The status of /G/ in Dutch as a fricative is rather peculiar, given that in most surrounding languages its etymological equivalent is a stop. Furthermore, it is one of the most stigmatized phonological variables in the Dutch language area. In the Netherlands speakers with voiceless uvular realizations of /G/ are labeled as coming from the north of the Dutch language area and having a hard G; speakers with more fronted (and sometimes voiced) realizations are from the south and have a soft G.

The speakers in this study are 160 Dutch language teachers, stratified for community, region, sex and age. 12 tokens of /G/ in word initial position were classified as hard or soft by 80 native speakers of Dutch from the Netherlands. Then, 10 trained transcribers classified half of the tokens on (i) place of articulation; (ii) voice, (iii) frication and tenseness. We will describe the regional variation patterns in the pronunciation of /G/ in standard Dutch, interpret these patterns in the light of convergence and divergence and establish the phonetic correlates of hard an soft G in standard Dutch by means of a linear discriminant analysis. Finally, the transcription method will be evaluated.