

*'da word moeilijk'*

**The interaction of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic variables in the production of verb spelling errors in informal online writing**

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Our poster presentation will be devoted to a recently initiated project on the interaction of social and mental processes in the production of spelling errors in informal computer-mediated communication (CMC). Unlike many CMC-studies, the research focuses on unintentional spelling deviations, more specifically on errors on regular verb homophones, i.e. verb forms whose pronunciation corresponds to two spelling forms. The data are extracted from an extensive corpus of online conversations produced by Flemish teenagers.

Interactive online writing imposes a pressure on working-memory. The speed or economy maxim (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2011), which urges participants to be fast to guarantee smooth turn taking, may not only lead to all kinds of abbreviations but also to unintentional spelling errors, since errors typically occur when working-memory runs out of resources, leaving insufficient time for applying grammatically based spelling rules. Previous research has shown most errors occur on lower-frequency homophones, which is known as the effect of homophone dominance (Sandra et al. 1999) and which reflects the interplay between working-memory and long-term memory retrieval.

However, these findings have been made in the artificial context of spelling experiments. Now their ecological validity can be tested in a natural writing context. Moreover, a number of social variables are included in the research design: age, gender and educational track.

Our main hypothesis reflects the interdisciplinary orientation of the project: Taking into account the fact that the research focuses on a highly stigmatized feature of Dutch spelling and considering sociolinguistic findings with respect to norm sensitivity, we expect the social variables to affect the *number* of spelling errors. However, in view of previous psycholinguistic findings, we assume that these social variables are less likely to affect the *pattern* of these errors.

In our poster we will present the design of the study and some preliminary results.

**References:**

Androutsopoulos, J. (2011). Language change and digital media: a review of conceptions and evidence. In Tore Kristiansen & Nikolas Coupland (eds.), *Standard languages and language standards in a changing Europe*, 145–161. Oslo: Novus.

Sandra, D., Frisson, S., & Daems, F. (1999). Why Simple Verb Forms Can Be So Difficult to Spell: The Influence of Homophone Frequency and Distance in Dutch. *Brain and Language*, 68, 277-283.