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# Linguistic attitudes in the Dutch-German border area

A comparison of Vreden (D) and Winterswijk (NL)

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1. Introduction and background
2. Attitudes: method and general overview
3. Grondelaers & van Hout (2011): Shared attitudes as a measure for linguistic unity?
4. Gooskens & Kürschner (2009): dialect proficiency and 'neighbour language skills'. Dialect recognition as a (socio)linguistic skill.
5. Conclusions

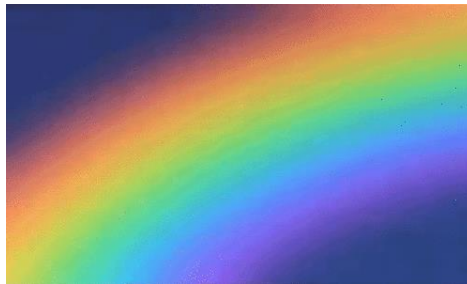
# 1. Introduction

- Continental West Germanic dialect continuum

# More or less intact until ca. 1900 (?)

# Today still gradual transitions between language areas, but state border has become a dialect border too

# Hence, from



to



# 1. Introduction

- Continental West Germanic dialect continuum
- Concrete:

# Winterswijk (NL) and Vreden (D)

Map: Smits (2011:180)



- # Low German: dissolution of dialect continuum through dialect levelling and loss, as investigated by, among others, Kremer (1979), Niebaum (1990), Smits (2011)
- # Process of language death? Low German is relatively resilient in border area (Goossens 1997, Smits 2011)
- # Unlike structural aspects, attitudes are poorly researched (cf. Kremer 2005:41)

## ***In short:***

- Perceptual perspective on the rise of state border as a dialect border

## ***Against the backdrop of a larger agenda...***

- Role of **attitudes in sociolinguistic change**

# Long theoretical debate (e.g., Auer & Hinskens 1996)

# Language policy: Low Saxon (NL) and Low German (D) recognized under Council of Europe's *Charter for regional and minority languages*

- Sociolinguistic development, cf. Blum-Kulka (2004:197):

“Most **sociolinguistic studies lack a developmental agenda**, and they are concerned with toddlers and preschoolers rather than with school-age children.”

(for discussion, see De Vogelaer & Toye, to appear, via [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu))

## 2. Method and overview

- ‘Speaker evaluation paradigm’

#Developed in 1960s by Wallace Lambert and colleagues, in a (French-) Canadian context

#Controversial? Cf. naive assumption that stimuli can be decontextualised

#Soukup (2013): reconceptualise experiments as “discursive events”, revealing “social meaning”

#Grondelaers & Kristiansen (eds., 2013): results robust enough to warrant cross-linguistic comparison



## 2. Method and overview

- ‘Speaker evaluation paradigm’
- Vreden: **#199 pupils** from 5th – 12th class in Gymnasium (**Age: 9-18**)
  - #5 fragments:**
    - regional colloquial German
    - High German
    - Vredener Platt
    - Wenters plat (= Winterswijk)
    - Standard Dutch
  - #of a fairytale** as read by 5 males (age 20-25)
  - #14 questions** re. ‘overt’ and ‘covert’ prestige, eligibility as a friend and as a model for own language usage + label the variety used
  - #Structure** of attitudes: Principal Components Analysis (PCA), cf. Zahn & Hopper (1985)



## 2. Method and overview

- ‘Speaker evaluation paradigm’
  - Winterswijk: #183 pupils from 1th – 6th class in VWO (Age: 12-18)
    - #4 fragments: regional colloquial German
    - Standard Dutch
    - Wenters plat (= Winterswijk)
    - Vredener Platt
    - High German
- #same questions, same analyses





## 2. Method and overview

### Spreker 1:

01) Volgens mij is de spreker van dit fragment een **intelligent** persoon.

1 2 3 4 5  
Volledig mee eens Volledig mee oneens

#### Attributes:

- intelligent
- helpful
- (un)intelligible
- leader
- speak.like
- trustworthy
- funny
- friendly
- TV-presenter
- popular
- well-paid
- my.friend
- beautiful

is volgens mij iemand die **graag anderen helpt.**

3 4 5  
Volledig mee oneens

is **moeilijk te verstaan.**

3 4 5  
Volledig mee oneens

zou goed **leiding** kunnen geven aan een groep.

3 4 5  
Volledig mee oneens

leze spreker.

3 4 5  
Volledig mee oneens

## 2. Method and overview

- General overview of results:
  1. Huge **discrepancy** between (reported) **active and passive** dialect proficiency in both locations
    - Vreden (D): **75,4%** reports (very) **bad active proficiency**  
**23,1%** reports (very) **bad passive proficiency**
    - Winterswijk (NL): **61,7%** reports (very) **bad active proficiency**  
**13,1%** reports (very) **bad passive proficiency**

## 2. Method and overview

- General overview of results:

2. Substantial differences in how attitudes are structured into **dimensions** when subjected to Principal Components Analyses

> Vreden:

**prestige < solidarity**  
(cf. Ferguson's 1959 diglossia model)

> Winterswijk:

**prestige < social attractiveness < personal integrity < linguistic attractiveness**  
(reminiscent of Lambert et al. 1966)

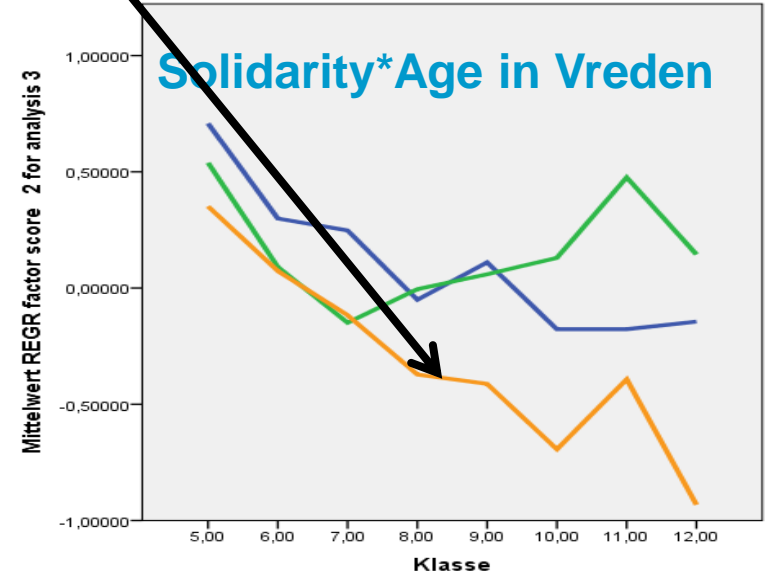
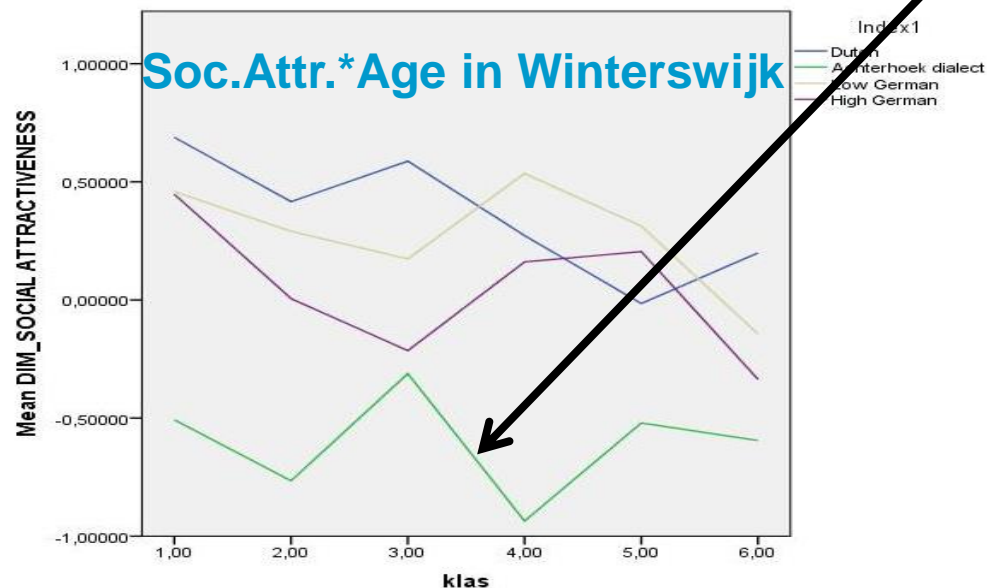
> differences are interesting, but may be partly due to methodological complication

## 2. Method and overview

- General overview of results:

### 3. General picture

A. Slightly more positive attitudes towards **dialect** in Winterswijk, but in Vreden adolescents develop a more favourable attitude towards the dialect



B. **High German** has a higher status in the Netherlands than **Dutch** in German

## 3. Shared attitudes?

- Shared language attitudes as a measure of an area's linguistic unity (Grondelaers & van Hout 2011 on the Netherlands)

>>> 2 questions:

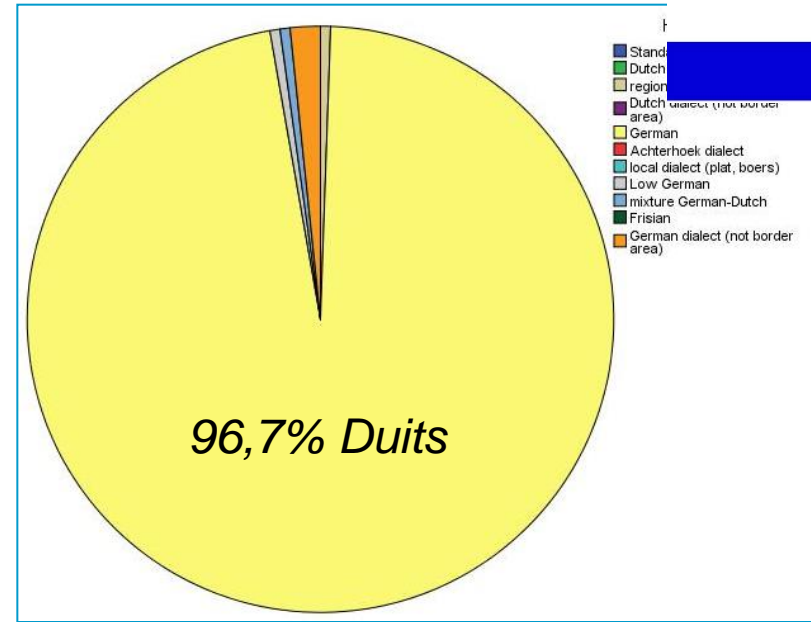
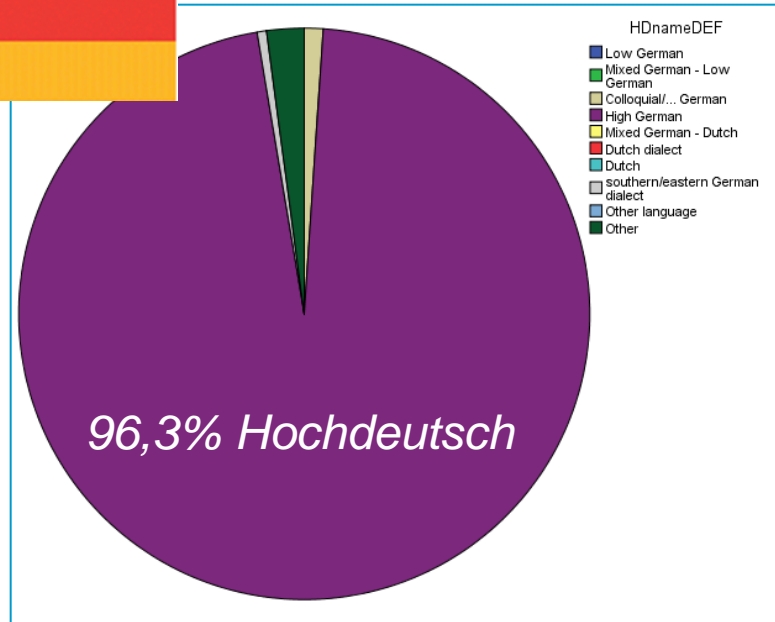
1. how are varieties under investigation conceived? --> labels
2. how are they evaluated? --> attributes

## 3. Shared attitudes?

- Shared language attitudes as a measure of an area's linguistic unity (Grondelaers & van Hout 2011 on the Netherlands)
  - Labels for High German, Low German (Vreden), Low Saxon (Winterswijk) and Standard Dutch fragments



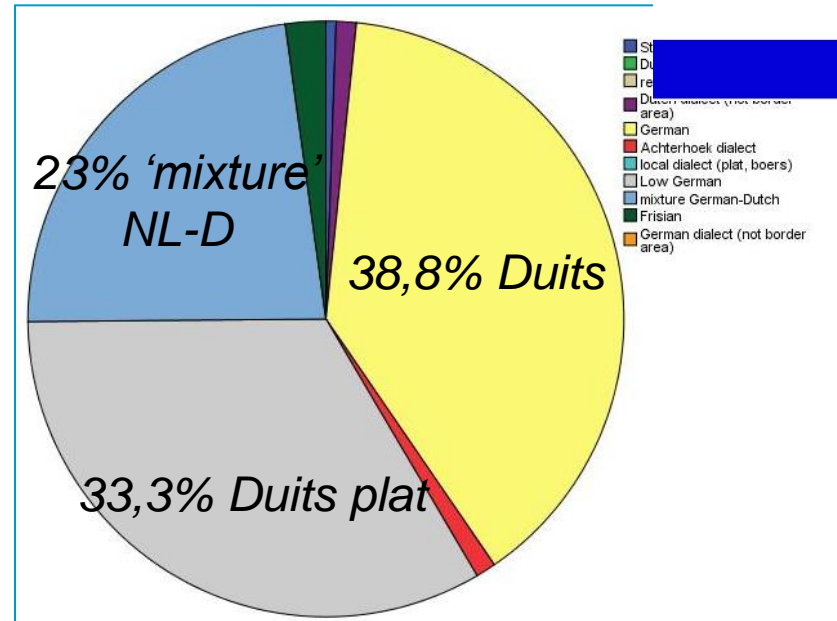
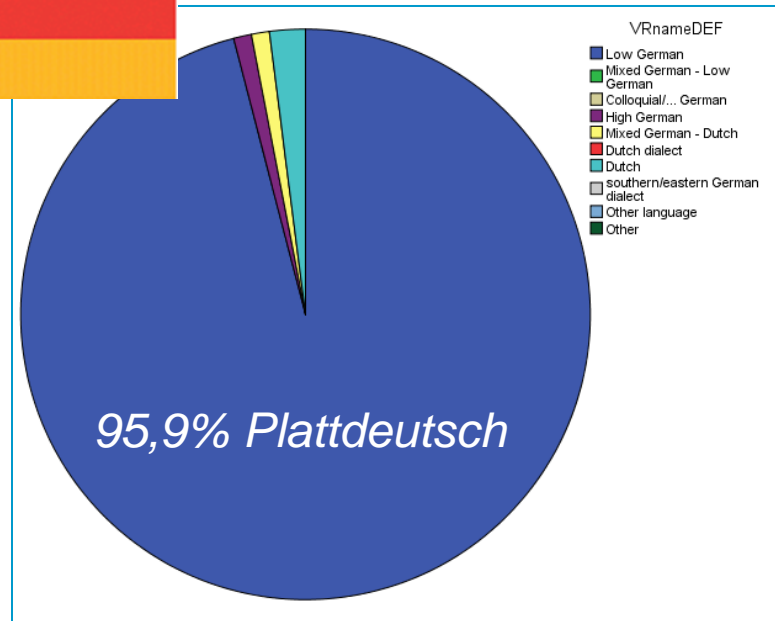
### High German



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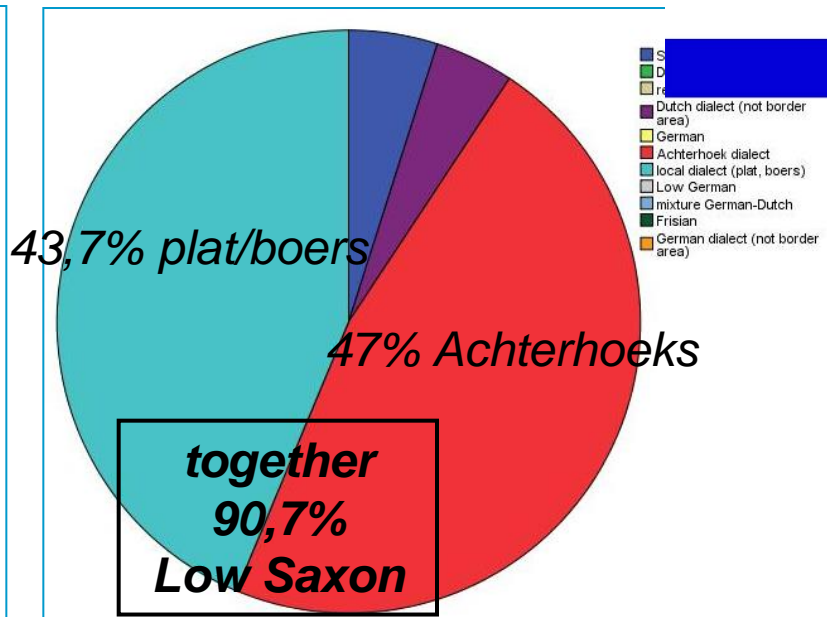
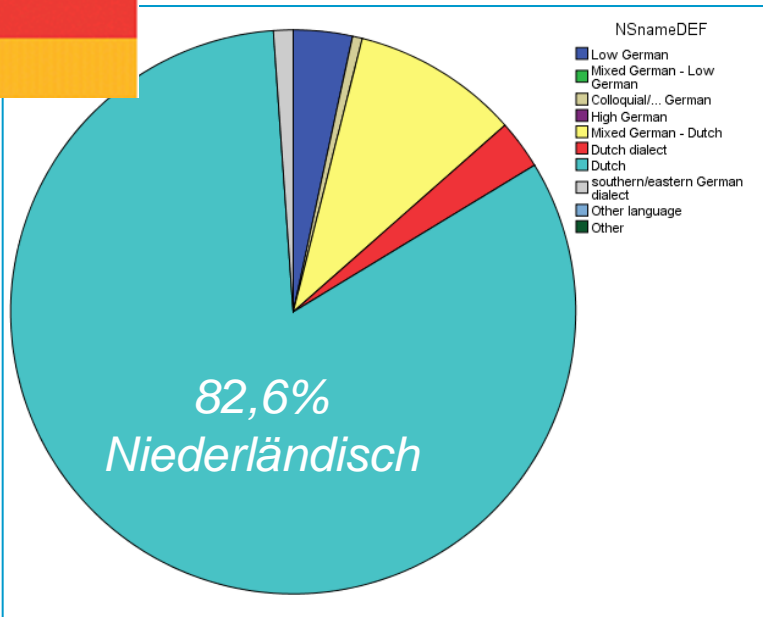
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#### Low Saxon





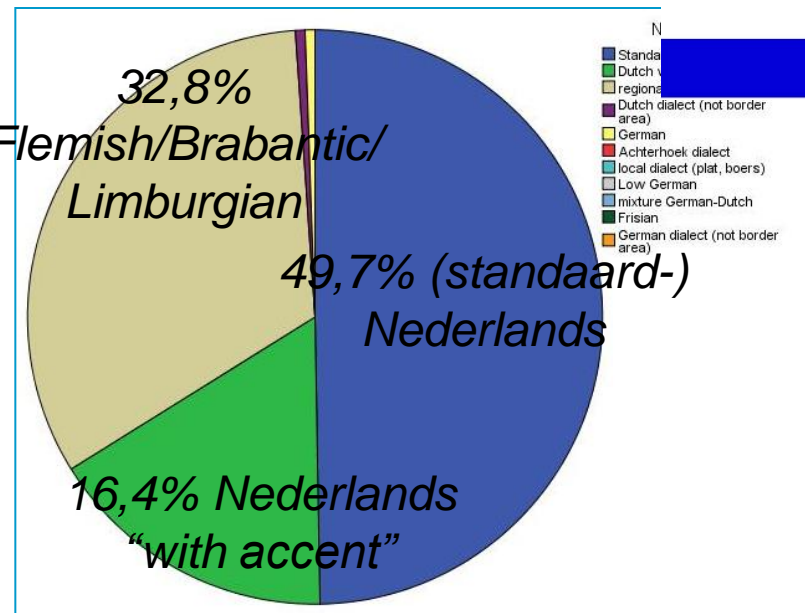
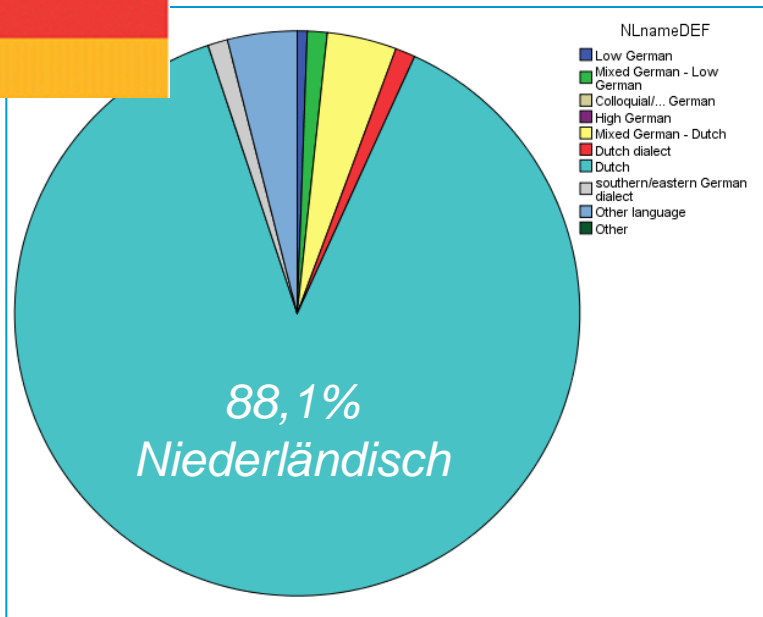
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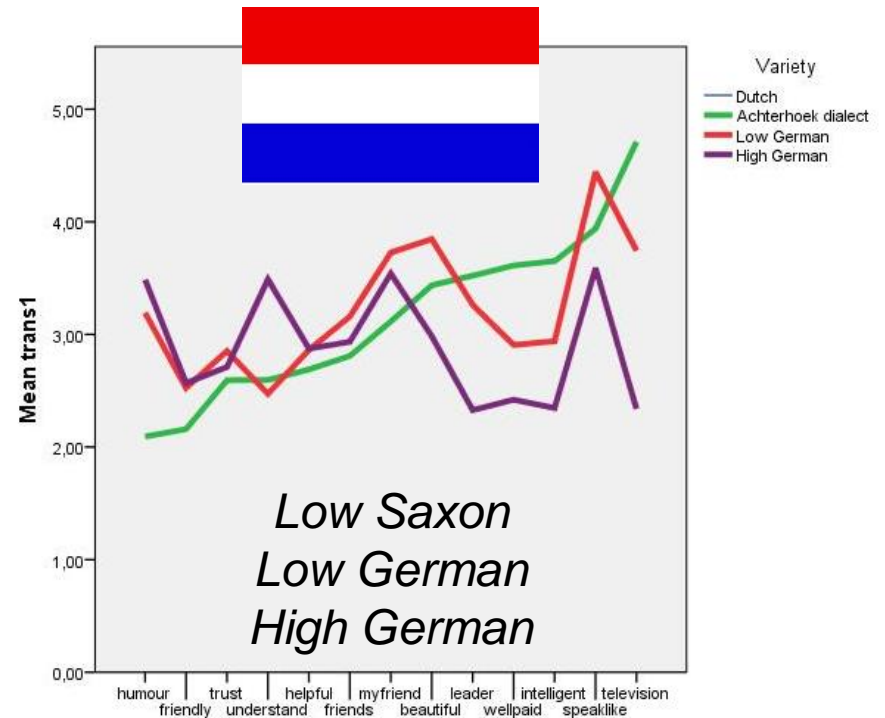
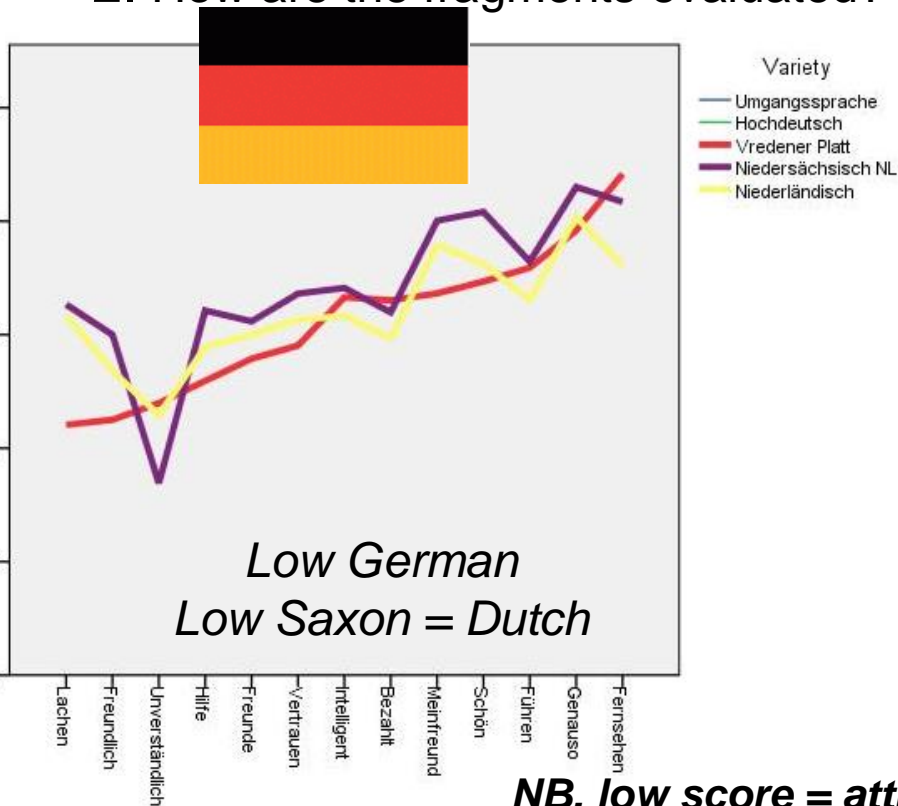
#### Standard Dutch (with slight Brabantic accent)



### 3. Shared attitudes?

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#### 2. How are the fragments evaluated?



**NB. low score = attribute applies**

## 4. More on dialect recognition

- In border areas, dialect competence positively impacts on the proficiency in the neighbouring language (Gooskens & Kürschner 2009)

# *E.g., recognition of the neighbouring dialect by ...*



Neutral/(very) good dialect speakers: 8,7% (4/46)  
(Very) bad dialect speakers: 0,8% (1/132)

45,7% (32/70)  
25,7% (29/113)

# **However**, years of exposure to the foreign standard language yields a more powerful effect:

	Dialect proficiency	Years German at school
Correct label 'Low German' (Winterswijk)	$r = .151^*$	$r = .352^{**}$

*(too low recognition of Low Saxon to carry out similar analysis for Vreden)*

## 5. Conclusions

- State border as a **strong dialect border** also in perceptual terms

Lack of active proficiency suggests that the gap will deepen

Which situation is more favourable for the dialect: an overall more positive evaluation in NL or the development into a solidarity variety in D?

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- **Assymetry**: Dutch informants have better sociolinguistic skills in German than vice versa

Cf. more levelling in Low Saxon (Smits 2011), in addition to smaller linguistic distance vis-à-vis the standard variety (Giesbers 2008)?

Probably rather due to more intensive German teaching in NL (cf. Schüppert & Gooskens 2012 on Swedish/Danish)

Offers many perspectives for further research, e.g. does alleged 'dialect friendly' attitude of border areas (Goossens 1997) relate to contact with the neighbouring language?

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- More **solid empirical basis** needed (e.g., other age groups and social strata; usage data;...)