Large-scale cross-sectional investigations have shown that Standard Dutch (spoken in the Randstad area) and varieties of Flemish differ in various phonetic respects. Salient differences are found in the vocalic domain, for example with respect to the realizations of the tense mid vowels and diphthongs (e.g. [1,2,3]), and in the consonantal domain, e.g. in the allophone inventory of the rhotic ([4]).

At the level of the individual, however, the effect of these accentual differences on interaccentual processing has not received a lot of attention. Studies on accent processing in general have found subtle processing effects in perception, such as attenuated N400 ERPs ([5]) and slightly larger reaction times to auditory words (up to 30 ms; [6]), which persist even when the listener receives more exposure ([7]). Production studies have shown that adjustments of a person’s speech can occur ([8]), but not through simple imitation ([9]).

The present study takes a closer look at the processing of Standard Dutch versus Flemish realizations of the vowels (e,o,o,ɛ,i,oey,ɑu) and the rhotic (r), by Flemish first-year students in the Netherlands and Randstad Dutch controls. Preliminary results will be discussed of the first session in a planned longitudinal experiment, aiming to shed light on the adaptation that will take place in the perception and production of these Flemish students to the Standard Dutch accent. A production task consisting of simple word-reading shows the expected differences already known from [2] and [4]: the Flemish students show less diphthongization for (e,o,o,ɛ,i,oey,ɑu) and less retroflexion for coda (r). They also show different RT patterns to aural identity and nonidentity primes compared to controls. Additionally, a perceptual rhymedecision task using stimuli that are ambiguous between Flemish and Standard Dutch realizations shows that the Flemish students use more conservative phonological category boundaries for the investigated continua [ər~ɚ], [ɛ:~ɛi], [o:~ɑu] and [ɛ~ɛi].

References