

Standardization and prescriptivism in Dutch: past, present and future

Rik Vosters (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

In this presentation, I will delve into the history of standardization in Dutch, and use the findings of our historical investigations as a basis for reflection on the present and future of standardization practice. I will begin with some theoretical reflections on standardization from a historical sociolinguistic perspective (Auer et al., 2015), drawing mostly on Joseph et al. (2020) and Rutten & Vosters (2021). Next, I will discuss several myths concerning Dutch language, particularly regarding the form and status of Dutch in the Southern Low Countries (present-day Belgium), and debunk these myths based on recent research (e.g. Rutten & Vosters, 2016, 2023; Vosters et al., 2010). In particular, I will focus on prescriptive efforts in language history, systematically comparing prescribed norms with linguistic practices, and concluding with some thoughts on the complex and layered relationship between norms and usage (cf. Lismont et al., 2023). Based on this historical overview, I will then end by offering some thoughts for the present and future of standardization, prescriptivism and language advice in Dutch and for languages with a similar sociolinguistic profile more generally.

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