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A SEVEN-LEAGUE STRIDES SIGHTSEEING TRIP THROUGH PAST AND PRESENT OF STANDARD DUTCH

ABSTRACT

Standard Dutch is an official language in the Netherlands, in the northern part of Belgium (Flanders and Brussels) and in very multilingual Surinam. The standardisation process started in the early 16th century; because of the political separation of the Seventeen Provinces after 1585, it came to a halt in the South (roughly present-day Flanders). From then onwards, Standard Dutch developed in its own way in the North and the South – in the South with a delay until the second half of the 19th century. In Surinam, Dutch was imported as a colonial language; in the decades after the abolishment of slavery (1863) and the education laws passed in 1876, the black descendants of the enslaved, the creole population and the various other ethnic groups gradually started acquiring it. This paper sketches the differential development of Standard Dutch in the three parts of the language area and relates the resulting divergence to the question as to whether Dutch should be seen as a pluricentric or rather a pluriareal language. On the basis of recent data (mainly from large-scale online questionnaires) the position of the language and its future are discussed in the main societal domains in the three parts of the language area.

KEYWORDS: Dutch, standardisation, language policy, external language history, norms, pluricentricity, pluriareality, domains of language use.

ANOTACIJA

Bendrinė olandų kalba yra oficiali kalba Nyderlanduose, šiaurinėje Belgijos dalyje (Flandrijoje ir Briuselyje) ir daugiakalbiame Suriname. Kalbos norminimo procesas prasidėjo XVI a. pradžioje. Po 1585 m. septyniolikai provincijų atsiskyrus, šis procesas pietuose (maždaug dabartinėje Flandrijoje) stabtelėjo. Nuo tada bendrinė olandų kalba šiaurėje ir pietuose formavosi skirtingai: pietuose kalbos norminimo procesas išsijudino tik XIX a. antroje pusėje. Suriname olandų kalba atsirado kaip kolonijinė kalba: praėjus dešimtmečiams po vergovės panaikinimo (1863 m.), 1876 m. priėmus švietimo įstatymus, juodaodžių, kreolų ir įvairių kitų etninių grupių palikuonys ilgainiui ėmė šios kalbos mokytis. Šiame straipsnyje apžvelgiama skirtinga bendrinės olandų kalbos raida trijose kalbinėse vietovėse ir su tuo susijusi divergencija, taip pat keliamas klausimas, ar olandų kalba yra pliuricentrinė ar pliuriarealinė kalba. Remiantis naujausiais duomenimis (daugiausia didelio masto internetiniais klausimynais), kalbos padėtis ir jos ateitis trijose kalbinėse vietovėse aptariama atsižvelgiant į pagrindines kalbos vartojimo sritis visuomenės gyvenime.

ESMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: olandų kalba, standartizacija, kalbos politika, išorinė kalbos istorija, normos, pliuricentris, pliuriarealinis, kalbos vartojimo sritys.

1. INTRODUCTION

This brief overview of some of the main developments of Standard Dutch builds on the insight that standard language norms are typically anchored in history, but since in a living language (such as Dutch) they are in motion, they are living history.

A standard language is a prestige variety of a speech community which is supposed to “cut across regional differences” and to provide “a unified means of communication, and thus an institutionalized norm which can be used in the mass-media, in teaching the language to foreigners and so on” (Crystal 2005: 431).

The Dutch language area is divided across northwestern Europe (the Netherlands and Flanders, i.e. the northern half of Belgium) and South-America (Surinam). Both the phasing and nature of standardisation have their own dynamics in the three parts of the language area.

They will be central in sections 2, 3 and 4 of this contribution, while section 5 speculates on the future of Standard Dutch.¹

2. EARLY MODERN HISTORY (END OF 15TH C.–19TH C.)

Middle Dutch has been documented reasonably well – although only a limited set of local and supra-local varieties is available for specific historical periods.² There was no standard language until the late Middle Ages. In the Low Countries, predecessors of the current dialects (Flemish, Brabant, Hollandic) and dialects of regional languages (Frisian, Low Saxon, Limburgish) were spoken.

At the beginning of the 16th century, the first trends began to emerge towards unification of the dialect landscape. These tendencies were of a commercial and political nature – in addition to the intellectual and cultural spirit of humanism (Marynissen 2017: 63–64).

2.1. Incipient standardisation

Thinking of their markets, the first generations of printers began to feel the need for a language that could also be read and understood elsewhere. In 1550 the Ghent printer Lambrecht published the first spelling manual; Kiliaan, who had a prominent position at the Antwerp printer Plantijn, published his Latin-Dutch dictionary in 1574 and the Amsterdam rhetorician Spiegel published the first Dutch grammar in 1584.

A similar desire for a supra-regional language developed in connection with literary competitions held at interregional meetings of chambers of rhetoric ('landjuwelen'). In the 16th century, with the rise of humanism, interest in the 'vernacular' arose. Jan van Gorp, a physician and scholar from Hilvarenbeek, who called himself Johannes Goropius Becanus,

¹ Thanks are due to participants at the 26th International Scientific Conference of Jonas Jablonskis *Linguistic Diversity in the Modern World: Language Power and Prestige* in Vilnius, October 3–4, 2019, for useful feedback on the oral presentation, and to the anonymous reviewers. At least as many thanks are due to Frits Beukema for polishing my English and for his invaluable remarks and suggestions.

² A list of digitized Middle Dutch manuscripts and prints in domestic and foreign libraries can be found at https://nl.wikisource.org/wiki/Lijst_van_gedigitaliseerde_Middelnederlandse_handschriften_en_drukken_in_binnen- en_buitenlandse_bibliotheken.

published his *Origines Antwerpianae* in 1569. In this extensive historical study he tried to demonstrate that Dutch was the oldest language in the world and he praised its excellent qualities (Hagen 1999: 7–8).

With the growing supra-regional commercial and cultural contacts, the need for a supra-regional linguistic system grew. Initially, this was developed for written usage only. It was the first significant step in the process of standardisation of Dutch.

Einar Haugen (1966) distinguished four aspects of standardisation:

- selection
- acceptance
- elaboration
- codification

In the case of Dutch, the *selected* language was based on Hollandic dialects, spoken in the north-western part of the present-day Netherlands, although the *selected* language was not purely Hollandic, but rather a koinè, with elements and structures from other dialect groups.

Grammarians debated how best to standardize the language and what choices should be made. Men of letters like the 17th century poets Vondel and Hooft also actively concerned themselves with the Dutch variant of what is known in Italy as the *questione della lingua*, the question as to what the supra-regional language should look like.

There was also a political need for standardizing the language and establishing norms. At that time Protestantism, in particular Calvinism, was the state religion. Unlike Catholics, Protestants read the bible – there was no complete Bible translation in the ‘*volkstaal*’ (the language of the people, the vernacular) yet. Hence the ‘Staten-Generaal’, the government (the meeting of representatives of the various classes of the *Zeventien Provinciën*, the seventeen provinces, including present-day Belgium), commissioned a group of theologians, translators and correctors who came from the different regions to write the first-ever translation of the entire bible in the *vernacular* on the basis of the Hebrew and Greek sources. The committee created a uniform language, partly constructed, which, in addition to Hollandic, also contained elements from Brabantian and Flemish dialects and exotic constructions based on the model of the classical languages and Hebrew. Characteristic features are the frequent use of the genitive (e.g. *de God der goden*, ‘the God of gods’) and the frequent use of participles (e.g. *hebbende*, *zijnde*, *zeggende*, ‘having’, ‘being’, ‘saying’) embedded in a complex

sentence (*De Coninck Herodes nu [dit] gehooort hebbende, wiert ontroert*, ‘Now the King Herod, having heard this, was touched’). Even in those early days, the language in this first-ever Dutch translation of the entire bible was considered as archaic and very elevated. Due to the Protestant tradition of Bible reading in the family circle, the supra-regional written language of the ‘Statenbijbel’ (after all, commissioned by the Staten-Generaal) would for centuries have a wide circulation based on the first edition from 1637.

The mathematician Simon Stevin (1548–1620), a kindred spirit of Becanus (Hagen 1999: 10), introduced Dutch terminology for such notions as mathematics (viz. *wisconste*, Modern Dutch ‘wiskunde’), triangle (*driehouck*, ‘driehoek’, lit. ‘three angles’) and decimal (*thiende*, ‘tiende’, ‘tenth [part]’). The language underwent *elaboration* for other purposes as well (the third aspect of standardisation in Haugen’s view), not only by the extension of its linguistic means but also by the use of the language in new domains (Marynissen 2017: 68), a dialectic which Kloss (1978) has labeled ‘Ausbau’.

As early as 1548, the political unity of the Seventeen Provinces was broken up by the Spanish (Los Reyes Católicos, ‘the Catholic kings’, from 1506 – Philip the Handsome – onwards from the House of Habsburg), who started pushing back Protestantism from the southern part of the Low Countries: the Counter-Reformation and the infamous Inquisition. After the Fall of Antwerp to the Spanish troops in 1585, a large part of the largely Protestant Brabant and Flemish elite (with its economic, intellectual and cultural capital) moved to the Hollandic Dutch cities, with all demographic and economic consequences that this entailed for the South. The number of refugees was large, and many were educated and wealthy. In addition, some had significant overseas trade connections.

As a result of immigration from the South, a great deal of Brabant and Flemish-colored Dutch could be heard, especially in the Dutch cities in the early Golden Age. Because of their background most speakers of these dialects enjoyed prestige and this prestige rubbed off on their language use, which in turn gave rise to ridiculing the ‘Brabant fashion’. In 1617 the Amsterdam poet and playwright Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Brederode (1585–1618) wrote the comedy *Spaansche Brabander* in which, among other things, he made fun of the then current Brabant fashion. The protagonist is Jerolimo Rodrigo, a fake nobleman and a bankrupt swindler; despite his name, he is of Brabant descent. Act One starts with a monologue of

Jerolimo dealing with Amsterdam and its inhabitants. His first lines are (translations approximate):

“T'Is wel een schoone stadt, moor 'tvolcxken is te vies:”
It certainly is a beautiful city, but the people are too filthy
 “In Brabant sayn de liens ghemaynlijck exkies”
in Brabant the people are usually refined
 “In kleeding en in dracht, dus op de Spaansche mode,”
in their clothing and dressing style, so in the Spanish fashion,
 “Als kleyne Konincxkens of sienelaycke Goden.”
as though they were minor kings or visible gods.

At the end of the Eighty Years' War the separation of North and South became a political fact in the Treaty of Münster (1648) with the foundation of the Republic of the (Seven) United Provinces. The famous Münster Peace Treaty resulted among other things in the political separation of the southern and the northern Low Countries. The South remained under (the Austrian branch of) the Habsburgs, the north developed into the *Republiek der Zeven Verenigde Nederlanden*, the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands.

2.2. The post-1585 Flemish linguistic situation

The Fall of Antwerp in 1585 heralded a period of stagnation for the South (now under the Austrian branch of the Habsburgs). Along with the economy, cultural life became paralyzed. A standard variety of Dutch spanning the local and regional dialects did not develop and the amount of exposure to the developing northern variety of Standard Dutch was limited; there was little contact with the independent Protestant North. The High code of the Catholic church was Latin; the thinned-out societal upper crust, the higher authorities and secondary schools used French; and the lower clergy, the Chambers of Rhetoric and the local authorities used dialectally coloured Dutch, which was looked at askance.

Later, from the French era onward, which dawned in the South of 1794, French was made mandatory for administrative and administrative matters. For success in society French was indispensable.

3. MODERN HISTORY (LAST QUARTER 18TH CENTURY – WORLD WAR II)

The position of French in Flanders hardly changed in the fifteen years following the reunification of North and South after the Vienna Congress (1815). One of the geo-political results of the Vienna Congress was the emergence of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. In this geographical extension (to approximately present-day Benelux) the newly installed kingdom existed from 1815 till 1830. King Willem I (William I) pursued an active language policy, imposing Dutch as the one and only national language. Hence, also in the southern provinces West-Flanders, East-Flanders, Antwerp and Limburg and from 1823 onwards also in bilingual Brabant, Dutch became the official language for the administration, jurisdiction and education. At the universities, chairs for the Dutch language were established.

All this met with resistance among the Catholic clergy, the liberals and the great mass of largely illiterate Flemish people, for whom Hollandic Dutch was miles away from the varieties they spoke. In 1830, Belgium became an independent nation. In the new constitution the freedom of language (choice) was guaranteed³. In practice, French remained the language of the ruling class.

3.1. Flanders

The *Vlaamse Beweging*, lit. Flemish Movement, a group of Flemish intellectuals opposed the French domination: they were committed to the emancipation of Flanders and the use of Dutch in Flanders (Marynissen 2017: 75).

There were two positions: the integrationists (led by the Ghent philologist and historian Jan-Frans Willems, a supporter of the House of Orange-Nassau, which supplies the Dutch kings and queens) advocated compliance with the Netherlandic norms for Standard Dutch, rejecting loan words, especially French loan words. The particularists, on the other hand,

³ Not so in the Netherlands; cf. Kirchmeier (2020).

advocated compliance with a dialectally coloured supra-regional Dutch language. The particularist position was supported by the Catholic church; for the Catholics in Flanders, Netherlandic Dutch was a Protestant thing. The main spokesman for the particularist position was the priest and poet Guido Gezelle. The Dutch he advocated had a distinctly West Flemish colouring. However, the kindred spirit Hendrik Conscience, who was a successful novelist, promoted a standard Dutch with an unmistakable Antwerp (Brabant) colouring.

The integrationists prevailed; one of their strongholds was formed by the Dutch language and literature conferences for Flemish and Dutch writers and academics, which were organized regularly from 1849 onwards. The Hollandic standard became leading and deviations from it were strictly rejected. In 1898 a law was passed that stipulates that Belgian laws must be drawn up in both French and Dutch, putting Dutch legally on a par with French.

3.2. Flanders & Netherlands

Ordinary people generally did not have the educational background for learning the standard language – and so most could not read or write. For both Flanders and the Netherlands it is true that until the end of the 19th century for the majority of the population the spoken language was their (local or regional) dialect. In higher circles, French was the everyday language – and not only in the French era, which ended in 1813.

3.2. Netherlands

In the early 19th century, the grammar as well as the orthography were *codified* (the fourth aspect of standardisation in Haugen's view) for the first time, which took place by order of the government in order to further the national unity. The Leiden professor Matthijs Siegenbeek was the author of the orthography guide, which appeared in 1804. A year later, Weiland's *Nederduitsche Spraakkunst* was published, which was already considered very conservative at the time. In 1851, the Leiden linguist Matthias de Vries started compiling the 'Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal' (Dictionary of the Dutch Language), which was to become the largest dictionary in the world. It has 21 parts; the last section appeared in 2001.

In the course of the 19th century, Standard Dutch was cultivated and 'enriched' with e.g.

- syntactic peculiarities (certain participial and infinitival constructions) which had never been common. Older examples of such participial constructions are *Al 't koren op synde, werd het voeder der beesten [...] menschenkost*, ‘because all the grain had been spent, the food of the beasts became food for the people’, and *ende, alhoewel maar vijfftiich oorlochsschepen sterck wesende, hebben wy ons aenstondts derwaerts vervoecht*, ‘and, although we were only fifty warships strong, we [nevertheless] immediately proceeded there’;
- case distinctions which had fallen into disuse, e.g. distinction between *hen* en *hun*, (3 pl accusative, prepositionless dative, respectively), which as such does not occur in any dialect and which has until today not taken root in Dutch spoken language;
- the distinction between *als* and *dan* (‘zo groot *als*’ versus ‘groter *dan*’, ‘as big as’ vs. ‘bigger than’).

The gap between written Standard Dutch and spoken Dutch grew and some writers started resisting. In an essay on the topic, the author Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker; 1820–1887) wrote “Ik leg mij toe op 't schrijven van levend hollands. Maar ik heb schoolgegaan”, roughly ‘I focus on writing living Dutch, but I’ve been to school’. Educational reformers started protesting, too.

4. CONTEMPORARY HISTORY (WORLD WAR II – PRESENT)

Initially, Hollandic and Flemish Standard Dutch seemed to converge, but this trend (if there was one on a large scale) seems to have been reversed more recently.

4.1. Flanders

For the Flemish the standardisation of Dutch (which set in relatively late) was urgent because of their language issue with French / Walloon. In 1963 Belgium was officially divided in four language areas. The official language of Flanders is Dutch, in the Walloon provinces in Belgium it is French, the Brussels agglomeration is officially Dutch / French bilingual, and in the East there is a relatively small German-speaking area (‘Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft’). See Map 1.

For about a decade or so the Dutch-French language conflict led to irregularities at the language border (Voerstreek 1979 – in the small Dutch enclave west of the German speaking area).

The orientation towards the exoglossic Netherlandic standard made that deviations from the norms sometimes met with severe disapproval. The usage label ‘Z.N.’ in (the list of abbreviations) of dictionaries and grammars to describe a form as ‘Zuidnederlands’, ‘southern Dutch’, was often interpreted prescriptively as ‘Zeg Niet’, ‘Do *not* say’.



MAP 1. The four official language areas in present-day Belgium. Green = Dutch, *Flanders*; red = French, *Walloon provinces*; red / green = bilingual, *Brussels*; blue = German, *Eupen c.a.*

Belgian Standard Dutch is known as ‘VRT Nederlands’, where VRT stands for *Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie* ‘Flemish Radio and Television broadcast organisation’. The variety is called this as it is virtually exclusively spoken on Flemish public radio and television – by the news readers. Especially for less educated speakers, this variety is like a Sunday suit (Geeraerts 2001) – it is not comfortable.

The standardisation of Belgian Dutch proceeded partly autonomously and has resulted in among other things

- systematic phonetic differences from Netherlandic Dutch; e.g. words such as ‘energie’, ‘ingenieur’, ‘corrigeren’ with [ɣ] rather than [ʒ]. Is this a matter of spelling pronunciation? Is it a reflection of the anti-French attitude? Or is it both?

- few grammatical differences from Netherlandic Dutch. Very salient is the ‘interruption of the final verb cluster’ (‘...dat Vlaanderen zich daar niet *kan over uitspreken*’ instead of ‘niet *over kan uitspreken*’, roughly ‘that Flanders cannot comment on that’);

- lexis: a) ‘referential Belgicisms’, referring to specifically Belgian phenomena, e.g. *assisenhof*, a level in the hierarchy of the legal system which does not exist in the Netherlands; b) variants such as e.g. *kwijspelen* for ‘verliezen’, ‘to lose’.

In 1980 the Nederlandse Taalunie [lit. Dutch Language Union, the ‘policy and knowledge organisation for the Dutch language’] was founded. Its shorter name is now Taalunie, in order to stress the fact that the language area consists of three multicultural and multilingual countries.

Despite the efforts on behalf of Standard Dutch, in daily life the so-called Tussentaal (a variety which is intermediate *-tussen*, ‘between’– between dialect and standard language) became more and more common in Belgian Dutch. For some (including some linguists) this is a delayed response to the initial *acceptance* (the second aspect of standardisation in Haugen's view) of Netherlandic Standard Dutch and a manifestation of growing Flemish self-awareness (De Caluwe 2017: 124). Some of the geographically wider spread features of Tussentaal are

- the [t]-less realisation of *dat*, *wat* and *niet* (‘that’, ‘what’ and ‘not’);
- the fact that articles, demonstratives and possessive pronouns are grammatically marked for masculine nouns (instead of common gender), e.g. *nen* hoed, *dieën* hoed, *mijnen* hoed (‘a hat’, ‘that hat’, ‘my hat’);
- diminutivisation with *-ke* instead of *-(t)je* (*bloemke*, *fotooke*; Standard Dutch *bloempje*, *fotootje*);
- Netherlandic Dutch *jij* (2 sg, informal) corresponds with *gij* (Subject) *u* (Object), whereas *u* is the reverential Netherlandic Dutch 2 sg form (both Subject and Object).

The rapid spread and the use of Tussentaal has led to heated debates in Flemish society.

4.2. Netherlands

Similar to Flemish Tussentaal, Hollandic Poldernederlands, ‘polder Dutch’, can also be heard on both commercial and public radio and television (Stroop 1998; Jacobi 2008). Geographically, however, the distribution of Poldernederlands is limited to the northwest of the Netherlands and linguistically it only stands out by the relatively open realisation of the diphthongs /*ei*, *œy*, *ou*/ as [*ai*, *æy*, *ou*]. According to some linguists this is related to the diphthongal realisation of the tense mid vowels (/e·/, /ø·/, /o·/ as [*ei*, *œy*, *ou*]) in the Hollandic dialects. Because of this diphthongisation *zee*, ‘sea’, Standard Dutch /ze·/, can become (nearly or entirely) homophonous with the word for ‘silk’, *zij* /*ei*/; by the same mechanism, the contrasts between, say, *leut*, ‘fun’ /lø·t/, and *luit*, ‘lute’ /lœyt/, and *boot*, ‘boat’ /bo·t/ and *bout*, ‘bolt’ /bout/ would bleach. Therefore, the hypothesis has been defended (Van de Velde 1996; Stroop 1998) that the lowering of the diphthongs compensates for the diphthongisation of the tense mid vowels. However, variants of the diphthong /*ei*/ with a lowered prominent first element, /*ai*/ and /*ɔ̃i*/, are endogenous in the Hollandic dialects spoken north and northwest of Amsterdam (see Hinskens 2020b: 65 for examples and sources).

non-standard	standard	gramm. feature	expressed on
<i>hun</i> hebben	<i>zij</i>	case	pers. pronoun
<i>jij kan</i>	<i>kunt</i>	person	modal verb
een <i>aardige</i> meisje	<i>aardig</i>	gender	adjective
U <i>hebt</i>	<i>heeft</i>	person	verb <i>hebben</i> ‘have’
<i>hele</i> mooie	<i>heel</i>	(gender)	adverb
<i>hij heb</i>	<i>heeft</i>	person	verb <i>hebben</i> ‘ ‘have’
het boek <i>wat</i>	<i>dat</i>	+/-definite, gender	relat. pronoun
de vrouw <i>waarvan</i>	<i>van wie</i>	human	relat. pronoun
een aantal mensen staan	<i>staat</i>	number	verb <i>staan</i> ‘stand’

TABLE 1. Nine instances of morphosyntactic variation in modern spoken Standard Dutch

Especially in the Netherlands, spoken standard Dutch shows quite a bit of variation in morphosyntax, i.e. inflection (Bennis, Hinskens 2014). See Table 1 for a non-exhaustive overview. The first variable mentioned in Table 1 concerns the variation between Standard Dutch *zij* (3 pl nominative) and the nonstandard variant *hun* (3 pl prepositionless dative). Hence *hun hebben* is literally ‘them have’ – with ‘them’ as a subject pronoun. The use of ‘hun’ as a subject (*Hun hebben gelaik*) also occurs in Poldernederlands.

There are at least eight other linguistic variables involving inflection – of a range of different grammatical features. Most of these variables occur across the Dutch part of the language area. Two of them have a more specific distribution: ‘hij heb’ for Standard Dutch ‘hij heeft’ (‘he has’), which is regional and ‘een *aardige* meisje’ for Standard Dutch ‘een *aardig* meisje’, i.e. the adnominal form without schwa, which occurs mainly in ethnolectal Dutch.

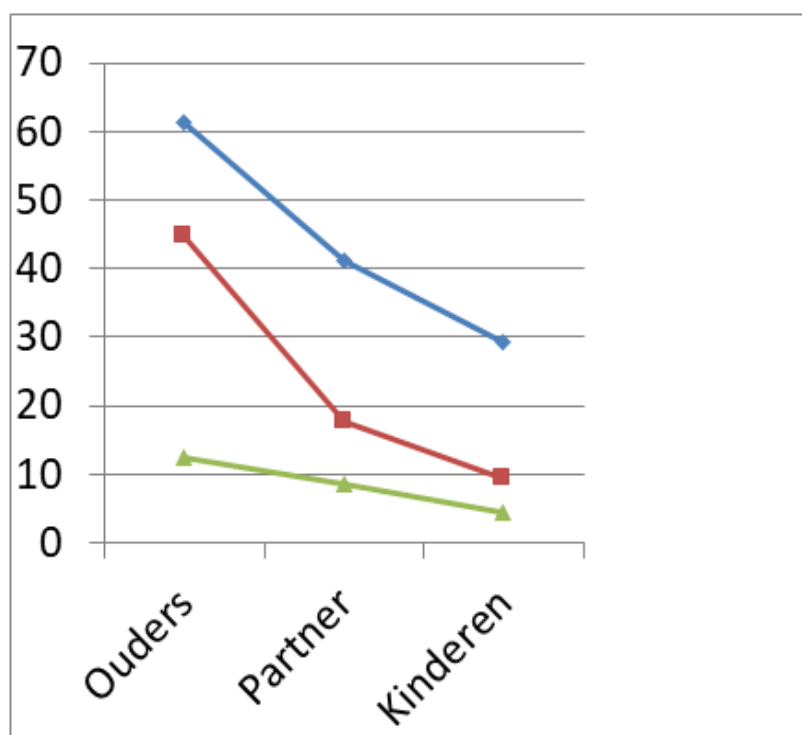


FIG. 1. Reported use of recently recognized regional languages (blue = Limburgish, red = Low Saxon) and dialects (green = Netherlands average) with parents (‘ouders’), partner (‘partner’) and children (‘kinderen’)

Until the early 20th century Standard Dutch was the language of the social upper crust. And apart from that, it mainly existed in writing. Most Dutch people spoke a dialect or a regional language. But the dialects and regional languages are now falling into disuse. The graph in Fig. 1, which summarizes relevant findings from a recent questionnaire (N=3559)⁴ confirms this.

Insofar as parents, partner and children stand for past, present and future, these findings indicate a gradual decline in the use of these regional languages and dialects. By the time the children have children of their own, at best 30% and at worst 5% will be able to pass on a regional language or dialect to the next generation – at least insofar as we can rely on the results of the *Staat van het Nederlands* study.

The dwindling dialects leave traces in new regional varieties of Standard Dutch, which develop into dialect/standard continua. Visually⁵:

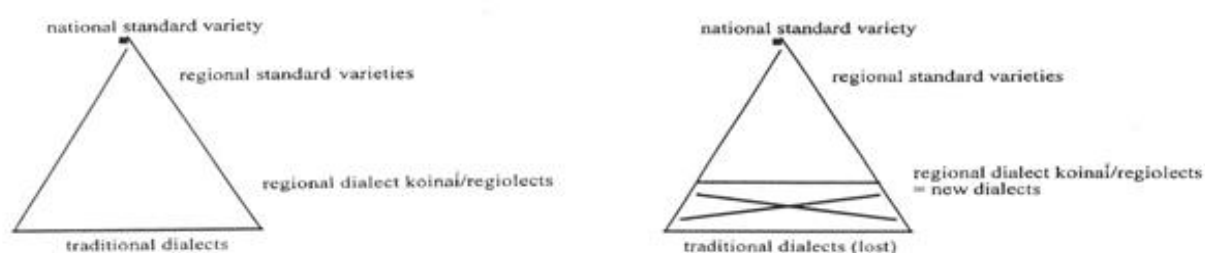


FIG 2. Dialect loss and the emergence of intermediate varieties between base dialects and the standard language (from Auer, Hinskens 1996)

4.3. Flanders and Netherlands

In the years after World War II, Standard Dutch has gradually become a part of the active linguistic repertoire of a large majority of Dutchmen and Flemings. But the development is paradoxical: while language policy in Flanders and the Netherlands has aimed at unification, in its growing usage Standard Dutch is subject to diversification.

⁴ Named 'Staat van het Nederlands', to be introduced in section 4.6 below.

⁵ More refined visualisations can be found in Auer (2005: 28), Fig. 8 and 9.

4.4. Surinam

In the former Belgian colony of Congo, Dutch, unlike French, plays no role. This is different in the former Dutch colony of Suriname⁶. The history of Surinamese Dutch began in 1667 with the Dutch take-over conquest of the originally British plantation colony. Until the abolition of slavery in 1863, the originally African slaves were not allowed to speak Dutch. In the contact between blacks and whites and among the growing creole population, Sranantongo or Sranan (formerly known as Negerengels, ‘Negro-English’) developed, a lexically English-based creole language. Sranantongo was sometimes also used among the whites. In 1873 the blacks were allowed to leave the plantations. In 1876 compulsory education laws were introduced. Through education Dutch was spread not only as the official but also as the only language – and these efforts were effective since for most people Dutch became the second language.

Well before the abolition of slavery in 1863 a start had been made with the recruitment of contract workers – notably Chinese, Hindustani and Javanese, who maintained their original languages, although in all cases specifically Surinamese varieties developed (e.g. Sarnami, which is Surinamese Hindustani). These groups gradually acquired Sranantongo as well as Dutch, both the official continental, and the emerging Surinamese variety. In 1954 Surinam was assigned ‘internal autonomy’, which, however, did not lead to an autonomous language policy. This situation did not change after Surinam had become independent in 1975; the government has always officially adhered to the norms of the continental variety of Dutch.

The use of Dutch in Surinam has always been largely confined to the city, Paramaribo, where there has been a non-white Dutch speaking elite ever since the beginning of the 19th century. Members of the higher classes tend to use Dutch at home, in many cases even as their mother tongue, while members of the lower classes mainly speak their ethnic language at home, although they are competent in Dutch (De Kleine 2002, 2013). In daily life, Dutch competes with Sranan; in fact, a continuum extends between Sranan via Surinamese Dutch to ‘metropolitan’ standard Dutch (Van Bree, De Vries 1997: 1149; Van Donselaar 2005: 117). In their daily contacts, following the stylistic requirements of the interactional circumstances,

⁶ Parts of this section are based on Hinskens, Muysken 2007.

most people use the various gradations in the part of the continuum that ranges from Sranantongo to Surinamese Dutch. At the same time frequent code switching and mixing occurs between Sranan and Surinamese Dutch.

Today about 60% of the inhabitants of the country (N=560.000) speak Dutch. The second language is Sranantongo (367.000 speakers) and the third one is Sarnami (160.000 speakers). In total there are about 16 different languages in daily use, but AmerIndian languages such as Arawak and Warao are nearing extinction.

Every ethnic group has its own cocktail of languages which colours their variety of Dutch. Among the more widespread features of Surinamese Dutch are

- the stereotyped bilabial realisation of /w/;
- the slightly nasalised /ɛ/ before nasals (as in e.g. *mens*, 'human being'), a rolling /r/, a less 'sharply' articulated velar fricative;
- variable non-realisation of small function words such as *er* ('there') in e.g. 'Ik heb geen zin in' instead of 'Ik heb *er* geen zin in', of the expletive subject *het* ('it'), of pronominal objects, and of the reflexive pronoun;
- *is* as a focus marker, e.g. 'Kijk meneer, *is* zo denkt die Srananman', roughly, 'Look sir, *is* this is the way Surinamese (men) think';
- frequent SVO word order, as in e.g. 'Toevallig *hij is* laatst doodgegaan' instead of 'Toevallig *is hij* laatst doodgegaan' (V2), roughly 'Coincidentally, he recently died';
- subordinate clauses which are not introduced by *dat*, 'that' and embedded clauses can have the main clause syntactic order;
- 'own' words as *buitenvrouw* ('mistress') and 'referential Surinamisms' such as *schaafijs* ('slush puppy');
- the use of Sranantongo, English as well as some originally Indian lexical items (mainly to refer to specific species of plants and animals).

Surinamese Dutch is a diffuse language variety. Nevertheless, in Surinam, a third set of norms for Standard Dutch seems to be developing – although, apart from a dictionary (J. van Donselaar 1977, 1989, 2013), it has not been codified as yet.

4.5. Pluri-what?

The Taalunie (Language Union – see section 4.1 above) has recently recognized that “the three parts of the language area are more and more orienting themselves on their own norms” (Adviescommissie Taalvariatie 2019: 3, 22; cf. De Caluwe 2017: 126–129). The divergence of Standard Dutch in Flanders, the Netherlands and Surinam is similar to that of German in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Or perhaps to that of English in England, North-America, Australia, New Zealand and in Scotland and Ireland. Modern Standard Dutch thus displays features of what has been labeled *pluricentricity*⁷, the type of situation that a single language has several national standard varieties which interact with each other and are used for official purposes within their national contexts (Clyne 1992). On this view standard varieties are intimately associated with nation states, with the more powerful national standard varieties affecting the less powerful. Since Dutch is the standard language only in a part of Belgium, it is given the feature [+ regional] in the typology proposed by Auer (to appear); since the language was imported into Surinam as a colonial language, it gets the feature [+ postcolonial].

The variation between Netherlandic and Flemish Standard Dutch is partly also a matter of *pluriareality*, the type in which linguistic variation in standard languages is largely independent of national and political borders (e.g. Niehaus 2015; Elspaß *et al.* 2017). On this view, standard varieties are not limited by national boundaries; they may instead overlap heavily across imagined borders. This holds for e.g. loanwords “ending in the written <tie>, including *ambitie*, *frustratie*, *generatie*, *justitie*, *natie*, *politie*, *relatie* (‘ambition’, ‘frustration’, ‘generation’, ‘justice’, ‘nation’, ‘police’, ‘relation’) the final syllable may be pronounced as [si] or as [tsi]. In Belgium, the first pronunciation is the most widespread option by far, whereas in the western, northern and central parts of the Netherlands, the latter is almost always used” (Haeseryn 2013: 704). The [si] variant can also be heard in the Dutch spoken in the southern Dutch provinces of Brabant and Limburg. A further example of a phenomenon which varies in Belgian Dutch but also in southern parts of the Netherlands concerns “[t]he demonstrative pronoun *zo’n* (‘such’ or ‘such a’) may, in the southern part of

⁷ Auer (to appear) prefers the term multi-standard language, as this does not carry connotations of centre vs. periphery.

the Dutch language area, and especially in Belgian Dutch, be used in combination with plural nouns and singular, non-countable neutral nouns (*het-woorden* ('it-words')), for example: *Zo'n huizen worden niet meer gebouwd* 'Such houses are no longer built.' and *Ik vind zo'n hout beter geschikt voor een tuinhek*, 'I consider such timber more suitable for a garden fence.'" (Haeseryn 2013: 706). This variation also occurs in the Standard Dutch spoken in Dutch Limburg.

Large scale migration from Surinam to the Netherlands started in the 1960s – in most cases of people with a reasonable educational background. In the time of Surinam's independence, considerable numbers of less educated Surinamese came to the Netherlands. Nowadays the Surinamese are the largest ethnic minority in several big cities in the western part of the Netherlands. A great many Surinamese live in the neighbourhood 'Bijlmer' or 'Bijlmermeer', which was built in the late sixties of the previous century in the southeast of Amsterdam. Many of the characteristics of Surinamese Dutch highlighted in section 4.4 also occur in the Dutch which is used for mutual contact by Surinamese who settled in the Netherlands after independence (1975).

Features of Surinamese Dutch which also occur in indigenous varieties of Dutch are the devoicing of voiced fricatives, the use of *hun* (dative 'them') as a subject pronoun and the use of *gaan* ('go') as an auxiliary. These variable phenomena also seem to be a case of pluriareality.

4.6. Netherlands, Flanders and Surinam

The norms of Standard Dutch thus appear to exhibit a centrifugal force. What about the position of Dutch in the three countries? We will answer this question on the basis of findings from the research project *Staat van het Nederlands* 'State (of affairs) of the Dutch language'. The project aims at establishing empirically well-founded insights into the usage of Dutch and other languages in various societal domains in the Dutch language area at large. The focus is on the central domains of social intercourse, work, news and information, culture, education and science.

The project builds on two types of data:

- online questionnaires among Dutchmen, Flemish and inhabitants of Brussels and (since 2018) Surinamese, proportionally stratified for sex/gender, age, country of birth and province of residence⁸;
- flanking data: repeated consultation of generally accessible sources (including annual reports of companies, audience figures for TV/radio channels, sales figures of the book trade) and other surveys (in 2018: higher education and science).

	2016	2018
Netherlands	3,003	3,559
Flanders	3,419	2,489
Brussels	113	104
Surinam	----	621
Total	6,535	6,773

TABLE 2. N of respondents who filled out the questionnaires for the *Staat van het Nederlands* project in 2016 and 2018, broken down for region

In total, over 200 more respondents participated in 2018, despite the decrease in Belgian participation and thanks to increased participation in the Netherlands and (of course) Surinam. Some of the main findings will be briefly discussed here⁹. As Fig. 3 shows, in 2018 some 85% of the Dutch respondents reported that they chose ‘always Dutch’ when speaking with relatives, friends, and neighbours.

⁸ The respondents are volunteers. For the Netherlands and Flanders, these are partly persons who, prior to the digitisation (2010), regularly received and filled out the written questionnaires distributed by the Meertens Instituut. For a growing part the respondents (and all Surinamese in the sample) were recruited via the electronic newsletter of the Meertens Instituut and via social media.

⁹ See for the complete report Rys *et al.* (2019).

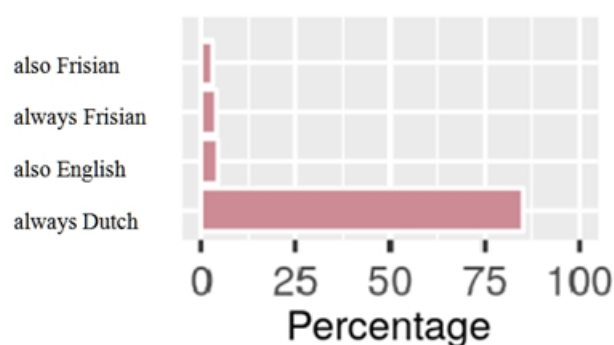


FIG. 3. Reported language choice while speaking with relatives, friends, neighbours – 2018, The Netherlands

For the Flemish respondents, the percentage is even higher, viz. almost 90% ‘always Dutch’ (Fig. 4).

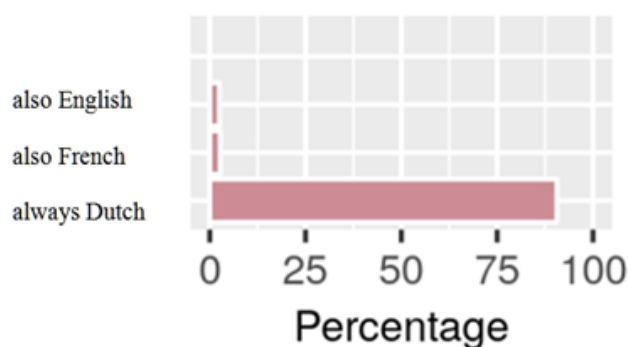


FIG. 4. Reported language choice while speaking with relatives, friends, neighbours – 2018, Flanders

As Fig. 5 shows, about 23% of the Surinamese respondents report they always use Dutch in this domain and non-negligible percentages of respondents report they mix Sranatongo (some 14%) or Sarnami (some 11%) with Dutch. Men more often mix Dutch with Sranatongo when interacting with friends, which is in line with research that shows that men find Sranatongo tougher. With relatives, however, they tend to speak exclusively Dutch.

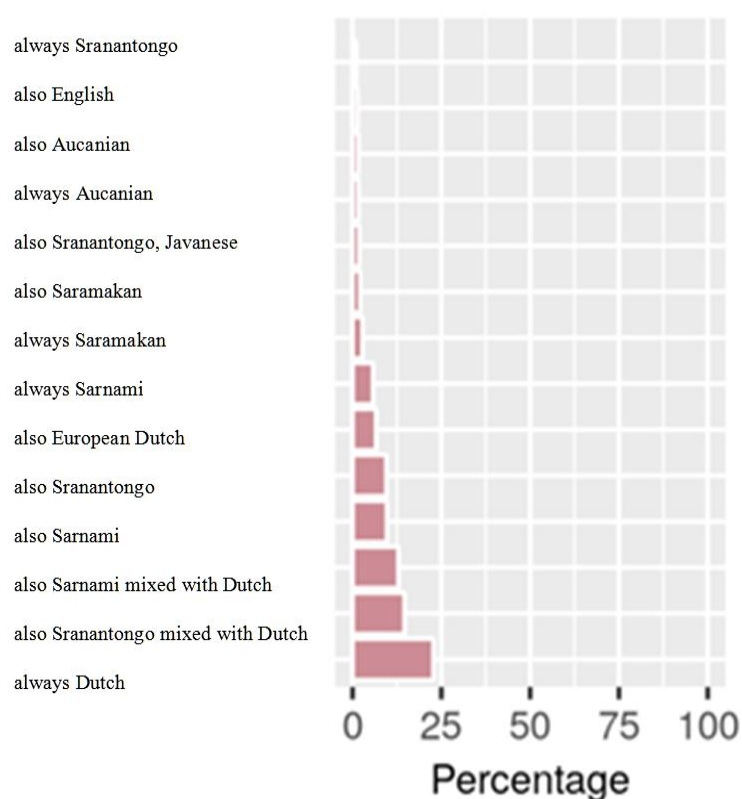


FIG. 5. Reported language choice while speaking with relatives, friends, neighbours – 2018, Surinam

Between 2016 and 2018, the language choice on social media in both the Netherlands and Flanders shifted significantly at the expense of English (from 23.6 to 22.7 percent for the combination of Dutch and English).

Of all domains, higher education appears to be the only one in which the use of Dutch is rapidly decreasing – though only in the Netherlands. As is evident from Fig. 6, the use of English only increased (2016: 10%, 2018: 20% – many MA trajectories are offered exclusively in English), while in the same period support for education in other languages than Dutch decreased. This does not take place in Flanders or in Surinam.

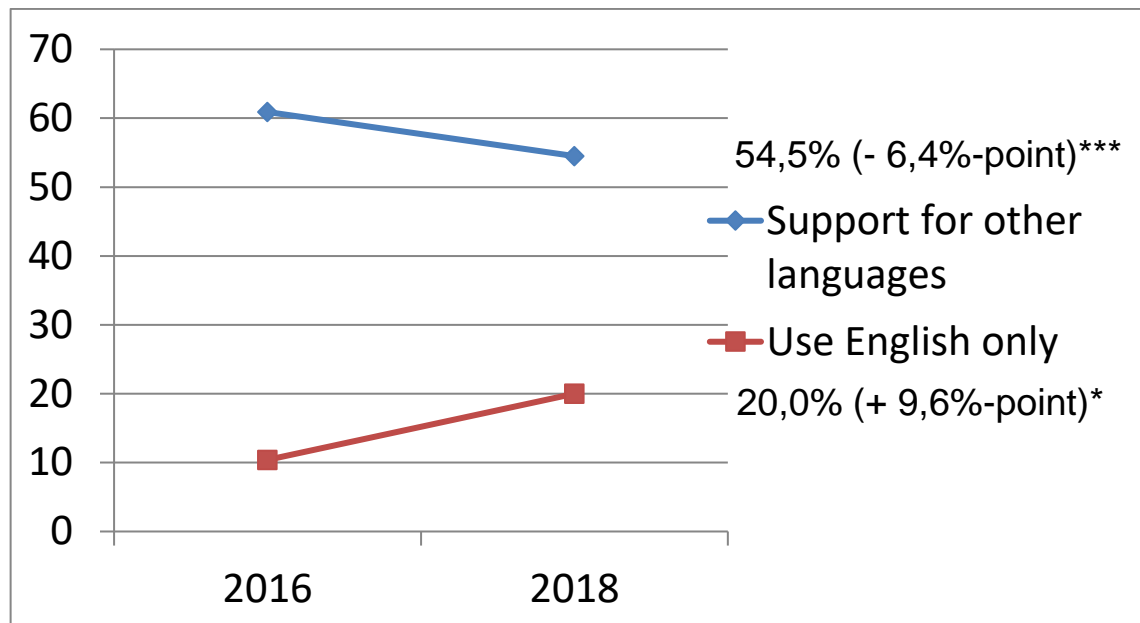


FIG. 6. Language of instruction in higher education, 2016–2018 – The Netherlands. Blue: support for the use of languages other than Dutch, red: actual use of English only (from Hinskens 2020a: 14)

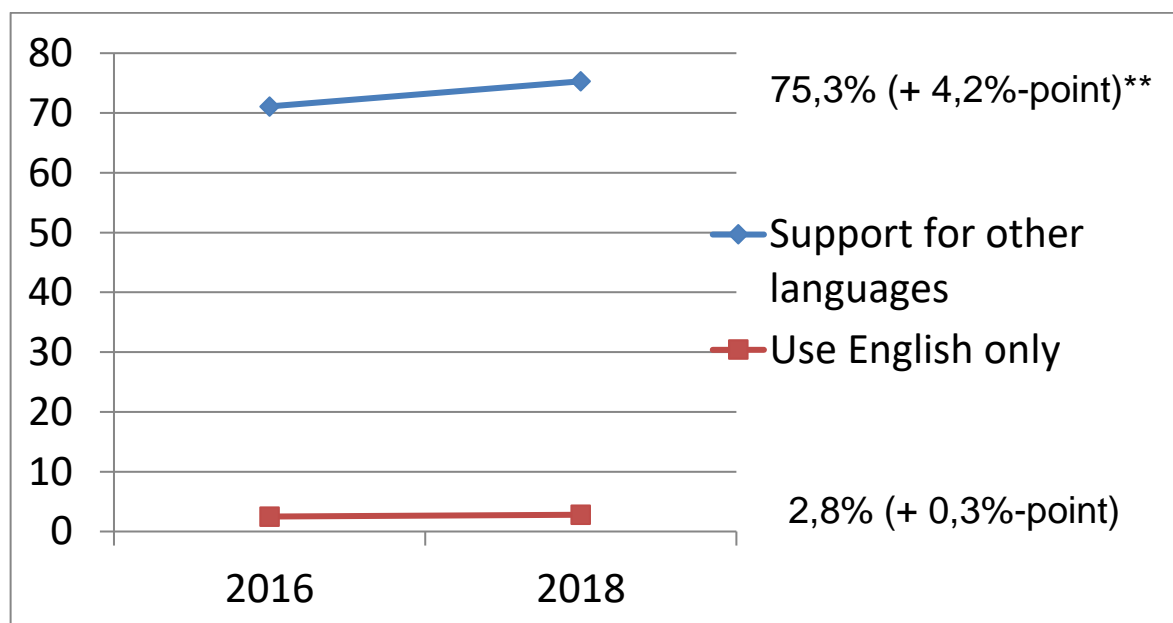


FIG. 7. Language of instruction in higher education, 2018 – Flanders and Brussels (from Hinskens 2020a: 14)

In Flanders and Brussels between 2016 and 2018 the use of English in academia did not increase, although there was a slight increase in the support for education in other languages than Dutch (Fig. 7).

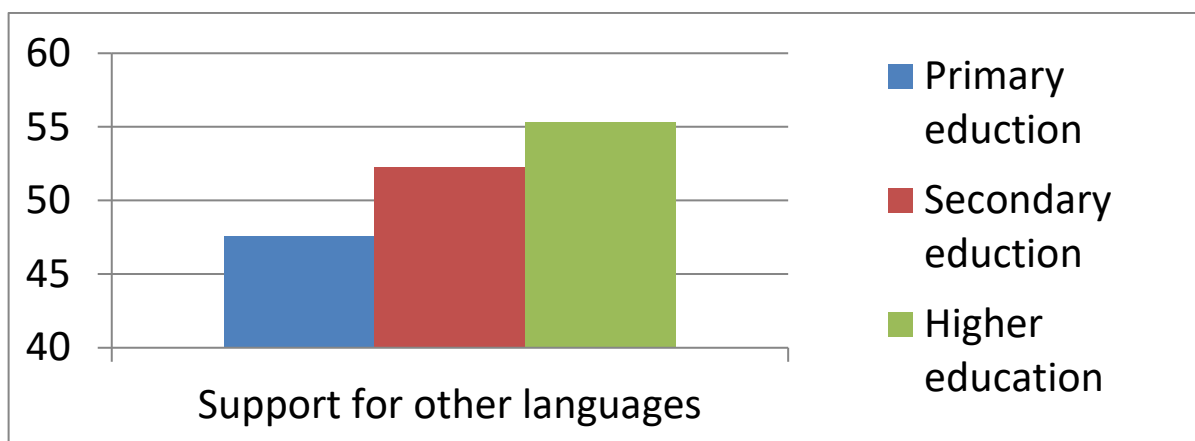


FIG. 8. Support for other language of instructions (than Dutch) in higher education, 2016–2018 – Surinam. Blue = primary education, red = secondary education, green = higher education

Fig. 8 presents the results concerning the support for the use of languages other than Dutch in Surinam for the three main levels of education. No use of English was reported and there is moderate support for education in languages other than Dutch.

5. FUTURE

The very last finding from the *Staat van het Nederlands* project deals with the future of Standard Dutch.

The leftmost column in Table 3 below presents the percentages of those who agree with the statement “I think it is important that children speak Dutch”. The native speakers of Dutch in the officially bilingual areas of Frisia and Brussels show a decrease in their adherence to Standard Dutch, but here and in all other areas a large majority is in favour of transmitting Standard Dutch to the next generation. There is also a large pro-Standard Dutch majority among non-native speakers, except in multilingual Surinam. As far as we can rely on these results, the future of Dutch does not look grim at all.

	<i>“I think it is important that children speak Dutch”</i>					
	Native speakers					
	(totally) agree		neutral		(totally) disagree	
YEAR QUESTIONNAIRE	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018
Netherlands	93,9 %	92,6	1,1	0,9	4,9	6,5
Frisia	97,8	89,3	0,0	2,0	2,2	8,6
Flanders	94,4	95,1	1,1	0,8	4,6	4,0
Brussels	95,9	85,4	4,0	6,1	0,0	8,5
Surinam	no data	83,6	no data	13,9	no data	2,5
	Non-native speakers					
	(totally) agree		neutral		(totally) disagree	
YEAR QUESTIONNAIRE	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018
Netherlands	93,8	88,2	2,7	8,1	3,4	3,7
Frisia	95,2	84,5	2,4	11,3	2,4	4,2
Flanders	94,3	100,0	1,1	0,0	4,5	0,0
Brussels	92,8	75,0	7,1	0,0	0,0	25,0
Surinam	no data	44,5	no data	51,1	no data	4,4

TABLE 3. The percentages of the respondents who (dis)agree with the claim “I think it is important that children speak Dutch” – broken down for region and mother tongue

Recent large-scale online surveys have shown that Dutch is firmly anchored and stable in all parts of the language area in all domains of language use. Even in the highly multilingual Surinam it is the largest language – in the Netherlands and Flanders it is so in absolute terms. From the same surveys, attitude data collected in all parts of the language area

show that the vast majority of both native speakers and non-native speakers (strongly) believe that it is important that children speak Dutch, so for the time being there is no need to fear for the future of Dutch.

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A SEVEN-LEAGUE STRIDES SIGHTSEEING TRIP THROUGH PAST AND PRESENT OF STANDARD DUTCH

Summary

The standardization of Dutch started in the early 16th century, driven by commercial, cultural and political developments; initially the standardization consisted only of the unification of the (regionally highly variable and still completely uncodified) written language. Standard Dutch is mainly built on Hollandic dialects. Standard Dutch is also partly a construct: for the sake of the first complete Bible translation (financed by the government of the Seven Provinces, where protestantism – in particular calvinism – was the state religion) scholars from different regions were recruited; the language they created had koine properties. The new Bible language also contained many constructions modelled on Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The linguistic resources of emergent Standard Dutch were further developed and expanded for other purposes as well.

After the Spanish occupation of Antwerp and the subsequent Counter-Reformation, the South became partially depopulated and isolated from the cultural developments in the politically autonomous and Protestant North, the first republic in the Early Modern history of Europe. The North experienced a booming development of Standard Dutch, but this did not reach the South. After the defeat of Napoleon and the Vienna Congress (1815), the two parts were reunited under King William I, who pursued a sharp ‘Dutch only’ language policy. This did not go down well with the Catholic and (French-speaking) liberal upper crust in the South. After Belgium had become independent (in 1830), language choice became free, but from a societal point of view Dutch stood no chance due to the political and economic domination of the Walloon / French elite. The Flemish response resulted in the emancipation of Dutch under the leadership of a group of pro-Dutch intellectuals; in this process the integrationist view i.e. affiliation to the Netherlandic standard variety of Dutch eventually predominated. In the 19th century, it was further cultivated and ‘enriched’ with, among other things, syntactic and morphosyntactic peculiarities that widened the gap with the spoken language (which was still close to the dialects), leading to reactions in the literary world and elsewhere.

Only in the course of the 20th century did Standard Dutch become anchored in the verbal repertoires of the masses. In the South, the adopted Northern variety of Standard Dutch appears to be too much of a *Fremdkörper* and a spoken variety has been developing that is coloured by dialect features and therefore varies regionally. Spoken Netherlandic Standard Dutch also contains variable phonetic and morphosyntactic non-standard features.

In Surinam, Dutch has its roots as a colonial language but it was only widely distributed among the non-colonial part of the population in the last decades of the 19th century. It coexists with a range of creole languages, (especially Asian) migrant languages and indigenous languages, resulting in a great deal of ethnolectal variation. The divergent developments in Standard Dutch in the three parts of the language area have resulted in situations which combine features of pluricentricity with features of pluriareality.

Recent large-scale online surveys have shown that Dutch is firmly anchored and stable in all parts of the language area in all domains of language use. Even in the highly multilingual Surinam it is the largest language – in the Netherlands and Flanders it is so in absolute terms. From the same surveys, attitude data collected in all parts of the language area show that the vast majority of both native speakers and non-native speakers (strongly) believe that it is important that children speak Dutch, so for the time being there is no need to fear for the future of Dutch.

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