Double Dutch: Language in the Lowlands

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Curious about the Dutch? 2006
Double Dutch

- Basic facts
- History
- Structure
- Influence on English
- Varieties
- Color
- Future
Basic Facts about Dutch

- 21 million speakers in The Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders)
  - more in Suriname, Aruba, Indonesia
  - approx. 140,000 in US (1990 census)
  - 48th in list of most widely spoken languages (2000)
- Afrikaans is related, nearly intelligible (but speakers not the counted in the 21 mill.)
- “Plattdeutsch” likewise closely related (Low German spoken in Northern Germany)
- Frisian also related, but less closely
- First documents ca. 1100 AD
Genealogy of Dutch

Indoeuropean
3,000 BC

Romance
Latin, French,...

Slavic
Russian, Czech,...

Germanic

...  

West-Germanic
200 BC

North Germ.
Swedish, ...

East
Gothic

English

Frisian

Dutch

German

Afrikaans
How Do We Know Prehistory?

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Influences

- **Statenbijbel (1637) standardization**
- Celtic -- *rijk* ‘kingdom’, *ijzer* ‘iron’, *klok* ‘clock’, *ambacht* ‘craft’
- Latin -- *keizer* ‘emperor’, *straat* ‘street’, *school* ‘school’, *poort* ‘gateway’, *pond* ‘pound’, *peper* ‘pepper’
- Frisian -- *tjalk* ‘small boat’, *sjokken* ‘trudge’, *klunen* ‘walk w. skates on land’, *kapen* ‘capture (as a pirate)’
French Borrowings

- enquête ‘questionnaire’, bureau ‘office’, bureaucratie, administratie, officieel, procedure


French Cuisine, Family


- papa, mama
More Influences

- Spanish -- cargo, tornado, commando, orkaan ‘hurricane’
- Russian -- doerak ‘fool’, mammoet ‘mammoth’, apparatsjik
- Japanese -- japon ‘gown’, samoerai, sjogoen, geisha, zen, mikado
Yiddisch

- *smoes* ‘dodge, excuse’ *kapsones* ‘insolence, rudeness’
- *lef* ‘guts’, *mazzel* ‘luck’, *gein* ‘joke’
- *mies* ‘bad, poor’ *tof* ‘nice, fine’
Colonial Influences

- Sranan -- *bo-bo* ‘big shot’
- Indonesian, Malaysian -- *pakkie-an* ‘task’, *piekeren* ‘worry’, *pienter* ‘smart’, *nasi (goreng)*, *bami (goreng)*, *sambal oelek*, *sate*, *ketjap*, *rames*
German Influences

- Medical: *arts, allergie, chromosoom, secrete* `secretion’, *polikliniek, heilgymnastiek* `physical therapy’, *homeopathie*
- Psychology: *autisme, paranoia, waanzin* `madness’, *narcisme, gestaltpsychologie*
- General: *Nachwuchs ‘younger generation’, überhaupt, Kater* (meaning hangover)
English Influences

- Too many modern borrowings to count
  - Technology, politics, pop culture, science
- “Reborrowings”
  - cruise “pleasure trip on a boat”
  - gin “genever” made popular in England by William of Orange (taxed French imports)
English Borrowings?

- stationcar `station wagon'
- jack `jacket'
- gráfiti (note stress)
- cola light `diet coke'
- folder `brochure'
- liften `hitchhike'
- globaal `rough’ (globale schatting)
- beamer `lcd projector’
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Distinctive Structure

- Sounds
- Spelling
- Words
- Phrases
- Meanings
Unusual Sounds

- Diphthongs (combined vowels)

Huis, schuwe, leeuw - involve front rounded vowel like German ‘ue’ or French ‘u’

...groeien
Unusual Sounds

- ‘harde g’ as in Groningen, lage landen ‘Low Lands’, rug ‘back’, acht (8)
- noisier than German Bach, Russian хорошо
- combination with ‘s’ used as “test” for foreigners (and spies): Scheveningen
Spelling

- Dutsj is essensjullie a Loo Sjurmennik lenkwitsj wis det vunkie letter (det riepleezes Y) plus a serieuslie koel ortografie.
- regular reforms, last ’95, ’06
Unusual Words

- Can anything be a verb?
  - voetballen, tennissen, bridgen, sudokuen, fitnessen, etc.
  - computeren `do something w. computers`
  - musiceren `make music`
  - klussen `do odd jobs`
  - opsexen `make sexy`
- gebiologeerd `biologized’ (fixated)
Can anything be diminutive?

- lam/lammetje `lamb/lammykins`
- eventjes `shortly’-kins
- tussendoortje `in the midst of’-kins
- onder ons-je `[a conversation etc.] between you and me’-kins
Unusual Phrase Structure

■ “Verb Second”  
  – like German
  
  Hans gaat morgen naar huis  
  Hans goes tomorrow to home  
  ‘Hans is going home tomorrow’

  Morgen gaat H. naar huis  
  Naar huis gaat H. morgen

■ vestiges in English
  
  In the forest lived a woodsman.  
  Never have I been so shocked.
Unusual Phrase Structure

- **Cross-Serial Dependence**

  Hans vermoedt dat (H. suspects that)
  Piet Marie leert zwemmen
  teach to swim

  ‘Hans suspects that P. is teaching M. to swim’

- **Subject-Verb Relations Cross**
Cross-Serial Dependence

- Crossing Relations Iterate

  Hans vermoedt dat
  Jantje Piet Marie zag leren zwemmen

  ‘H. suspects that J. saw P. teach M. to swim.’

- Theoretically hard to process
Unusual Meanings

- ‘Negative items’ occur only with negation
  - English ‘ever’, ‘any’, ‘budge’, ‘give a hoot’
- Dutch has at least 100 of these
  - Groningen research Hoeksema, Zwarts (current rector)
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Dutch Borrowings in English

- Shipping and naval
  - boom, bow, buoy, commodore, cruise, dock, freight, keel, keelhaul, pump, skipper, sloop, yacht, smuggle

- Textiles
  - bale, duck (cloth), nap, spool, stripe

- Art
  - easel, etching, landscape, sketch

- War
  - beleaguer, holster, freebooter, onslaught
Dutch Borrowings in English

- **Food and Drink**
  - *booze, brandy, coleslaw, cookie, crullers, waffle*

- **Other**
  - *bluff, bully, boss, derrick, dollar, drill, dike, frolic, grime, hunk, kink, runt, scum, slim, snap, spook, stoop*
Dutch Accents in English

- Dutch “English” is excellent—generally this [dɪs]/[zɪs], thin [sɪn],
- Dutch [dytʃ] (like French u, German ü) – “spelling” mispronunciation
- Bob [bɔp], God [gɔt], dog [dɔk]
- bad/bed [bɛt], language [lɛŋk.фɪtʃ] (Eng. [læŋ.gʌθʃ])
‘Dutch’ in English

- ‘double Dutch’ - nonsense
- ‘in Dutch with her’ - in trouble with
- ‘Dutch treat’, ‘go Dutch’ - split costs (no treat)
- ‘dutchman’ - cover-up for construction error
- ‘Dutch courage’ - from alcohol
- ‘Dutch bargain’ - deal made w. alcohol
- ‘Dutch uncle’ - someone with unwanted advice
- ‘Dutch disease’ - politics of consensus (W. Laqueur)

- also ‘Dutch oven’, ‘Dutch doors’ -- but mostly negative
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Dutch Dialects

- Experts distinguish 3-5 main areas, approx. 30 areas in total (in only 40K km²)
- Frisian recognized as “minority language”
- Lower Saxon, Limburgs recognized as “regional languages”
- Lay interest enormous
  - clubs, songs, web sites, publications
Dutch Dialect Areas
How different are dialects from each other?

- Standard Dutch
- Groningen
- Zeeland
- Frisia
- Flanders
- Twente

Ons oude huis is afgebrand
Our old house [is] burned down
Dialect Differences

- oude / ouwe / olle
- huis / hus (ü) / hoes
- afgebrand / afbraat / outband / afabraat
How different are dialects from each other?

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De pastoor heeft goede wijn
The minister has good wine
Dialect Differences

- wijn / win
- xoede / xoeje / xoje / xoeoe / hoede / goede / beste
- heeft / het / ai / hat
Other major differences

- final n ‘lopen’
  - standard lope, Groningen lop’m
- hard/soft g ‘laag’, ‘Goede’
  - how much “noise” in the g/ch
- aspirated (English-like) vs. unaspirated (French-like) p,t,k
  - pʰaard, paard
Dialects vs. Standard Dutch
Dialect Continuum?
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Color

- Interest in Language
- Coinages with cultural speculation
- Humor
- Obscenity?
- Idioms, Proverbs
Interest in Language

- *Onze Taal* - private foundation for language issues
- *Taalunie* - government organization for questions of standards, technology
- Six regular language columns in newspapers
  
  - Huib Boogert  
  - Peter Burger  
  - Jan Kuitenbrouwer  
  - Liesbeth Koenen  
  - Wim Daniels  
  - Ewoud Sanders  

  - De Telegraaf  
  - Algemeen Dagblad  
  - Volkskrant  
  - NRC Handelsblad  
  - Eindhovens Dagblad  
  - Nederlands Stadscourant
Interest in Language

- Foreign languages
  - 5 in college-prep. schools (*gymnasia*)
- Excellent facility with English (even TV)
- Foreigners trying to learn Dutch find it difficult to find Dutch who are willing (they all want to practice English)
  - but Dutch are critical of foreign residents “who don’t take the trouble to learn Dutch”
Culture & Coinage

- **vergadercultuur** - ‘meetings culture’
- **alle neuzen dezelfde kant op** - ‘all noses in the same direction’ -- the goal of decision makers is consensus
- **gedoogbeleid** - ‘policy of tolerance’, esp. w.r.t. soft drugs & sex, sometimes also w.r.t. zoning & safety
- **maaiveld** ‘mowing field’ - whatever pokes out above the rest is cut back
  - derogatory terms for show-offs, braggarts, etc - kapsones; kakkineus, elitair of dik doen; opscheppen; naast je schoenen lopen; spatjes hebben; jezelf op de borst kloppen
Culture and Coinage

- *inspanningsverplichting* - ‘responsibility to try’
- *verworven rechten* - ‘acquired rights’
- *planologie* - ‘urban planning’
- *onthutst, verontwaardigd, verbijsterd, ontgoocheld* - lots of words covering indignation
- *wildplassen* ‘urination outside usual facilities’
Humor

- About the Dutch - miserly
  - How to break up a demonstration? Pass a collection plate.
  - Why are Dutch nostrils so big? --The air is free.
  - What’s a Dutchman do if he wins the lottery? --Recounts the money.

- In fact the Dutch donate generously
Dutch Humor

- Strong “maaiveld” streak -- humor that cuts big shots down to size
- “Gonzo” elements, free fantasy
  - Youp van ‘t Hek on Maxima even makes fun of the royal family (uncommon target)
Everyone loves Cruijff

- "Italianen kennen niet van je winnen, maar je ken wel van ze verliezen." (Italians can’t beat you, but you can lose to them.)
- “Als je wilt scoren, moet je schieten” (If you want to score, you have to shoot)
- “Ieder nadeel heeft z’n voordeel” (Every disadvantage has its advantage)
Obscenity

- lots of cursing, obscenity
- obscenities focus on genital rather anal area
- less sensitive
  - no “forbidden words” for radio, TV
- cursing - wishing disease
  - *krijg de tering/kanker/tyfus/pokken/stuipen/beroerte!* ‘get TB/cancer/typhoid/smallpox/convulsions/stroke’
  - Van der Waals ‘Dutch Terms of Abuse’ *Maledicta* 13, 2005
    • *Ellending, Pestpokkentyfuskankeringwijf!*
- *Bond tegen het Vloeken* ‘Anti-Cursing League’ campaigns in train stations
  - religious focus
Idioms and Proverbs

- Appreciated in speech and prose
- Idioms often based on water and shipping
- Water
  
  Dat zet geen zoden aan de dijk
  That sets no sod on the dike
  That doesn’t help.

  oude koeien uit het sloot halen
  old cows out of the trench haul
  Bring up painful memories

  van de wal in de sloot
  from the bank into the trench
  out of the frying pan, into the fire
Idioms and Proverbs

- Idioms based on shipping, fishing
  
  tussen wal en schip vallen
  between shore and ship fall
  fall between the cracks

  de beste stuurlui staan aan de wal
  the best helmsmen stand ashore
  Talk is cheap

  Achter het net vissen
  behind the net fish
  go through the motions with little chance of success
Proverbs

- Pieter Brueghel the Younger (1564-1638) created a painting dedicated to Proverbs
- Copied his father’s work
- Many other versions -- popular topic
Dutch -- The Future

- Unrest about influence of English
  - Minister of Education Ritzen proposed that universities switch to English (1993)
  - Lots of English in everyday Dutch
    - *Ik heb alle hits gedownload van de web*
    - I downloaded all the hits from the web
  - English “more attractive” in experiments, but not more reliable, knowledgeable

  Giftshop Marianne / Cadeauwinkel Marianne

- Will Dutch survive? --Unquestionably.
A Bit of Gronings

- Groningers known for laconic understatement
- *Het kon minder* -- high praise
  ‘It could have been less’

- unlike Eng. ‘It could have been worse’

- My wish: when you summarize your stay here, you’ll want to say “*Het kon minder*”