

Esther Hanssen

Linking elements in compounds:

Regional variation in speech production and perception

Words like *noot+en+kraker* ('nutcracker') and *pan+en+koek* ('pancake') contain a linking element *en* in between the two parts of the compound. In Dutch, this linking *en* is most often homographic with the regular plural suffix *-en* (*noot+en* 'nuts' - *noot+en+kraker* 'nutcracker'). This dissertation investigates whether the linking element *en* in spoken Dutch compounds is similar to the plural suffix *-en*.

The psycholinguistic studies reported here investigate the pronunciations of the linking *en* and the plural suffix *-en* for Dutch speakers from five different regions of the Netherlands, and for Frisian-Dutch bilinguals from two regions of Friesland. Second, the studies reported here investigate whether speakers of standard Dutch and speakers from different regions of the Netherlands interpret subtle speech variants of linking *en* as a plural marker. This dissertation reveals clear regional pronunciation variation of the linking *en* in compounds for Dutch speakers. Moreover, the speech variants of Dutch linking *en* are most often interpreted as plural forms.

This study is of interest to scholars interested in linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. It shows the diversity of language: Regional variation exists in the pronunciation and interpretation of linking elements in Dutch compounds. This implicates that speakers from different, although closely related linguistic backgrounds arrive at subtly different interpretations in everyday speech.

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