Diminutive formation in Limburgian Dutch: Sittard, Herten and Panningen

Diminutive formation in Sittard has been described in Gussenhoven and Jacobs (2011) by four rules, UMLAUT, S-INSERTION, N-ASSIMILATION, and, K-FRONTING. In that order, they predict that stem-final n surfaces as an assimilated velar nasal before the underlying /-k/ diminutive suffix, as in /pɔn-ka/ ‘pot DIM’ surfacing as [ŋɛŋka], whereas other stem-final non-continuant coronals, like [t], as in /tɔnt-ka/ ‘aunt DIM’ surface as [tɛŋka].

The analysis raises a number of questions. First, why is N-ASSIMILATION limited to anterior coronal nasals, but does not affect non-anterior nasals, as in /mɔŋ-ka/ [mɛŋka]? Secondly, how to account for Herten, where the diminutive of /mɔn/ is [mɛŋka] (Beenen (1973) mentions “menke” moet men uitspreken als: men-ke“)? The MAND (Morfologische atlas van Nederlandse dialecten (Goeman and Taeldeman 1996, http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/projecten/mand) allows for a comparative study of these questions. We report on the findings that resulted from contrasting and comparing the Beenen (1973) description of Herten with the MAND data for Panningen and Sittard and on recordings for three generations of Panningen speakers.

