



MOOC

LINGUISTIC ASSERTIVENESS FOR MINORITIZED LANGUAGE SPEAKERS (ML)

LESSON 3:

Can you become linguistically assertive?

In this lesson we will try to (1) understand our own linguistic behaviour, and (2) devise some basic general strategies to learn how to progress from a somewhat submissive way towards a more assertive style.

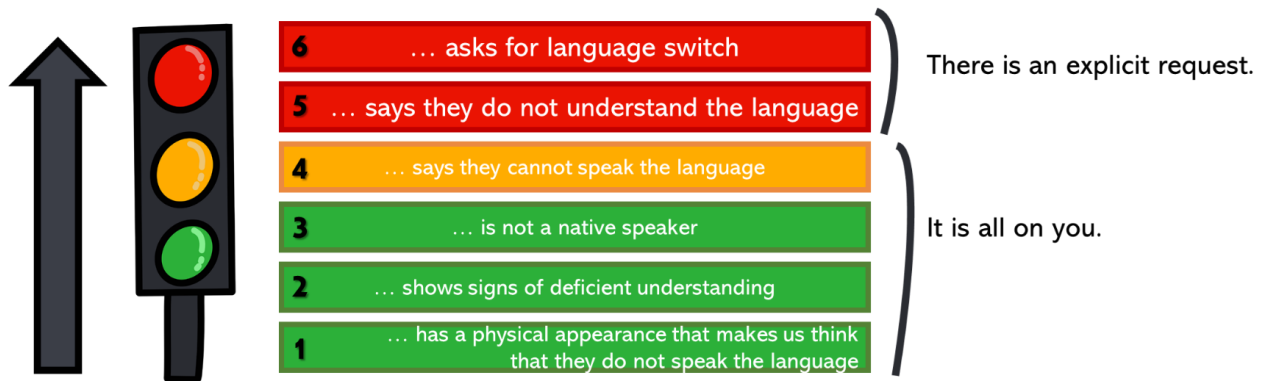
1. Understand your behaviour

As mentioned in previous lessons, linguistic submissiveness is a habit. As such, it can be modified or replaced. In lesson 3 we address **useful strategies to produce that change in behaviour** in the desired direction (using your ML more).

With the language assertiveness test in Lesson 1 we were able to test how we generally behave in terms of ML use: linguistically submissive, aggressive, or passive. We will now go into a little more detail so that you can identify in which situations you use or switch to your DM unnecessarily.

You can use the following diagram to do that:

I generally switch to the DL when the interlocutor...



2. Devise alternative strategies to your usual behaviour

In the following lessons we will go into detail on specific resources that you can use to be more linguistically assertive. For now, we are learning three very simple strategies: (1) Pole position; (2) Bilingual conversations; (3) Assertive demands.

1. Pole position

There is one simple thing you can do from now on: starting a conversation in your ML.

When you meet a group of people, just greet them through the ML, loud and clear. Do not use generic formulas (*Hi, Hello, Hey...*) but a clearly identifiable local greeting expression like *Dia Duit* (Irish) or *Maidin Mhaith* (Welsh). That way, you will be able to identify all the ML-speakers present. In some cases, most of them will be ML-speakers.

2. Practice bilingual conversations

Some people you already know are perfectly able to understand your ML, even if they are not fluent enough to speak it. That is a good opportunity for you to practise bilingual conversations. Additionally, it will help them to improve their

knowledge and fluency and, eventually, the conversation might evolve towards the ML on both sides. If this is not the case, it will provide you with valuable experience in holding your language.

→ **Keep a record of your progresses**

When you practise a new habit it is important to keep what we call a behaviour log. Keeping record of our behaviour allows us to easily detect changes and facilitate progress. Use the following record of bilingual conversations to do that. You will see how you feel more and more comfortable each time!

Table 1. Bilingual conversation chart

	M O N D A Y	T U E S D A Y	W E D N E S D A Y	T H U R S D A Y	F R I D A Y	S A T U R D A Y	S U N D A Y
Week from ____ to ____							
Bilingual conversations							
Degree of effort (0-10):							
Degree of satisfaction (0-10):							



Perceive bilingual conversations as **a game**, rather than a conflict. When we experience something in a pleasant way, we allow it to act as a reinforcer. And we already know that behaviours that provide reinforcement are more likely to repeat themselves.

3. Assertive demands

Think of the people with whom you already have a relationship of any kind (acquaintances, neighbours, co-workers, friends, family, couple ...), which so far has been developed in the DL. Think about how many of these conversations

could be held by you in the ML. How would you go about that? And how do you make sure it goes reasonably smooth?

This can be done in different styles. Here, we will learn how to use assertive demands to switch to the ML and keep your language in different conversations.

Characteristics of an assertive demand for linguistic change:

1. Formulate it in the first person without manipulating or providing more reasons, and prepare your argument based on fully subjective reasons: "I would like", "I would prefer", "I would feel better", "I would like to", "I would be more comfortable if...".
2. Do not ask it as an ultimatum, but as a negotiated solution: What do you think? How does it sound to you?
3. Response Prevention: Anticipate the other person's more probable response. "In what ways is he likely to tell you "no"?" and after that, prepare your reaction to that.
4. Reach a viable compromise. For example: you can continue speaking in Dutch and I will continue in Frisian.



Recommendations for assertive demand which lead to language change:

1. Select the time and opportunity (on what day, on what conditions) when you want to make the request to the person in question. Generally, it is advisable to do it without other people being present.
2. Present it in a way that highlights the positive elements. For example: "I am used to speaking ML with those people I respect and love. I would like to do the same with you."
3. Prepare your answers, because you are likely to find some resistance there.

**Test
yourself!**

[You can find the mid lesson-test for lesson 3 here.](#)