The Dutch dialect of Weert

LINDA HEIJMANS AND CARLOS GUSSENHOVEN
Centre for Language Studies, University of Nijmegen,
Erasmusplein 1, P.O. Box 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen, the Netherlands
e-mail: l.heijmans@let.kun.nl, gussenhoven@engindy1.let.kun.nl

The town of Weert, which has a population of 47,000, is situated in the Dutch province of Limburg, close to the provincial boundary with Noord-Brabant and some 8 km from the Belgian frontier. Dialectologists classify the dialect as West-Limburgian (Goossens 1977). As in other parts of Dutch Limburg, the local dialect tends to be spoken throughout the social gamut, with all speakers being bilingual with standard Dutch, which is used in interactions with outsiders. Within Weert, the variety spoken in the town itself, also called 'Stadsweerts', can be distinguished from a more rural variety, which is spoken just outside the town and in the surrounding parishes, reflecting a purely regional difference. In the rural variety, the centring diphthongs of 'Stadsweerts' correspond to long mid vowels, as in [biək, be:k] 'stream', [ˈkyəkə, ˈkø:kə] 'kitchen', [ˈkuəkə, ˈko:kə] 'to cook'.

The speech transcribed is that of a 22-year-old female speaker, OH, who is a speaker of the rural variety. Since Limburgian dialects do not have a well-established written tradition, the recorded sample passage is given in standard Dutch spelling.

The dialect is remarkable for its rich vowel system, which illustrates a phonetic five-height system in the front unrounded series. The complexity in the vocalic part of its phonology is further enhanced by the liberal occurrence of the glides [β̞, j] in coda position. As is the case in standard Dutch, it would appear to be useful to distinguish between a 'basic' phonological system and a 'marginal' one; the latter comprises segments and structural possibilities that are confined to recent loans, onomatopoeias, and interjections. 'Marginal' items are put in parentheses, as are allophonic segments.

Consonants

	BILABIAL	LABIO-DENTAL	ALVEOLAR	POST-ALVEOLAR	PALATAL	VELAR	UVULAR	GLOTTAL
PLOSIVE	p b		t d	c ɟ		k (g)		(ʔ)
NASAL	m		n	(ɲ)		ŋ		
FRICATIVE		f v	s z	ʃ ʒ		x ɣ		h
APPROXIMANT	β̞				j			
LATERAL APPROXIMANT			l	(ʎ)				
TRILL							R	

Journal of the International Phonetic Association (1998) **28**: 107–112
https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100300006307 Published online by Cambridge University Press

p	pɛːʀ	'pear'	t	tɔβ̞	'closed'	k	ˈkæːʀməs	'fun fair'
b	bɛːʀ	'bear'	d	dɔβ̞	'(I) push'	(g)	ˈbʀœgə	'bridges'
			c	oːɲc	'onion'			
			ɟ	ˈlɪŋɟə	'length'			
m	mɪk	'bread'	n	ˈneːvə	'next to'	ŋ	ɪŋ	'narrow'
			(ɲ)	ɪɲc	'end'			
f	fiəst	'party'	s	sɔp	'soup'	x	daːx	'day'
v	viə	'cattle'	z	zɔk	'sock'	ɣ	ɣoːt	'good'
			ʃ	bœʀʃ	'drop dead'			
			ʒ	ˈmɔʒə	'did you have to'			
β̞	ˈβ̞ɪçtəʀ	'children'				j	joːŋk	'young'
l	lɔxt	'sky'				(ʔ)	ɣəˈæːʀmc	'arm in arm'
(ʎ)	ˈɣœːʎɟə	'guilder'	ʀ	ʀiːst	'rice'	h	hɔːs	'glove'

In proper names and loans, [c, ɟ, ʃ, ʒ] may occur in the onset of a strong syllable, as in [ʃæk] 'tobacco', [ʒaːk] 'Jack', where their status is marginal. In the 'basic' vocabulary, [c] and [ʃ] occur in coda position and in the onsets of weak syllables, and because of the general distributional restriction of voiced obstruents to syllable onsets, their voiced counterparts, [ɟ] and [ʒ], are only found in the onsets of weak syllables. They often occur in cliticized forms of 2nd person plural and 2nd person masculine singular pronouns: [ˈkʏɲɟə] 'can+you', [ˈlɛːʒə] 'read+you'.

The post-alveolar segments [ɲ, ʎ] are variants of [n, l], occurring before [c, ɟ] within the word, as in [ɛiɲc] 'duck', [ˈɛiɲɟə] 'ducks', [sxœːʎc] 'debt', [ˈsxœːʎɟə] 'debts'. As in standard Dutch, [ɲ] has a marginal status intervocalically, as in [kəˈstaːɲəl] 'chestnut'.

[x] and [ɣ] contrast in the syllable onset, as in [ˈlɑxə] 'to laugh', [ˈvlɑɣə] 'flags', but the occurrence of the voiceless velar fricative is limited to loans like [ˈxaːɔs] 'chaos' or [xluːʀ] 'chlorine' in word-initial position. [x] and [ɣ] are prevelar when preceded or followed by a front vowel: [ɪç] 'I', [ɟɛːʀ] 'gladly'. [g] only occurs intervocalically, as in [ˈlɛgaːf] '(the chickens have) stopped laying'. Younger speakers of the dialect tend to use [ɣ] instead of [g], as in [ˈbʀœɣə] vs. [ˈbʀœgə] 'bridges'.

[ʀ] is a uvular or pre-uvular trill with a fricative component, the latter element being particularly prominent in the coda, where the consonant is partially devoiced.

Vowels

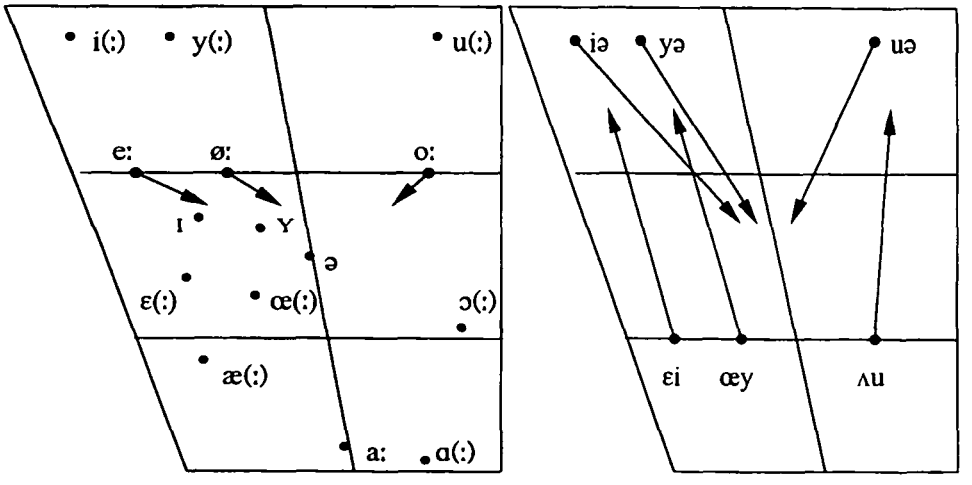
The dialect has 28 stressable oral vocalic nuclei: seven short lax vowels, three short tense vowels, twelve long (tense or lax) monophthongs, and six diphthongs, of which three are centring and three are closing. Among the short vowels, eight have approximately the same quality as their long counterparts. In addition, there is [ə], which occurs in unstressed syllables only. The typologically interesting set is formed by the long monophthongs, which include the series [iː, eː, ɛː, æː, aː, ɑː, ɔː, oː, uː], of which [æː, aː, ɑː] are all unrounded. The vowels [ɑː] and [æː] are restricted to positions before a

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100300006307 Published online by Cambridge University Press

sonorant consonant in the coda, but in this position contrast with the other vowels, as shown by [keːl] 'smock', [kɛːl] 'throat', [bæːls] 'Belgian', [kɑːl] 'bold' and [kɑːl] 'rumours'. The dialect thus strengthens the case for the existence of five-vowel height systems made earlier on the basis of the Bavarian dialect of Amstetten (Austria) by Traunmüller (1982), cited in Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996: 289). The two dialects would appear to have similar long vowel systems: Weert has unrounded [ɑː] where Amstetten has [ɒː], while Weert lacks Amstetten's open [œː].

SHORT VOWELS			LONG VOWELS			DIPHTHONGS		
i	ʀit	'Mary'	iː	βiːt	'far'	iə	kiət	'hut'
y	yt	'out'	yː	zyːt	'sees'	yə	ɣʀyəts	'proud of'
ɪ	hɪtst	'heat'	eː	ʀeːt	'reed'	uə	ʀuət	'red'
ʏ	blʏts	'bump'	øː	zøːt	'sweet'	ɛi	lɛit	'sorrow'
ɛ	ˈzɛgə	'to say'	ɛː	ˈblɛːcə	'leaf +DIM'	œy	kœyt	'fun'
œ	nœt	'mean'	œː	fœːts	'slap'	ʌu	stʌut	'naughty'
æ	slæt	'dishcloth'	æː	tæːnt	'tent'			
			aː	naːt	'wet'			
ɑ	kʀɑts	'scratch'	ɑː	lɑːŋk	'tall'			
ɔ	kʀɔt	'beet'	ɔː	kβɔːt	'angry'			
			oː	bloːt	'blood'			
u	ʀuts	'slide'	uː	ʀuːt	'pane'			
ə	ˈmɛːxcə	'girl'						

Before [ʀ] in the same word, [i, y, u], [iə, yə, uə] and [ɛi, œy, ʌu] do not occur, but all other vowels do. However, when preceded by [ɪ, ʏ, ɛ], [ʀ] is not very frequent and even has a marginal status, as in [ˈβɪʀβɑʀ] 'crisscross', [ʏʀzəˈlinə] 'nuns having St. Ursula as a patron'. The close-mid series [eː, øː, oː] is pronounced [eˑ, øˑ, oˑ], unlike the similarly transcribed vowels in the standard language, which are closing diphthongs, except before [ʀ], where they are centring, as in Weert. Unlike the author LH, who is also a native speaker of the dialect, our informant appeared to be less secure in the



https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100300006307 Published online by Cambridge University Press

distribution of [ɛ] vs. [æ] and [ʏ] vs. [œ], which may foreshadow the collapse of these distinctions in future generations. Older speakers seem to have an additional [ʊ], as evidenced in Van den Berg et al. (1983: 36), Van Moorsel (1996: vii), and Hermans et al. (1998: 40), which neither LH nor OH have.

Vowel plus glide

Like many southeastern dialects, Weert allows short lax vowels to be followed by [β̞, j] in the coda, by the side of long vowels, which latter possibility it shares with the standard language. When preceded by a short vowel, the glide can be followed by a tautosyllabic consonant. These are the combinations that occur (with those occurring marginally in parentheses):

SHORT VOWEL + GLIDE			LONG VOWEL + GLIDE		
ɪj	blɪj	'happy'	iːβ̞	liːβ̞	'lion'
ʏj	kʏj	'cows'	yːj	pyːj	'paws'
			eːj	sneːj	'cut'
			øːj	zøːj	'she, they'
œj	bœj	'shower'	ɛːj	bɛːj	'(I) pray'
æj	dʀæj	'three'	œːj	sxœːj	'bolts'
(ɑj)	deːˈtɑj	'detail'	aːj	slaːj	'lettuce'
ɑβ̞	nɑβ̞	'narrow'			
(ɔj)	hɔj	'hi'	ɔːj	kɔːj	'cold'
ɔβ̞	nɔβ̞	'new'	oːj	ɣoːj	'good'
			oːβ̞	noːβ̞	'now'
			uːj	kuːj	'cage'

The vowel + glide combinations [æj], [œj], [ɑβ̞] are distinct from the closing diphthongs [ɛi, œy, ʌu], whose qualities are similar to those of the corresponding diphthongs in the standard language. First, the durations of the vowel+glide combinations are shorter than those of the diphthongs. In the context [β̞æjts] 'luxurious', [zβ̞ɛit] 'sweat' spoken in isolation, the respective durations are 180 ms and 230 ms. Second, the short vowels are slightly opener than the first elements of the diphthongs, [œ] being considerably opener before [j] than elsewhere. The duration of the long vowel+glide combination [aːj] is 300 ms. Because the diphthongs [ɛi, œy, ʌu] rarely occur word-finally, there are few minimal pairs with short vowel plus glide combinations in final position. An example of a near-minimal pair is [bœj] 'shower', [nœy] as in [heː kʀeːx ɔp sin ˈnœy] 'he was given a good beating'. Preconsonantal (near-)minimal pairs can easily be found: [β̞æjc] '(the wind) blows', [lɛit] 'sorrow', [dœjts] 'German' (adj.), [kœyt] 'fun', [ɑβ̞x] 'eye', [ʌux] 'also'.

Prosody

Although Weert is usually included in the Limburgian, Ripuarian, and Mosel-Franconian geographical area with lexical tone (as on the map in Gussenhoven and Bruce 1999, which is based on Peeters and Schouten 1989, Schmidt 1986, and Wiesinger 1975), and its dialect is described as having a tonal contrast by Verhoeven (1992), and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100300006307 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Verhoeven and Connell (1992), it is in fact non-tonal (Heijmans 1999). It has an intonation system which is very similar to that of the standard language. The reason why it has been classified as tonal is probably that well-known tonal minimal pairs in the more easterly dialects, like [bɛin] 'leg' (pronounced with a falling-rising pitch in the declarative intonation) vs. [bɛin] 'legs' (pronounced with a sharply falling pitch in the declarative intonation, and with a somewhat shorter duration than [bɛin] 'leg') correspond to [bɛin] versus [bæjn] in Weert, which thus in a sense mimics the durational difference of the tonal dialects. Other such pairs are [kniːn] 'rabbit', [knin] 'rabbits' and [bæːʀx] 'mountain', [bæʀx] 'mountains', which have segmentally identical, but tonally distinct cognates in the more easterly dialects.

Stress and accentuation

The stress pattern in the dialect of Weert is identical to that of standard Dutch: main stress is assigned to the antepenult, the penult, or the final syllable of a word if the penult is open, and to the penult or final syllable if the penult is closed.

Largely depending on focus, intonational pitch accents are aligned with respect to the main stressed syllable of certain words, marked with [ˈ] in the transcription. Intonational phrases are delimited by the single bar |, while the end of the phonological utterance is indicated by the double bar ‖.

Transcription of recorded passage

də ˈnoːʀdəβ̞eːɲc æn də ˈzɔn | ˈɦaːjə nən dɪsˈkʏsi | ˈoːvəʀ də ˈvʀɔːx | β̞eːm vɑn hʏn tβ̞iːjə də ˈstæːʀkstə β̞oːʀ | tun dəʀ ˈjyst eːməs vəʀˈbeːj kβ̞oːm | deː ənə ˈdɪkə | ˈβ̞æːʀmə ˈjɑs aːnhaːj ‖ zə ˈspʀoːkən ˈaːf | dæt β̞eːm də vəʀˈbeːjɣɑŋəʀ | zuβ̞iːt zoːj ˈkʀiːyə | ʏm zinə ˈjɑs yt tə tʀækə | də ˈstæːʀkstə zoːj zeːn ‖ də ˈnoːʀdəˈβ̞eːɲc | bəɣɔs yt ˈɑlə mɑxt tə ˈblɔːzə | mæʀ β̞i ˈɦaːʀdəʀ hɛː ˈbleːs | dæs tə ˈstʀɑŋəʀ | də vəʀˈbeːjɣɑŋəʀ zinə ˈjɑs ʏm zɪx ˈhɛːʀ tʀɔk ‖ ytˈʔɛindələk | ɣoːf də ˈnoːʀdəβ̞eːɲc ət mæʀ ˈɔp ‖ ˈdɔːnɔː | bəɣɔs tə ˈzɔn | ˈkʀɑxtəx tə ˈstʀɔːlə | æn məˈtæjn dɔːˈʔɔp tʀɔk də vəʀˈbeːjɣɑŋəʀ zinə ˈjɑz yt ‖ də ˈnoːʀdəβ̞eːɲc | mɔs ˈtun β̞aːl ˈtɔβ̞ɣɛːvə | dæt də ˈzɔn də ˈstæːʀkstə β̞oːʀ‖

Standard Dutch orthographic version

De noordenwind en de zon hadden een discussie over de vraag wie van hun tweeën de sterkste was, toen er juist iemand voorbij kwam die een dikke, warme jas aanhad. Ze spraken af dat wie de voorbijganger ertoe zou krijgen zijn jas uit te trekken de sterkste zou zijn. De noordenwind begon uit alle macht te blazen, maar hoe harder hij blies, des te dichter de voorbijganger zijn jas om zich heen trok. Uiteindelijk gaf de noordenwind het maar op. Daarna begon de zon krachtig te stralen, en meteen daarop trok de voorbijganger zijn jas uit. De noordenwind moest toen wel toegeven dat de zon de sterkste was.

References

BERG, J.H.M. VAN DEN, BROUWER, J.F.H., FEIJEN, J.A.P., HERMANS, P.F., WOUW, J.G.W. van de. (1983). *Weertlands Woordenboek*. Nederweert: Van Deursen.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100300006307 Published online by Cambridge University Press

HERMANS, P.F., BERG, J.H.M. VAN DEN, BROUWER, J.F.H., FEIJEN, J.A.P. and WOUW, J.G.W. van de. (1998). *De Weertlandse Dialecten.* Beegden: Limburgsche Post.

HEIJMANS, L. (1999). Lexical tone in the Dutch dialect of Weert? *Proceedings of the 14th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences, San Francisco,* vol. 3, pp 2383-2386.

GOOSSENS, J. (1977). *Inleiding tot de Nederlandse Dialectologie.* Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff.

GUSSENHOVEN, C. and BRUCE, G. (1999). Word prosody and intonation. In Hulst, H. van der (editor), *Word Prosodic Systems in the Languages of Europe.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

LADEFOGED, P. and MADDIESON, I. (1996). *The Sounds of the World's Languages.* London: Blackwell.

MOORSEL, A.A. van (1996). *'t Wieërts Umgespaadj.* Weert: Maes.

PEETERS, W. and SCHOUTEN, B. (1989). Die Diphthongierung der Westgermanischen î- und û- Laute im Limburgischen. *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* **56,** 309-318.

SCHMIDT, J.E. (1986). *Die Mittelfränkischen Tonakzente (Rheinische Akzentuierung).* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden.

TRAUNMÜLLER, H. (1982). Vokalismus in der westniederösterreichisches Mundart. *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* **2**, 289-333.

VERHOEVEN, J. (1992). Fonetische kenmerken van sleep- en stoottoon in het dialect van Weert. *Taal en Tongval* **44**, 140-155.

VERHOEVEN, J. and CONNELL, B. (1992). Tonal accents in a Limburg dialect: an acoustic-phonetic investigation. *Progress Report from Oxford Phonetics (PROPH)* **5**, 60-72.

WIESINGER, P. (1975). Strukturgeographische und strukturhistorische Untersuchungen zur Stellung der bergischen Mundarten zwischen Ripuarisch, Niederfränkisch und Westfälisch. In Göschel, J. and Veith, W.H. (editors), *Neuere Forschungen in Linguistik und Philologie. Aus dem Kreise seiner Schüler Ludwig Erich Schmitt zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet,* 17-82. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

Appendix: recorded samples on the Internet

The recording of the sample passage as well as recordings of the wordlists are available at http://lands.let.kun.nl/projects/weert.html.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100300006307 Published online by Cambridge University Press