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De open klinkers in het Utrechts en het Amsterdams

Summary

Standard Dutch has two open vowels: a long front vowel [a] as in the word “maan” (linguistic variable <AA> in this paper) and a short back vowel [A], as in the word “man” (linguistic variable <A> in this paper). The dialects of Utrecht and Amsterdam, however, have a different feature distribution, with <AA> pronounced at the back of the mouth, and <A> at the front. In Amsterdam, place of articulation appears to be the only difference with Standard Dutch, but in Utrecht there seems to be an additional difference: the vowel <A> in the word “man” is often heard as long.

This paper investigates the validity of these impressions by measuring the durations and formant frequencies of ten minimal <A>-<AA> pairs, pronounced by about ten speakers of both dialects and of Standard Dutch. The results show that the Utrecht and Amsterdam pronunciations of <AA> do have the same degree of backness as the Standard-Dutch pronunciation of <A>, and that the Amsterdam and Utrecht versions of <A> are, relatively speaking, front vowels. However, their positions are much less advanced than that of the Standard-Dutch realisation of <AA>, which stands out here as an extremely front, extremely open vowel.

The durational measurements show that in Utrecht <A> is significantly longer than in Amsterdam and in Standard Dutch, but still considerably shorter than <AA>.

Finally, a perceptual test showed that experienced listeners are quite capable of assigning the various realisations of <A> and <AA>, after they have been excised from the words in which they occur, to the right vowel category and the right dialect.