

Katrien Stroobants

Noord/Zuid-verschillen in de taal van de reclame

Summary

The specimen of Dutch as it is used in commercial advertisement reveals a lot of differences between the northern and southern linguistic variants. This fact is more true for advertisement language than for any other linguistic register, because it has a strong persuasive goal, and therefore the language in ads ought to be client focused and appropriate for the intended audience. The regional influences (differences) are the strongest in publicity texts for food and beverages, but these differences are mainly lexical. Grammatical oppositions are more important, though. Two grammatical items are highlighted in this article. The first one is the conjugation of the verbs *kunnen* and *zullen*. The northern part of the Dutch linguistic area uses the “alternative” option *kan/zal* on strict conditions only: in mere casual contexts, and in texts that are written for a young target group. In the South the form *kan/zal* is both more widespread and used in a wide variety of contexts. An explanation for this dichotomy could be that Flemings still link the form *kun(t)* with the “Flemish” pronoun *ge/gij*. As long as this association is echoing in the heads of the Flemish natives, the secondary *kun(t)* form will not lose ground; the growing familiarity with the “northern” pronoun system – without *ge/gij* – does not necessarily interfere with this evolution.

The second topic is the wellknown distinction between the “Rood” and “Groen” word/order: allegedly a matter of regionally based preferences. This assumption is not countered by the data in my inquiry. South uses both orders, apparently without underlying rules, which in practice results in a natural preponderance of “Groen”. North is rather rigid: “Rood” matches with formal contexts, “Groen” should be reserved for the more casual, so to say tongue in cheek contexts. Although this rule is respected in the greater part of the examples that I found, the *deviations* (i.e. “Rood” in for example dialogues and street talk) are a significant criterion to measure the impact of what I call the “tyranny” of the “Rood” order in the northern part of the Dutch linguistic area.