COHERENCE IN SPOKEN BELGIAN AND SURINAMESE DUTCH: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Anne-Sophie Ghyselen – 22.05.2023

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fwo
Research Foundation
Flanders
Opening new horizons

WHICH SENTENCE IS REALLY ATTESTED (WEST-FLANDERS)?

(1) **Maar** zou je geloven **dat ik** 't nu **nie** mee weten.

(2) **Maa** zou je geloven **da ke** 't nu **nie** mee weten.

(3) **Maa** zou je geloven **da ke** 't nu **niet** meer weten.

'Maar zou je geloven dat ik het nu niet meer weet'

'but would you believe that I don't now it anymore now'

WHICH SENTENCE IS REALLY ATTESTED (WEST-FLANDERS)?

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'Maar zou je geloven dat ik het nu niet meer weet'

'but would you believe that I don't now it anymore now'

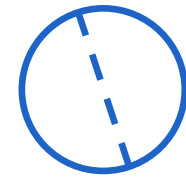# Some language variants typically co-occur with other variants

COHERENCE

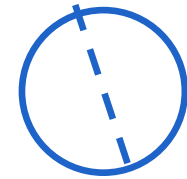# To which degree do communities differ in coherence?

Disclaimer:
- No hard and fast answers will be given during this talk.
- Work-in-progress!
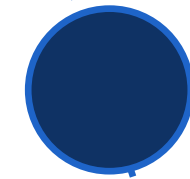- 'Journey is as interesting as the result'

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

MY PROJECT

INITIAL RESULTS & CHALLENGES

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

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COHERENCE

"[C]oherence concerns to what extent multiple co-existing linguistic variables have similar distributions, both internally and in the speech community at large."

OF TOPICAL INTEREST TODAY

— Informalisation, democratisation/self-reflexivity (Giddens 1991) > impacting/endangering coherence of (standard) languages (cf. Kristiansen and Coupland 2011)

— Third wave sociolinguistics: emphasis on speaker agency and bricolage

How coherent is language variation?

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NOT A NEW QUESTION

—'Multivariate' version of 'old' question of **orderly heterogeneity**

(Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968)

—Important question:

- ➤ The ontological status of linguistic systems
- ➤ Can we say there is such thing as a 'variety', 'a language system' or a 'lect'?
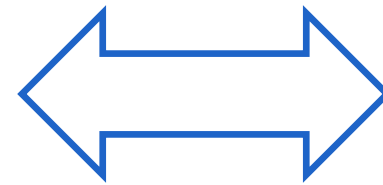
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RECENTLY QUITE SOME RESEARCH INTO COHERENCE

— Geeraerts 2010

— Guy 2013

— Guy & Hinskens 2016 (volume)

— Ghyselen & De Vogelaer 2018

— Beaman & Guy 2022 (volume)

— …

RESULTS INCONCLUSIVE

Ghyselen (2016); Ghyselen & De Vogelaer (2018)

⟷

Gregersen & Pharao (2016)

Tussentaal is not as chaotic as often assumed

> clear structures and covariance patterns

Language variation in Denmark is not coherent

COHERENCE DEPENDS ON COMMUNITY/SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT UNDER STUDY?

Cf. Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985):

focused vs. *diffuse* communities

INTERESTING IDEA TO THINK ABOUT

- **Coherence seems inherently human** > needed for succesful communication (cf. assumption usage-based approaches: coherence arises in interaction)

- But:

  - **Interaction patterns differ across communities**

  - **Cultural processes** of "progressive reification, totemization and institutionalization of a language", Le Page, 1988, p. 31) can impact coherence

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COHERENCE DEPENDS ON COMMUNITY/SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT UNDER STUDY

> NOT MUCH EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE YET

COMPARABILITY ISSUES

How do you turn abstract notion of *coherence* into an empirical one?

(A) Variation in incorporation of social dimension

1. Per linguistic variable: correlation with social or stylistic predictors
2. Compare correlations across parameters

(Becker 2015; Gregersen & Pharao 2016)

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COMPARABILITY ISSUES

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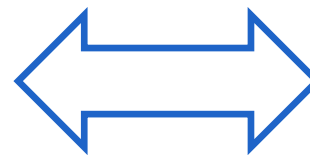
(Becker 2015; Gregersen & Pharao 2016)

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Calculating and visualizing distances between variants and exploring correlation with social and stylistic predictors post-hoc

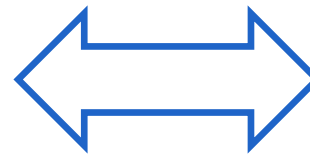(Ma & Herasimchuk 1972; Ghyselen & De Vogelaer 2018)

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COMPARABILITY ISSUES

How do you turn abstract notion of *coherence* into an empirical one?

(B) Variation in degree to which variables are expected to co-vary in order to allow coherence interpretations

Linear correlation?
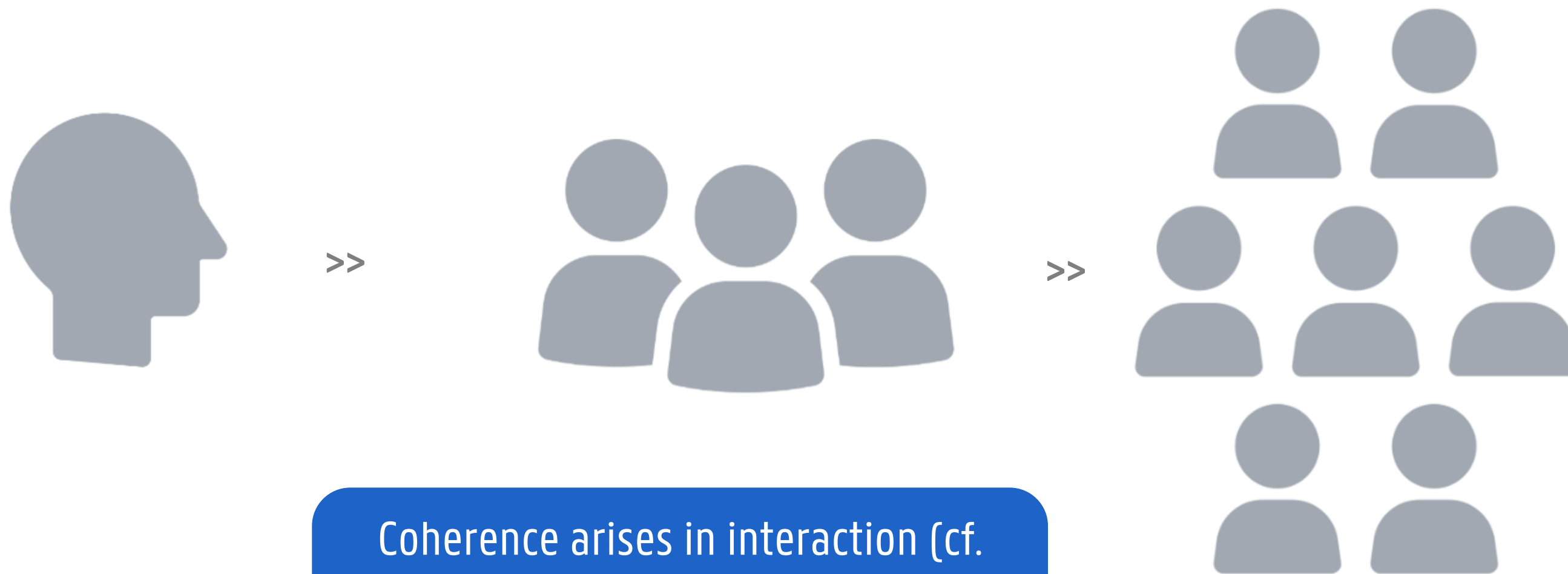Guy 2013; Gregersen & Pharao 2016

⟺

Implicational patterning?
DeCamp 1971; Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen 2016

Coherence is a matter of degree, not a yes-or-no phenomenon

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COMPARABILITY ISSUES

How do you turn abstract notion of *coherence* into an empirical one?

(C) Variation in level of aggregation

>> >>

Coherence arises in interaction (cf. Geeraerts 2010) > can be studied at different levels of abstraction
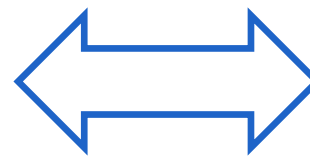
COMPARABILITY ISSUES

How do you turn abstract notion of *coherence* into an empirical one?

(C) Variation in level of aggregation

Ghyselen (2016)

Tussentaal is coherent and can be delineated

⟷

Plevoets (2008)

standard Dutch and colloquial Belgian Dutch cannot be distinguished as separate linguistic systems > no clear clusters of co-varying features

COMPARABILITY ISSUES

How do you turn abstract notion of *coherence* into an empirical one?

(D) Matter of production or perception?

- Coherence as "an ideology at odds with production data but guiding both perception of varieties and lay discourse about lects" (Gregersen & Pharao 2016: 42, cf. Grondelaers & Van Hout 2016)?
- From a usage-based perspective: both
- But little reflection on impact of 'culture' on coherence > Same effect on production and perception?

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COHERENCE DEPENDS ON COMMUNITY/SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT UNDER STUDY?

Cf. Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985):

diffuse vs. *focused* communities

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

MY PROJECT

SOME INITIAL RESULTS & CHALLENGES

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

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"ON THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE LINGUISTIC SYSTEM: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON COHERENCE IN SPOKEN SURINAMESE AND BELGIAN DUTCH"

— Funded by the Research Foundation Flanders (senior postdoctoral fellowship)

— Goal: **study coherence in 2 communities – Suriname and Flanders – at different levels of granularity** (individual vs. group) **using comparable datasets and tools of analysis**

Flanders (Belgium)

Paramaribo (Suriname)

Differences:

— History of Dutch

— Relative and absolute number of native speakers of Dutch

— Multilingualism & multi-ethnicity

— Dutch in Suriname has been described as 'diffuse' vs. hyperstandardisation in Flanders
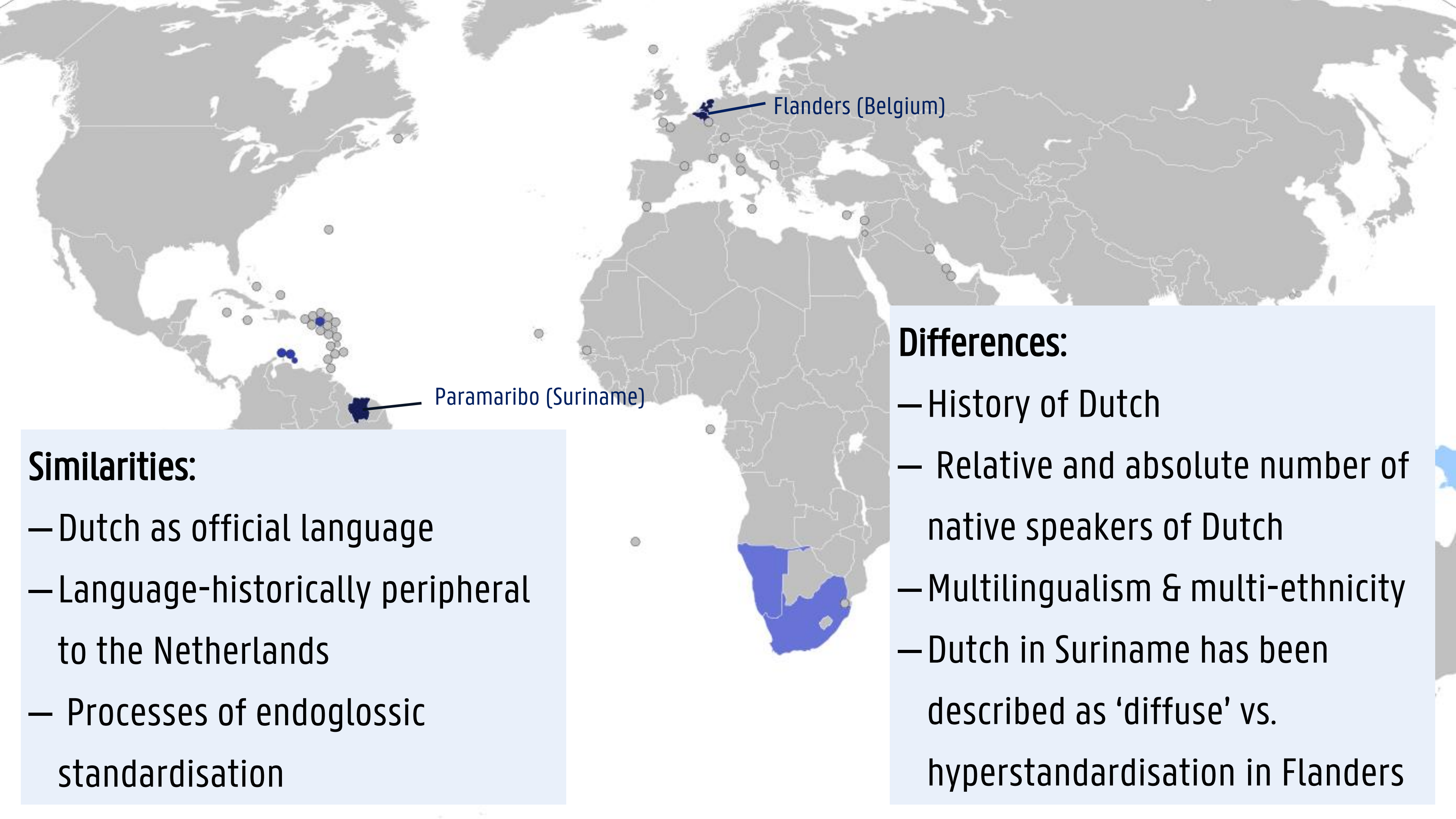
Similarities:

— Dutch as official language

— Language-historically peripheral to the Netherlands

— Processes of endoglossic standardisation

THE PLAN

1. Collect comparable data in Flanders and Suriname

2. Analyse multiple variables per area

3. Compare coherence

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VERTICALE STRUCTUUR EN DYNAMIEK VAN HET GESPROKEN NEDERLANDS IN VLAANDEREN

Een empirische studie in Ieper, Gent en Antwerpen

Anne-Sophie Ghyselen

Proefschrift voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van Doctor in de Taalkunde

See also **Ghyselen & De Vogelaer (2018)**
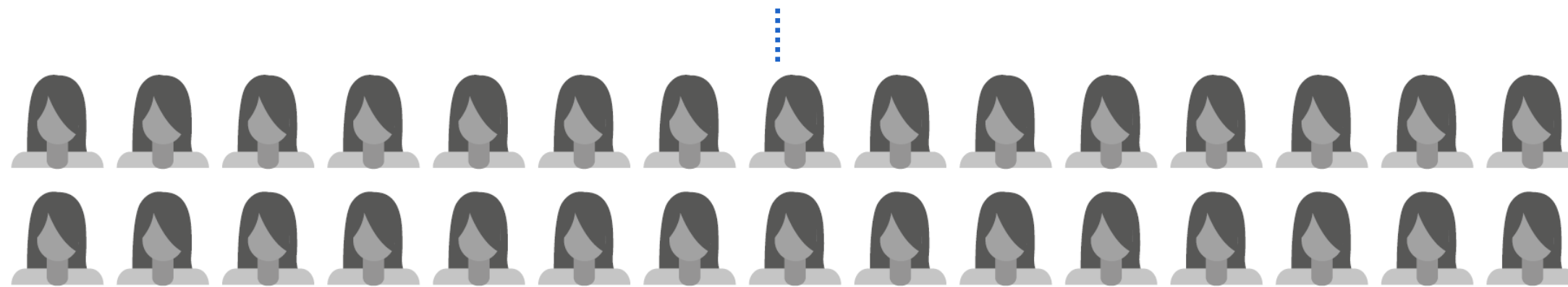
2016

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DATA COLLECTION

> Small-scale corpus of language use of 30 Flemish women

DATA COLLECTION

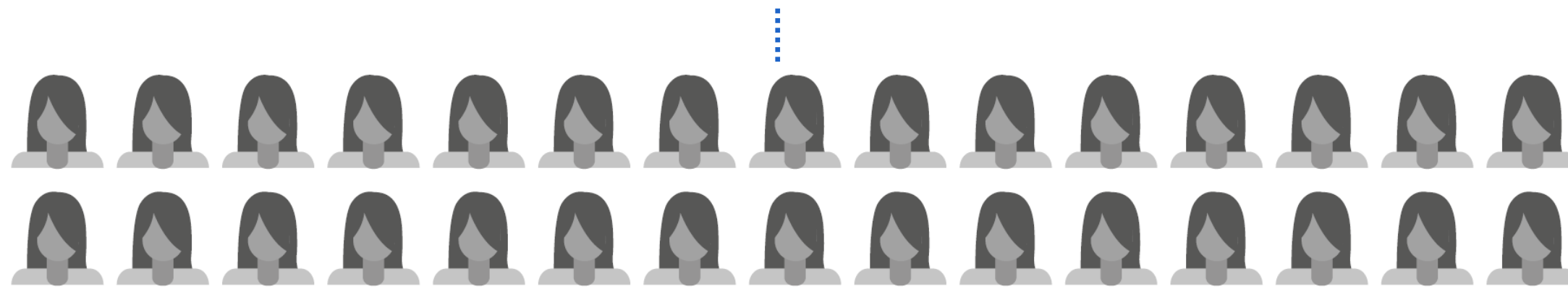> Small-scale corpus of language use of 30 Flemish women

25-35 years old (n=15)

DATA COLLECTION

> Small-scale corpus of language use of 30 Flemish women

25-35 years old (n=15)

50-65 years old (n=15)

DATA COLLECTION

> Small-scale corpus of language use of 30 Flemish women

Ieper (n=10)   Gent (n=10)   Antwerpen (n=10)

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Dialect areas in Flanders
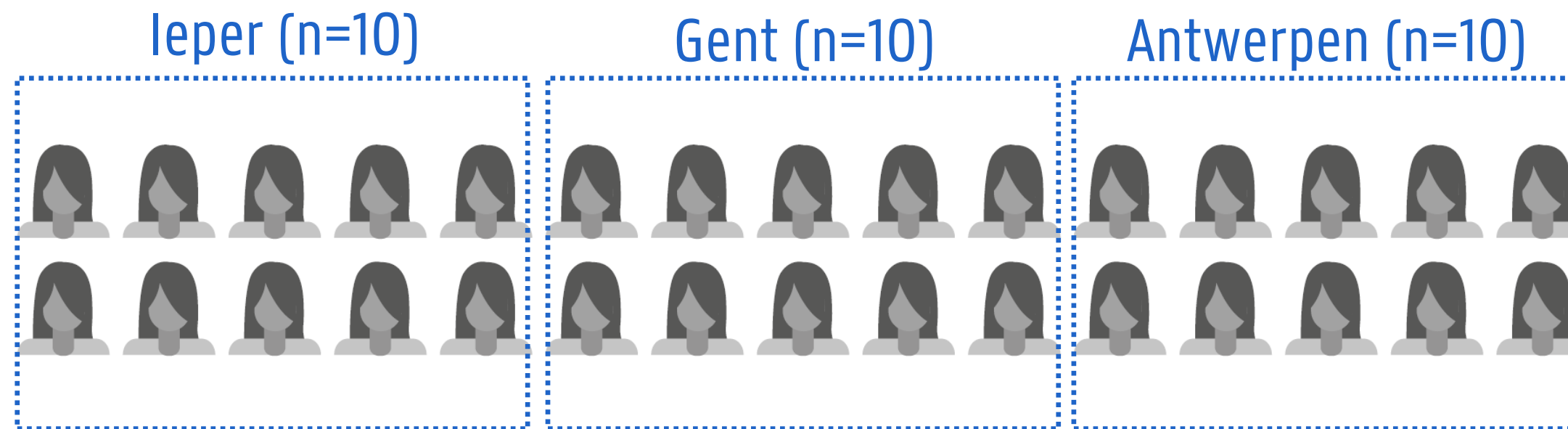
Strong dialect vitality

Diaglossic repertoires > dialect loss

WEST FLEMISH — EAST FLEMISH — BRABANTINE — LIMBURGIAN

Brugge · Ieper · Gent · Antwerpen · Brussel · Leuven · Hasselt

DATA COLLECTION

> Small-scale corpus of language use of 30 Flemish women

Ieper (n=10) Gent (n=10) Antwerpen (n=10)

DATA COLLECTION

> Small-scale corpus of language use of 30 Flemish women

Ieper (n=10) Gent (n=10) Antwerpen (n=10)

No language related training or job

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DATA COLLECTION

> 5 speech settings

Conversation with a friend of same city (1h)

DATA COLLECTION

> 5 speech settings

DATA COLLECTION

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DATA COLLECTION

> 5 speech settings

Conversation with a friend of same city (1h)

Conversation with a friend of different dialect area (1h)

Interview (30-45 min)

Dialect test (5 min)

DATA COLLECTION

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Standard lg. test (5 min)

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DATA COLLECTION

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Result: corpus of 62h of transcribed speech

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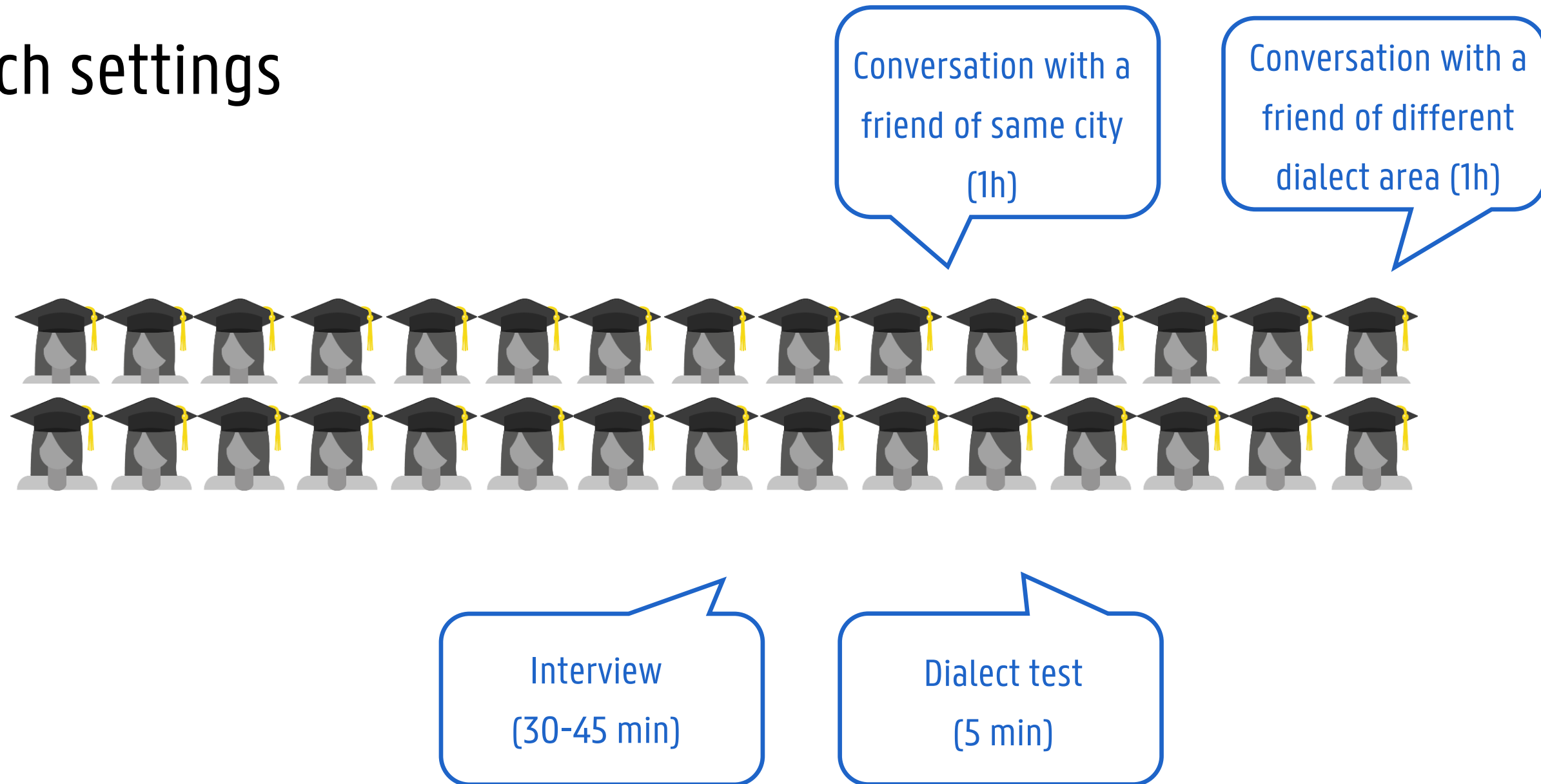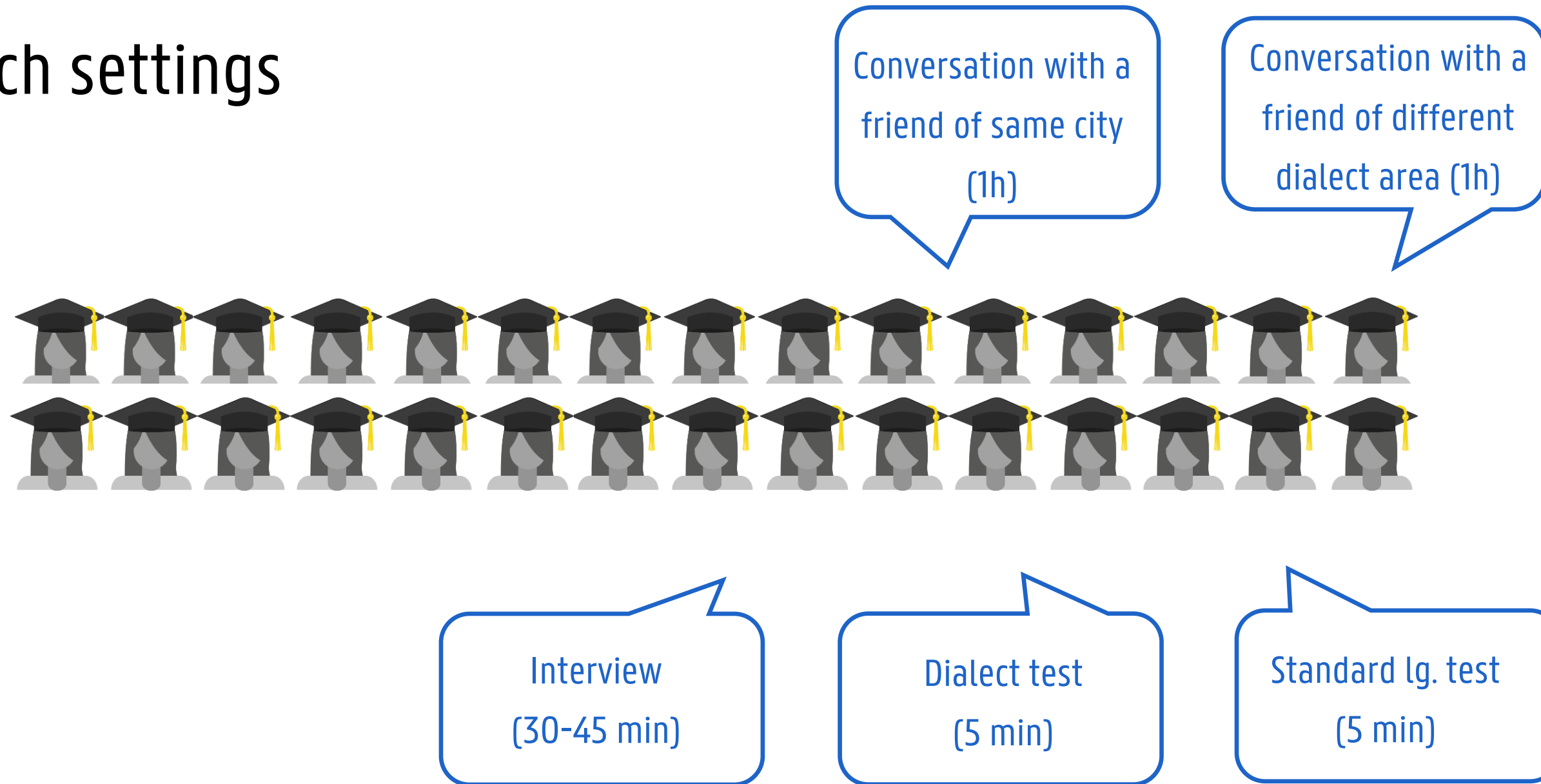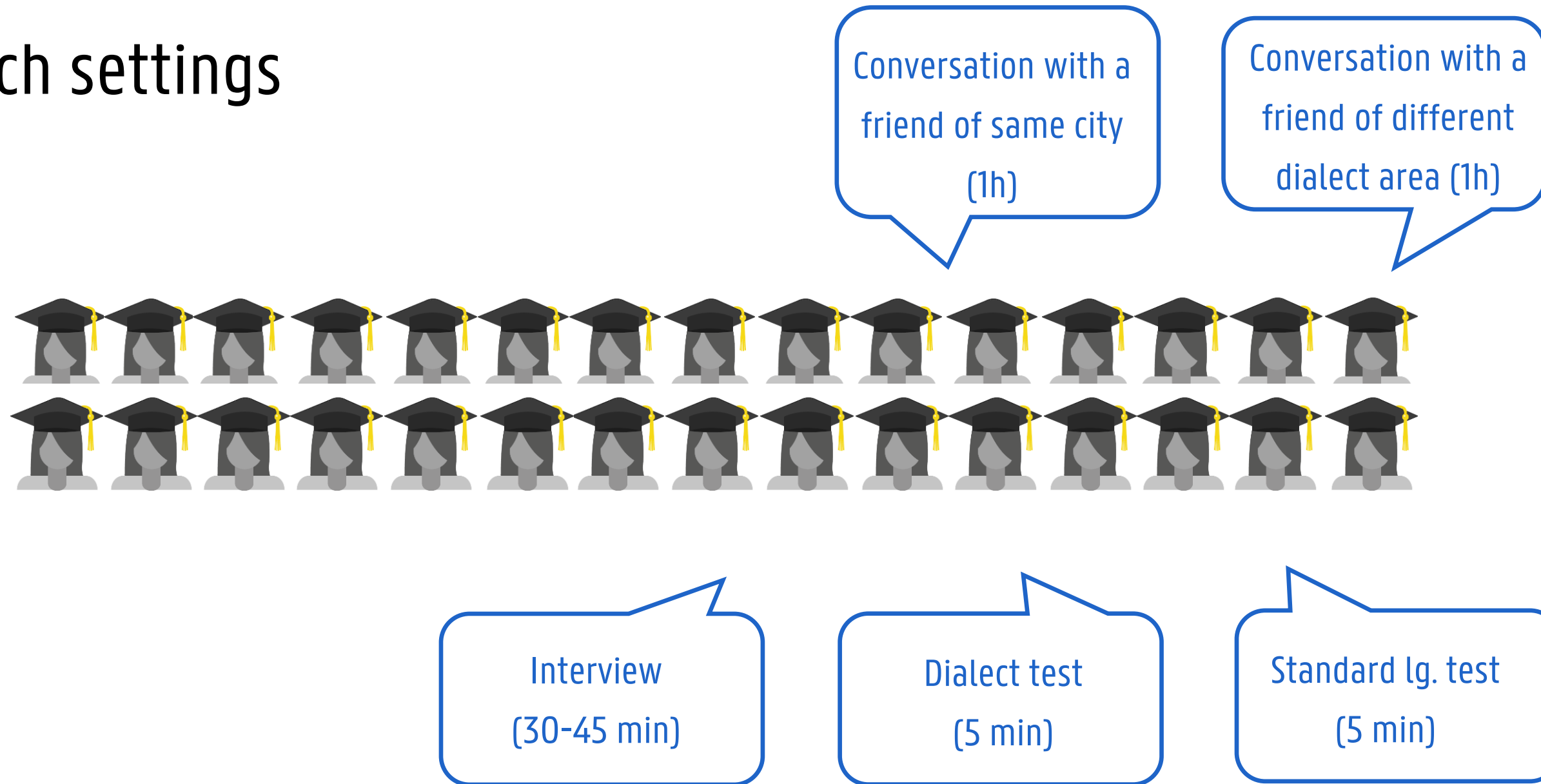
DATA COLLECTION

— 2019: Idea: new Surinamese data, modelled as strictly as feasible on the Belgian Dutch dataset

— However: also take into account fundamental socio-cultural differences between the two areas (e.g. concerning ethnicity)

DATA COLLECTION

Suriname - 2020

- 22 highly educated Creole women

- District Paramaribo

- Dutch as 'the most important means of communication with at least one parent'

- 2 age groups (25-37 years old or 50-60 years old)

- Higher education, no language related job

- Not longer than one year in The Netherlands or Belgium

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DATA COLLECTION

> 5 speech settings

Conversation with a friend **of same ethnicity** (1h)

Conversation with a friend **of other ethnicity** (1h)

Interview (30-45 min)

Standard language test - **Picture description task** (10 min)

Standard lg. Test – **sentence reading task** (10 min) - Cf. Van Hout et al. (1999)
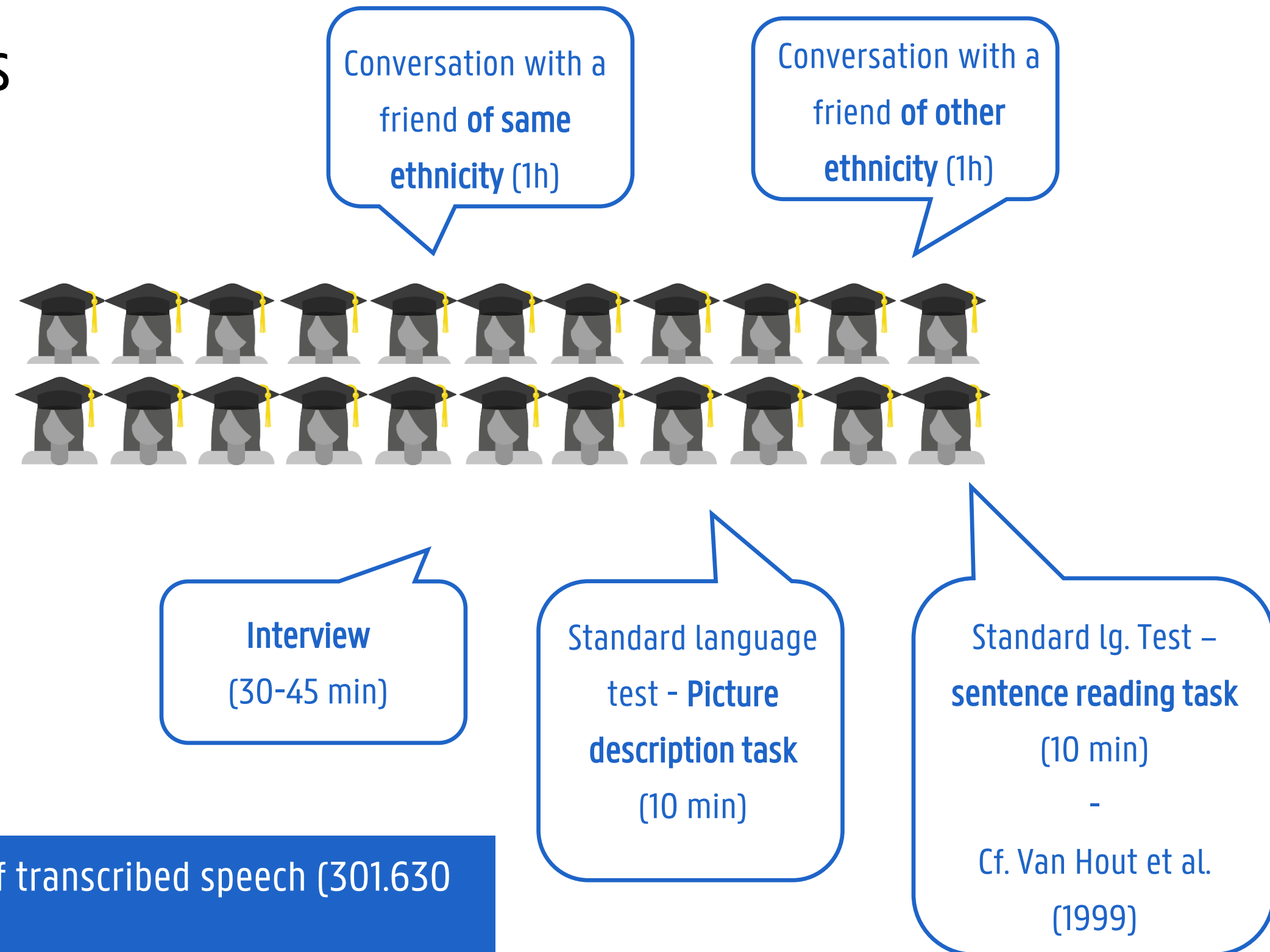
Result: corpus of 48h of transcribed speech (301.630 words)

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DATA ANALYSIS

— **Challenge (1): which linguistic variables???**

  — Comparability ideally achieved by operationalizing both the linguistic and social dimension in a similar vein in the two areas under comparison

  — But: every community has its own socially meaningful linguistic variables

  — Idea: compare specific 'types of variables' (e.g. noun phrase syntax/complementizer phenomena/…)

  — Selection criteria:

    — reported variability within Belgian/Surinamese context,

    — variable frequency

    — operationalisability in a profile-based approach (cf. Speelman et al. 2003),

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DATA ANALYSIS

1. The use of *voor* and *van* vs. *om* as non-finite complementisers

2. The absence or presence of expletive *dat* after complementisers

3. The absence or presence of subject doubling

4. The inflection of attributive adjectives

5. The form of the indefinite determiner as used with male singular nouns

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DATA ANALYSIS

1. The use of *voor* and *van* vs. *om* as non-finite complementisers

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1. Word order in clauses introduced by adverbials (verb-second vs. verb-third word order)

2. Place of the verb in subclauses (SVO vs. SOV)

3. Presence or absence of the conjunction *dat* in subordinate clauses

4. Use or absence of *te* in infinitivals

5. Conjunction in embedded yes/no-questions (*als* versus *of*)

6. Realisation vs. omission of articles in the noun phrase

7. Inflection of attributive adjectives modifying neuter indefinite nouns (with or without *e*-suffix),

8. Absence or presence of a suffix marking the plural in nouns

9. Use or omission of *het* ('it') as a referential element

10. Expression of passive semantics (active vs. passive construction)

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DATA ANALYSIS

— **Challenge (2): measuring and comparing covariance**

    — **Per country**

        — Check implicational scaling using frequency-based approach described in Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen (2016)

t-dele-tion (4) > *h*-dele-tion (3) expl. *dat* (8) > [ɣ]-laryn-galisation (2) > Subject doubling (7) > *ij* (1) > non-suffixal final [ə] (5) *n*-suffix in 1st sg pres (6) etw-lexemes (9)

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Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen (2016)

Table 2: Implicational hierarchies of the studies language features based on the relative percentages in supraregional informal conversations.

	Most frequent								Least frequent
All	$4_{1,2,3,5,6,7,9}$ >	$8_{1,2,3,1,5,9,7,6}$ >	$3_{1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9}$ >	$2_{1,3,4,5,6,8,9}$ >	$7_{1,3,4,5,6,8,9}$ >	$1_{2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9}$ >	$9_{1,2,3,4,5,7,8}$ >	$6_{1,2,3,4,7,8}$ >	$5_{1,2,3,4,7,8,9}$
	99%	98%	88%	81%	71%	35%	19%	16%	3%
Wvl a1	$8_{1,5,6,9}$ & $4_{1,3,5,6,9}$ >		$2_{1,5,6,9}$ >	$3_{1,4,5,6,9}$ >	$7_{5,6,9}$ >	$1_{2,3,4,5,6,8,9}$ >	$6_{1,2,3,4,7,8}$ >	$5_{1,2,3,4,7,8}$ >	$9_{1,2,3,4,7,8}$
	100%		98%	94%	92%	64%	18%	3%	0%
Wvl a2	$4_{1,3,5,6,9}$ & 7 & 8		> $2_{1,5,6}$ >	3_4 >	$1_{2,4}$ >	$6_{2,4}$ >	$5_{2,4}$ >	9_4	
	100%		95%	88%	71%	50%'	25%	0%	
Wvl a3	$8_{1,2,5,6,7,9}$ & $4_{1,2,5,6,7,9}$ >		$3_{1,2,5,6,7,9}$ >	$7_{1,3,4,6,8}$ >	$2_{1,3,4,6,8}$ >	$6_{2,3,4,7,8}$ >	$1_{2,3,4,7,8}$ >	$5_{3,4,8}$ & $9_{3,4,8}$	
	100%		95%	47%	39%	8%	4%	0%	
Wvl a4	$8_{1,2,5,6,9}$ >	$4_{1,2,3,5,6,7,9}$ >	$3_{1,2,4,5,6,9}$ >	$7_{1,2,3,4,6}$ >	$2_{1,3,4,6,7,8}$ >	$1_{2,3,4,7,8}$ & $5_{3,4,8}$ & $6_{2,3,4,7,8}$ & $9_{3,4,7,8}$			
	100%	98%	82%	78%	33%	0%			
Wvl a5	$4_{1,3,5,6,7,9}$ & $8_{1,5,6,7,9}$ >	$2_{1,3,5,6,7,9}$ >	$3_{1,2,4,5,6}$ >	$7_{1,2,3,4,8}$ >	$1_{2,3,4,7,8}$ & $5_{2,3,4,8}$ & $6_{2,3,4,8}$ & $9_{2,3,4,8}$				
	100%	96%	77%	29%	0%				
Wvl b1	4_9 & 6 & 8		> 2_9 >	1_9 >	3 >	7 >	5 >	$9_{1,2,4}$	
	100%		97%	92%	87%	83%	50%	20%	
Wvl b2	$8_{1,5,6,9}$ >	$4_{1,6,9}$ >	$3_{1,5,6,9}$ >	$2_{1,5,6,9}$ >	$7_{1,5,6,9}$ >	$1_{2,3,4,7,8}$ >	$5_{2,3,4,7,8}$ & $6_{2,3,4,7,8}$ & $9_{2,3,4,7,8}$		
	100%	97%	89%	88%	85%	17%	0%		
Wvl b3	$4_{1,3,5,6,7,9}$ >	$8_{1,5,6,7,9}$ >	$3_{1,4,6}$ >	$2_{1,6,7}$ >	$7_{2,4,8}$ >	$6_{2,3,4,8}$ >	$1_{2,3,4,8}$ >	$5_{4,8}$ & $9_{4,8}$	
	99%	94%	81%	79%	37%	9%	4%	0%	
Wvl b4	8	> $4_{1,2,6}$ >	$1_{3,4}$ >	$3_{1,6}$ >	7_6 >	9_6 >	$2_{4,6}$ >	$6_{2,3,4,7,9}$ >	5
	100%	97%	96%	94%	89%	83%	81%	29%	0%
Wvl b5	$8_{1,5,6}$ >	$4_{1,2,5,6,7,9}$ >	$3_{1,5,6,9}$ >	$7_{1,4,6}$ >	$9_{2,3,4}$ >	$2_{1,4,5,6,9}$ >	$1_{2,3,4,7,8}$ >	$6_{2,3,4,7,8}$ >	$5_{2,3,4,8}$
	100%	97%	94%	89%	83%	81%	69%	28%	0%

1=ij, 2=[ɣ]-laryngalisation, 3=h-deletion, 4=t-deletion, 5=non-suffixal final [ə], 6=n-suffix in thematic verbs 1st sg, 7=subject doubling, 8=expletive dat, 9=etw-lexemes. The numbers in subscript represent the linguistic features with which the ranked feature contrasts significantly (Fisher Exact pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni corrections, α=0.05).

DATA ANALYSIS

— **Challenge (2): measuring and comparing covariance**

  — **Per country**

    — Check implicational scaling using frequency-based approach described in Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen (2016)

    — distance-based multivariate techniques (correspondence regression and hierarchical cluster analysis)

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Fig. 5: Correspondence plot Ghent (dimensions 1 and 2) with main effects for situation

Ghyselen, Speelman & Plevoets (2020)

DATA ANALYSIS

— **Challenge (2): measuring and comparing covariance**

  — **Per country**

    — Check implicational scaling using frequency-based approach described in Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen (2016)

    — distance-based multivariate techniques (correspondence regression and hierarchical cluster analysis)

    — Logistic regression (mixed effects: random effects per speaker)

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DATA ANALYSIS

— **Challenge (2): measuring and comparing covariance**
  — **Per country**
    — Check implicational scaling using frequency-based approach described in Ghyselen & Van Keymeulen (2016)
    — distance-based multivariate techniques (correspondence regression and hierarchical cluster analysis)
    — Logistic regression (mixed effects: random effects per speaker)
  — **Comparison**
    — Logistic regression: Compare fixed effects and random effect sizes, amount of variation explained
    — Distance-based techniques: compare confidence intervals and number of splits

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

MY PROJECT

INITIAL RESULTS & CHALLENGES

TAKE-AWAY MESSAGE

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LITERATURE ON SURINAMESE DUTCH ≠ OUR RESPONDENTS

Many variables described as typically Surinamese Dutch: not variable among our respondents!

1. Place of the verb in subclauses (SVO vs. SOV)

2. Use or absence of *te* in infinitivals

3. Realisation vs. omission of articles in the noun phrase > *56/4867 NPs*

4. Absence or presence of a suffix marking the plural in nouns

5. Expression of passive semantics (active vs. passive construction)

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EXTENDED DESCRIPTIVE UNIVARIATE PHASE NEEDED

- STEP 1: In-depth analysis per variable of intra- and extra-linguistic predictors
- Questions:
  - Suitable for lectometric analysis? If yes: how to operationalize/delineate the variable?
  - Orderly heterogeneity?
- STEP 2: Explore correlation between variables in Surinamese data & compare with European data

EXAMPLE: CONJUNCTION EMBEDDED YES-/NO-QUESTIONS

IK WEET NIET $\dfrac{\text{als}}{\text{of}}$ HIJ MORGEN WERKT.

Typically Surinamese: *als*
Influence of Sranan *efi?*
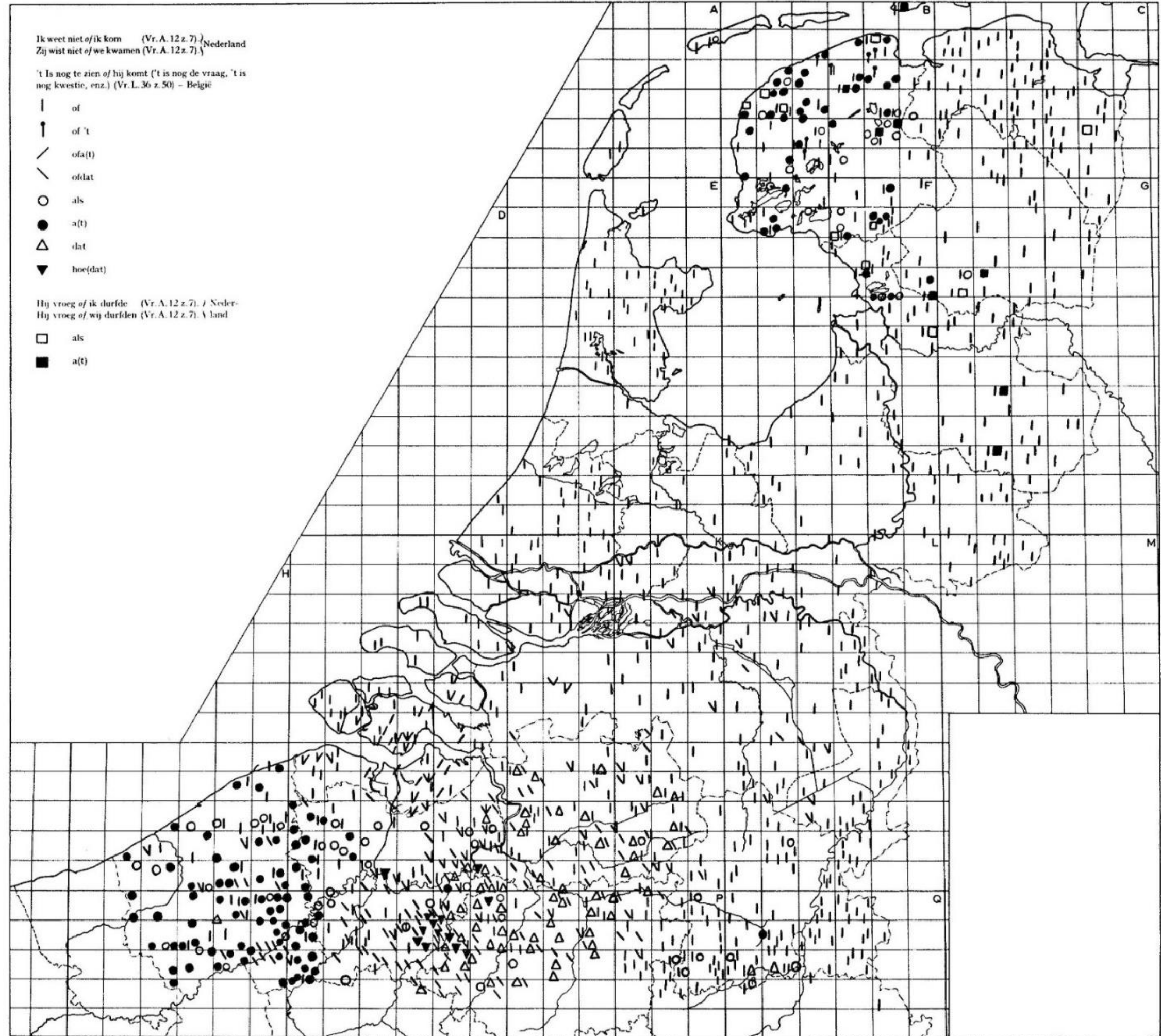Muysken (2017, 304-305), Sluisdom (1992) en Ventura (2013)

Ik weet niet *of* ik kom (Vr. A. 12 z. 7). } Nederland
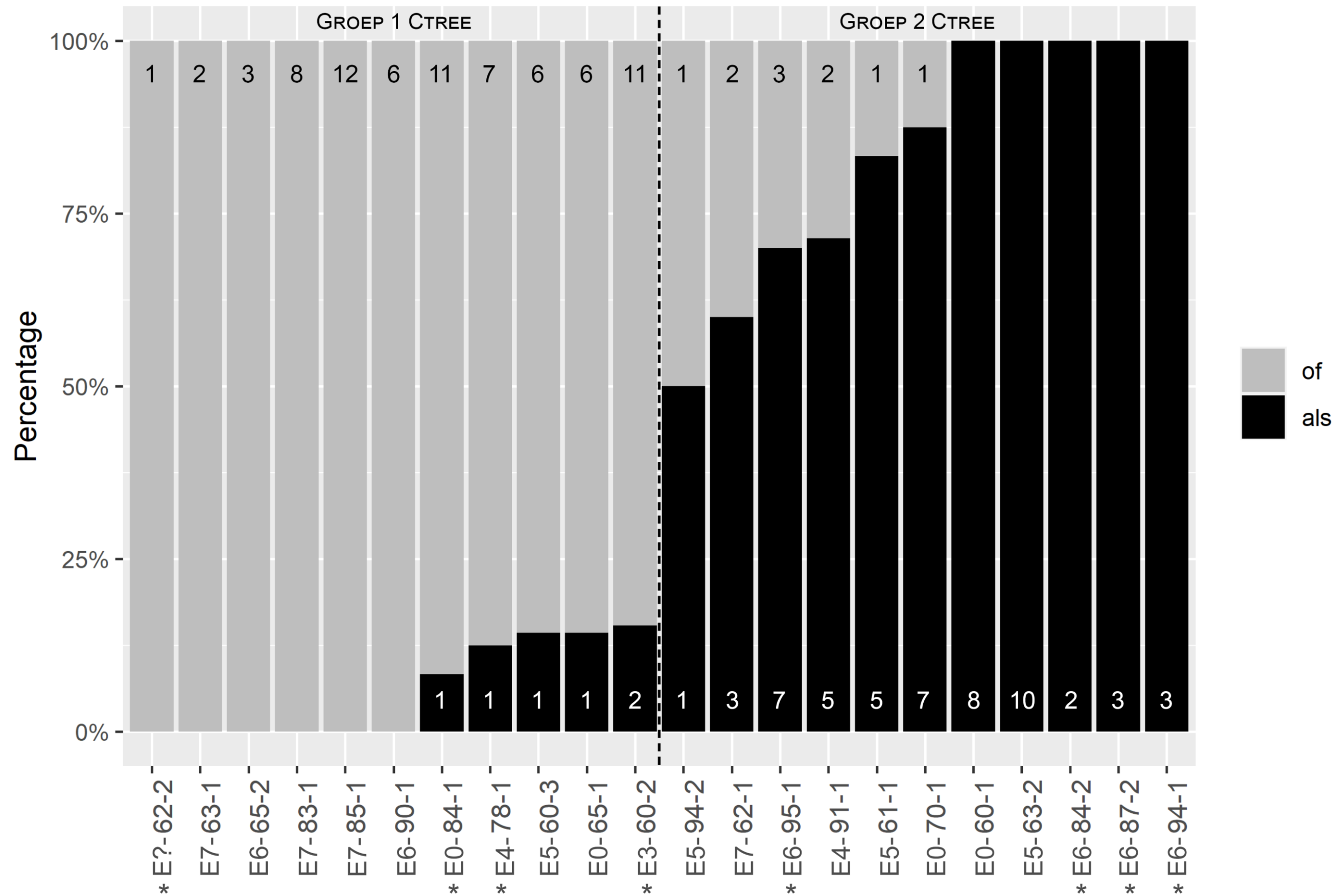Zij wist niet *of* we kwamen (Vr. A. 12 z. 7). }

't Is nog te zien *of* hij komt ('t is nog de vraag, 't is
nog kwestie, enz.) (Vr. L. 36 z. 50) – België

| of
↑ of 't
╱ of a(t)
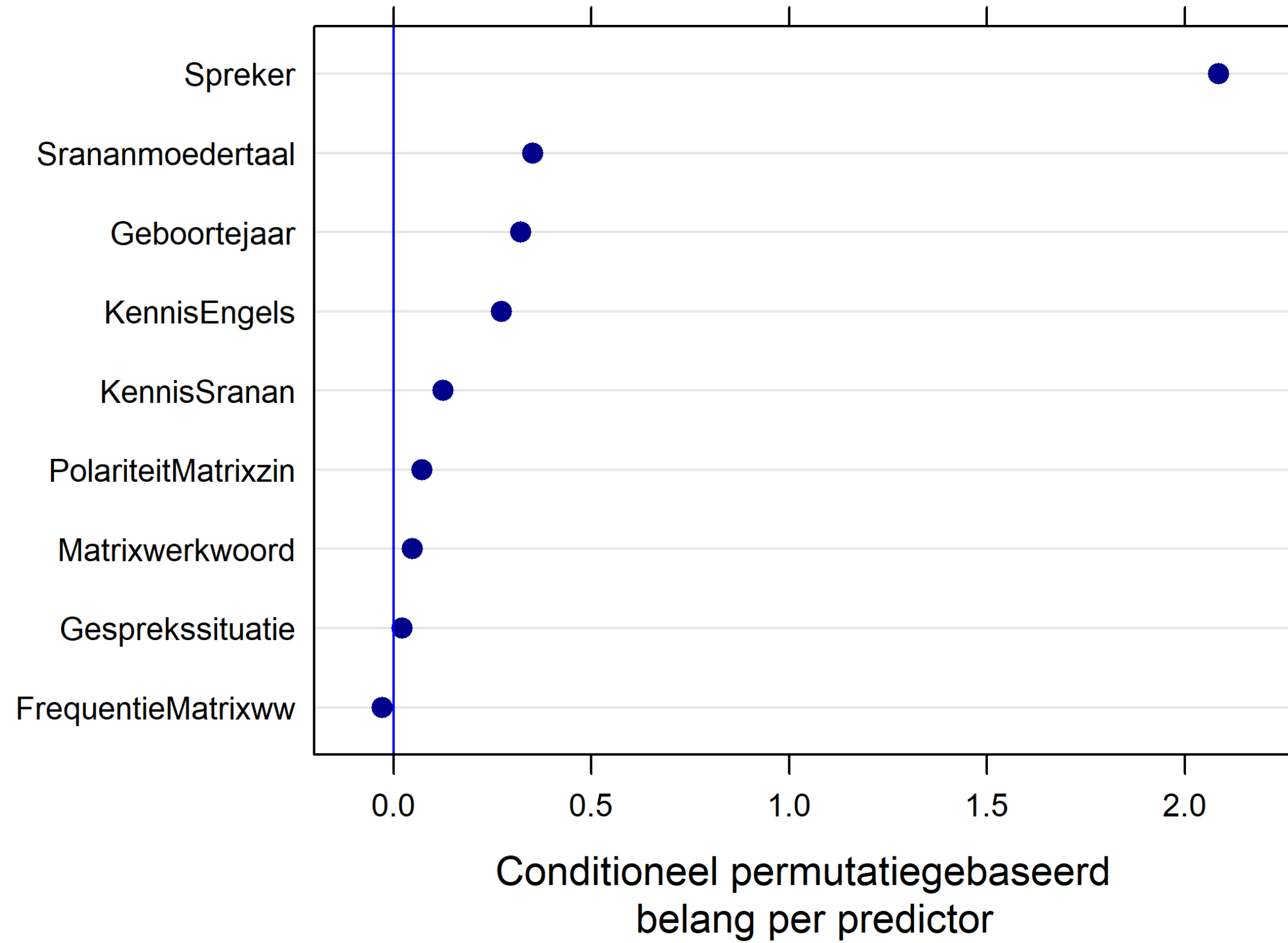╲ of dat
○ als
● a(t)
△ dat
▼ hoe(dat)

Hij vroeg *of* ik durfde (Vr. A. 12 z. 7). } Neder-
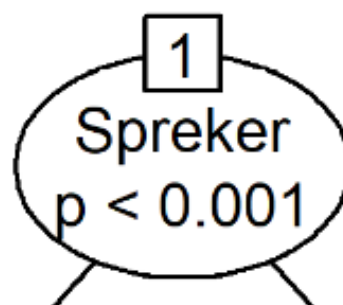Hij vroeg *of* wij durfden (Vr. A. 12 z. 7). } land

□ als
■ a(t)
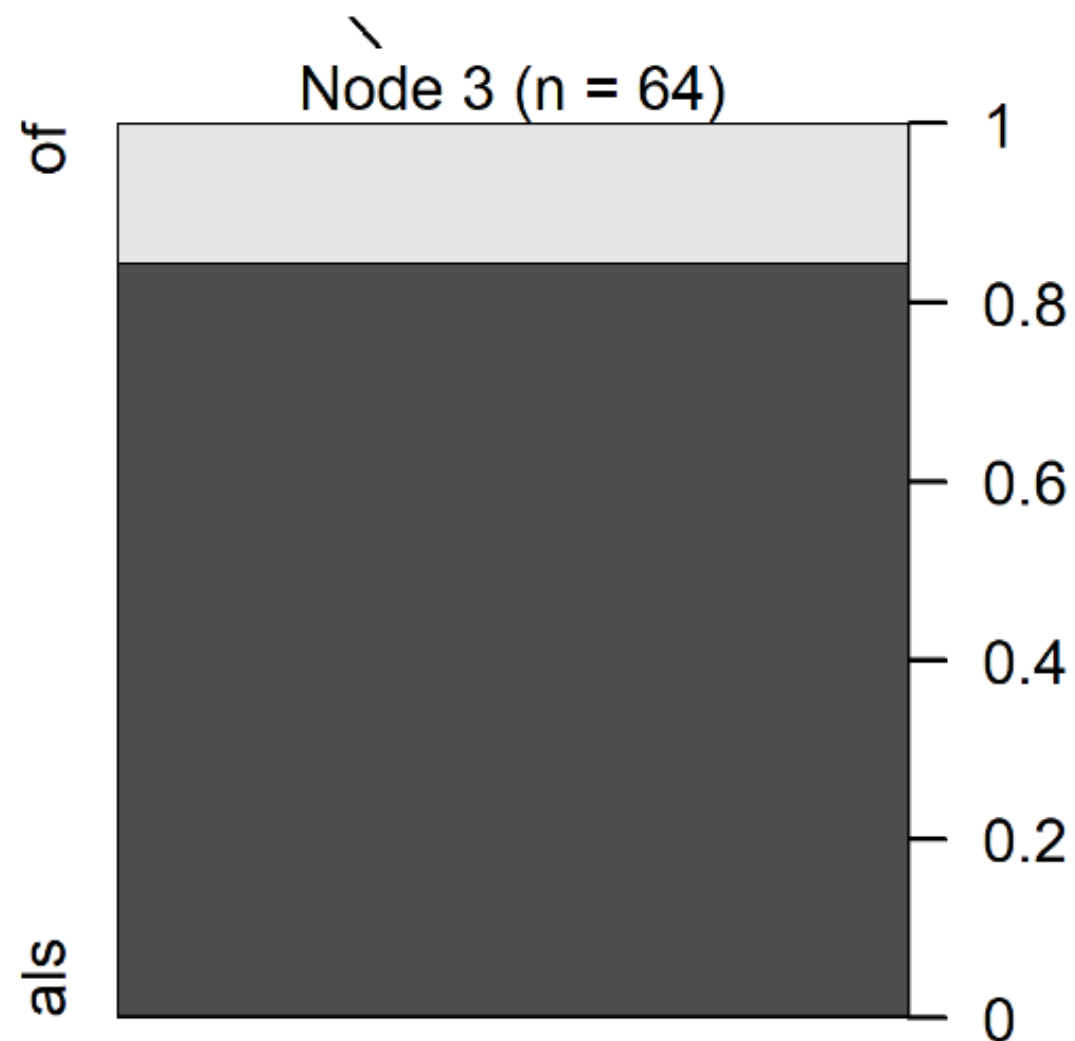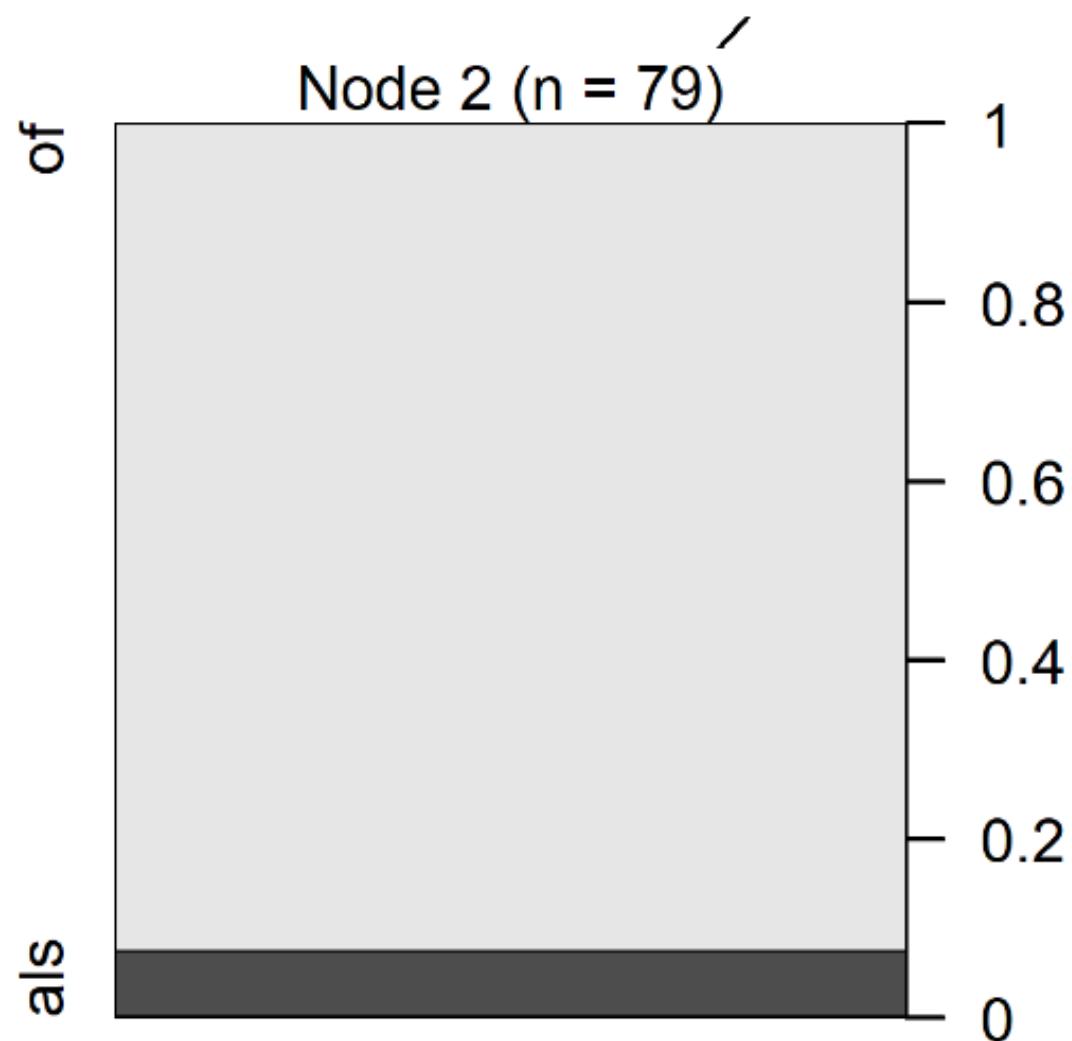
43,5%: *als*
54,0% : *of*
(n=161)

Conditioneel permutatiegebaseerd
belang per predictor

RANDOM FOREST
ANALYSIS
C-value of 0.97

CONDITIONAL INFERENCE TREE
C-value of 0.89

EXAMPLE: CONJUNCTION EMBEDDED YES-/NO-QUESTIONS

—Variation seems random

—However: stylistically: implicational pattern

—Enough variation for coherence study, but problem: low token frequency

—Sidestep: conjunctions in Surinamese component of 'Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands'

7722 token:s
- 547 (7.1%): *als*
- 7175 (92.9%): *of*

Models fail to predict! > lack of coherence

LOW TOKEN NUMBERS COMPLICATE ANALYSIS, BUT ALL IN ALL: LITTLE COHERENCE

WORK-IN-PROGRESS

—Presence or absence of the conjunction *dat* in subordinate clauses

—Alternation *hen/hun* as indirect object

—Inflection of attributive adjectives modifying neuter indefinite nouns (with or without *e*-suffix),

—Word order in clauses introduced by adverbials (verb-second vs. verb-third word order)

Can correlations/implicational patterning be found?

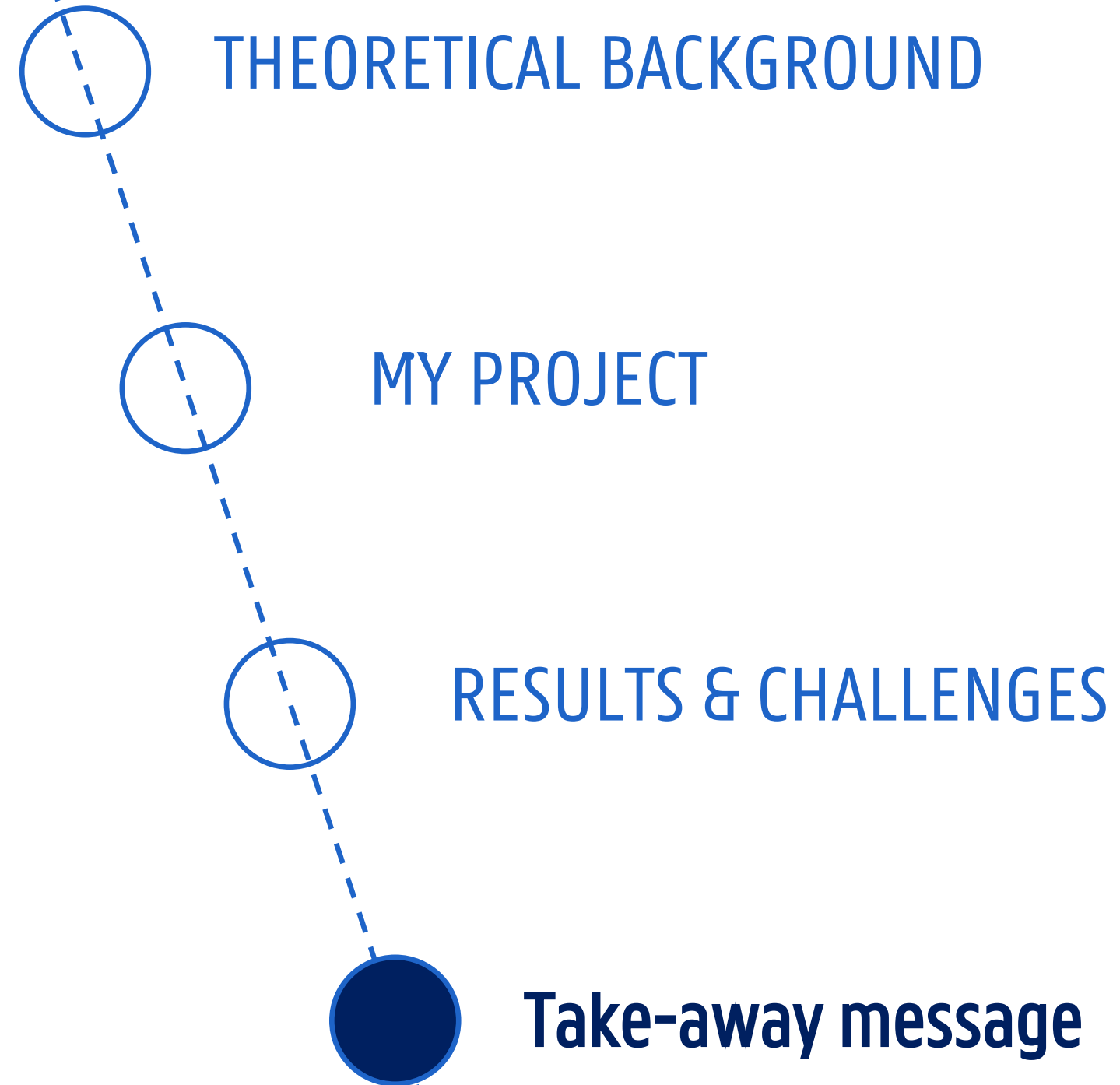If no: evidence for distinction between communities on basis of coherence.

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BIGGEST 'WORRY': SELECTION BIAS

— Everything depends on variables you select

— E.g. *T*-deletion (Vervaeke, Goeman & Ghyselen under review): nicely structured

— Selection still feels too 'random'

— How to avoid bias and avoid comparing apples to oranges?

— Follow-up research: more bottom-up approach:

— Subdomains instead of variables: Inflection + pronominal variation

— Map all variation > define variables and their entropy

— Coherence research on the basis of variables with highest entropy?

— Labour-intensive approach! 'Easier' solutions?

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FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH

— Coherence in perceptions and attitudes

— E.g. acceptability judgements of *als/of:* coherent patterns?

STILL A LOT TO ANALYSE AND THINK ABOUT BUT...

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

MY PROJECT

RESULTS & CHALLENGES

Take-away message

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(1) COHERENCE IS AN INTERESTING PHENOMENON, IN NEED OF MORE EMPIRICAL ATTENTION

— Claims about (non-)existence of varieties/language systems

— Claims about standardization/destandardization

— Comparative claims about norms in different nations

Need empirical evidence!

(2) FOR EMPIRICAL COMPARISON

— Think carefully about **ways of operationalizing coherence**!

— Need datasets that are **sufficiently comparable** (level of aggregation, speaker diversity etc.), contain enough **intraspeaker variation** and **metadata about individuals**

— **Need to think carefully about variable selection**

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THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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