Children's emerging sociolinguistic expectations around social roles: a triangulated approach

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5 Abstract

6 This paper adds to current work on developmental sociolinguistics and the socio-pragmatic turn in anglicism research through a triangulated design meant to uncover children's sociolinguistic 7 expectations towards social roles. A sample of 25 participants, aged between seven and thirteen, 8 completed three tasks probing assumptions on the use of English elements for three English-oriented 9 roles ('rapper', 'gamer' and 'soccer player') and two Dutch-oriented roles ('prime minister' and 10 'farmer'). In particular, participants took part in a closed rating task, a roleplay performance task and 11 an open-ended interview. Results uncover children share adult expectations of Dutch- vs. English-12 oriented roles (RQ1.1), which they implement in their role performances, using more English words 13 14 for the latter (RQ1.2). Participants, lastly, reflect on their performance to varying degrees, reporting changes to their language use in those performances, though only the oldest girls specifically mention 15 English words (RQ1.3). Overall, the comparison of the participants and tasks invites a reflection on 16 developmental pathways and on the relationship between metalinguistic awareness, sociolinguistic 17 expectations and the perception of boundaries between language(s) (varieties). 18

19 **1** Introduction

20 Speakers automatically link particular languages and specific types of language use to the social 21 attributes of the language user. These attributes are referred to as 'social meaning' and give rise to sociolinguistic expectations. For instance, different social roles (e.g. 'mother', 'doctor', 'gamer') evoke 22 different beliefs on their linguistic behavior (D'Onofrio 2020; Eagly and Koenig 2021; Lynch 2007). 23 24 This paper targets to uncover to what extent Belgian Dutch-speaking preadolescents have internalized such linguistic expectations concerning the use of English words for different social roles. In order to 25 provide the necessary background, we first elaborate on the framework of developmental 26 27 sociolinguistics (Section 1.1) and on our case of English use in Belgian Dutch (Section 1.2), after which we formulate the research questions (Section 1.3). 28

29 **1.1 Developmental sociolinguistics**

Connecting insights from language acquisition research and sociolinguistics, developmental sociolinguistics investigates how children forge the link between language and social attributes (De Vogelaer and Katerbow 2017; Nardy et al. 2013). Apart from studies focusing on young learners' own emerging sociolinguistic repertoire (e.g. Nardy et al. 2014; Smith and Durham 2019), attention is paid to the sociolinguistic expectations children hold about other language users, typically connected to the social roles they occupy (see Shields and Duveen 1986 for an early reflection). For instance, children likely expect a teacher to speak in a formal and "correct" way at school. So far, these expectations have

37 been probed in three ways.

38 A first approach targets the presence of sociolinguistic expectations, through closed assessments, 39 typically involving a type of rating task. One example is Starr et al. (2017; see also Starr 2022), where 40 115 children and adolescents aged five to nineteen participated in a forced-choice occupation judgment task. Participants were asked to indicate whether the speaker they heard in a given speech sample 41 42 occupied a certain role ('teacher', 'coffee shop worker' and 'helper/maid'). The speech samples 43 contained four regional varieties spoken in Singapore (viz. Australian English, Northern-China-44 accented English, Filipino English, and Singapore English). Results suggest the young participants 45 tuned in with sociolinguistic expectations based on the general prestige of the roles, for example 46 confidently qualifying Australian English speakers (prestigious variety) as teachers (prestigious role). Additionally, implementing a forced-choice matched-guise experiment (N=215 child participants) with 47 48 two cartoon doctors speaking either dialect or standard German, Kaiser and Kasberger (2021) observed 49 children prefer a standard German-speaking doctor over a dialect-speaking doctor as of seven to eight 50 years old. Children's ability to map social role information onto differences between languages and 51 varieties is further demonstrated in Hirschfeld & Gelman (1997, see also Kristiansen 2010). Apart from 52 the finding that children as of two years old are capable of identifying distinct languages, Hirschfeld 53 & Gelman (1997) demonstrated that children aged five almost categorically connect a white speaker 54 with English and a black speaker with Portuguese. This was found in a rating task implemented with 55 N=36 children (2;7 to 5;5 y/o) in the US, who listened to speech samples (English or Portuguese) and 56 were asked to point to the picture of the speaker they thought the voice was originating from.

57 A second approach assesses children's *implementation* of sociolinguistic expectations, relying on 58 (semi-)elicited roleplay set-ups where children's language use is studied based on the roles they 59 perform in symbolic play. For instance, Andersen (1984, 1990) asked children to 'talk' with hand 60 puppets representing roles in three triads, viz. 'nurse'/'doctor'/'patient', 'mother'/'father'/'child' and 'teacher'/'student'/'foreign student'. She found that children from the age of four are able to adjust 61 their speech each time a new role (with corresponding puppet) is assumed. Similarly, Katerbow (2013a, 62 63 2013b), using a play shop, found four- to seven-year-olds use fewer regional variants of Moselle-64 Franconian for 'seller' and 'buyer' than in their own spontaneous speech. In this study, no age effects were identified and rather large amounts of individual variation were attested. Lastly, Kaiser and Ender 65 66 (2021, see also Kaiser 2019; 2022), investigating standard and dialect variation in Bavarian, combined 67 the hand puppet and play shop designs and observed a similar drop of dialect forms in the roleplay. 68 However, since most research reports this dialect drop for all roles, the question arises whether this is 69 an effect of the pretend play mode in general, rather than resulting from expectations on specific roles.

70 A third approach considers the *reflection* on (the implementation of) sociolinguistic expectations, typically 71 through open-ended interviews. In Buson and Billiez (2013), for example, 196 children aged nine to eleven 72 listened to an answering machine message three consecutive times. Each time, the adult speaker in the 73 message adopted a higher degree of formality. In the follow-up interview based on the open-ended question "what did you notice?", 60% of the child participants referred to stylistic differences, with children's social 74 75 background as an important predictor. A similar set-up was used in Stamou et al. (2015). In this study, 76 82 six-year-old children watched video excerpts of dubbed cartoon heroes (e.g. in Cars, Winx Club) and 77 adult TV characters, speaking either Standard Modern Greek or rural accented Greek. In a semi-78 structured interview, the young participants demonstrated their ability to comment on standard and 79 dialect variation with regard to upper-class versus lower-class and female versus male roles.

This body of research shows children set their linguistic expectations towards social roles starting in early childhood and preadolescence, between the ages of four and thirteen. Yet, the pivotal age in this trajectory remains unclear (see Holmes-Elliott 2021), and the relationship between the results of the methodological approaches outlined above (cf. expectation, implementation and reflection) is not fully

understood. Building on previous work (e.g. Kaiser and Ender 2021; Katerbow 2013b; Starr et al. 2017;

85 2022), this paper's goal is to examine emerging sociolinguistic expectations by triangulating those

86 three approaches. Specifically, we aim to implement different tasks targeting social role assumptions

in the same design, investigating (1) sociolinguistic expectations through a closed rating task, (2)
 implementation of these expectations in role performance and (3) reflection on this implementation

so relying on an open ended interview

89 relying on an open-ended interview.

90 **1.2** Emerging sociolinguistic expectations on English words in Dutch

We conduct this triangulation in a study on English lexical resources, tuning in with the sociopragmatic turn in anglicism research (Peterson and Beers Fägersten 2018), where the perspective of language use in context is foregrounded rather than the structural integration of linguistic material. The research is situated in Flanders, Belgium, where the English language has no official status, though is frequently used in Dutch (viz. De Decker and Vandekerckhove 2012). These English insertions are

96 ideal to examine with regards to children's emerging sociolinguistic expectations for two reasons.

97 First, English in Flanders is associated to specific societal hotspots (e.g. IT) and social roles (e.g. 98 gamers). Earlier work has revealed that Belgian Dutch-speaking adults share expectations on the use 99 of English insertions by such social roles. More concretely, modern roles like 'gamers', 'rappers' and 100 'soccer players' are expected to insert more English into their Dutch, whilst traditional roles (e.g. 101 'farmer') and public roles ('prime minister') are seen to rather use Dutch (Schuring et al. 2023). This 102 allows us to examine to what extent children share the sociolinguistic expectations that adults hold, and 103 to investigate how and when children start to orient to those community norms.

104 Second, English words have additionally been shown to function as a youth language marker to which children in Flanders seem to start attach social meaning in preadolescence. As such, previous research 105 106 observed Belgian Dutch-speaking preadolescents receptively know a high number of English words 107 (Puimège and Peters 2019), actively produce these words in sociolinguistic interviews (see Schuring 108 and Zenner 2022) and evaluate these words more positively than before starting at the age of ten years 109 old (Zenner et al. 2021). Additionally, this last study demonstrated children are able to recognize some 110 English words as English at age six, although this ability considerably improved by at the age of ten to eleven years old at which point most children recognized all English words included in the study. From 111

this ensues that children already engage with English words sufficiently for them to start holding sociolinguistic expectations on these words.

114 **1.3 Research questions**

In a bid to capture multiple layers of sociolinguistic expectations in the same design, this paper aims to triangulate different methods to answer the following research questions on the English-Dutch

117 contact setting:

118 RQ1. To what extent do Belgian Dutch-speaking preadolescents hold sociolinguistic expectations on
 119 English use by various social roles:

- 120 RQ1.1 in a closed rating task, directly targeting the sociolinguistic expectations?
- 121 RQ1.2 in role performance, targeting the implementation of these expectations?
- 122RQ1.3in an open-ended interview, targeting reflection on the implementation of these123expectations?

124 **2** Method

125 **2.1 Sample**

126 A sample of 25 Belgian Dutch-speaking preadolescents (aged 7 to 13, M=10;2, SD=1;8) was selected 127 to address the research questions. As part of the larger research project "Playing with English", the participants, who all have high socio-economic status, were recruited in a hockey club in Flanders, 128 129 Belgium. Depending on the task, the players participated individually and in small groups of 3 to 5 130 children which coincided with their usual hockey teams (see Table 1). For this study, the children completed three tasks, all monitored by the same Belgian Dutch-speaking 23-year-old female 131 132 researcher: a closed rating task (Section 2.2), a role performance task (Section 2.3) and an open-ended interview (Section 2.4). As can be seen in Figure 1, the chronological order in which the tasks were 133 134 performed was (1) role performance task, (2) open-ended interview and (3) closed rating task, 135 considering the participants could only be informed about the research object after completion of the role performance task and the interview. 136

137**Table 1**: Participants (pseudonymized names) ordered by team with age in [years;months] at the start of138the project.

Boys 1	Boys 2	Boys 3	Girls 1	Girls 2	Girls 3
Nathan [7;7]	Adam [8;6]	Elias [11;1]	Rosalie [9;2]	Stella [9;11]	Yasmine [11;6]
Leon [7;8]	David [8;9]	Noah [11;7]	Jade [9;2]	Lily [10;0]	Floor [11;8]
Thomas [7;9]	Kobe [9;2]	Max [11;8]	Zoë [9;2]	June [10;11]	Camille [12;7]
Finn [8;5]	Simon [9;5]	Victor [12;3]	Laura [9;2]		Sarah [12;11]
			Charlotte [10;1]		Olivia [13;3]



Figure 1: order of the tasks

139

140 2.2 Closed rating task

141 **Design.** Focusing on the sociolinguistic expectations themselves (RQ1.1), participants were asked to

- individually complete an online survey, using a laptop, with the researcher following along. To ensure
- that the younger participants understood the task and to cross-check for random answers, the researcher
- 144 explained every step thoroughly and asked clarifying questions.¹ The rating task mirrored an adult

¹ Social desirability that might result from this approach is not deemed a liability here since this study targets community norms: we are interested precisely in the extent to which children can indicate what they believe we want to read.

145 study (see Schuring et al. 2023) and consisted of one matrix question "How often do these social role actors use English words in Dutch when performing their role, according to you?". Participants 146 indicated their expectations on a 7-point Likert scale, as shown in Table 2. Among the 19 social role 147 148 items included in the adult study, this study targeted five roles, three of which traditionally orient 149 towards English ('gamer', 'rapper' and 'soccer player') and two away from English ('farmer' and 'prime minister', see Section 1.2). This selection of roles was based on children's familiarity with these 150 151 roles measured through a semi-structured interview with 13 preadolescent children not part of the 152 sample.

	never	very rarely	rarely	sometimes	often	very often	all the time	I don't know
[social role]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

153 **Table 2**: 7-point Likert scale used in the rating task (translated from Dutch to English)

154 Analysis. Results are examined per hockey team and compared to the adult ratings discussed in Section

155 1.2. Considering this study's limited sample size, analysis here is solely descriptive.

156 **2.3 Role performance**

Design. To study the implementation of the expectations (see RQ1.2), we asked participants to take 157 158 part in an elicited roleplay design based on fully imaginary play (e.g. no props/costumes, see Schuring et al. 2024 for a detailed description). In a room containing 5 chairs and 2 cameras, the participants 159 160 each engaged in 5 group plays with the members of their hockey team (see Table 1). For each play, the researcher instructed the participants to all impersonate the same social role² (e.g. 'gamer') and create 161 and perform a story with a fixed theme (e.g. a new game) and a fixed structure ('there is a problem'). 162 163 We presented the same roles as offered in the closed rating task, viz. 'gamer', 'rapper' and 'soccer 164 player' (orienting towards English) and 'farmer' and 'prime minister' (orienting away from English). Thus, each participant performed 'gamer', 'farmer', 'rapper', 'soccer player' and 'prime minister'. To 165 gather spontaneous speech from the children as a benchmark for their roleplay, additional data was 166 167 collected from peer group conversations during a 15-minute break. The participants devised and rehearsed each play (8 minutes, no researcher present) and then staged their performance (4 minutes), 168 in the order 'gamer, farmer, (break), rapper, soccer player and prime minister'. The final corpus 169 170 consists of 75 minutes of video data per team.

Analysis. All utterances in the corpus were manually transcribed according to CHILDES' CHAT conventions (MacWhinney 2000) and later tagged for roleplay (utterances in 'character', see Excerpt 1), noise (metacomments and instructions, see Excerpt 2) and spontaneous speech (cf. Excerpt 3 and see Schuring et al. 2024: 8-9 for the full identification protocol). Due to data sparseness for Boys 2, we excluded this team for further analysis for all the tasks. The resulting corpus thus consists of 5,348 child utterances, 3,443 of which belong to roleplay and 1,905 to spontaneous speech (see Appendix 1 for a full overview).

 $^{^{2}}$ Per play, the social role was kept stable following a pretest that indicated that mixed roles in one play create confusion, as participants accidently shifted to other roles and found it difficult to invent a narrative for a play with many different roles. Additionally, one stable role per play (N=5) allowed us to compare 5 role performances per individual participant.

- 178 (1) *STE: **jow bro** vandaag zijn we op deze **show**. (Stella impersonating 'rapper')
- 179 %eng: jow bro today we are at this show.
- (2) *ELI: kunnen we niet doen dat deze stoel een dier is? (Elias talking about the 'farmer' play)
 %eng: *can't we pretend this chair is an animal*?
- (3) *OLI: wij zijn zo toxic en maken keiveel ruzie. (Olivia talking about an ex-boyfriend)
 %eng: we are so toxic and argue a lot.

184 In the final dataset, we then identified all recognizable English words (based on a proxy, see Onysko 2007; Schuring and Zenner 2022; Supplement 1). Of course, it is possible the participants insert English 185 words because they are simply the default term for a concept; there is for instance no alternative in 186 187 Dutch for *computer*, a loanword that at the same time is closely linked to the gamer identity. Hence, 188 we only retain recognizable English words for which a Dutch alternative is available (see boldface 189 words above, cf. Onysko & Winter-Froemel 2011). Thus, we aim to eliminate the possibility that 190 participants are just drawing from ("unavoidable", a term we use purely descriptively) role-specific 191 vocabulary rather than performing sociolinguistic expectations. On the final dataset with labeled English words (see Supplement 1 for the full identification protocol), we performed quantitative analysis, 192 193 implementing a conditional inference tree in R.³

194 **2.4 Open-ended interview**

Design. With the aim to capture reflection on the implementation of the sociolinguistic expectations (RQ1.3), we created a semi-structured interview protocol based on recall. Three months after the role performance task (Section 2.3), the researcher visited each participant individually in their home. During a 2-hour metalinguistic interview session of the larger "Playing with English" project (see Schuring 2024), 15 minutes were allocated to invite the children to think back on their role performances. Following a question probing task recall ("Do you remember the roleplay task?"), the researcher asked the target question "Did you change something about your language?".

Analysis. The session was video-recorded and all utterances were transcribed manually (see Section 203 2.3). The responses to the target question were then categorized into "no", "not sure" and "yes" 204 utterances, with a further breakdown in six types of comments for the latter group. We provide an 205 example from the data for each of these types below (see Excerpts (4)-(9)):

206	1.	No specification	The participant answered 'yes' but could not explain their answer.
207		(NO SPEC)	(4) *ZOE: yes but I don't now what I changed.
208	2.	Voice changes:	Comments related to voice changes (e.g. pitch, volume, pace).
209		(VOICE)	(5) *STE: I spoke with a lower voice.
210	3.	Speech acts:	Comments related to differences in speech acts (e.g. more imperatives).
211		(SPEECH ACTS):	(6) *JAD: I gave more orders.
212	4.	Stand-alone social meaning:	Comments related to social meanings without reference to linguistic forms.
213		(SOCIAL MEANING)	(7) *LEO: I talked cooler.
214	5.	Language variation	Comments related to other patterns of language variation.
215		(LANG.VAR)	(8) *FLO: a farmer uses more dialect.
216	6.	English words:	Comments on the use of English words for specific social roles.
217		(ENGLISH WORDS):	(9) *CAM: gamers use street language [] words like 'show'.

³ We implemented the 'ggplot2', 'party', 'partykit' and 'ggparty' packages.

218 **3 Results**

219 **3.1 Closed rating task**

The sociolinguistic expectations as captured in the rating task ("How often do these social role actors use English words in Dutch [...]?") are portrayed in Figure 2. For all roles performed (x-axis) the individual participants' expectations of English use are plotted on the 7-point Likert scale (y-axis, see Table 2) and grouped by hockey team.

Overall, for each panel, we observe an adultlike pattern moving from bottom left (low estimated English use for Dutch-prone roles 'farmer' and 'prime minister') to top right (high estimated English use for English-prone roles 'soccer player', 'gamer' and 'rapper') with the Girls2 team avoiding the extremes. The only participant group where the pattern seems to be more whimsical (lower ratings for the English-prone roles) is the Boys1 team, which includes the youngest participants (viz. 8-year-olds) of the sample. Specifically, it seems to be Thomas (THO: 8;3 y/o) who portrays the most divergent ratings (indicating 'soccer player' and 'gamer' 'never use English words in Dutch').

231

232



Figure 2: closed rating task

234 **3.2 Role performance**

235 Figure 3 includes the conditional inference tree (Tagliamonte and Baayen 2012) we computed for the roleplay data. This inferential statistic technique aims to predict English use YES (green) or NO (blue) 236 237 by recursively making the most significant binary splits in the data based on the predictors: role (with 238 levels: 'farmer', 'prime minister', 'spontaneous speech benchmark', 'gamer' and 'rapper'), gender 239 (with levels: 'boy', 'girl'), age (7-8, 9-10,11-13 y/o), hockey team (see Table 1), and individual 240 participant. We select the technique given its ability to uncover complex interactions, and its robustness 241 to small n, large p problems. The solution presented in Figure 3 adopts an alpha level of p < 0.01 and 242 has a C-value of 0.72.

Turning to the output of the tree, the most important split is made on the basis of 'social role', separating 'rapper' (highest English use) from all other roles. Within the latter group, a second 'social role' split isolates 'soccer player' and 'gamer' (more English insertions) from 'farmer', 'prime minister' and 'spontaneous speech'⁴ (fewer English insertions). This confirms the pattern of English- and Dutchprone roles found in Figure 2, as participants use more English insertions for performances of *rapper*, *gamer* and *soccer player* than for *farmer* and *prime minister*. The most frequently inserted English elements per role are presented in Table 3 (based on N=677 utterances containing English out of a total

250 of N=5,348 utterances).

English-prone roles			Dutch	Dutch-prone roles		
gamer	rapper	soccer player	farmer	prime minister	speech	
game	jow	goal	online	lover	sorry	
(N=33)	(N=23)	(N=15)	(N=5)	(N=4)	(N=18)	
loser	peace	keeper	website	online	killen	
(N=9)	(N=18)	(N=10)	(N=3)	(N=3)	(N=9)	
go	band	team	babytijger	bro	oh my god	
(N=6)	(N=17)	(N=9)	(N=2)	(N=1)	(N=8)	
babygamer	award	match	cushy	cool	lol	
(N=4)	(N=14)	(N=8)	(N=1)	(N=1)	(N=5)	
hey	dude	let's go	hey	team	fuck	
(N=4)	(N=7)	(N=5)	(N=1)	(N=1)	(N=4)	

Table 3: Most frequently inserted English types per role (including spontaneous speech)

252 Next, regarding stratification, the model did not retain the 'gender' or 'age' parameter, but we do see 253 that hockey team and individual participant contribute to the explanation of variation in English in 254 certain nodes of the tree. Although no straightforward interpretation is at hand, it does appear to be the 255 case that the behavior of some individual participants is more varied than that of others. For instance, 256 where Olivia (OLI: 13;3 y/o) makes a difference between spontaneous speech (more English 257 insertions) and 'farmer'/'prime minister' (fewer English insertions) and between 'soccer player' (more English insertions) and 'gamer' (fewer English insertions). Thomas (THO: 7:9 v/o) does not vary his 258 259 English use between these pairs of roles.

⁴ The English use for 'spontaneous speech' differs from that of 'farmer' and 'prime minister' for only some participants.



Figure 3: conditional inference tree for role performance

262 **3.3 Open-ended interview**

Figure 4 presents the results of the open-ended interview, portraying the participants' answers to the target question "Did you change something about your language?" distinguishing between 'NO', 'not sure' and 'YES' (with further specification of the comments, see Section 2.4). We refer to Supplement 2 for a complete overview of the Dutch interview excerpts (including English translations) for all participants.

Participant	Did you change something about your language use?								
	Response		If yes: participant commented on changes to:						
		NO SPEC	VOICE	SPEECH	SOCIAL	LANG	ENGLISH		
				ACTS	MEANING	VAR	WORDS		
Boys1				1	1	1			
NAT [8;0]	NO								
LEO [8;1]	YES								
THO [8;3]	NO								
FIN [8;9]	YES								
Girls1									
ROS [9;6]	YES								
JAD [9;6]	YES								
ZOE [9;7]	YES								
LAU [9;7]	YES								
CHA [10;5]	NO								
Girls 2									
STE [10;4]	YES								
LIL [10;5]	NOT SURE								
JUN [11;4]	YES								
Boys 3							·		
ELI [11;6]	YES								
NOA [12;1]	NO								
MAX [12;1]	NO								
VIC [12;8]	YES								
Girls 3	·						·		
YAS [12;0]	YES								
FLO [12;1]	YES								
CAM [13;0]	YES								
SAR [13;4]	YES								
OLI [13;8]	YES								
Total	yes: 15	1	10	1	6	3	2		
N_PARTI-	no: 5								
CIPANTS	not sure: 1								

Figure 4: open-ended interview

Figure 4 demonstrates that the majority of participants believe to have made changes to their language use (YES, N=15/21), with voice adaptation being the most frequently quoted change (N=10/15, see Excerpt (5) in Section 2.4). Here, an age pattern can tentatively be identified. While younger participants (cf. top left of Figure 4) typically answer 'NO' to the target question or comment on changes made with a focus on the social (stand-alone social meanings), older participants, especially

the oldest girls (bottom right of Figure 4) refer to the linguistic side of language variation (N=3) and
even comment on English words (N=2, see Excerpt (9) in Section 2.4). Exceptions occur as well, with
for instance young Leon (LEO: 8;1 y/o) giving a particularly perceptive account when he refers to
'talking cooler for soccer players' (labeled as stand-alone social meaning, see Excerpt (10) below).
Max (MAX: 12;1 y/o) and Noah (NOA: 12;1), two of the oldest boys in the sample, in turn argue not
to have changed their language use at all (see e.g. Excerpt (11)).

278	(10)	*INT:	en zou je nog dingetjes hebben aangepast aan jouw taal?
279		%eng:	and would you have changed anything else about your language?
280		*LEO:	ik denk misschien toen bij de voetballer ofzo.
281		%eng:	I think maybe when I was a soccer player or something.
282		*INT:	&=hmm wat heb je toen gedaan?
283		%eng:	&=hmm what did you do then?
284		*LEO:	&-eumh (.) ik toen praatte ik zo een beetje cooler.
285		%eng:	&-eumh (.) I then I talked like a little bit cooler.
286		-	
287	(11)	*INT:	en heb jij dan ook nog denk je dingen aangepast aan de manier waarop jij
288			praatte terwijl jij die rol aant [: aan het] spelen was?
289		%eng:	and do you think you have changed things to the way you talked when you
290		C	were performing the role?
291		*NOA:	nee dat denk ik nie(t).
292		%eng:	no I don't think so.
		-	

293

294 **4 Discussion and conclusion**

295 This paper investigated 25 Belgian Dutch-speaking preadolescents' expectations on the use of English 296 insertions by various social roles. The findings from our triangulated approach suggest the children 297 have shared expectations of the role English plays in Belgian Dutch society: the results of the rating 298 task align nicely with those of adults (RQ1.1) and are reflected in the roleplay performances where 299 children insert more English elements for the English-prone roles than for the Dutch-prone roles 300 (RQ1.2). However, in an interview, participants do not seem to be able to pinpoint how they 301 implemented these expectations in the role performance with great precision (RQ1.3), showing more 302 extensive individual variation than for the first two research questions. From these findings, we derive 303 three key insights.

304 First, preadolescents pick up on the places and roles in society where English is pervasive. Similar to 305 what has been found for variation between standard and vernacular (see Section 1.1), children seem to be well aware of the presence of this external lexical resource in Dutch. This observed sensitivity to 306 307 the varying use of English may be fueled by its attractivity as a youth language marker. In emerging 308 adolescence, children in some way learn to relate to and hence be attentive to English insertions in 309 order to consolidate membership in their ingroup (Leppänen 2007). One way for future studies to 310 unpack this relationship between English as a hotspot in specific domains in society and English as a 311 youth language marker, is to zoom in on the type of English insertions in the data, distinguishing 312 between domain-specific English use (e.g. goal, tackle for sports) and typical youth language markers 313 (oh my god, crazy).

Second, although we find clear expectations on the use of English, we observe a marked difference between the outcomes of the rating task and the roleplay, on the one hand, and of the interview on the other. Only a handful of our participants, specifically the oldest girls, explicitly refer to English words

317 when talking about their roleplay, while most of the participants show the expected shifts in the other

318 tasks. From this, it is tempting to infer that no metalinguistic reflection is needed to exhibit 319 sociolinguistic sensitivity in production and perception (cf. Drager and Kirtley 2016: 12). However, 320 alternative interpretations can be put forward. For one thing, the uniform results for the roleplay task 321 may have been distorted by peer group priming. More importantly, an open-ended interview is a 322 difficult task for (young) participants to perform, as it requires the skills and concepts to verbalize 323 metalinguistic intuition. It is possible that the more focused reflection of older participants is a 324 pedagogical effect of going to secondary school, where the children are socialized differently and 325 taught to argue successfully. Alternatively, older participants might be able to refer to English more 326 upfront following the growing importance of English as a youth language marker in this age group. 327 Finally, it is possible that the younger children in the sample perceive the English words they inserted 328 in their performances as Dutch words which could also explain the absence of reflection on English in 329 the interview. Conversely, the participants might consider it so obvious that the English words are 330 English that they do not mention it (see also Zenner et al. 2021, Section 1.2 on children's recognition 331 of English words).

332 Third, although our aggregations generally reveal fairly consistent patterns, we also observe 333 considerable variation between participants (see e.g. Olivia and Thomas in role performance, Section 334 3.2). This could be related to the fact that children develop at various rates, being exposed to different 335 input, leading to a range of developmental pathways. Such individual differences between 336 preadolescents also hold methodological implications: task engagement and what is or is not 337 recognized as an English insertion (see above) can for instance vary significantly between participants. 338 In this sense, careful reflection is needed on how (sociolinguistic) research with children should be 339 designed. In the future, an important next step in this process would be to add a more qualitative 340 approach to this quantitative study as would further investigation into the extent to which children 341 perceive the boundaries between language(s) (varieties) (cf. Hirschfeld & Gelman 1997; Kristiansen 342 2010). Additionally, a roleplay design in which children of one group each play a different role could 343 uncover differences now left undetected. Children might use more English if they need to differentiate 344 their role (e.g. *rapper*) from other roles (e.g. *farmer*) in the same interaction.

We conclude that a triangulated approach can be of great help to investigate children's sociolinguistic expectations. It not only allows us to compare information across tasks, but can also offer the opportunity in follow-up research to construct participant profiles. Precisely how triangulation provides a rich source of information that can lead to insights otherwise undetectable, is what we hope to have shown in this study.

350 **5** Appendices

351 Appendix 1: overview of the dataset

	Utterances not containing		Utterances containing		Utterances total	
	English	insertions	English ir	nsertions		
	n	%	n	%	n	
in-group benchmark	1770	92.91	135	7.09	1905	Mean_in-
Boys 1	233	86,30%	37	13,70%	270	group
*FIN	71	83,53%	14	16,47%	85	benchmark
*LEO	63	91,30%	6	8,70%	69	7.09%
*NAT	26	68,42%	12	31,58%	38	
*THO	73	93,59%	5	6,41%	78	
Girls 1	405	96,89%	13	3,11%	418	
*CHA	67	95,71%	3	4,29%	70	
*JAD	69	95,83%	3	4,17%	72	
*LAU	116	98,31%	2	1,69%	118	
*ROS	109	95,61%	5	4,39%	114	
*ZOE	44	100,00%	0	0,00%	44	
Girls 2	307	98,08%	6	1,92%	313	
*JUN	49	90,74%	5	9,26%	54	
*LIL	109	99,09%	1	0,91%	110	
*STE	149	100,00%	0	0,00%	149	
Boys 3	257	98,47%	4	1,53%	261	
*ELI	76	96,20%	3	3,80%	79	
*MAX	22	95,65%	1	4,35%	23	
*NOA	56	100,00%	0	0,00%	56	
*VIC	103	100,00%	0	0,00%	103	
Girls 3	574	88.44	75	11.56	649	
*YAS	84	95,45	4	4,55	88	
*FLO	69	92,00	6	8,00	75	
*CAM	143	84,12	27	15,88	170	
*SAR	121	91,67	11	8,33	132	
*OLI	151	84,83	27	15,17	178	
English-prone roles		-			-	-
	n	%	n	%	n	
gamer	667	82,45%	142	17.55%	809	Mean English-
Boys 1	54	62,79%	32	37,21%	86	prone roles
*FIN	22	64,71%	12	35,29%	34	24.60%
*LEO	7	46,67%	8	53,33%	15	
*NAT	11	68,75%	5	31,25%	16	
*THO	14	66,67%	7	33,33%	21	
Girls 1	206	75,18%	68	24,82%	274	
*CHA	52	88,14%	7	11,86%	59	
*JAD	55	77,46%	16	22,54%	71	
*LAU	30	69,77%	13	30,23%	43	
*ROS	57	68,67%	26	31,33%	83	
*ZOE	12	66,67%	6	33,33%	18	
Girls 2	134	87,58%	19	12,42%	153	1
*JUN	16	72,73%	6	27,27%	22	
*LIL	39	81,25%	9	18,75%	48	
*STE	79	95,18%	4	4,82%	83	

Boys 3		125	91,91%	11	8,09%	136	
	*ELI	21	77,78%	6	22,22%	27	
	*MAX	36	94,74%	2	5,26%	38	
	*NOA	46	100,00%	0	0,00%	46	
	*VIC	22	88,00%	3	12,00%	25	
Girls 3		148	92.50%	12	7.50%	160	
	*YAS	13	92,86	1	7,14	14	
	*FLO	14	100.00	0	0.00	14	
	*CAM	55	90.16	6	9.84	61	
	*SAR	21	91.30	2	8.70	23	
	*OLI	45	93.75	3	6.25	48	
	-			_	-, -	-	
		Utterances	not containing	Utterances	containing	Utteranc	es total
		Fnglish	insertions	English in	sertions	otterune	
		g.ioii	%	g	%	n	
soccer player		163	⁷⁰ 80 80%	110	19 20%	573	Mean English-
Boys 1		55	02.22%	110	6 78%	50	nrone roles
BOys 1	*FIN	16	93,22%	4	5 88%	17	24.60%
	*1 EO	10	100.00%	1	0.00%	17	
	*NAT	10	90.48%	2	0,00%	4 21	
	*TUO	16	90,48%	1	5,5276	17	
Cirle 1	THU	10	94,12%	1	5,00%	144	
GINSI	*	110	80,30%	28	19,44%	144	
		27	81,82%	0	18,18%	33	
	*JAD	22	81,48%	5	18,52%	27	
	*LAU	13	86,67%	2	13,33%	15	
	*RUS	41	75,93%	13	24,07%	54	
Cirle 2	*ZOE	13	86,67%	2	13,33%	15	
GIRIS 2	*	55	83,33%	11	16,67%	66	
	*JUN	14	//,/8%	4	22,22%	18	
	*LIL	28	87,50%	4	12,50%	32	
	*SIE	13	81,25%	3	18,75%	16	
Boys 3	*=	81	81,00%	19	19,00%	100	
	*ELI	16	84,21%	3	15,79%	19	
	*MAX	19	76,00%	6	24,00%	25	
	*NOA	23	85,19%	4	14,81%	27	
	*VIC	23	79,31%	6	20,69%	29	
Giris 3	*****	156	76,47%	48	23,53%	204	
	*YAS	10	58,82	/	41,18	1/	
	*FLO	16	84,21	3	15,79	19	
	*CAM	40	/1,43	16	28,57	56	
	*SAR	31	79,49	8	20,51	39	
	*OLI	59	80,82	14	19,18	73	
rapper		377	62.94%	222	37.06%	599	Mean English-
Boys 1		42	58,33%	30	41,67%	72	prone roles
	*FIN	11	42,31%	15	57,69%	26	24.60%
	*LEO	11	64,71%	6	35,29%	17	
	*NAT	11	64,71%	6	35,29%	17	
	*THO	9	75,00%	3	25,00%	12	
Girls 1		124	72,09%	48	27,91%	172	

				n			[
	*CHA	24	72,73%	9	27,27%	33	
	*JAD	23	65,71%	12	34,29%	35	
	*LAU	16	72,73%	6	27,27%	22	
	*ROS	49	75,38%	16	24,62%	65	
	*ZOE	12	70,59%	5	29,41%	17	
Girls 2		51	46,79%	58	53,21%	109	
	*JUN	17	38,64%	27	61,36%	44	
	*LIL	11	91,67%	1	8,33%	12	
	*STE	23	43,40%	30	56,60%	53	
Boys 3		81	81,82%	18	18,18%	99	
	*ELI	20	80,00%	5	20,00%	25	
	*MAX	20	76,92%	6	23,08%	26	
	*NOA	25	83,33%	5	16,67%	30	
	*VIC	16	88,89%	2	11,11%	18	
Girls 3		79	53,74%	68	46,26%	147	
	*YAS	10	66,67	5	33,33	15	
	*FLO	11	57,89	8	42,11	19	
	*CAM	18	35,29	33	64,71	51	
	*SAR	15	53,57	13	46,43	28	
	*OLI	25	73,53	9	26,47	34	
Dutch-prone role	es						
		Utterances	not containing	Utterances	containing	Utteranc	es total
		English	insertions	English in	sertions		
		n	%	n	%	n	
farmer		654	96 32	25	3 68%	704	Mean Dutch-
Boys 1		66	91.67%	6	8 33%	72	prone roles
	*FIN	11	91.67%	1	8 33%	12	4.61%
	*LEO	11	100.00%	0	0.00%	11	
	*NAT	4	66 67%	2	33 33%	6	
	*THO	40	93 02%	3	6 98%	43	
Girls 1		138	97 87%	3	2 13%	141	
01101	*СНА	17	100.00%	0	0.00%	17	
	*IAD	28	100.00%	0	0.00%	28	
	*1411	28	96 55%	1	3 45%	20	
	*RUS	50	98.04%	1	1 96%	51	
	*70F	15	93 75%	1	6.25%	16	
Girls 2	201	113	98.26%	2	1 7/%	115	
	*11 IN	12	02.86%	1	7 1 1 %	1/	
	*111	22	100.00%	0	0.00%	74	
		55	09 52%	1	1 47%	55	
Pove 2	JIL	80	98,55%	5	5 2 2 %	00	
BOYS 5	*=11	16	94,08%	3	3,3278	20	
		10	100.00%	4	20,00%	20	
		14	100,00%	0	0,00%	14	
<u> </u>		21	100,00%	1	2 1 2 0/	27 14	
Circle 2	VIC	210	30,00%	<u> </u>	3,13% 2 E00/	32 257	
		240		9	3,50%	257	
 	****		T00.00	U	0,00	29	
	*YAS	23 47	07.02	1	2 00	18	
	*YAS *FLO	47	97,92	1	2,08	48	
	*YAS *FLO *CAM	47 60	97,92 92,31	1 5	2,08 7,69	48 65	
	*YAS *FLO *CAM *SAR	47 60 41	97,92 92,31 97,62	1 5 1	2,08 7,69 2,38	48 65 42	
	*YAS *FLO *CAM *SAR *OLI	47 60 41 71	97,92 92,31 97,62 97,26	1 5 1 2	2,08 7,69 2,38 2,74	48 65 42 73	

		n	%	n	%	n	352
Prime minister		734	94.47%	43	5.53%	777	Mean Dutch-
Boys 1		46	95,83%	2	4,17%	48	prone rol@§3
	*FIN	12	100,00%	0	0,00%	12	4.61%
	*LEO	15	100,00%	0	0,00%	15	354
	*NAT	29	96,67%	1	3,33%	30	
	*THO	224	96,55%	8	3,45%	232	355
Girls 1		25	78,13%	7	21,88%	32	
	*CHA	41	100,00%	0	0,00%	41	356
	*JAD	54	100,00%	0	0,00%	54	
	*LAU	88	98,88%	1	1,12%	89	357
	*ROS	16	100,00%	0	0,00%	16	
	*ZOE	54	100,00%	0	0,00%	54	358
Girls 2		20	83,33%	4	16,67%	24	
	*JUN	63	96,92%	2	3,08%	65	359
	*LIL	94	87,85%	13	12,15%	107	
	*STE	92	97,87%	2	2,13%	94	360
Boys 3		55	100,00%	0	0,00%	55	200
	*ELI	9	81,82%	2	18,18%	11	361
	*MAX	10	100,00%	0	0,00%	10	001
	*NOA	18	100,00%	0	0,00%	18	362
	*VIC	139	92,67%	11	7,33%	150	502
Girls 3		139	92.67	11	7.33	150	363
	*YAS	12	80,00	3	20,00	15	505
	*FLO	16	94,12	1	5,88	17	364
	*CAM	41	85,42	7	14,58	48	
	*SAR	11	100,00	0	0,00	11	365
	*OLI	59	100,00	0	0,00	59	505

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- 461

462 DATA AVAILABILITY

- 463 The data sets presented in this article are not readily available because of ethical restrictions that could comprise
- the privacy of the research participants.

465 ETHICS STATEMENT

- 466 This study was reviewed and approved by the Social and Societal Ethics Committee (SMEC) at KU Leuven,
- 467 approval number G-2020-1998-R6. The participants provided assent to participate in the study and were
- 468 unaware of the research object. Parents gave written informed consent and were given full disclosure.