standard Dutch, dialect or Tussentaal?

During the interviews students sometimes spontaneously gave examples of what they considered 'dialect' or 'standard Dutch' (see examples in section 5.2.3). Their examples gave a vague impression that there might be some confusion about which aspects belong to which

language variety. While it seemed relatively easy for L2 speakers to point at West-Flemish aspects like the soft 'g' that sounds more like a /h/ sound, it was not as easy for them to differentiate other varieties, such as Antwerp dialect or Tussentaal. Most of the students who had learned Dutch in Antwerp and had acquired the Antwerp accent partially considered the "Antwerp accent to be quite close to Standard Dutch".

This gave the impression that the interviewees may not be able to fully differentiate between standard and non-standard Dutch (yet) and may be considering words and expressions that sound clear to be "standard Dutch" or at least closer to standard Dutch. This impression from the interviews cannot be confirmed in this article since more data is needed to understand the situation.

5.2. Intensive Academic Language Courses: Counterproductive?

Students who tried both CVO schools and ULCs all had similar opinions on the pace and density of the ULC curriculum. Most students realised that CVO courses mostly gave practical skills and encouraged students to *produce* language as soon as possible, while ULC courses focused mainly on correct grammar and language *reception*. This was noted by half of the interviewees.

Student *S12* learned the first level of Dutch at a CVO school, then enrolled in an intensive, fast-track, academic language course which would prepare prospective students for the ITNA test. Each level took between three to four weeks to finish. Out of 30 students at the start of the programme, there were only two students who managed to reach level B1. Then she moved to a normal-track course for level B2 with students preparing for the ITNA test, like herself. She quickly realised the difference in fluency between her classmates and herself, who were supposed to be at the same level. After finishing level B2 she did not pass the ITNA test and decided to enrol in a slow-paced course for level B2 which took three months per level during the first semester of the academic year. Her original plan was to start at university in September, however she needed to wait a semester to retake the ITNA test and be able to start at the programme she chose.

> *"[the slow-track course] was less stressful and the information was spread out on a period of three months. During those months, I caught up with all the skills I had missed previously and took my time to improve my vocabulary, grammar and speaking skills before taking the ITNA test, which I passed." (S12)*

5.3. Language Practice Opportunities (with L1 speakers)

Flemish NT2 schools and university language centres, as we have seen earlier, offer Dutch learning programmes that take between one and two years to finish. Most of the interviewees spent one to one and a half years learning Dutch as a second language. One of the reoccurring topics throughout the twelve interviews was (the lack of) practicing opportunities of what they learn in the classroom. The conversations with the L2 learners made it clear that they did not lack practising writing or reading. They rather felt the need for more speaking and listening. Especially at university language courses, NT2 students felt they received enough reading and writing practice, in the form of in-class exercises or homework, while having fewer opportunities to practise speaking and listening. While most of the interviewees who studied at university language centres felt they had received more than enough information and guidance in terms of grammar, they still felt unprepared for the requirements of spoken Dutch outside the classroom. S9 and S10 realised that the latter competencies needed more practice in the real world. S10 initially started learning Dutch in an intensive programme that took one month full-time learning to finish one level. In the last two levels he switched to a more slower trajectory that took three months to finish one level and required attending classes only three days a week, and on that he said:

> *"during the intensive courses, I did not have the time to go out and meet new people. I attended classes from 8 am to 4 pm and returned home to study and do homework. The time was too tight to do anything else. This changed in the last two levels where I attended shorter classes, four hours each, three days a week. Although the content was more challenging, I then had enough time to read, listen to the news, to go outside and meet new people." (S10)*

We still need to acknowledge that not all students may want to or have the capacity to take the longer path, or to have direct interaction with L1 speakers early on in their learning trajectory. S10's account is a positive side of giving more time for long-term exposure to the L2. Another positive example of language practice (that may not need as much time as the slow courses) is what S1 found helpful to improve speaking and listening, "Praattafels" (lit. speaking tables). These are initiatives organised by either the local integration offices or Flemish municipalities a few times a week where volunteering native speakers come together with L2 learners of Dutch to chat over a cup of coffee. S1 found this a helpful and pleasant exercise to speak about topics of interest which may not be mentioned in class.

-Hier komt nog een samenvatting en afsluiter van het paragraaf om de resultaten beter te situeren in de context-

5.4. Language Attitudes of L1 and L2 Speakers

During the interviews there were multiple occasions where the participants mentioned West-Flemish dialect as one of the difficult varieties to understand, especially after a year of learning standard Dutch at a language school. Beside the reoccurring classic pronunciation of the consonant /g/ as /h/, whenever West-Flemish is mentioned, students either laughed and made jokes about pronunciation. Some of them also referred to occasions where teachers or L1-speakers joked about this regional accent, and saw dialect or Tussentaal as a means to have closer relationships with L1 speakers.

S7: *"... at first I only spoke Standard Dutch [with my L1 classmates]. Later when we became good friends they told me jokingly that I sound like I am announcing the news. They motivated me to learn to speak their dialect, or at least Tussentaal […] I also want to say that I liked integrating with my friends by speaking in their accent. If we keep speaking like news broadcasters, it is normal that we are seen differently."*

Almost all of the interviewed students came in contact with West Flemish speakers. Some of them lived in West Flanders and others had West Flemish contacts through work or studies. In university and college contexts, West Flemish contacts were either classmates or, though rarely, lecturers who had West Flemish influence in their spoken communication according to the interviewees. As the participants live in different Flemish regions, and some even lived and studied in different places with different spoken dialects and Tussentaals, many of them expressed that they noticed the dialect influence of the (different) places they lived in on their own spoken Dutch. Still, the interviewees' opinions varied, from those who found dialect as a means for social integration, to others who preferred sticking to standard Dutch for professional, as well as day-to-day communication.

When students were asked about the different spoken forms of Dutch in Flanders and their attitudes towards them, most students showed a preference towards Standard Dutch and some of them stated that they only use Standard Dutch in their daily communication. They mentioned that they understood "light" dialects, when the L1 speaker does not use new words and expressions and only has a slight regional accent. The conversations with the participants brought new questions to the table: what is considered "dialect" by L2 speakers? And is there a possibility that they are mixing what is considered dialect and Tussentaal? Student S2, for

instance, explained that with time he "started speaking some dialect with friends" and the example he gave was using "da's" instead of "dat is". Participant S12 also mentioned instances where she used dialect, for example using the first person pronoun "gij" instead of "jij" which is in fact a characteristic of Flemish dialect and is also used in Tussentaal according to Ghent University's Dialectloket ('Kenmerken van Tussentaal', n.d.).

6. DISCUSSION

In this study, we discussed the experiences and views of twelve Syrian students at Dutch-medium higher education institutions in Flanders. The objective of this thesis was to look for answers to our three research questions (section 3).

RQ1: How do Syrian L2 students feel language variation in Flanders affected their academic career at Dutch-medium universities and university colleges?

RQ2: What were the good and bad practices in the Dutch language courses according to Syrian L2 students?

RQ3: How could academic language schools, universities and university colleges improve L2 learners' experience during Dutch-medium higher education journey, from the learners' perspective?

Looking for answers to those questions gave us insights into the experience of Syrian L2 students in Flanders, from learning Dutch as a second language to entering Dutch-medium higher education. We tried to identify how they felt language variation in Flanders affected their academic career (RQ1), what they considered helpful or less helpful teaching practices at language schools (RQ2), and what they needed in terms of language support to improve their experience at Dutch-medium higher education (RQ3).

The presence of different spoken varieties of Dutch in Flanders affected the interviewees' experience at higher education in one way or another. Many of them expressed that learning in a foreign language was already difficult and this (at the beginning unanticipated) variation slowed them down from the start, especially in the first year. During group projects where students speak a dialect or Tussentaal or when a lecturer uses non-standard Dutch to illustrate an example, an L2 student who only speaks Standard Dutch would find it difficult to understand the language and be engaged with these situations.

L2 students also felt they were doing twice as much work as their L1 classmates while not seeing the same results, which was frustrating. Professional course-specific jargon was

completely new to them, so the studying process was different than that of L1 students. L2 students had to translate new words, understand them in their context and then move forward with studying. Even note-taking during lectures was tricky at first, some students felt that missing a few crucial words could affect their understanding of the rest of the lecture. As a solution they either recorded the lecture, studied from the syllabus, used classmates' lecture notes or counted on external materials in English or Arabic. This is how many of them approached the difficulties of the first year. The following years became gradually better, however, many still felt they were falling behind because of the language barrier.

When it came to the good and bad practices (RQ2), students' experiences varied. Many students appreciated non-intensive programmes that gave them time to acquire the new language and practice their skills. University language courses were more grammar-oriented and although students appreciated learning the correct use of the language, they felt that classes could have been organised differently, spending more time on practising speaking skills and being acquainted with spoken Dutch "outside the classroom walls". Two of the students gave similar suggestion on preparing for higher education: they suggested hosting information sessions between L1 students at higher education and prospective students to gain more knowledge about higher education context in general. They believe it would be both a good language exercise and a chance to learn about student life in Flanders.

To answer our final research question the students' studying techniques were taken into account. Students who could not follow up with the lecturer recorded the lectures for personal use or looked for other materials to help them understand their lectures. Students who were faced with completely new subject-specific vocabulary made their own vocabulary lists and learned them while studying. Students who did not understand non-standard Dutch directly, took their time, asked people to speak slowly or to repeat what they said. Universities and colleges could therefore look at these aspects of the L2 student's journey and try to mediate them to make the process less tricky.

6.1. Limitations

The twelve interviews and previous research provided this study with useful and meaningful insights into the status quo of Syrian L2 speakers at Flemish universities and university colleges. However, given the qualitative nature of this research, only twelve students were interviewed for an in-depth account of their individual experiences, and therefore, it is not possible to make a generalised conclusion about the entire population of Syrian higher

education students in Flanders. The results rather pinpointed reoccurring themes which might be interesting to study in the future. For example, we have seen specific struggles during the first year at higher education: listening to different varieties of Dutch, understanding professional jargon, live note-taking, etc. so it could be interesting to observe first-year L2 students during lectures or group discussions to take notes from an external point of view. Another seemingly important topic is recording lectures; it would be interesting to see whether recorded lectures are as helpful as the research subjects claim. For this specific topic it might be helpful to compare L2-students' scores on recorded lectures as opposed to regular lectures to see the extent to which lecture recordings help processing information and to weigh their overall advantages and disadvantages.

In addition to the limitations above, in *section 5.2.3*. examples were given regarding interviewees who may not have been able to tell the difference between regional dialects and Tussentaal. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, which was helpful for the initial purpose of the study, however, empirical evidence is needed to confirm whether L2 students can tell the difference between the different spoken varieties of Dutch/Flemish in Flanders, and if so, at which level. This could be in the form of controlled experiments to test the accuracy of that inference.

7. CONCLUSION

Learning Dutch as a second language for Dutch-medium higher education purposes is not always simple. It is a lengthy process that takes effort and dedication. The interviews with the twelve students in this study confirmed that, but also showed it is possible to gain a certain level of fluency in Dutch that enables students to enter the cycle of higher education, and to build a professional career afterwords. Despite the rocky road they had to go through, many of them have acquired their bachelor's and some even their master's degree while this thesis was being written. They also gave suggestions that could be useful for future research about language facilities for L2 students:

1. Offering recorded lectures for first year L2 students to help them process the information at their own pace.
2. Offering subject-specific vocabulary lists (per faculty) that prospective L2 students can study during their preparatory year.

3. Including some Tussentaal in the NT2 courses, or giving information about regional dialects systematically to help them understand non-standard spoken Dutch earlier on.

In this thesis we discussed but a number of aspects of learning Dutch as a second language by Syrian students for higher education purposes. In this attempt to address a broad topic, different suggestions were presented based on the interviews with Syrian L2 learners, however, to conclude whether these suggestions are effective for other (Syrian) prospective L2 students, experiments on a larger scope are definitely needed for evidence-based guidelines that would help improve the experience of prospective students on their own rocky road to Dutch-medium higher education in Flanders.

8. LIST OF REFERENCES

Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering. (n.d.). Retrieved 10 August 2022, from https://www.integratie-inburgering.be/nl

Al Masri, H., & Abu-Ayyash, E. A. S. (2020). Second language acquisition from Syrian refugees' perspectives: Difficulties and solutions. *Open Linguistics*, *6*(1), 372–385. https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2020-0025

Asylum Statistics—General Overview 2016. (2017). https://www.cgrs.be/en/news/asylum-statistics-general-overview-2016

Asylum statistics—Survey 2015. (2016). https://www.cgrs.be/en/news/asylum-statistics-survey-2015

Begine, S. (n.d.). Goesting in Taal. *Goesting in Taal*. Retrieved 18 August 2022, from https://www.goestingintaal.be/about/

Christophersen, M. (2015). *Obstacles to Education for Syrian Refugees* (Securing Education for Syrian Refugees in Jordan, pp. 12–17). International Peace Institute. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09545.9

De Caluwe, J. (2006). Tussentaal als natuurlijke omgangstaal in Vlaanderen. *STUDIA GERMANICA GANDENSIA*, *2006*, 19–34.

De Decker, J. (2015). *Vlaamse jongeren op de glijbaan van het taalcontinuüm: Attitude- en perceptieonderzoek van taalvariatie in het Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs in de vijf Vlaamse provincies.* [Master's Thesis]. KU Leuven.

De Schutter, S. (2020, February 24). Vluchteling-studenten aan de Vlaamse universiteiten: Nog geen succesverhaal. *vrtnws.be*. https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2020/02/18/nog-geen-400-vluchteling-studenten-in-het-vlaamse-hoger-onderwij/

De Sutter, G. (2017). Het Nederlands anno 2017: Verspreiding, juridische status en variationele structuur. In *De vele gezichten van het Nederlands in Vlaanderen: Een inleiding tot de variatietaalkunde* (pp. 22–32). Acco.

Delarue, S. (2013). Teachers' Dutch in Flanders: The last guardians of the standard? In T. Kristiansen & S. Grondelaers (Eds.), *Language (de)standardisation in Late Modern Europe: Experimental studies* (pp. 193–226). Novus Forlag.

Deygers, B., & Frijns, C. (2021). Begrijpelijkheid en accent bij beginnende NT2-leerders: Het belang van achtergrondvariabelen. *Nederlandse Taalkunde*, *26*(2), 195–221. https://doi.org/10.5117/NEDTAA2021.2.003.DEYG

Deygers, B., Van den Branden, K., & Van Gorp, K. (2018). University entrance language tests: A matter of justice. *Language Testing*, *35*(4), 449–476. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532217706196

Deygers, B., & Vanbuel, M. (2022). Gauging the impact of literacy and educational background on receptive vocabulary test scores. *Language Testing*, *39*(2), 191–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/02655322211049097

Dierckx De Casterlé, B., Gastmans, C., Bryon, E., & Denier, Y. (2012). QUAGOL: A guide for qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *49*(3), 360–371. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2011.09.012

Dolapcioglu, S., & Bolat, Y. (2021). The education issues of Syrian students under temporary protection status. *Research in Education*, *109*(1), 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523719892019

Field, J. (2011). Into the mind of the academic listener. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *10*(2), 102–112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.04.002

Grondelaers, S., & van Hout, R. (2011). The Standard Language Situation in the Low Countries: Top-Down and Bottom-Up Variations on a Diaglossic Theme. *Journal of Germanic Linguistics*, *23*(3), 199–243. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1470542711000110

Hadi, M., & Chaiban, T. (2021). *After almost ten years of war in Syria, more than half of children continue to be deprived of education*. unicef. https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/after-almost-ten-years-war-syria-more-half-children-continue-be-deprived-education

Heeren, J., Deygers, B., Speelman, D., & Wachter, L. (2021). Halen we de norm? De scores van moedertaalsprekers op een talige toegangstest voor anderstaligen aan de universiteit. *Levende Talen Tijdschrift*, *22*(1), 3–13.

Hier spreekt men Nederlands. (n.d.). [Video recording]. Retrieved 21 August 2022, from https://www.vrt.be/vrtnu/a-z/hier-spreekt-men-nederlands/

ILT KU Leuven. (2023, August). *ILT KU Leuven*. https://ilt.kuleuven.be/english/

Interuniversitaire Taaltest Nederlands voor Anderstaligen. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 August 2023, from https://www.itna.be/

InterUniversity Testing Consortium. (n.d.). Retrieved 20 December 2023, from https://www.iutc.be/

Jiménez, T. R., & Orozco, M. (2021). Prompts, Not Questions: Four Techniques for Crafting Better Interview Protocols. *Qualitative Sociology*, *44*(4), 507–528. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-021-09483-2

Kenmerken van tussentaal. (n.d.). *Dialectloket Universiteit Gent*. https://www.dialectloket.be/tekst/tussentaal/kenmerken-van-tussentaal/

Linguapolis | UAntwerpen. (2023). *Dutch Preparatory One-Year Programme | Linguapolis | University of Antwerp*.

https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/centres/linguapolis/academic-dutch-english/one-year-dutch-programme/

Lybaert, C., & Delarue, S. (2017). 'k Spreek ekik ver altijd zo: Over de opmars van tussentaal in Vlaanderen. In *De vele gezihten van het Nederlands in Vlaanderen: Een inleiding tot de variatietaalkunde* (pp. 142–162). Acco.

Lybaert, C., Van Cleemputte, S., & van Hest, E. (2018, October 23). OVER DE KLOOF TUSSEN TAALBELEID EN TAALREALITEIT. *Tijdschrift Voor NT2 En Taal in Het Onderwijs*, *36*. https://www.tijdschriftles.nl/inhoud/tijdschrift_artikel

Lybaert, C., & van Hest, E. (2020). Standaardnederlands, de sleutel tot integratie in Vlaanderen?: Over de uitdagingen van niet-standaardtaal voor NT2-leerders in Vlaanderen. *Nederlandse Taalkunde*, *25*(1), 125–159. https://doi.org/10.5117/NEDTAA2020.1.006.LYBA

Lybaert, C., van Hest, E., & Van Cleemputte, S. (2019). Over de tweestrijd tussen taalnorm en taalrealiteit: Hoe NT2-leerkrachten uit een Gentse school worstelen met niet-standaardtalige variatie in het NT2-onderwijs. *Internationale Neerlandistiek*, *57*(3), 205–224. https://doi.org/10.5117/IN2019.3.001.LYBA

Lynch, T. (2011). Academic listening in the 21st century: Reviewing a decade of research. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *10*(2), 79–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.03.001

Marynissen, A. (2017). De lange weg naar een Nederlandse standaardtaal. Een beknopte geschiedenis van de standaardisering van het Nederlands. In *De vele gezichten van het Nederlands in Vlaanderen: Een inleiding tot de variatietaalkunde* (pp. 60–79). Acco.

NT2 Verkort Traject | CVO Gent. (n.d.). Retrieved 17 August 2022, from https://cvo.gent/opleidingen/nt2-nederlands-voor-anderstaligen/nt2-verkort-traject

Onderwijskiezer. (2023). https://www.onderwijskiezer.be/v2/hoger/hoger_taal.php?submit=zoeken#

Onthaalonderwijs—Voor ouders. (n.d.). Retrieved 4 August 2024, from https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/ouders/naar-school/vanuit-of-naar-het-buitenland/vanuit-het-buitenland/onthaalonderwijs-voor-anderstalige-nieuwkomers/wat-is-onthaalonderwijs

Over de Taalunie. (2023). https://taalunie.org/over-de-taalunie-

Rooms, B. (2017, October 24). *Maak nieuwkomers ook vertrouwd met tussentaal, want dat bevordert integratie*. vrtnws.be. https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2017/10/24/kennis-van-tussentaal-of-dialecten-bevordert--integratie/

Spindler, W. (2015). *2015: The year of Europe's refugee crisis*. UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2015-year-europes-refugee-crisis

Statistics | Eurostat. (2023). [Dataset]. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA__custom_7149110/default/bar?lang=en

Statistisch jaarboek van het Vlaams onderwijs. (2023). https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/statistisch-jaarboek-van-het-vlaams-onderwijs

Testonderdelen – Interuniversitaire Taaltest Nederlands voor Anderstaligen. (n.d.). Retrieved 29 December 2023, from https://www.itna.be/over-de-test/testonderdelen/

The CEFR Levels—Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)—Www.coe.int. (n.d.). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Retrieved 14 August 2023, from https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions

Thieme, A.-M., & Vander Beken, H. (2020). *Meertalige en anderstalige studenten in het Nederlandstalige universitaire onderwijs. Kansen en uitdagingen voor taalbeleid Een verkennende analyse* (p. 67). Interuniversitair Overleg Taaltaken Anderstaligen.

UCT | UGent. (n.d.). *Preparatory training of higher education for foreign speakers (VTHO)*. Retrieved 15 August 2023, from https://uct.ugent.be/en/dutch-for-speakers-of-other-languages/detail-2/A006000

UCT | UGent. (2023, August). *Dutch for speakers of other languages—University Language Centre*. https://uct.ugent.be/en/dutch-for-speakers-of-other-languages

Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H., & Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, *6*(5), p100. https://doi.org/10.5430/jnep.v6n5p100

Van Lancker, I. (2017). *Een linguïstisch-etnografische analyse van het hedendaags gesproken Nederlands in een Oost-Vlaamse secundaire school* [PhD Thesis, Ghent University]. http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8542428

Vancompernolle, H. (with Algemeen-Nederlands Verbond). (2012). *Normgevoeligheid: Attitude van Vlaamse jongeren ten aanzien van het Standaardnederlands, de tussentaal en het dialect*. Academia Press.

Vlaanderen.be. (n.d.). *Leerplicht van 5 tot 18 jaar*. Vlaanderen.be. Retrieved 4 August 2024, from https://www.vlaanderen.be/onderwijs-en-vorming/wat-mag-en-moet-op-school/leerplicht/leerplicht-van-5-tot-18-jaar

Voortraject hoger onderwijs voor anderstalige nieuwkomers. (n.d.). Retrieved 12 December 2023, from https://www.integratie-inburgering.be/nl/voortraject-hoger-onderwijs-voor-anderstalige-nieuwkomers

VVStudenten. (2021, November 25). Lesopnames, heb ik daar recht op? *Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten (VVS)*. https://vvs.ac/heb-ik-recht-op-lesopnames/

Zenner, E. (2017). Doomsday? (Engelse) leenwoorden in het Nederlands. In *De vele gezichten van het Nederlands in Vlaanderen. Een inleiding tot de variatietaalkunde.* (pp. 230–248). Acco; Leuven. $$Uhttps://lirias.kuleuven.be/retrieve/518652$$DZenner_2017final_doomsday_engelse_leenwoorden_nederlands.pdf [Available for KU Leuven users]