

The ambiguities of Limburgerness : language, place, and belonging in Limburg, the Netherlands

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The Ambiguities of Limburgerness

Language, Place, and Belonging in Limburg, the Netherlands

Lotte Thissen
Maastricht University

On a sunny afternoon in July 2012, I was ‘hanging out’ in the inner-city of Roermond, a middle-sized city located in Limburg, the south-eastern province of the Netherlands. I was desperately searching for an accessible place where people meet and talk on a regular basis. For a moment, I gave up hope and sat down on a bench. I started wondering where to begin, what to do, and tried to remind myself of why I was doing this. An old man who sat on a bench in front of me with his dog, greeted another man who walked by. While overhearing their conversation, the interest of my linguistic-anthropological ear was raised: the man with the dog used a mix of standard Dutch and Limburgian dialect and the other man responded in standard Dutch coloured with Limburgian characteristics. My curiosity about this linguistic variation gave me the courage to

approach them, introduce myself as a researcher and ask permission to record them, which they granted me.

The man with the dog will be called David (D in the transcript) and the man who joined him will be called Zeegert (Z in the transcript).¹ After the recorder was switched on, I (L in the transcript) told them that I investigated how people feel at home in Roermond. In reaction to this, Zeegert proudly showed me the self-made laminated photographs of Roermond and shared where he comes from originally (see extract 1). In reaction to this, David defended why he thinks they are not qualified participants for a study in Limburg. During the conversation, I did not use any Limburgian dialect. The key to transcriptions can be found in the notes.²

Extract 1

1 Z ik kom oorspronkelijk uit Zwolle	1 Z I originally am from Zwolle
2 L Zwolle	2 L Zwolle
3 <u>zuus se waal</u> hè, je hebt ehh, ↑eCHte LimburGers tref je hier niet <u>veul</u> , want <u>dae zien</u> allemaal van	3 D you see huh, you have err, ↑real Limburgers, you won't find them here, because they are all from
4 Z zijn import	4 Z are imported
5 D xxx import	5 D xxx import
6 Z daarom, wij zijn geen Limburgers	6 Z that is why, we are not Limburgers
7 L nee maar dat maakt niet uit, jullie zijn inwoners van Roermond toch?	7 L no but that does not matter, you do live in Roermond, right?
8 Z en wat <u>ga</u> je onderzoeken dan precies	8 Z what exactly are you going to investigate?
9 L nou hoe mensen zich thuis gaan voelen in Roermond, dus daarom zijn jullie hele mooie voorbeelden, jullie wonen hier allang,	9 L well, how people make themselves at home in Roermond, that is why you two are great examples, you have been living here for a long time,
10 D = ja, ja	10 D = yes, yes
11 L maar u maakt foto's van de stad alsof het uw eigen stad is,	11 L but you take photographs of the city as if it is your own city,
12 Z = van de bezienswaardig heden, alles wat, [verkeer]	12 Z = of the attractions, everything that is, [traffic]
13 Z van het gemeentehuis van de kathedraal van kunst, van vanalles hè,	13 Z of the city hall, of the cathedral, of art, of everything, huh,
14 L maar voelt u wel een soort verbond,	14 L but do you feel some kind of connection,
15 Z = verbonden met de stad ja, >>de stad is mooi<<, °en eh de mensen zijn wat moeilijk in de omg ang vin ik, de <u>ech</u> te Limburgers die hier <u>geboren</u> zijn,°	15 Z = connected to the city yes, >>the city is beautiful<<, °and err, the people can be difficult to deal with, I find, the real Limburgers who are born here°
16 D = ↑ja ik denk 't ook dat de eCHte LimburGers, dat dat ↑Geen Gemakkelijke mensen <u>zeen</u>	16 D = ↑yes I also think that the real Limburgers, they are ↑not easy to interact with

David, originally from The Hague (located in the west of the Netherlands), was 81 years old at the time of this conversation. He had been living in Roermond for approximately 45 years (and approximately 67 years in Limburg). He had worked as a coal miner, as a construction worker, and at a roof tile factory. Zeegert, originally from Zwolle (which is located in the north-east of the Netherlands), was 54 years old at the time of this conversation. He had been living in Roermond for 45 years and used to work as a market vendor throughout the province of Limburg.

Extract 1 encourages the study of three aspects. First, the linguistic practices of both men. The extract showed that David used a hard /g/ (capital and bold in the Dutch transcript), which is mostly associated with the northern provinces ‘above the rivers’ (Hagen and Giesberg 1988: 32), as well as Limburgian dialect words (underlined in the Dutch transcript). Zeegert used a soft /g/ (other font, bold, and italics in the Dutch transcript) and his pronunciation of standard Dutch sounded melodious or sing-song which is associated with the southern provinces of the Netherlands (ibid). Both men were thus using linguistic variation in their speech, which is the social practice in which people use different linguistic forms that may index particular places or social groups (cf. Eckert 2008). Within the study of linguistic variation, it is interesting to unravel how these variations become attached to social meanings. Secondly, while extract 1 demonstrated that David and Zeegert used varying linguistic forms which are originally associated with both Limburg and the rest of the Netherlands (or ‘Holland’ as many Limburgers refer to the rest of the country), line 3, 6, and 15 showed that, at the same time, both men were

deliberately distancing themselves from the ‘real Limburgers who are born here’. These utterances hint at the ideas about who belongs to a particular place or group and who does not. It is thus about how these men involve themselves in processes of place-making and give meaning to places. Finally, it is interesting to study how these three aspects – linguistic variation, belonging, and place-making – relate to each other. Do the forms of linguistic variation of David and Zeegert point to (or index) particular ideologies of belonging they cherish regarding places like Roermond and Limburg as a whole? In short, it is my surprise about the contradicting linguistic and ideological practices of both men that will serve as the point of departure for this paper.

This paper extends the Dutch cultural and linguistic anthropology in three ways. First, while Dutch societal and social scientific debates regarding belonging and place usually take place at the level of the nation-state and in terms of *allochtoon* vs. *autochtoon*, this paper approaches belonging from a regional perspective. By showing how a person may feel *out of place* when moving to a particular region in one’s native country (cf. Geschiere 2009), I argue that it is necessary to refocus our attention to understand how processes of belonging to places evolve at smaller scales in peripheral areas such as Limburg. I believe that the Dutch multicultural society is not and should not be only a matter of (post)migrants. Rather, multiculturalism and multilingualism *among* those referred to as ‘autochtoon’ Dutch seem to be a relevant topic when looking at the case-study through a linguistic-anthropological lens. This contribution stresses that regional and local differentiation and displacement may be as important

national identification. This research adds another dimension to linguistic ethnographic research on multilingualism in urban contexts, which generally takes place in dominant urban parts of the Netherlands, cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the so-called *Randstad*, and in other European countries, like Copenhagen in Denmark and London in Great Britain (Quist and Svendsen 2010; Rampton 2006). Thus far, comparatively little research of this kind has been done on the multilingual practices in urban settings in peripheral areas.

Secondly, this study aims to contribute to the broader discussion about understanding the relationship between language, place, and belonging (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Taking as a point of departure Silverstein's (1985) notion of the total linguistic fact, that is the triadic relationship between linguistic form, social praxis, and ideology, this paper focuses on the actual linguistic forms people use, how they use these linguistic forms (for example to align with a particular place or group) and the ideologies people construct, reproduce and resist by using particular linguistic forms. In doing so, this interdisciplinary approach scrutinizes, following Blommaert (2010), Heller (2011), Møller et al (2009) and Quist (2011), the connection between language, place and belonging and shows that this connection is multi-layered and ambiguous rather than fixed. As a result, it adds a new dimension to so-called NORM research, often done on dialects in Limburg, which focuses primarily on non-mobile, older, and rural males in order to lay bare the 'purest' or 'most authentic' form of a language existing in a particular locality (Chambers and Trudgill 1980: 33). This paper challenges this view on language and

includes all linguistic resources that are used in daily interactions, thereby demonstrating how people use linguistic variation as a social meaning-making process.

Thirdly, rather than focusing on 'pure' and 'authentic' forms, I deliberately explore the actual linguistic practices people use in daily life. In doing so, I agree with Blommaert (201:10) that 'language is an extremely sensitive indicator of broader social and cultural processes'. Similarly, Ahearn argues that 'questions about social relations and cultural meanings can best be answered by paying close attention to language' (Ahearn 2012: 17). Language is – besides many other aspects (i.e. visual images) – one of the richest resources for semiotic production since it is dual in nature: language has referential as well as social meaning (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). This can be illustrated by the differences in pronunciation of the word '*geld*', money. In the southern parts of the Netherlands, this word would be pronounced with a soft /g/, whereas the hard /g/ is to be found in other parts of the country. The pronunciation of '*geld*' thus refers to region on a broader socio-cultural level. Moreover, as we will see later, the soft /g/ is associated with people from the south who have *joie de vivre* whereas the hard /g/ is associated with distant people from the north. The fact that linguistic forms constitute this semiotic meaning makes them powerful resources for people trying to align or distinguish themselves from others (ibid: 377). Moreover, by including geographic and anthropological concepts, like place-making and belonging, this paper is able to add a new perspective on language use in daily interaction. Therefore, this interdisciplinary research is valuable for cultural anthropologists and other social scientists that are interested in matters of belonging

but are not particularly interested in language, since the analysis of language use is the area *par excellence* where constructions of belonging to places and groups can be studied closely.

In short, this contribution offers another perspective on ‘the Netherlands now’ by looking into regional and local mechanisms of place-making and belonging. By combining the study of themes like language, place, and belonging, this paper is able to analyse meaning making through language in relation to physical sites and the senses of belonging people hold towards them. Moreover, this paper aims to complicate the taken-for-granted connection of language, place, and belonging by analysing the linguistic and cultural practices of two native Dutch men who do not feel to belong to the Limburgian region. After setting out the theoretical framework and context of this paper, the case-study sheds light on the ways people, who moved to another (peripheral) region of their native country, give linguistic and cultural content to place-making and ideologies of (un)belonging. The following questions are addressed. First, how do people give meaning to linguistic forms and places? Second, how do they choose linguistic forms in order to align with or distance themselves from a specific belonging to a particular place or group? And, finally, how do people construct ideological oppositions of (un)belonging?

Language, place-making, and belonging in the era of globalisation

The consequences of globalisation for linguistic and cultural practices are popular subjects in current

anthropological (for example Inda and Rosaldo 2007) and sociolinguistic (for example Blommaert 2010) studies. It is often said that the ways people attach cultural and linguistic features to spaces and align with particular groups are less predictable in a world that is highly interconnected (Bauman 1998; Inda and Rosaldo 2007). However, globalisation’s bridging function also produces cleavages between people, economies, and parts of the world: the *have* and the *have-nots*, as Bauman (1998) calls it. At the same time, the transformation of the world into a *global village*³ provokes the urge to search for a locality, a root or something stable that people can trust (Bauman 1998). Because of this growing urge for localities to identify with, people increasingly have become preoccupied with place (Feld and Basso 1996; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). Moreover, Geschiere argues that the notion of autochthony – which literally means to be born from soil – has gained more importance in this globalising context where the authenticity of places is increasingly questioned and challenged (Geschiere 2009). Places are thus important foci for the construction of senses of belonging in a globalised world: to distinguish who belongs and, as important, who does not (Christensen 2009; Geschiere 2009; Ghorashi 2003). Within the construction of belonging, place serves as an essential context for providing loci for processes of (dis)identification (Hubbard and Kitchin 2010). It is therefore necessary to study place-making: the process in which people endow physical spaces with cultural and linguistic meaning in order to embrace them (Hubbard and Kitchin 2010; Feld and Basso 1996; Johnstone 2010). Moreover, by adding the concept of belonging to place-making, we are able to study the ideas about

who ‘belongs’ and ‘does not belong’ to a particular place and the reasons given for this. Briefly summarised, on the one hand, globalisation enables people to make their place in multi-layered and sometimes unforeseen manners, whereas on the other hand, people also try to defend their places from being absorbed into the global village and thereby connect their place to an autochthonous group.

The era of globalisation not only influences processes of place-making and belonging, it also affects the ways linguistic practices are perceived. Blommaert (2010: 5) describes two strands: the sociolinguistics of distribution and the sociolinguistics of mobility. The first strand studies language in a horizontal and stable place and tries to conventionalise languages. In this stance (as in dialectology), language, place, and belonging are understood as having a one-to-one relationship (Chambers and Trudgill 1980: 33). A person born in one place *has* a particular identity and *belongs* to a particular speech community (cf. Quist 2011). This strand essentialises people and their linguistic behaviour in its construction of ‘the authentic speaker’ (Coupland 2003).

The second strand recognises languages as language-in-motion due to globalisation and should be studied as such (Blommaert 2010: 5). Whereas the first strand thus focuses on ‘languages’ as linguistically and culturally defined entities one simply ‘has’, the second one investigates the process of ‘linguaging’ in which people use all linguistic resources that are at their disposal (Jørgensen 2008: 169; see also Møller et al 2009). The result of linguaging is that people create incomplete repertoires reflecting one’s life history, a view that contrasts with the notion that people acquire a complete

language; after all, ‘we never know “all” of a language’ (Blommaert 2010: 23). From these repertoires, people can pick and mix various linguistic resources in order to fulfil particular purposes. As a consequence, the connection between language, place, and belonging becomes deconstructed or untied (cf. Quist 2011). This means that people are able to cherish multiple alignments to varying linguistic resources, places, and senses of belonging, which can be ambiguous or contradicting. Similarly, Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 7) challenge ‘the spatial distribution of peoples, tribes, and cultures’. As cultures, languages are not to pinpoint on a map, not only because of borderlands where practices are mixed but moreover because of the linguistic difference within localities (ibid). To study these shifting constructions of language, place, and belonging, Blommaert (2010: 96) argues for an ethnographic approach to language, since ‘ethnographic sensitivity’ enables us to investigate how people actually organise their semiotic resources instead of ‘predicting’ these practices according to their locality.

The connection of language, place, and belonging can thus be perceived as either fixed or fluid. Even though the linguistic and cultural practices in the case-study etically underline this fluid explanation of the connection between language, place, and belonging, it shows at the same time that people emically engage with more essentialist or fixed stances. Moreover, the case-study stresses the mobile nature of linguistic resources by analysing the men’s linguistic practices in detail, thereby showing their adoption of Limburgian linguistic resources, such as a soft /g/ and dialect words. Before explaining the linguistic practices from the case-study in relation to place and belonging, it is first

necessary to clarify this contribution's regional perspective on belonging. Secondly, it is necessary to embed the case-study within a historical context to explain the notion of Limburgerness.

Approaching Dutch belonging from a regional perspective

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper approaches belonging from a regional perspective rather than the national perspective currently predominant in societal and social scientific debates. In this national perspective on belonging, the multicultural Dutch society is mostly reduced to the existence of two groups which are opposed to each other: *allochtonen* (migrants and post-migrants) and *autochtonen* (Dutch 'natives'). Especially due to new realist parties like Partij voor de Vrijheid (hereafter the pvv) and their dedication to decrease immigration and the so-called 'islamization' of Dutch society, this debate on belonging has become increasingly hardened and polarised (Prins 2002).⁴ In this debate, autochthony has become an important notion to decide whether or not one is able to claim legitimate belonging to the Netherlands (cf. Geschiere 2009).

Since the pvv is known particularly for their nationalism, it is perhaps surprising to find it resurfacing in a paper that seeks to establish a *regional* rather than *national* perspective on belonging. However, as I will show in the following, Limburgerness is deeply and ambiguously entwined with national identity in Wilders' discourse. For the Provincial Government elections in March 2011, Geert Wilders – born and raised in Limburg and leader and only member of his

own party since its foundation in 2006 – decided to brand his party as Limburgian, thereby turning to a regional perspective on belonging. In his speech in December 2010, Geert Wilders used and emphasised the notion of *Limburgerness* (a notion primarily based on the linguistic, cultural and religious otherness, as will be explained in the next section) to attract as much voters as possible. This speech is relevant to clarify the current political debates going on in the Netherlands and the way the pvv approaches belonging from a regional perspective.

In this speech, Wilders entrusted that he was happy to 'escape' Holland for the occasion, where the political centre is located, and that coming to Limburg was always a delight. Wilders even emphasised that from the viewpoint of the pvv, not Amsterdam but Limburg is the heart of the Netherlands, and that Limburgers deserve better because they have been neglected too long by national politics. With this, the party adapted its strategy to the opposition of Holland vs. Limburg, a forceful historical construct as we will see in the next section. Moreover, the pvv wanted to subsidise and preserve Limburg's traditional folklore and 'our beautiful Limburgian dialect'. During the presentation of the five candidates for the Provincial Government elections, their Limburgerness was highlighted constantly: Cor sold his homemade Limburgian *vlaaien* (pies) in his supermarket and Roland was qualified to strive for Limburg's well-being. Apart from that, the anti-Islam statements generally used in the national debate on belonging were put into a regional perspective by slogans like: 'with the pvv it is: no halal but *zuurvlees*! No mosque, but *carnaval*! No speeches of hatred-imams, but *buutreedners*!' With this quote,

the pvv opposed aspects generally associated with Islam to aspects which are seen as characteristic for Limburgian culture and belonging: *zuurvlees* is a traditional Limburgian dish with horsemeat or beef, syrup and gingerbread as its main ingredients, *carnaval* is the three-day celebration before the fasting period starts, and a *buutreedner* is a *carnaval*-related comedian. Moreover, they emphasised a connection between Limburgian dialect words and Limburgian culture and identity. Wilders concluded the speech with the promise ‘to conquer Limburg and to give Limburg back to the Limburgers’. The speech thereby implied that Limburg was taken over by the national politics as well as (Islamic) migrants. Emphasising Limburg’s otherness appeared to be a successful strategy, as many Limburgers voted for the pvv in the Provincial Government. At the time, the party became the largest party – a position it shared with the Christian Democrats, the party that is traditionally the most popular in Limburg (Provinciale Staten van Limburg 2011: 10).⁵

In addition to the debates on national belonging encouraged by the pvv, this campaign thus underlined the regional scale of belonging. The pvv’s and Wilders’ Limburgerness were clearly stressed as well as their connectedness to the province and its imagined cultural heritage. Moreover, the fixed connection between language, place, and belonging was clearly reproduced during this speech. The empirical material will critically review the taken-for-granted label of Limburger. Who is this Limburger to whom the pvv wants to give Limburg back to? As described above, the pvv has an exclusive notion attached to the label ‘Limburger’, but the question is which oppositions of belonging are important on a regional level when local daily linguistic

and cultural practices are considered? Before addressing this question, the next section informs about the construction of Limburgerness.



Figure 1. Touristic advertisement of Limburg

Love of the homeland⁶

Limburg is actually a piece of foreign country in the Netherlands. Just take some photographs, show them to the people at home and do not tell anyone where you were. The reactions: Tuscany? Central France? A camp site next to the Loire? Somewhere in the Mosel area? No! Limburg is so un-Dutch and so close-by. Hardly two hours by car and you are already there: you quickly get the feeling of being on holiday, the pleasure starts right away. Book a long or short vacation and before you know it, you will encounter the love of your life. Discover it all at www.liefdevoorhetleven.nl

The construction of Limburgerness

The province of Limburg is located in the southeast of the Netherlands and has approximately 1.2 million inhabitants, of which more than fifty per cent live in the southern part of the province (CBS 2011). A campaign run by the Tourist Information Office of Limburg in 2008, illustrates the construction of Limburg's distinct culture and identity.

In the advertisement, Limburg is presented as a piece of foreign country – un-Dutch even – which is only two hours away by car. Presumably, the campaign's goal was to attract more national tourists to Limburg, since the time range of two hours implies coming from the *Randstad*. After this two-hour drive to Limburg, he or she would immediately feel as if being on holiday. In other words, Limburg is such a different place compared with the rest of the country that it is a paradise where other Dutch inhabitants can go to if they want to escape the 'real' Netherlands. This advertisement reproduces the general feeling that Limburg is not, due to its landscape, really part of the Dutch nation-state.

This image of un-Dutchness could be historically explained since the boundaries of the province have been changed many times in the past. During the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), the southern part of the Netherlands, the current provinces of North Brabant and Limburg, were under Spanish rule during which Catholicism was the only permitted religion (Hagen and Giesbers 1988: 32). After this, the actual area 'Limburg' was artificially created by the French administrative forces (Knotter 2009: 43-44). However, the territory remained a highly contested area with political instability and take-overs. King William I

decided in 1815 that the province should be called 'Limburg', a name derived from a medieval duchy (Knotter 2009: 187). Ultimately, the province of Limburg was integrated into the Netherlands in 1866 and, after the independence of the German Confederation in 1867, the province became fully Dutch (Knotter 2009: 35-36).

Knotter considers Limburg as a case of 'negative integration' (2011) since 'a regional Limburg identity is constructed in opposition to 'Holland' ([which is] the rest of the Netherlands), it could only develop because Limburg became part of that country'. Put differently, everything that the Netherlands was, Limburg was not. Inhabitants of Limburg as well as the rest of the Netherlands still reproduce Limburg's distinct and peripheral identity, of which the *pvv*'s speech was an example. One of the most important aspects of the regional identity construction is the linguistic otherness of Limburg. In general, how people speak in Limburg, and other parts of the south, is quickly recognised because of the soft /g/ (International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA): ɣ), whereas the hard /g/ (IPA: ɣ) is associated with the north (Hagen and Giesbers 1988: 32; Van Oostendorp n.d.).⁷ The case-study of David and Zeegert shows the ideological associations of the hard and soft /g/. In addition to this phonological difference in standard Dutch, there is also the use of the dialect. The Limburgian dialects have been recognised by the Dutch government as an official regional minority language since 1997 based on the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages (ECRML 2001: 30). The dialects in Dutch-Limburg are part of a larger group of dialects which is spread throughout Belgian-Limburg and the German border region (Cornips in

press). The dialects in Limburg are claimed to be spoken by 75% of the Limburgian population in both formal and informal situations (Driessen 2009:69). Being able to speak a Limburgian dialect is what generally constitutes Limburgerness.

The construction of Limburgerness also takes place through religion (Catholicism in the south versus Protestantism in the north) and concepts of conviviality and *joie de vivre* whereas the north of the Netherlands is imagined to be cold and distant (Knotter 2009). This construction of Limburgerness is reproduced in many public events, daily situations, political events (as the pvv's speech) and in (social) media (see Cornips et. al. 2012).

Therefore, it is clear that the notion of Limburgerness is primarily constructed by highlighting its linguistic, cultural, and, to a lesser extent, religious otherness in comparison with the rest of the Netherlands. The next section clarifies how linguistic forms can index ideological construct, such as this notion of Limburgerness.

The indexes of languaging

It has been stressed earlier that linguistic forms must be seen as one of the richest resources for semiotic production because of their referential and social meaning (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). This paper takes as a point of departure Silverstein's (1985) notion of the total linguistic fact to fully grasp this social meaning of linguistic forms. This concept encourages the study of linguistic forms, social praxis and ideology in triadic relation to each other. In this way, by combining the

analysis of linguistic practices and ideas about place and belonging, we gain an understanding of the ways people choose linguistic forms to construct ideological beliefs about linguistic forms, places and existing oppositions within these places (Eckert 2008). Therefore, I will examine the linguistic forms used by David and Zeegert and the social and ideological meanings thereby reproduced.

Extract 1 demonstrated that David and Zeegert used linguistic forms associated with Limburgian speech and dialect even though they were raised outside Limburg. By doing so, the connection of language, place, and belonging is untied. One cannot predict one's linguistic practices solely based on one's place of birth. Instead, these men were languaging; they were using different linguistic resources that were at their disposal (Blommaert 2010; Jørgensen 2008). But what are the purposes of languaging? According to Woolard (2008), linguistic variation can be explained by awareness of language ideologies: if one is aware of the underlying ideology of a particular linguistic form, he or she may decide to change his or her linguistic practices according to the ideology. Therefore, the choice of linguistic forms is never neutral. What, then, does it mean that David used both a hard /g/ and a soft /g/ and words stemming from standard Dutch and Limburgian dialect whereas Zeegert used a soft /g/ and standard Dutch?

In order to explain languaging, it is necessary to clarify exactly how ideological meaning is constructed through linguistic practices. For this, the notion of indexicality sheds light on the ways linguistic forms come to be associated with ideological meaning: social categories, localities, lifestyles, etcetera (Ahearn 2012: 25-30; Eckert 2008). This means that a linguistic form

points to a meaning on another level, like smoke may index fire. Eckert (2008: 454) argues that a particular linguistic form may have a range of ideological meanings or interpretations, which she calls the indexical field. Within this field, a linguistic form may be connected to a range of possible places, identities and/or categories. For example, apart from fire, smoke could also index a cigarette or a cloud. Which index may be foregrounded at what point is highly dependent on the context and who is doing the interpretation. I will now describe the indexical field of Limburg.

The indexical field of Limburg

What is the geographical distribution of the well-known distinction of hard /g/ and soft /g/ in the Netherlands? The map of Figure 2 serves as an example of the strand of sociolinguistics of distribution since it pins particular linguistic forms to particular places by showing the spread of the two phonemes soft and hard /g/. According to the map, the soft /g/ (indicated by the pink/green stripes) is not exclusively found in Limburg; it is spread throughout the south of the Netherlands and a part of the east. The so-called ‘big rivers’ feature as natural borders that demarcate the gradual transition from the use of soft /g/ to hard /g/.

Mathijssen (2011) reviews the existing stereotypes about Limburgers and argues that these stereotypes are ‘othering’ the Limburger: they love to go to cafes, they like to drink, they do not value the truth, they are sensitive to authorities, they are not very intelligent, and they are arranging business ‘among each other’ (ibid:

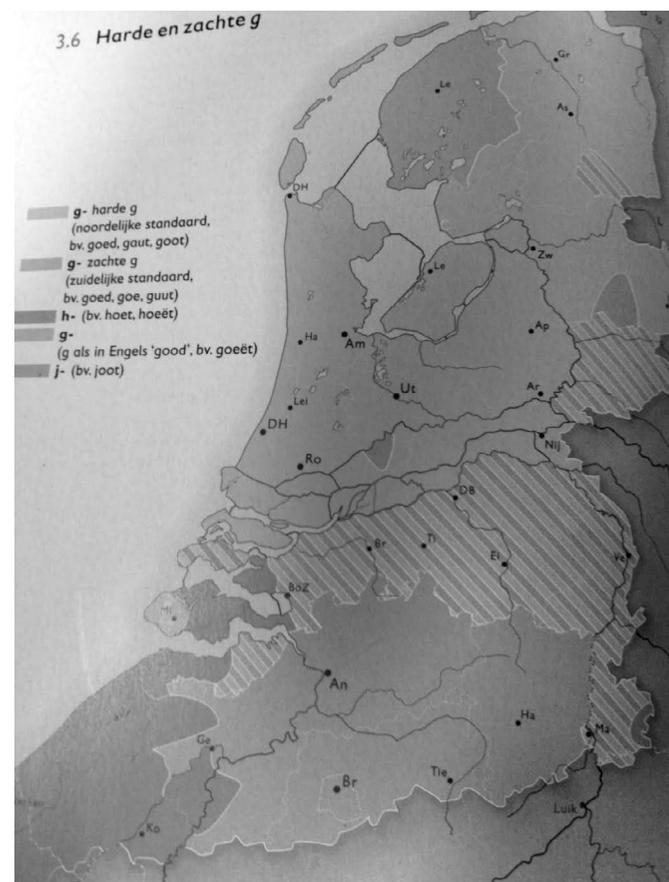


Figure 2. The spread of soft and hard /g/ in the Netherlands (Van der Sijs 2011)

19-20). People from the north, on the other hand, are rude, stingy, and arrogant (ibid: 20).

Wherever the soft /g/ and hard /g/ are to be found, they both index particular ideological beliefs which are in fact placed: the soft /g/ indexes the south and the hard /g/ indexes the north of the Netherlands. Hagen and Giesberg (1988: 32) argue that the soft /g/ in and

‘melodious’ or ‘sing-song’ pronunciation of standard Dutch of southern speakers are prone to language attitudes and language stereotyping (ibid). So, it is clear that the melodious pronunciation with the soft /g/ in standard Dutch may index various categories: Limburgers, Brabanders, catholic, conviviality, carnival, backwards, less intellectual, rurality, etcetera (Hagen and Giesberg 1988; Mathijssen 2011: 19-20). However, this othering is not just a one way process (Mathijssen 2011: 23). The Limburgers are also othering people from ‘beyond the rivers’, the northern part of the country (Hagen and Giesberg 1988: 32). In this sense, the hard /g/ comes to be associated with: Hollanders, rudeness, stinginess, arrogance, urbanity, and etcetera. These ideologies construct a border between two groups of people. Although these language ideologies of linguistic forms are constructed, vague and ambiguous (Eckert 2008; Mathijssen 2011), people tend to highlight and reproduce these differences and oppositions in everyday life, of which the abovementioned touristic advertisement and the speech of the pvv were an example.

Place-making through languaging

The process of place-making, that is to say, the process in which people attach cultural and linguistic resources to and adopt resources already existing in a physical space, enables people to embrace a place and to feel at home. One might wonder why David and Zeegert still live in Limburg, even though they claimed to be excluded continuously because they were outsiders or Hollanders. But are they Hollanders or outsiders when we consider their linguistic forms? Why did they use

mixed linguistic resources? And how did they linguistically relate to Roermond and/or Limburg?

The insights of indexicality provide an analytical tool to analyse the conversation with David and Zeegert.

Extract 1

16 D = ↑ja ik denk ‘t ook
dat de eCHte Limbur-
Gers, dat dat ↑Geen
Gemakkelijke mensen
zeen

16 D = ↑yes I also think
that the real Limburgers,
they are ↑not easy to
interact with

In accordance with the indexes of the hard /g/, as described above, David performed an outsider position by using the indexical linguistic forms of an outsider. As a result, the boundary between him and ‘real Limburgers’ is strengthened. He showed he does not want to belong to that group and emphasises this with the indexical hard /g/. In doing so, I believe he opposed ‘the real Limburgers’ – them – against the outsiders – us – with which he resisted his belonging to Limburg. However, David also used the dialect word ‘*zeen*’ with which he revealed, to a certain degree, his place-making in the province through the acquisition of its dialect. In addition to the argument of Woolard (2008: 438), that people change their linguistic practices according to the existing ideologies, languaging relates thus to aligning with or distancing oneself from a particular belonging to a place, group, community, etcetera, through one’s linguistic practices. It should be noted, however, that indexes are not always interpreted the same. Context and the person who is doing the actual interpretation influence the actual indexical meaning

Extract 2

1 L en u, want u spreekt ↑wel wat dialect woorden?	1 L and you, because you do use dialect words?
2 D = ↑ja >>maar weet je <u>wie</u> dat komt<< <u>omdet iCH</u> eh eh <u>veul</u> (.) <u>iCH</u> hōb in ↑Thorn Gewoond hē, >>22 jaar<<	2 D yes, but do you know why, because I err many, I have lived in Thorn, huh, 22 years,
3 Z ja ja, dat zal,	3 Z yes yes, as if
4 D en op een GeGeven moment,	4 D and at one point
5 Z het witte ↑stadje	5 Z the white town
6 L het witte ↓dorp	6 L the white village
7 D daar ben ik zelf ook prins ↑carnaval geweest in Thorn	7 D I was Prince Carnival myself in Thorn
8 L ↑echt waar?	8 L really?
9 D jaha	9 D yes!
10 D maar dat zo, >>da hatse altied ↑(zeukers)/(zeikers) tussen hē<<, want ze wisten dat ik een Hollander ↓was. En toen zag ik dat eh tegen de president; >>daē <u>man</u> daē moet <u>mich</u> <u>neet</u> , <u>daē</u> <u>zag</u> altied <u>teage</u> <u>mich</u> <u>doe</u> <u>waers</u> nooit prins, <u>doe</u> ↑kale Hollander<<. ((spreekt tegen Z)) <u>witse</u> wat 't was xxx	10 D but it was, you always have (searchers)/(naggers) huh, they knew that I was a Hollander. And then I told the president: that man does not like me, he always tells me: you are never going to be a Prince, you bald Hollander. ((talking to Z)) you know what xxx
11 Z jaja	11 Z yes yes
12 D maar ik trok <u>mich</u> <u>dao</u> <u>neet</u> <u>veul</u> van aan, maar het was ↑hate, >>hatelijk hē<<,	12 D but I did not take it personally, but it was hate, hateful huh
13 Z jajaja dat is jammer, dat is gewoon , dat is wel zo,	13 Z yes yes yes, it is a shame, it is, it is true
14 D ja maar dat ↑is	14 D yes it is
15 Z dat krij dat is, dat is gewoon	15 Z you get it, it's normal
16 D ik ben toch even Goed prins carnaval geworden ((lacht))	16 D I nevertheless did become Prince Carnival ((laughs))
17 Z wij zijn buitenstaanders en dat hou je, dat blijf je, daar kan je niks aan doen, of veranderen, daar moet je gewoon bij neerleggen, als je dat kan dan ben je, dan voel je jezelf wel thuis hier	17 Z we are outsiders, that's the way it is, you will stay outsider, you cannot help it, or change it, you just have to accept it, and if you can then you are, then you will feel at home here.

of a linguistic form. David provided us with another example of aligning with a particular place through languaging in extract 2.

David explained how he had learned the Limburgian dialect and started telling an anecdote from the times he lived in a village not far from Roermond, where he was Prince Carnival. Before the celebration prior to the fasting period, each carnival club announces a Prince who takes the lead that season. This nomination is perceived as a great honour and a once in a lifetime experience.⁸ As a Hollander, David was criticised during his reigning period as prince. While telling this story, he selected linguistic forms from different sources: both soft and hard /g/, standard Dutch and dialect words. Especially in line 10, David used more dialect words and soft /g/ compared to his other utterances. David's linguistic practices challenge the map of Figure 2 since it seems to be unnatural to pin linguistic forms to a place. We could thus conclude that David was languaging by using varying linguistic resources at his disposal. Woolard's explanation (2008: 438) for languaging fits this case. Since David was aware of the fact that he is perceived as a Hollander, probably with the accompanying stereotypes, he aligned with Limburg by using local indexes, in contrast to extract 1 where he was clearly distancing himself from *Limburgers*. The fact that David was criticised as Prince Carnival helps to understand why he was making an effort to perform as a Limburger by using more dialect words and soft /g/. To legitimate this belonging and the use of Limburgian dialect, he pointed out that he had lived in Thorn for 22 years and that he has been Prince Carnival. David thus demonstrated that he embraced the place and is proud of the

fact that he became prince against the odds, according to the victory laugh in line 16.

Extract 1 illustrated how Zeegert used a soft /g/ in his standard Dutch and that he sounds melodious. This is not remarkable since he has been living in Limburg since he was a little boy and has presumably adapted to his surroundings. As David, Zeegert is languaging and embraces the local difference in phonemes, while originally being from an area where (according to the map of Figure 2) the hard /g/ is present. He did not, however, adopt the Limburgian dialect. In fact, what is striking is that he strongly resisted his belonging to Limburg: he claimed to be an outsider in Limburg who cannot fit in due to the difficulties of contact with 'the real Limburgers who are born here' (see extract 1, line 15). Although Zeegert used a soft /g/, he was not clearly trying to distance himself from a group of Limburgers, as David is, when distancing by using a hard /g/ and aligning when using a soft /g/ and dialect words. Rather, Zeegert was more prone to aligning himself to Limburg, or more specifically, Roermond as a place, which is illustrated by extract 3.

Zeegert clearly drew a boundary between the people of Roermond and the city itself. When he talked about dialect, he claimed to understand it well, but says he did not want to belong; in other words, he did not want to speak the dialect, since he did not have the urge to belong to the people. One could even argue that he perceived speaking a Limburgian dialect as a prerequisite to get in contact with Limburgers. Instead, he said he wanted to belong to the city, which he found beautiful. In order to feel at home or to make his place within the city, he claimed to have distanced himself from the people of Roermond. Zeegert belonged to the

Extract 3

1 L en ook dialect, is dat ook een factor dat meespeelt daarin?	1 L and the dialect, too, is that also of any influence?
2 Z ja dat speelt,	2 Z yes it is,
3 D = >>nou eh<<	3 D well err,
4 Z ja ik versta het goed, maar ehh dat speelt ↑zeker een rol	4 Z yes I do understand it, but err it sure influences
5 D als ze horen	5 D when they hear
6 Z >>ik wil d'r niet bijhoren<<, ik wil wel bij de stad horen, de stad is <i>prachtig</i> . °maar niet bij de mensen dat hoeft voor mij niet°	6 Z I don't want to fit in, I want to belong to the city, the city is beautiful. but I don't want to belong to the people, there's no need
7 D nee	7 D no
8 Z dus daar heb ik me af, ↑afstand van genomen en daar voel ik me goed in	8 Z so of that I, I distanced myself from that and I feel good about it

city, but not to the people. His hobby, taking photographs of the city, underlines this belonging to the city as a physical place. In extract 2, line 17, he already claimed that he had to accept the fact that he is an outsider to Limburgers in order to feel at home. With this, he demonstrated how place can be a locus for (un)belonging or disidentification; Zeegert drew a line between belonging to a place *as such* and belonging to a particular group present in that place.

David and Zeegert have embraced their place linguistically (by embracing the soft /g/ and the dialect) but also culturally (by becoming Prince Carnival and taking photographs of the city's highlights which he carried around in a special bag and proudly showed to me). They nevertheless claimed to be outsiders within Roermond. How is this ambivalence reproduced in oppositions of (un)belonging (Christensen 2009) and

how do these oppositions recur in different contexts (Gal and Irvine 1995)?

Recurring oppositions of (un)belonging

Within processes of place-making, people are fashioning themselves and – equally important – others, through the construction of definitions of self and other with which people try to fit in into the existing relations, groups or oppositions within a place (cf. Eckert 1989; Feld and Basso 1996). We have seen that the linguistic forms David and Zeegert employ, as well as their constructions of place-making were rather localised, which means that their self-imposed unbelonging ('we are not Limburgers') was not as clear-cut: they shifted between senses of belonging and unbelonging.

longing to Roermond/Limburg. Indexes are of great importance to adjust one's linguistic practices in order to align or distance oneself from a particular group or place. In this process of fashioning one's belonging to a place, oppositions of who belongs and who does not are constructed (Christensen 2009). This section uncovers the various oppositions of 'us' and 'them' constructed by David and Zeegert and shows how these oppositions are reproduced on three different levels. Gal and Irvine (1995: 974) call this logic *recursiveness*. This involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level. Gal and Irvine (ibid) argue that examining these recurring oppositions is not the same as examining identities; it is rather about the oppositions between activities or roles associated with prototypical social persons. These recursive oppositions allow actors to claim and attempt to create shifting communities, identities, and selves, at different levels of contrast, within a cultural field. In the case-study at hand, David and Zeegert shift between different selves and oppositions with the cultural, and linguistic, field of Limburg.

Large opposition: Limburg versus Holland

The opposition constituting a sense of Limburgerness from 1867 onwards, namely the oppositions between Limburg and Holland, has been reproduced by David and Zeegert in extract 1 and 2. This is underlined by extract 2 in which we saw that David, being aware of this stereotype and related language ideology about the soft and hard /g/, adapted his linguistic resources and succeeded to fit into the existing oppositions (since he actually became prince of carnival). Both he and Zeegert underlined that they did not fit in because they

were Hollanders. Consequently, the concept of autochthony (Geschiere 2009) is put into another perspective. David and Zeegert felt *out of place* after having moved to another region within their own native country. This means that oppositions of belonging like 'insider' and 'outsider', 'Limburger' and 'Hollander' are multi-layered and dynamic in daily practices. The following extract is another example of how this large opposition between Limburgers (insiders) and Hollanders (outsiders) can be interpreted.

My question about the bluntness of Limburgers stems from the stereotype that Limburgers never talk straight to a person when there is a problem (Knotter 2009). In extract 4, line 2, Zeegert responded negatively to this question. Without being prompted, David referred to Hollanders, who, by contrast, are stereotypically seen as blunt. Zeegert agreed but then reversed the argument and adds that people from Amsterdam and Limburgers cannot understand each other because *Amsterdammers* are bold, with which Zeegert explicitly agreed. He eventually said, in line 10, that he preferred living in Limburg since he did not like the rush that runs the West. Although coming from the West originally, David agreed with this immediately. This extract affirmed once again that David and Zeegert belonged much more locally than they had claimed until now and that they were reproducing this large opposition, like the touristic advertisement and the speech by the pvv. More importantly, Zeegert reversed the opposition of 'us outsiders' and 'them Limburgers' and sided with the Limburgers by stating that he *also* thought of *Amsterdammers* as being bold and that he preferred to live in Limburg. In this recurring opposition, 'us' shifts to 'them' and 'them' shifts to 'us'. They thus seemed to

Extract 4

1 L zijn Limburgers direct of juist niet?	1 L are Limburgers blunt?
2 Z ↓nee nee	2 Z no no
3 L helemaal niet	3 L not at all
4 D een ↑Hollander wel	4 D a Hollander is
5 Z een Hollander wel	5 Z a Hollander is
6 L jahaa	6 L yes
7 D mijn moeder wel hoor ((auto toetert))	7 D my mother was, see ((car honking))
8 Z een ↑Amsterdammer is heel brutaal	8 Z an Amsterdammer is very bold
9 D ((lacht))	9 D ((laughs))
10 Z als die hier komt die verstaan mekaar helemaal niet, een Limburger en en vice versa. Amsterdammer, Amsterdammer, die zullen mekaar nooit verstaan, want die zijn brutaal en >>dat vind ik ook<<. daarom woon ik liever hier, het westen is altijd <i>chaotisch</i> daar zijn ze ehh opgefokt	10 Z when they come here, they don't understand each other, a Limburger and and vice versa. Amsterdammer, Amsterdammer, they will never understand each other, because they are bold and I think so ↑too! that is why I prefer to live here, the west is always chaotic, they are err worked up
11 D = ja	11 D = yes
12 Z = enzo een beetje doorgedraaid, hier zit een versnelling minder	12 Z = and so on a bit trotted on, people here take it easier.

Extract 5

1 Z >>al kom je uit Hoensbroek<< ↓bijvoorbeeld, dan zeggen ze die komt niet uit Roermond, die laten we niet, die laten we ↑niet (.) in de kern komen, niet samen zijn	1 Z even if you are from Hoensbroek, for example, they will say he is not from Roermond, we won't let him, we won't let him, get in the core, not being together
2 L ja	2 L yes
3 Z chauvinisme hè	3 Z chauvinism huh
4 L ja ja	4 L yes yes
5 Z dat heeft daar ook een rol	5 Z that plays a part as well
6 D ja daar zit ook vee- <u>veul</u> vriendjespolitiek in hè, ↑ <u>woare</u> , >>ja het krijG je hè<<.,	6 D yes there is also a lot of nepotism involved, huh, isn't it, yes that's what you get, huh,

relate to the notion of Limburgerness, more than they claimed at first, and adopted the opposition of Holland vs. Limburg.

Smaller oppositions: Limburg

The opposition of Limburg vs. Holland is not foregrounded continuously. This is illustrated by the next extract in which David and Zeegert related to oppositions within the province of Limburg itself (extract 5).

Why Zeegert picked Hoensbroek (a village in the south of Limburg) for this opposition, is not clear. The opposition Roermond vs. Hoensbroek is not a common opposition in daily discourse like, for example, Roermond vs. Venlo (a city in the north of the province) and Roermond vs. Maastricht (the province's capital located in the south). Nevertheless, Zeegert showed that he does know something about local oppositions and that he embraced and oriented towards Roermond and its local relationships much more than he has claimed in the previous extracts. Similarly, David exposed his knowledge about Limburgian stereotypes in extract 5, line 6 in which he argued that the politics of nepotism is a cause of the local opposition of insiders and outsiders. Nepotism is often seen as a characteristic of Limburgian business life and politics (Knotter 2009). With this he showed that he acquired local knowledge about the place he lives in, like Zeegert. This extract exemplifies the recursiveness of oppositions as explained by Gal and Irvine (1995: 974). The oppositions of outsiders vs. insiders recur in extract 6 when Zeegert talked about people from Hoensbroek who cannot fit into Roermond either, even though they are all native Limburgers. The opposition now recurs in a regional context: the outsiders are no longer

Hollanders and the insiders are now Roermondnaren instead of Limburgers. The next section focuses on the opposition with Roermond.

Smallest oppositions: Roermond

This section underlines the importance of ethnography for research regarding language, belonging, and place. Since the 1970s, reflexivity increasingly became evaluated as a positive aspect of ethnographic research (Davies 2008 [1998]). Many social scientists used to be critical of involving the 'self' too much and thereby undermining the scientific value of their studies. Davies, on the contrary, goes on to argue that informed reflexivity is compatible with both realist ontology and a commitment to social scientific knowledge based in a real social world (ibid: 216). Reflexive ethnography enhances the ethnographic understanding, which is to say that personal involvement is acknowledged and reported upon (Rosaldo 1993 [1989]). Therefore, in order to understand the value of the upcoming extracts, the researcher's background needs to be elucidated. I was born and raised in Roermond and lived there until the age of eighteen. Throughout my life, my looks are generally interpreted by others, in Limburg or the Netherlands as a whole, as being 'different': my hair and eyes are perceived as being 'dark' compared with the general accepted looks for 'native' Limburgers and Dutch(wo)men. Therefore, I am generally perceived as an outsider in Limburg and the Netherlands as a whole, even though I evaluate my own linguistic resources as local as David's and Zeegert's. This adds another layer to the fixed understanding of language, place, and belonging, namely the dimension of appearance: to be perceived as coming from a particular place, one needs

Extract 6

1 L ja ik kom zelf ook uit Roermond	1 L I come from Roermond myself
2 D >>oh dan zal u dat wel weten hè?<<	2 D oh, then you know, right?
3 L ja ik merk het niet zo heel erg	3 L well I do not recognize it very much
4 D = nee dat merk je ook niet	4 D no you don't recognize that
5 Z = omdat je zelf Roermondenaar bent, maar als je >>buitenstaander<< bent	5 Z that is because you are a Roermondenaar yourself, but if you are an outsider
6 L ja maar ik heb hier ook niet meer zo heel veel vrienden of eh	6 L yes but it is not like I still have many friends here, or err
7 D ik denk als je hier bij een >>vereniGing<< wilt <u>kommen</u> of <u>biej</u> een <u>sangkeur</u> , koor of een carnaval, daar komen >>wij<< <u>Geen</u> , ↑ <u>nemes tusse jong</u>	7 D I think that if you want to join a community, or a choir or a carnival, we can't, nobody steps in, boy
8 Z nee daar kom je niet ↑bij	8 Z no, you can't join
9 D daar kom je niet tussen	9 D you can't step in
10 Z dan kom je... dan moet je hier <u>geboren</u> zijn	10 Z then you come... you have to be born here
11 D want die <u>zègge</u> je zo: <u>wat mot dae</u> ?	11 D because they will say: what does he want?

to have the matching looks. The following extracts are clear examples of this.

Because of my looks, David and Zeegert did not immediately presume that I am from Roermond. After having said that I am from Roermond as well, David assumed that I am an outsider in Roermond just like them by assuming that I would feel the same as they do (line 2). In a way, he tried to bond with me as being both outsiders. After claiming that I did not recognise the feeling of being an outsider, both men immediately acknowledged that I am an insider who cannot recognise these senses of unbelonging, since I came from

Roermond myself. They positioned me as a Roermondenaar who belongs and themselves as outsiders who do not belong. David added that it is hard to join a community, choir or carnival association in Roermond, which was illustrated by his own experience of becoming Prince Carnival, which was not accepted at once. Zeegert believed that one has to be born in Roermond to fit in, which affirms Geschiere's argument (2009) that to be born from a particular soil, autochthony, is often used to legitimate one's belonging to a place.

Extract 7

1 D maar u bent eigenlijk ook Geen ↑Roermondenaar?	1 D but you are in fact not a Roermondenaar either?
2 L ja jawel ik ben hier geboren en getogen	2 L yes, I was born and raised here
3 D = omdat u zo'n zwart haar hebt en ↑hele zwarte oGen	3 D because you have such black hair and very black eyes
4 L ((lachend)) ja ik ben half Roermonds, eigenlijk half Nederlands, ik ben altijd in Roermond opgegroeid, en dialect ook wel leren spreken eigenlijk,	4 L ((smiling voice)) yes I am half Roermond, actually half Dutch, I was always brought up in Roermond, and learned to speak the dialect actually,
5 D = <u>jao jao</u>	5 D = yes yes

When Zeegert had left, David again tried to bond with me as outsiders in the city in extract 7. In response to David's suggestive question if I was in fact not a Roermondenaar either, I told him that I was born and raised in Roermond. However, David interpreted my looks as extraordinary looks which do not correspond with belonging to the place Roermond. Looks thus seem to be an important factor in the fixed understanding of the connection between language, place, and belonging. Moreover, the use of the hard /g/ in the abovementioned extract displayed the alignment of outsiders David tried to associate with me. When I attempted to defend my belonging by telling him that I learned to speak the dialect, David reacted with Limburgian dialect words in line 5. This response can be explained in two ways. First, David acknowledged that I know the dialect by responding with these dialect words. Second, David showed that he also belongs to Roermond and uses an index to emphasise this.

Extract 6 and 7 illustrated how rapidly oppositions may shift. In extract 6, David and Zeegert hoped to bond with another outsider in Limburg, but immedi-

ately excluded me from this level of being outsiders because I was born in Roermond. Additionally, after having failed to bond as outsiders again, David reversed the opposition of insiders and outsiders. In this opposition, he was the insider who put me in the position of outsider and emphasised my looks which did not correspond with the general looks of a Roermondenaar.

The oppositions of (un)belonging constructed by David and Zeegert are thus a very good example of how, as Gal and Irvine (1995) argued, people may use recursive oppositions to claim and create shifting communities, identities, and selves within different levels. Hence, the oppositions of (un)belonging (such as Limburgers vs. Hollanders or more general outsiders vs. insiders) are highly ambiguous, contextual, and multi-layered. What can we conclude from this paper's regional perspective on belonging, especially when we return to the pvv's claim 'to give Limburg back to the Limburgers'? Who are these Limburgers? And, more generally, how does this research challenge the connection of language, place, and belonging?

Conclusion

This contribution served as an intervention into debates about belonging in the Netherlands now by taking a case-study from fieldwork in Roermond, a city in the Dutch southern province of Limburg. Whereas national debates mainly focus on oppositions like *autochtoon* vs. *allochtoon*, this paper approached belonging from a regional perspective while studying the local processes of place-making and belonging through linguistic practices.

In doing so, we have seen that, on a regional and local level, there are more oppositions constructed which recur on difference levels. For example, a native Dutch, or so-called *autochtoon* on a national level, may be considered and feel like an *allochtoon* on a regional level. Consequently, the national perspective on belonging gets de-centralized, since the case-study demonstrated the construction of recurring oppositions of (un)belonging that resulted in shifting and contradicting alignments with different groups and places. In these local and ambiguous senses of (un)belonging, oppositions of the national level (*autochtoon* vs *allochtoon* when interpreting my looks) as well as the regional level (Hollander vs. Limburgers) recurred and were reproduced. Although David and Zeegert strongly claimed to unbelong to Limburg and Roermond, their daily practices disclosed a more local linguistic and cultural place-making. Consequently, the notion of Limburgerness – primarily based and reproduced (in media, tourism, and politics) on the linguistic, cultural and religious differences between Limburg and the rest of the Netherlands (Knotter 2009) – was challenged. The notion of Limburgerness, and the label ‘Limburger’ in itself, are

rather static and reified notions which do not reflect the ambiguous linguistic and cultural practices. In addition to this, even though Wilders’ (pvv) speech was a clear example of rescaling national debates on belonging to a regional level, its reproduction of Limburgerness, thereby constructing ‘a Limburger’ to ‘give back the province to’, is clearly not in line with the actual linguistic and cultural practices of David and Zeegert.

Yet, even though the ambiguous and shifting linguistic and cultural practices stress the deconstructed and fluid nature of the relation between language, place, and belonging, we also saw that people nevertheless ideologically fix language, place, and belonging, since soil serves as a legitimation for belonging (Geschiere 2009) and it protects people from being absorbed by globalising forces. Therefore, we should not just discard the connection of language, place, and identity at once since it is such a forceful ideology in daily practices of people and (political) discourses (Heller 2011; Quist 2011). Rather, we should untie this connection and look at it in closer detail as I have argued in this paper. Such a perspective can add another layer to the concept of autochthony (Geschiere 2009). By putting belonging into a regional perspective, this contribution has uncovered how a native Dutch person may feel *out of place* in a peripheral area of one’s own country due to the reproductions of the static notion of Limburgerness.

In conclusion, I hope this paper encourages to consider language as an extremely rich semiotic resource, even for those not particularly interested in language, in explaining broader cultural and ideological processes such as place-making and (un)belonging.

E-mail: lotte.thissen@maastrichtuniversity.nl

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Notes

- 1 These names are fictitious because of privacy matters.
- 2 Key to transcriptions:

Symbol	Symbol explanation	Symbol meaning
G/CH	capital and bold	hard 'g'
<i>g/ch</i>	bold, italics, other font	soft 'g'
<u>word</u>	underlined	dialect words
,	comma	continuing intonation
.	period	closing intonation
>>word<<	'more than' signs	emphasis
↑↓	up or down	rise or fall in pitch
=	equals sign	latching; no space in between turns
xxx	triple x	transcriber could not hear what was said
((word))	double round brackets	transcriber's comment on a sound
˘word˘	degree signs	soft, relative to surrounding talk
(word)/(word)	brackets/brackets	two possible hearings
(.)	dot between brackets	short pause
D	capital D	David
Z	capital Z	Zeegert
L	capital L	Researcher and author

- 3 The term *global village*, introduced by Marshall McLuhan (1962) explains that, due to mass media, borders between people are fading.
- 4 After a period of pacification towards minorities, some politicians started criticizing this 'soft' approach to minorities in the early 1990s. Foremen (like Bolkenstein and Fortuyn) 'dare to face the facts and speak frankly about 'truths' that the dominant discourse has supposedly covered up' (Prins 2002: 368). Prins refers to this genre of discourse as new realism, which advocates assimilation and liberated this precarious subject from its presumed taboo (Prins 2002: 364). New realism has broken with the trend of cultural relativism in which tolerance and pacification are of great importance (ibid: 367-368). New realism has risen from the 1990s up until now with Geert Wilders who is primarily 'telling the truth' about (mostly Islamic) minorities.

- 5 pvv won many votes in the rest of the Netherlands as well and it should be noted that the voting percentages within Limburg differed enormously, see: <http://nos.nl/dossier/210939-provinciale-statenverkiezingen-2011/tab/128/live/>
- 6 <http://media.liefdevoorhetleven.nl/mediagallery/Gallery/Promotieteksten/Promotietekst%20EigenLand.pdf>
- 7 On Marc van Oostendorp's website (<http://www.vanoostendorp.nl/>) one can find many academic publications about linguistics in the Netherlands. For this paper, I consulted the pages on phonology of Limburg which are based on his book *Tongval: Hoe klinken Nederlanders?* (1996).
- 8 During my fieldwork at a carnival club in Roermond, the honour of becoming a prince was emphasised repeatedly. When introducing themselves to me, most men immediately informed me about the year when they became prince.

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