DOUBLE DUTCH – THE DUTCH LANGUAGE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Dutch have a longstanding reputation for individual bilingualism and even multilingualism. Their knowledge of other languages is mainly a result of school-based language learning, combined with regular contact with other speech communities. The main languages learnt in the Dutch education system were and continue to be English, German, French and Spanish. More recently, some immigrant languages such as Turkish, Arabic and Berber, as well as the languages associated with former colonies, have been added to this list, as Extra and Verhoeven point out in their 1993 study of community languages in the Netherlands.[1] However, the latter are usually studied only by the children of immigrants. In addition, since the Netherlands is a small country with only one neighbour sharing the same language (Flanders in Belgium), regular and extensive contact with other speech communities is not only a given, but also increasingly necessary in a globalising world. Indeed, contact with other languages has a long tradition in the Netherlands dating back to the Seventeenth Century, Holland's 'Golden Age' as a world seafaring nation. During that era, a considerable number of Dutch seafarers and traders from all walks of life came into contact with other languages and often learnt a smattering of these languages. Like other seafaring nations, the Netherlands established settlements and colonies around the world in which Dutch came to play a significant role as the main language for trade and administration, or even as the official language. In some regions, the contact between the indigenous people and the Dutch traders and colonists also led to the development of pidgins and later, Creole languages such as Berbice Dutch, which is spoken in Guyana.

Early Dutch contact with Australia, and later, the settlement of many post-war migrants from the Netherlands, gave rise to a very different linguistic story for Dutch in Australia. It is this story that I present in this chapter through the elaboration of three themes. The first theme traces the linguistic footprints that early Dutch explorers left on the Australian landscape, with a focus on the toponymy or incidence of Dutch place-names in the region of Western Australia. The second theme of the chapter, 'leaving Dutch behind — from bilingualism to monolingualism in one generation', examines the question of language ecology in relation to the Dutch community in Australia; that is, the development of the language spoken by Dutch people as they interacted with their environment. In this part of the chapter, I discuss the language practices of Dutch migrants and their children in Western Australia and outline the consequences for the future of the Dutch language. I will compare the evolution of the Dutch language in WA with the language practices of Dutch migrants in other parts of Australia as well as with those

of other migrant groups. The third theme of this chapter, 'Double Dutch', deals with the linguistic features characteristic of the Dutch language in Western Australia. Here I discuss the consequences of long-term contact with English on the Dutch spoken by Dutch migrants and their offspring. The final section offers some concluding remarks about the fate of the Dutch language in Western Australia.

THE LINGUISTIC FOOTPRINTS OF DUTCH EXPLORERS IN THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

Dutch seafarers were among the first westerners to explore the coasts of and waters around *Nieuw Holland (New Holland)*, later to be named Australia. Other chapters in this book deal more extensively with this aspect of early Dutch-Australian connections. Here I would like to highlight briefly the linguistic footprints that these Dutch explorers left in Australia, particularly in Western Australia, as a result of their navigations around the coastline and their brief explorations of the region. To date there has been limited research on Dutch toponymy in Australia, although Dr Jan Tent has written some brief reports on Dutch placenames in Australia.[2] He distinguishes between Dutch placenames, which were coined by Dutch explorers and those, which are named in honour of Dutch explorers.[3] It is not always straightforward to know which placename belongs in which, category.

Most remnants of the Dutch explorations around the coastline of Australia are primarily of a toponymic nature: placenames and names like *Cape Leeuwin, Batavia Coast, Hartog Island, Duyfken* are well-known and recognised by many people as linked to Dutch explorers and their ships. Names like *Rottnest Island, Swan River, Red Bluff, Turtledove Island* are less likely to be linked to Dutch exploration or recognised as linguistic footprints of the Dutch. This is because they have been subjected to linguistic conversion processes. The likely origins of *Rottnest* are the Dutch words *rat* and *nest*, coining the name for the island, a *rattennest*, based on the abundant presence of the quokkas — rat-like creatures — on this island. Names like *Swan, Red Bluff* and *Turtledove Island*, none of which are recognised as Dutch words, are the result of direct translations from the early Dutch names, *swaen* or *swane* for the Swan River, *Roode Houck* for Red Bluff and *Tortelduyf Eylandt* for Turtledove Island. Besides such placenames coined by Dutch explorers (albeit translated later or even replaced by other names), there are a number of Dutch-linked and Dutch-based placenames named after or in honour of Dutch expeditions or explorers. The West Australian town of *Guilderton* is said to have been named after the Dutch ship *Gulden Draek* — Gilt Dragon — which had lost a fortune in guilders when it sank off the coast of Western Australia near the

Moore River. Another example is the township of *Leeman,* named after the under-steersman on the ship *Waeckende Boey* — Watchful Buoy — which was sent to recover the shipwreck of the Gilt Dragon.

More recent influences of Dutch on English in Australia are linked to the considerable number of Dutch migrants (more than 100,000) to Australia after the Second World War. They pertain primarily to the foods that these migrants brought with them: this includes *drop* (liquorice), *bitterballen* (a type of cheese/meat croquet), *poffertjes* (very small pikelets fried in oil), *speculaas* (a type of gingerbread) and the cheeses *Gouda* and *Edam.* However, with the exception of *Gouda* and *Edam,* most of these food-related words are not known by Australians in general, only by Dutch-Australians or those associating with them. This is very different from the impact other migrant groups such as the Italians and Greeks have made on the culinary vocabulary of Australians: the Dutch culinary words listed above are no match for those brought to Australia by Italian migrants — *pizza, espresso, cappuccino* — by Greek migrants — *souvlaki, baklava* — and by many other groups. Clearly the culinary habits of the post-war Dutch migrants did not raise the same interest as those of other migrant groups! In sum, Dutch linguistic footprints are quite minimal: in

Figure 1
'This is called a foot.'
Child evacuees from the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) learning English at Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra - during their sojourn in Western Australia for rehabilitation after three years in Japanese Internment camps in Java during WWII.
Courtesy: *Western Mail* 1946.

the case of the early Dutch explorers, the explanation probably lies in the fact that they considered Australia to be of little commercial value and were fully focused on reaching the Netherlands East Indies.

LEAVING DUTCH BEHIND: FROM BILINGUALISM TO MONOLINGUALISM IN ONE GENERATION

Dutch migrants were well represented among the early post-war migrants to Australia. Although the majority of Dutch migrants came from the Netherlands to escape the economic ravages of the Second World War, a small contingent of Dutch-born migrants had moved to Australia from Indonesia following its independence from the Netherlands. It is estimated that at the height of post-war migration around 100,000 Dutch-born people settled in Australia. Dutch migrants were often held up as 'model' migrants in terms of their assimilation into post-war Australian society:[4] a major element in this assessment was their willingness to adapt and their ability to learn English quickly. Early scholarly investigations have shown that many Dutch migrants had acquired (some) English soon after their arrival, resulting in a high degree of Dutch-English bilingualism compared to other post-war migrants from Europe. These investigations further revealed that soon after their settlement, Dutch-born migrants not only started using English in many public situations but also in private domains such as within the family and among (Dutch) friends. It seems that their early acquisition of English paved the way for a rapid shift away from Dutch to the exclusive use of English. In other words, their Dutch-English bilingualism proved to be transitional and rapidly gave way to the dominant and later exclusive use of English even among the Dutch-born generation. This is quite different from the language behaviour of other post-war migrants, who took longer to become bilingual and who have maintained a much higher level of bilingualism.[5]

In the following paragraphs I illustrate this remarkable and rapid shift from Dutch to English, by drawing upon the extensive language data pertaining to Australian Census surveys since 1976, as well as upon in-depth studies and surveys of the post-war Dutch community in Australia. Where possible and relevant I provide more specific details about the language behaviour of Dutch living in Western Australia. These data show that Dutch migrants spearhead language shift, with more than 60 per cent no longer using Dutch. Consequently only a very small per centage of their Australian-born children (less than 8 per cent) can or do use Dutch in Australia.

DUTCH LANGUAGE USE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: A SHRINKING STORY

The first generation: Dutch-born migrants

In 1976 the Australian Census introduced for the first time a question about the use of languages in Australia. Later Census surveys (1986, 1991, 1996

and 2001) continued to include a question about language use, although the wording changed, making comparisons with the 1976 Census somewhat difficult. In 1976 the question sought information about the *regular* use of languages, whereas in later census surveys the question concerned *home* language use. Despite this rewording the inclusion of this question has allowed for a significant insight into the language ecology of Australia. In Table 1, I present data on the users of Dutch in Australia between 1976 and 2001.

Table 1: Users of Dutch in Australia

Census	1976	1986	1991	1996	2001
Australia-wide	64768	62181	47115	40770	40190
Rank based on speaker numbers	4	9	13	15	17
W.A.	7737	8272	6319	5591	5610
Rank	4	5	8	10	10

The Australia-wide figures show a significant reduction in the use of Dutch over a period of 25 years. Whereas Dutch ranked fourth in 1976 after Italian, Greek, German and French, it fell well outside the top ten languages other than English by 2001. The decrease in use was most dramatic between 1986 and 1991, falling by almost 25 per cent. The situation of Dutch in Western Australia is similar though not identical: although there is an overall decline in the number of Dutch speakers, the decline is less dramatic and less linear, with slight increases in 1986 and 2001. Furthermore, in Western Australia, Dutch continues to rank among the top ten languages used other than English. This is partly due to the fact that the more recent large-scale influx of migrants from Asia and Africa have not settled in Western Australia.

Although other community languages (Polish, German, Italian and Greek), which entered the Australian scene around the same time as Dutch have also suffered decreases, these have been less dramatic. For example, Italian continues to rank as the most widely used language other than English, despite dropping from approximately 445,000 users in 1976 to around 353,600 users in 2001. In the case of Greek, its use grew from around 263,000 users in 1976 to approximately 277,400 users in 1986, before decreasing to 270,000 in 1991 and to 264,000 in 2001. Greek continues to rank as the second most widely used community language in Australia.

The precarious situation of the Dutch language is further illustrated through data on language shift. Language shift refers to the process in which speakers of language A gradually abandon the use of language A, in favour of the exclusive use of language B. Although the process of language shift is common amongst most migrating communities, the rate at which the shift occurs can differ significantly from group to group. In comparison with most other migrant communities in Australia, the Dutch community registers a very high rate of language shift. In fact, the 2001 Australian Census revealed that 62.6 per cent of Dutch-born Australians spoke only English at home. This is the highest rate of language shift among overseas-born people. The second highest rate

of language shift is recorded by people born in Germany and Austria, with approximately 54 per cent speaking only English at home. The lowest shift rates are found among people born in Vietnam (2.4 per cent). Most post-war migrant groups have maintained more of their language than the Dutch: for example, those born in Greece register a 7.1 per cent language shift rate, those born in Italy 15.9 per cent and those born in Poland 22.3 per cent. In Table 2, the progressive increase in language shift among Dutch-born people in Australia and in Western Australia is documented. This shows that many Dutch-born people abandoned the use of Dutch soon after their arrival and switched to the use of English. Though the rate of language shift is somewhat lower for Western Australia than for Australia as a whole, the difference is too small to be significant.

Figure 2
The 'Klashorsts' - A bilingual family - 1962. They were the first Dutch Butcher in Perth. Courtesy: Klashorst Collection.

Table 2: Percentage language shift among Dutch-born Australians

Census	1976	1986	1991	1996	2001
% LS -AUS	43.55	48.4	57.8	61.9	62.6
% LS W.A.	42.83	45.0	55.2	58.9	59.9

Studies on language use in the Dutch community have shown that English is a dominant presence in most community-related contexts such as clubs, societies and ethnic church services.[6] For example, English is used extensively in many Dutch social and community organisations, despite the fact that they cater primarily (if not solely) for Dutch-born migrants. Formal and written forms of communication within these societies such as member correspondence, signs, agendas and minutes of meetings are almost exclusively in English. The language of formal meetings tends to be English, although individual members may use Dutch. The language of social activities in such settings is best characterised as extensive 'code-switching': that is, individuals switch between Dutch and English or mix both languages constantly even within a sentence. The use of Dutch in 'ethnic' church services varies according to religious denomination.

In comparison, clubs, societies and community organisations catering for other ethnic groups in Australia, tend to preserve a much greater role for the ethnic language in the formal and social conduct of their activities than do Dutch organisations.[7]

Most dramatic however, in terms of accelerating language shift, is the language use in the home. In-depth studies of the home language practices of Dutch migrants confirmed the findings of the census. They showed that many Dutch-born migrants spoke English in their homes, at least to their children and increasingly also to each other. The domain in which they have maintained Dutch best is that of friendship: when Dutch migrants (now mostly elderly) meet with their same-age Dutch friends, Dutch tends to be the preferred language. Their preference for Dutch in this context is said to be linked, to creating an atmosphere of Dutch cosiness known as *Gezelligheid*.

Figure 3
English lessons at the Holden Migrant Camp in Northam c 1952. Courtesy: N. Peters Collection.

The second generation

The figures detailing the use of Dutch amongst the Australian-born children of Dutch migrants paint a picture of almost complete English monolingualism. The Dutch second generation also tops the list in terms of the rate of language shift. Table 3 documents the progressive increase in language shift rate among second generation Dutch, with a distinction between those children with two Dutch-born parents (endogamous) and those with only one Dutch parent (exogamous). Unfortunately, due to changes in the wording of the Census question on parental birthplace — only two options: 'in Australia' or 'outside Australia' were included — detailed language shift rates for the second generation could not be calculated beyond 1996.

Table 3: Percentage language shift among Australian-born offspring in Dutch endogamous and exogamous marriages

Census	1976	1986	1991	1996
% LS Endogamous	80.29	85.4	NA	91.9
% LS Exogamous	99.9	92.0	NA	96.9

The Census data for 1976 showed a more pronounced difference in language shift between the two groups (around 19 per cent). However, by 1996 this difference had almost disappeared, with both groups using very little Dutch in the home. Again, this rate is high in comparison with other groups: for the German second generation the respective figures in 1996 are 77 per cent (endogamous) and 92 per cent (exogamous), for Greek they are 16.1 per cent (endogamous) and 51.9 per cent, for Italian they are 42.6 per cent (endogamous) and 79.1 per cent (exogamous) and for Polish they are 58.4 per cent (endogamous) and 86.9 per cent (exogamous).

DUTCH AS A LANGUAGE OF THE ELDERLY

The Census data backed up by in-depth studies of language use in the Dutch community clearly point to Dutch being a language increasingly associated with the elderly. For example, Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels' analysis of the 1991 Census noted that 'the Dutch-speaking population in Australia is an ageing one, with 63 per cent aged over 45 years, and 26.6 per cent aged over 65.'[8] With new migration from the Netherlands to Australia being negligible in numerical terms, and with an almost completely monolingual English-speaking second generation, the use of Dutch is confined largely to elderly Dutch migrants. Indeed, in the early 21st century, it is in nursing homes and retirement villages associated with the Dutch community that one hears and uses Dutch the most. As opportunities for studying Dutch at secondary and tertiary education level have almost completely disappeared (in fact it is no longer possible to study Dutch at an Australian university) it is unlikely that this pattern will change.

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> "Op het ogenblik is 't meer *sort of* van het, zoals ze zeggen, *Double Dutch*" [Translation: At the moment it is more like, as they say, Double Dutch].

This quotation by a Dutch-born immigrant is included in Clyne's pioneering study of the Dutch language in Australia.[9] The quotation not only illustrates the phenomenon of language contact, but also reveals that its users are aware of the changes in their use of Dutch. Although this awareness may not occur at the moment they utter the words, it is nevertheless present amongst most immigrants. Clyne's study, together with other studies including those of Ammerlaan, Hoeks and Pauwels, have documented the diverse contact features occurring in the Dutch language spoken by Dutch migrants (and in some cases their children) in Australia.[10] Transference from one language to another affects many levels of language and parts of speech. Sounds (phonology), intonation patterns (prosody), words (lexicon), meanings (semantics), forms and structures (morphology and syntax) as well as language use conventions and practices (pragmatics) can be subject to transfers from one language to another. A description of all these types of transfers is well beyond the scope of this chapter, and I refer the reader to more substantive descriptions of transference such as those of Clyne and Pauwels.[11] Here I provide some examples of lexical transfers. The examples given below are all taken from Pauwels' 1980 study, except where stated. Before moving on to these transfer phenomena, it is important to note that Dutch migrants are not unique in displaying the effects of contact in their language. Similar features are also found in many other immigrant languages such as Italian, Greek, Hungarian, Vietnamese, French, German, and Chinese and have been described by numerous scholars.[12]

LEXICAL TRANSFERS – COMING TO GRIPS WITH A NEW ENVIRONMENT

When people migrate, they are confronted with many changes, including learning a new language, coming to grips with a new culture and its values, and settling into a new environment which is often very different from the one they left behind. It is not surprising then that they borrow words from their new language to name and describe the objects, concepts and experiences typical of their new environment. For example, for many Dutch migrants the Australian physical and cultural landscape was very different from the one they had known in the Netherlands; so rather than find translations for the new concepts, they simply borrowed the English words, for example: *weatherboard* huis, een (a) *ute*, een *gum tree*, de (the) *milkbar*, de *surf*, *bushwalking*, een *bottle shop*. Another source for borrowing English words was linked to their new work environment and experiences: in the initial settlement period many migrants were assigned specific jobs,

Figure 4
Children from various European countries – including the Netherlands – at the Holden Migration Camp, where they were keen to learn English so that they could communicate with each other.
Courtesy: *West Australian* Newspapers c1953.

which were unrelated to their training. As they were unfamiliar with the new types of work before they moved to Australia, they used the English terms and concepts to talk about them. Examples include *power station, supervisen, computer studies*, de *oxygen tent*, een *qualified hair-stylist*.

In other cases the use of transfers from English allows the migrant to make distinctions along cultural and regional lines. For example, although beaches, waterways, woods and roads are well-known concepts in Dutch, Dutch migrants often use their English equivalents when speaking Dutch in Australia, to stress the difference between Australian and Dutch versions of these concepts. The word *beach* will be used to describe a typical beach scene in Australia, whereas the word *strand* will be used when describing a beach in Holland or Europe. This also occurs frequently with the words *bos* and *bush*. Transfers from English into Dutch also happen because the speaker cannot remember the word or does not know the word. The former is more typical of first generation speakers who do not use much Dutch, and the latter typifies the second generation speaker who has a very limited knowledge of Dutch.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The linguistic history of the Dutch in Australia as detailed in this chapter is an interesting one. It shows that the Dutch can be said to be more pragmatic about language matters than many other groups and societies. The use of Dutch does not appear to be a core value for maintaining their identity in Australia. Indeed, throughout the period of contact with and settlement in Australia, making a linguistic impression on Australia has been peripheral to Dutch people. As a result there are very few linguistic remnants of the early contact period. As post-war migrants the Dutch focused their energies on linguistic integration, if not assimilation, as evidenced in the very high rates of language shift to English. These shift rates are continuing to rise, so that there is a limited future for the Dutch language in Australia. Nevertheless Dutch will continue to be used by small sections of aged-Dutch migrants and some recently arrived migrants. However, the current intake of Dutch migrants is very small, and is unlikely to increase significantly in the foreseeable future. Also, there is no evidence that the more recently arrived migrants behave markedly differently from post-war migrants in terms of language use. Perhaps the increased contact that second and third generation Dutch people have with the Netherlands through regular travel and extended periods of residence in the Netherlands, may lead to a small revival of Dutch in Australia in future years.[13]

ENDNOTES

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9   Clyne, 1977, p. 20.

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12   For succinct overviews see Clyne, Michael 1991 *Community Languages. The Australian Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Clyne, Michael 2005 *Australia's language potential*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

13   Pauwels, Anne and Joanne Winter 2006 Exporting and importing multilingualism: The language potential and linguistic capital of the (returning) Australian diaspora. Paper presented at the Applied Linguistic Association of Australia Congress, University of Queensland, Brisbane July 200612
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