

## Evaluative responses to normative and pragmatic violations in digital language use

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### Project summary

Digital language can be found on mobile phones (texting), social media (twitter) and the internet (discussion forums). Very often, this register takes forms which deviate, deliberately or not, from 'standard' features: impolite language (*verruwd taalgebruik*), youth language (*sms-taal*), sloppy language (*typfouten*) and erroneous language (*taalfouten*). In the recent past, the coordinators of this proposal have carried out two joint research projects in which evaluative responses were collected to carefully designed, experimental variants of (1) forum comments and (2) texting messages. Preliminary analyses revealed that these evaluations were affected indeed by the experimental factors. No attention has been paid yet to interactions between experimental factors nor to the moderating effects of personal characteristics. The latter still need to be determined in part from the surveys administered together with the experimental tasks. The early results have been presented at several conferences on general linguistics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Written reports of comprehensive analyses of all empirical data are still awaiting, however. For two trainees we offer the possibility to participate in the full work cycle from the analyses of already available data to the drafting of the final report. Together with both coordinators each trainee will be the author of a paper to be submitted to an international research journal, and presenter of a paper at a (national) conference.

*Project 1:* For a post on an internet forum two reactions were written in standard Dutch (*ABN*): one was supportive, the other critical. While keeping the content of each reaction the same, eight experimental versions were designed by making systematically various formal changes: language or spelling errors caused by sloppiness or ignorance; deviant language based on two aspects of teenspeak or of rude language. A total of 1835 persons scored both their appreciation of the message and the image of the sender. They were split in three age groups: from 16 to 26 ( $n=543$ ), from 27 to 46 ( $n=678$ ), and from 47 to 80 ( $n=614$ ). Gender was distributed evenly within all conditions. Educational levels were represented substantially: low ( $n=431$ ), medium ( $n=606$ ), and high ( $n=798$ ). The central question is "to what extent do the evaluative reactions differ with language use (standard versus the eight deviances), and to what extent are these effects moderated by the tone of the reaction and characteristics of the participants (such as age group, educational level, and gender)?"

*Project 2:* Two texting messages were written that informed about either an offer or a request. Each message appeared in two forms: in standard Dutch only or with a number of texting features (misspellings, abbreviations, smileys...). The messages were said to be meant for one of three recipients: a school member, your own father, or an adult acquaintance. A total of 1162 participants scored both their appreciation of the message and the image of the sender. The sample consisted of pupils from vocational schools (*vmbo*,  $n=472$ ) or grammar schools (*vwo*,  $n=459$ ) and a 'control'-group of adults ( $n=231$ ). The question addressed here is "to what extent do the evaluative reactions differ with language use (standard versus texting features), and to what extent are these effects moderated by type of recipient, the subjective costs of the speech act involved, and characteristics of the participants (such as experience with texting and knowledge of texting features)?"

### **Project timeline**

Both projects proceed along the same timeline. Month 1: getting acquainted with the data, already collected. Month 2 and 3: collecting and reviewing recent research papers. Month 4: preparing dataset for further analyses. Month 5: running statistical evaluations. Month 6: interpretation of results. Month 7: summer holidays. Month 8: writing first draft academic paper. Month 9: writing first draft professional paper. Month 10: finalize both papers. Month 11: prepare oral presentation. Month 12: finish everything still waiting to be done.

### **Research Trainee Profile**

Trainees have an interest for both linguistic and cultural aspects of language use, affinity with methodological and statistical aspects of empirical research, skills in searching internet sources for relevant publications (journals, newspapers, websites....), and a desire to improve their proficiency in writing reports for academics and professionals. Given the specific forms and contents of the language use studied, trainees have to be (near) native speakers of Dutch. Bachelors in their third year and (research)master-students may apply. Both projects can be done by a student following either a culture or a communication program, yet project 1 may be oriented more toward communication and project 2 more toward culture.

### **How to apply**

Send a mail with a list of the courses you have completed successfully and a summary of all activities, experiences and skills you consider relevant for this project together with a short motivation of your interest in this specific project to [Peter.Broeder@uvt.nl](mailto:Peter.Broeder@uvt.nl) and [chvwijk@uvt.nl](mailto:chvwijk@uvt.nl)