

Katrien Deygers en Vicky Van Den Heede<sup>1</sup>

## Belgisch Nederlandse ‘klassiekers’ als variabelen voor lexicaal variatie-onderzoek: een evaluatie

### Summary

In this article we report on our investigation of 50 Belgian Dutch terms and their standard Dutch synonyms in a corpus of written Belgian Dutch from the seventies and a corpus from the nineties. The main aim was to compare the frequency of the Belgian terms in the seventies and the nineties. The corpus analysis was complemented with the study of elicited materials. Part of the investigated words are what we call ‘suspicious Belgian Dutch words’, which means that the average native speaker in Flanders is familiar with their typical Belgian Dutch character; the other part of the words are ‘unsuspicious Belgian Dutch words’, which means that the average native speaker in Flanders considers them as standard Dutch and is not familiar with their typical Belgian Dutch character.

We found a spectacular decrease of the ‘suspicious’ Belgian Dutch words between the seventies and the nineties; the ‘unsuspicious’ Belgian Dutch words decreased slightly, remained more or less status quo, or even grew stronger. The part of suspicious Belgian words in the corpus of the nineties is only approximately 17% (which means that authors have preferred a standard Dutch term in more than 80% of the cases); the part of the unsuspecting Belgian words is much stronger with approximately 76%.

Research based on the analysis of suspicious words gives the impression that Belgian Dutch words are disappearing in favour of standard Dutch words, and suggests a strong converging tendency. Research that incorporates unsuspecting Belgian Dutch words, however, will show a less stronger tendency of convergence. This outcome proves the thesis of Geeraerts, Grondelaers and Speelman (2000): lexical variation research exclusively based on lexical items of which the variability is known beforehand renders non-representative results concerning the actual relation between Belgian Dutch and Dutch Dutch.