

ACOUSTICS2008/2075
Perception of two English front vowels by L1 Dutch speakers with
different regional accents

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This paper reports the results of a categorization task of the English vowels "epsilon" and "ash" by native speakers of Dutch. Dutch has only one member of the contrast ("epsilon"), the acoustic realization of which is subject to considerable regional variation (Adank et al., 2007). Previous research has shown that there is asymmetrical lexical competition between English words containing "epsilon" and "ash" for native speakers of Dutch (Weber & Cutler, 2004; Escudero et al., in press). Weber & Cutler (2004) argue that "epsilon" is the dominant category for native speakers of Dutch, because it is phonetically closer to the L1 Dutch sound. The present study investigates whether the dominant category may vary depending on the speakers' L1 dialect by examining how two groups of Dutch-speaking participants from different dialect regions (the Randstad region in the Netherlands and East-Flanders in Belgium) perceive the English vowels "epsilon" and "ash". Preliminary results indicate that participants from these two areas do indeed categorize English "epsilon" and "ash" differently as the result of the acoustic properties of their L1 vowel "epsilon" (F1, F2 and duration).