

Citizenship and linguistic inequality

Jeroen Vermeulen

Introduction

In recent years the concept of ‘citizenship’ has shown growing popularity among Dutch politicians discussing multiculturalism in the Netherlands. Newcomers to Dutch society are obliged to take an *inburgeringscursus* (freely translated as ‘a course aimed at becoming a proper citizen’). More recently voices are heard to extend the obligation to so-called ‘old-comers’, loosely defined as those ‘allochtones’ who are said to have not been ‘integrated’ well into Dutch society. An *inburgeringscursus* consists mainly of language proficiency components, but also of components aimed at some minimal knowledge and skills required to be able to function in Dutch society.

The rising popularity of the concept can not be seen as separate from the popularity of another concept that dominates public discourse on multiculturalism in the Netherlands, namely ‘integration’. The centrality of the concept of ‘integration’ in public discourse on multiculturalism represents the dominant view assuming cultural differences to be highly problematic and favoring instead a politics of monoculturalism (Ingleby, 2000). The concepts of *inburgering* and ‘integration’ are mutually supporting, as will be argued in this chapter. The former can be considered the operationalisation, at the level of government policy, of the latter. As Blommaert & Verschueren (1998: 114 ff) argue, the term *inburgering* seem to promise to provide more substance than the notoriously underdefined concept of ‘integration’.

At closer look, as will be illustrated later, language is assigned a major role in the operationalisation of *inburgering*. Language proficiency is a major component of the *inburgeringscursus*. Learning the dominant, Dutch, language is considered to provide equal access, for all its speakers, to the public domain and its institutions. It is considered as the key to the integration of allochtones in Dutch society. The positive, instrumentalistic, role of language is very much taken for granted in public debate on multicultural society.

In the following I will illustrate the line of argument I set out above. That is, I will first discuss a major shift in the debate on multicultural society towards ‘monoculturalism’ by way of analyzing a few influential public contributions to the issue. The point I want to make here is that the view on monoculturalism is legitimated by a deceptive notion of equality. Secondly, I will relate this discussion to a short discursive analysis of a political text that handles the concept of *inburgering*. The analysis suggests that *inburgering* is a concept that draws heavily on the concept of ‘integration’ and, consequently is a boundary concept, generating insiders and outsiders. Finally, I will turn to the role of language in the discussion. By analyzing some instances of a bureaucratic interaction between a civil servant and its clients of Turkish descent, I will point to the inequalities the use of Dutch language reflects and produces. This analysis is meant to criticise the role language is assigned to in the debate as actually generating equality of access and functioning in the public domain.

Changing debate on Dutch multicultural society

The last few years the debate on multiculturalism in the Netherlands has gradually been shifted towards ... dominated by explicit statements criticizing governmental policy based on the principle of 'integration with preservation of one's own culture', which was officially introduced in the 1980s. Opinion leaders as the historian Maarten van Rossum (1998), Paul Scheffer (2000), member of the academic institute of the Labour Party ('Partij van de Arbeid') and Paul Schnabel (2000), director of the Social and Cultural Planning Officeⁱ, wrote provocative and highly critical publications on the subject using eloquent metaphors to evaluate the negative output of governmental policy over the years: 'the multicultural drama' and 'the multicultural illusion'. Schnabel (op.cit.) argues against a "disastrous" relativistic standpoint towards culture, that would permit views and practices contrary to "basic western values" as individual freedom, equality between men and women and the integrity of the human body. Immigrants from other cultures should adapt, integrate and assimilate to fundamental values of Dutch society. Scheffer (op.cit.) suggested that the ideology of multiculturalism has proven to generate "dramatic" social consequences (such as high rates of unemployment and criminality among immigrants), because the immigrants failed to integrate in Dutch society; they didn't learn to speak the language properly nor did they acquire enough knowledge of Dutch culture and history. Although their arguments differ, their diagnosis is highly comparable: cultural differences are the main cause for social problems. In fact, they argue in favor of a politics of monoculturalism that suggest that it is best for a country to have only one culture immigrants must assimilate to (Ingleby, 2000: 4).

Public discussions, such as those mentioned, broke the taboo that prohibited earlier debate on the darker sides of multicultural society. It could be said that it paved part of the way walked by Pim Fortuyn, a former professor of Sociology and political commentator who made a startling entrance into Dutch politics before the parliamentary elections in May 2002. The dramatic rise and fall of Pim Fortuyn, who was assassinated shortly before the elections can be considered as a turning point in the debate on multiculturalism. He vigorously attacked 'political correct' opinions about liberal and tolerant multicultural society. 'He said what no one dare to say' almost became a slogan after his death, pointing to his harsh and provocative statements about integration, multicultural society, cultural differences and especially the meaning of islamic religion. The politics of respect for cultural differences, formulated in government policy in the 1980s was being replaced by views in which cultural differences were talked about in terms of their backwardness. It was Fortuyn who called "islamic culture" a "backward culture", thereby not only superficially confusing religion and culture but also placing cultural differences in evolutionary schemes (for a critic of this issue, see Blommaert & Verschueren, 1993). The latter is a well-known rhetorical device in evaluating cultural differences under the guise of universal equality, a position that has been criticized in anthropology since long. In the same line of reasoning as Schnabel (op.cit.) Fortuyn argued that integration of allochtones (read: muslimsⁱⁱ) is hampered by fundamental differences with regard to supposedly 'basic' values. Fortuyn name three of them: individual responsibility, division between religion and state, and equality of men and women. In a television interview for the Dutch Muslim Broadcasting organization ('Nederlandse Moslim Omroep'), broadcasted a few days before his assassination he voiced his ideas as followsⁱⁱⁱ:

Explicating individual responsibility: “*that in cultures in which individual responsibility is much less developed [than in Western cultures, or Dutch culture for that matter, JV] and where it is more about collective responsibility, that means the family, the network, the tribe, well you name it*”^{iv}

Explicating division of ‘church and state’: “*that Christianity and Judaism went through a process of secularization by which they accepted that religion is a matter for private individuals*”^v

On equality between men and women: “*that is very recent*”; “*it didn’t exist here in the fifties neither*”; “*You can discern within Islam quite big differences from us*”^{vi}

In all three statements the evolutionary rhetoric is obvious. Fortuyn refers to ‘big’ differences between ‘islam’ and ‘us’ that are due to differences in development. Hence the ‘backwardness of islamic culture’, as he called it. The values he talks about are considered to be the fruits of modernity. In spite of the supposed universality of modernity in the interview Fortuyn admits that it will be very difficult for Islam to reach this stage of development given the idiosyncracies, or better even, the deficiencies of its, ‘collective’, culture. A reference the Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor (1995: 42) makes to a statement supposedly made by the writer Saul Bellow might apply here. Saul Bellow is reported to have said something like “When the Zulus produce a Tolstoy we will read them”. This statement, like those made by Fortuyn, illustrate European arrogance suggesting the supremacy of their own values. Moreover, these values are presented as being neutral and universal. This line of thought, of which Fortuyn’s statement are illustrative, allows for just one solution to the problem of cultural differences. The only way integration in – Dutch, for that matter – society can be successful is when allochtones give up their own culture and assimilate to dominant values and norms. Taylor (op.cit: 43) would say that this position is “in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture. As it turns out, then, only the minority or suppressed cultures are being forced to take alien form”.

Citizenship as ‘inburgering’

The above sketched picture of the changing public discourse on multiculturalism in the Netherlands towards a plea or even demand for integration and monoculturalism does of course not pretend to be complete nor thorough. It gives merely an impression and illustration of an ongoing debate. But the picture fits the analyses of others (e.g. Verweel, 2003; Ingleby, 2000). Moreover, the hegemonic pressure of the doctrine of monoculturalism is rather big in other parts of Western Europe as well, if not on the level of explicit rhetoric than certainly on the level of implicit assumptions (see Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998).

The changed discourse on the multicultural society affected all Dutch political parties. Less than one year after the last parliamentary elections new elections had to be held, since the newly chosen government was brought down. With regard to the issue of the multicultural society the word *inburgeren* (freely translated as ‘to become a proper citizen’) was used in the election programs of most political parties, from right-wing to left wing. *Inburgeren* became the policy instrument *par excellence* aiming at

realizing an integrative society. The political programs, notwithstanding their traditional differences on the topic, show broad consensus concerning the obligatory ‘inburgering’ of allochtones. Below some excerpts from political programs will be given (in the order from ‘left’ to ‘right’). The left-wing green party (‘GroenLinks’) write in their election program (2002):

“All newcomers an obligatory, tailor-made, course in Dutch language and society”^{vii}

In a similar way, the second largest Labour party (PvdA) states:

“Admitted foreigners have to sit for an exam to become citizen; there is an obligation in terms of result. A permanent residence permit is connected to this.”^{viii}

The Christian Democratic Party (CDA), winner of last two elections, say the following on the issue of ‘inburgeren’: ^{ix}⁸

“Integration and becoming a citizen

In a society, in which people are committed to each other and interact on the basis of respect, equal participation of all is fundamentally important. To make up for deficiencies of big groups is an important task for the government. It is about a reciprocal process: newcomers, first of all, have to learn to speak Dutch and have to build thorough knowledge of and insight in the society of which they are part.

Society has to give newcomers the chance and the space to become a citizen in their own way, but obviously within values and norms of Dutch constitutional state. Stronger effort will be put in acquiring active knowledge of the Dutch language.

The newcomers becoming citizens will no longer be an obligation in terms of effort, but an obligation in terms of result. (...) A definitive residence permit will be granted only after the trajectory of becoming a citizen is concluded successfully.”^x

I would like to discuss this excerpt shortly since it tells us about the use of the concept of ‘burgerschap’ (translatable as ‘citizenship’) in Dutch public, political, discourse. A note must be made regarding the translation of the word ‘burgerschap’. In the Dutch context it doesn’t have the history and associations it has in immigrant countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States. Whereas in Western multicultural societies such as Canada and the United States of America the concept of ‘citizenship’ has an established history both in social science and political philosophy (e.g. Young, 1976; Taylor, 1995; Kymlicka, 1989) as well as in their respective societies, this is not the case in the Netherlands. Although political philosophical meanings have affected the use of ‘burgerschap’ in Dutch social science and perhaps in the political use of the term, the common sense use of the word is imbued with bourgeois connotations of good and decent behavior that derive from a conservative and conformist discourse. This contextual difference produces ‘linguistic inequality’ between the concepts of ‘citizenship’ and Dutch ‘burgerschap’. That is why I want to put some effort in understanding the Dutch concept not as an autonomous noun but as a concept that is

discursively produced within the specific context of Dutch public debate on multiculturalism and immigrants.

I will go into three topics now, mentioned in the political text: (1) the reciprocal character of 'citizenship'; (2) the juxtaposition of a notion of citizenship and integration; (3) the role of language.

First reciprocity is mentioned in the text: 'it is about a reciprocal process'.

'Citizenship' involves the rights of a citizen as a member of a political community or state in reciprocal relation to obligations to the state (Jary & Jary, 1991: 70)

Reciprocity is not very clear in this excerpt, however. Of course we should bear in mind that we are not dealing with a juridical text. It is political text. As such the, Dutch, language (more or less mirrored in the English translation) is full of the notorious qualities such as awkward syntax, vagueries (passive constructions) and ambiguities that seems to be characteristic for these kind of texts (see also Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998: 53). The concept of 'burgerschap' is being talked about in an active way as in the verb 'inburgeren' (to become a citizen) or as a nominalization of the verb 'inburgering'. The fact that the noun is left unmentioned is meaningful. Not using the noun 'burgerschap', even when at the end of the text the successful conclusion of the trajectory is referred to, permits the writers of this text to remain vague about the rights of the 'successful' newcomers and of the obligations of the state towards the newcomers. In the beginning of this excerpt, it is clearly said what are the duties of the newcomers ('have to learn to speak Dutch'); but it remains vague who is going to give them what in return for their investment (the government? society?). At the end of the paragraph the reciprocity gets more substance. The sentence 'the newcomers becoming citizens will no longer be an obligation in terms of effort, but an obligation in terms of result' is significant here. Although at first sight it is unclear who is to make the effort and who is to give results (government or newcomer, or both?), the next sentence puts an end to doubts. The newcomer has the obligation to show results at the end of the trajectory, after which the government grants him a residence permit in return. It is notable that the reciprocity of the 'inburgering' is presented here as a kind of exchange that takes place at the boundaries of the community. The trajectory is not about 'burgerschap' per se, it's about whether or not being permitted to get inside. But what happens inside?

This brings me to the second point. The process of 'inburgeren' is placed within a discourse of integration. This is seen by the juxtaposition of the two words in the heading of this section of the political program. Moreover, the prefix '-in' of 'inburgering' refers to the direction of the process, worded here as the 'values and norms of Dutch constitutional state'. The juxtaposition of integration and 'inburgering' suggests an inclusive use of the concept, pointing to 'equal participation'. This is more or less in line with what Turner writes about citizenship: "Behind the citizenship debate is the quest for an adequate account of the public within which the good life could be realized on the basis of universalistic social participation, irrespective of color, creed, class, age or gender" (Turner, 1991: 217). At the same time Turner (op.cit.) suggests that the concept is in fact extremely contested. The debate hinges on the question whether citizenship is an inclusive or exclusive classification. Is it a unifying "category that takes priority over other divisions – gender, class, ethnicity and so on" (Parker, 1997: 84)? Or does it construct insiders and outsiders to society? Even within the category of insiders: does it create more and less equal citizens? This inherent tension within the concept of citizenship requires an explication of shared values (Parker, op.cit.). Combining 'inburgering'

and integration in the Christian democratic text inevitably refers to the public debate on multiculturalism we discussed before. There we saw Fortuyn's and Schnabel's explication of what they view as integrative values: these were, deceptively, presented as universal and thus stress equality. More often, shared values that lead to integration are poorly defined. The concept of integration itself is notoriously underdefined, although it is considered to be the key concept in the process of becoming a citizen ('inburgering'). Moreover, as I have tried to show, the allochtones that are specifically targeted in the debate on multiculturalism, and who are pressured most to integrate in Dutch society, are the ones that are explicitly accused of being fundamentally different. It is appropriate to cite the question Blommaert & Verschueren (1998: 115) ask in their discussion of the same debate in Belgium: "How can one ever bring about 'integration' if the members of the target group are fundamentally considered as outsiders (..)?" In a discursive context like this how can the concept of 'burgerschap' be anything different than "the architect of legitimate inequality" (Marshall, 1950).

The third point I want to make is about the role of (Dutch) language in the discussion of 'inburgering'. In the text, and throughout public discussion about 'inburgering' and integration of allochtones, learning the dominant language is seen as a vital element. This point is emphasized by the 'first of all'; and later in the excerpt it is stated that 'stronger efforts' will be made concerning 'active knowledge' of Dutch language. Learning Dutch language is considered to be the instrument par excellence for a successful process of 'inburgering', and hence for 'equal participation'. In all Dutch courses of 'inburgering' language acquisition forms the core of the training program. And whereas the (substance of) other components, concerning 'knowledge and insight in society' and 'values and norms of Dutch constitutional state' are often highly contested, the linguistic program seems undisputable and agreed upon by, at least, all political parties. Language is apparently seen without any problem as the 'guide to social reality'; language is seen as the uncontested instrumental means toward integration. Learning the language is the *sine qua non* of equal access to the public domain, and its institutions, of Dutch society. Such views draw heavily on a cultural conception about the nature of language being an instrumental, transparent means of communication (see Gal & Woolard, 2001). In this regard, language is said to contrast with the opaque character of culture. And so, whatever little the various political parties write in their programs about the courses of 'inburgering' (notably, in sharp contrast to the oral debates about the subject), it is mostly about learning Dutch language. Dutch language thus becomes a symbol of equality and, in an Herderian way, the unique bearer of Dutch culture.

Linguistic inequality

In the following I will argue, instead, that language is full with inequalities with regard to its structure, media and functions. The field of sociolinguistics has a history, since the 1960s of research on the issue of linguistic inequality. The works of Dell Hymes (e.g. 1996), John Gumperz (e.g. 1982) and William Labov (e.g. 1972) were seminal to the development of insights in the issue. Outside the field of anthropological linguistics and sociolinguistics Pierre Bourdieu (1991) must be mentioned as an important figure. What their writings have in common is that language is studied as a contextually situated social practice. The use of language is investigated as both reflecting and producing social differences that relate to power differences. Thus, the idea of social and linguistic uniformity, underlying any notion of community and society, is challenged. As Hymes (1996: 59) put it: "(..) from one

standpoint the history of human society can be seen as a history of language – diversity of languages as such, diversity as to their media, structures and functions and of diversity as a problem”.

From this point of view I will analyze how the use of language organizes inequality in an interaction between an administrator of a Dutch social service and its clients. The analysis is aimed to illustrate the point that language may perhaps be instrumental for getting ‘inside’, passing the *inburgering* exam, but that it reproduces existing inequality.

Bureaucracy: different language forms

The first excerpt to be discussed here concerns the beginning of an intake at a Dutch social service^{x1}. The male, civil servant (CS) interacts with a young couple of Turkish descent, a male client (MC) and his wife a female client (FC). The goal of the intake is to establish whether the clients rightfully apply for a social benefit and, if so, to what kind of social benefit. The social servant has the task to apply the categories of the law to the situation of his clients. With regard to this task, the social servant has to act in the tension between the principle of equality, which holds that all cases should be treated equal, and the principle of individuality, which holds that the individual circumstances of the case should be accounted for. The civil servant, thus, begins with asking the male client the reason for his coming. At some points in the story the male client is telling, his wife adds to it.

- (01) **CS**: alright, tell me. What is I going on?
(02) **MC**: well, I'll start (laughs). We are uh begin (xxx) let's say
(03) **CS**: yes, go ahead
(04) **MC**: we have been married. But is (xxx) happened like this. A culture difference, yes. I was at school, I went to school, let's say.
(05) **CS**: uhm
(06) **MC**: I went to MEAO
(07) **CS**: yes
(08) **MC**: I was getting good results but I didn't finish it
(09) **CS**: uhm
(10) **MC**: I failed for just one subject, that was English, the rest is all well. And my wife is the MAVO
(11) **CS**: uhm
(12) **MC**: she had some problems, couldn't finish it
(13) **CS**: uhm
(14) **MC**: because
(15) **FC**: not finished
(16) **CS**: you didn't finish it
(17) **FC**: no for I ran away
(18) **MC**: from home
(19) **FC**: so that's why
(20) **MC**: (xxx)
(21) **CS**: because of problems with the parents
(22) **FC**: yes
(23) **CS**: yes ...
(24) **MC**: and, yes we are without social benefit and I am looking for a job as soon as possible. I already made some applications

- (25) **CS:** uhm
- (26) **MC:** I made an application at the police, wait the answer for that
- (27) **CS:** yes
- (28) **MC:** and, I am now living with my parents, but they yes. I have to pay quite an amount of money, in order to live with them. We just signed a contract (shows the contract)
- (29) **CS:** yes (rejects) that is all (xxx)
- (30) **MC:** but, yes, I am now without money, I made some debts. Yes we' re married. Is very difficult.
- (31) **CS:** yes
- (32) **MC:** without money, one can't live
- (33) **CS:** yes
- (34) **MC:** but uhm I am looking, I am just busy trying to find a job. But yes, that time you do need some money
- (35) **CS:** uhm
- (36) **MC:** that is why I applied for a social benefit. I went to the employment bureau, I registered.
- (37) **CS:** yes
- (38) **MC:** as an administrative worker , so I already have some experience
- (39) **CS:** uhm
- (40) **MC:** and they said, you have to be at the social service, they gave me letter, to get a declaration
- (41) **CS:** uhm
- (42) **MC:** and that they did, according to me, give, something
- (43) **CS:** yes
- (44) **MC:** and further, that's the way it is more or less
- (45) **CS:** alright, just. I am going to pick out some little things that are important to me
- (46) **MC:** yes
- (47) **CS:** I hear you tell you are, let's see, you are nineteen years old, aren't you?
- (48) **MC:** yes
- (49) **CS:** nineteen years. And you left school, the MEAO ... you didn't finish.

Although the client starts his contextualisation of his situation somewhat hesitatingly, (perhaps because he feels a bit insecure given the institutional character of the interaction), he tells his story in a quite straightforward, though minimalist, way showing good command of the Dutch language. He describes a complex situation in which he tells about his education, the problematic background of their marriage, the fact that they live in the house of his parents, his financial problems and his efforts to look for a job. Actually, his ability to convey the complexity of his situation with minimal linguistic means is quite astonishing. Each topic he addresses is presented in a way which touches its character full of tension. The marriage that was problematic because of the fact that the wife ran away from home; about his school where he had good results, but which he didn't finish; the fact that they live with his parents, with whom however they have a business-like agreement; that he has money problems but is seriously looking for a job. Each topic, then, invites to be asked for in more detail. But the civil servant is only interested in categorizing the client in the formalities of the law. So he concludes by naming two 'objective' categories: age (which the client didn't mention himself) and school situation. These two categories allow him to apply the law to this case.

The example thus shows a sharp contrast between the story the client tells about his personal situation and "the procedural-discursive expectations of the bureaucracy" (compare Maryns & Blommaert, 2002: 18). The civil servant, due to expectations provided by the institution, is not really interested in the personal story of the client.

These expectations have to do with the specific trajectory that is normal for bureaucracy. The conversational exchange of the intake has, finally, to be translated into a short formal report in which it must be unambiguously stated whether a social benefit is granted rightfully. The narrative 'logic' of the clients personal situation must be translated into the formal 'logic' of the law. These two logics are based on two contrasting uses of language: narrative and factual (Bruner, 1990). The former is full of ambiguities and contextuality, whereas the latter suggests transparency between wording and meaning based on an ideal of objectivity and non-contextuality (Maryns & Blommaert: 19/20). Also the difference between spoken and written language is at stake here. The civil servant recapitulates the client's narrative, preparing the spoken exchange to be molded in written form. These two media of language are, as Hymes puts it are not just a matter of representation; writing and speaking are two different "modes of action" (1996: 36). Both ways of using language (both media) thus are very different in terms of social and institutional consequences. Differences in power, between the three participants of the exchange, are intrinsically bound to these modes of action. In other words, linguistic command is certainly not the issue here. At issue is the specific context in which language is used and the power and status differences between linguistic forms in this context.

Equal access?

Linguistic inequality takes various forms. Not only the evaluation of linguistic forms is unequal, due to institutional assumptions and expectations, also the rights of speakers to enter a specific linguistic field is unequally distributed. Consider for example the following excerpt which is taken from the same exchange at the social service. The issue is whether or not the fact of their marriage is a reason to make an exception to the rule of the law. In fact, the categorization the civil servant made in the first excerpt is being contested by the two clients.

- (01) **CS**: no but the point is look. In itself uhm you are both quite young, aren't you?
- (02) **FC**: yes
- (03) **CS**: nineteen eighteen years old. That mean that you fall under the
- (04) **FC**: (nods) youth law, yes they said so
- (05) **MC**: yes that I have uhm I have
- (06) **CS**: under the youth law
- (07) **FC**: yes
- (08) **CS**: and this youth law that says that people under the age of twenty years, they should be falling under the JWG. Even if they are married, that doesn't matter. You are married, but I see you as two different persons, that are together coincidentally but, the law sees you as two different persons.
- (09) **MC**: but that's what I said, that I knew I said that, but this lady said
- (10) **CS**: yes, so that means yes
- (11) **MC**: you have to go with this paper to social service first
- (12) **CS**: yes
- (13) **MC**: and your situation is totally different, make also, uhm to people that are in your situation they make an exception. That is what she said
- (14) **FC**: maybe
- (15) **CS**: yes alright. But that is the story of the employment bureau,
- (16) **MC**: yes
- (17) **CS**: and now hav- you are going to listen to my story

This excerpt is an example of a struggle for the power to define the situation. The civil servant is trying to begin a quite authoritative monologue in which he tries to explain his decision by referral to the rules of the law. He does so in the beginning (01) by involving the two, opposing, clients into his line of argument by posing a rhetorical question about their age. But instead of letting him speak, the two clients show not only their competence in Dutch language, but also their competence in using the bureaucratic language, in the language of the law (e.g. (04)). In other words, they know their juridical situation, they don't need an explanation by the civil servant, but they do contest his interpretation of the law in their specific case. The civil servant (08) ignores their juridical contribution to the conversation and continues his explanation. The civil servants does not allow the two clients to enter his professional domain. Even the clients appeal to another institution, the employment office, (09) doesn't help them to get access. They keep contesting the civil servant interpretation of their situation (as in 08), by interrupting him. In the end, the civil servant feels that finally he has to explicit his authority verbally: 'and now you are going to listen to my story'. That silences the resistance of the two clients, at least for the moment. Here does happen what Herzfeld (1992: 115) says about these kind of bureaucratic encounters:

"Since meanings are so easily disputed, bureaucrats reassert, over and over, their right to define terms and usages."

The things that the civil servant says in (08) is interesting from the point of view of having access to he domain of the law. In two syntactically parallel sentences the civil servant equates his position to the law, thereby legitimating his words and his interpretation of the case: "I see you as two different persons" and "the law sees you as two different persons". As Herzfeld (1992:111) would say he takes refuge in the "transcendent logic of the law", thereby silencing all discussion about the (his) interpretations of it.

In sum

Language use in the public domain and its institutions is conditioned by inequalities concerning their "control over resources, access to status varieties, channels and media" (Maryns & Blommaert, 2002: 28). The assumption of learning the dominant language, based on the discourse on 'integration' and *inburgering* is just the opposite. Command in the dominant language is suggested to be the key to 'successful' integration to Dutch society, based on the assumption that language provides equal access to the public domain. Language is considered to be the carrier of modernist values of equality, freedom and individuality that are presumed to be characteristic for Dutch society. This equality however is deceptive. Language rather is the carrier of inequalities that are reflected and produced on the level of its media and its functions and even on the level of its structure.

References

- Blommaert, J. & Verschueren, J. (1998) *Debating diversity. Analysing the discourse of tolerance*. London: Routledge.
- Blommaert, J. & Verschueren, J. (1993) The rhetoric of tolerance, or, what police officers are taught about migrants. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 14/1, 49-63
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press

- Bruner, J. S. (1990) *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press
- Gal, S. & K. Woolard (2001) *Languages and publics*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Gumperz, J.J. (1982) *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herzfeld, M. (1992) *The social production of indifference: exploring the symbolic roots of western bureaucracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hymes, D. H. (1996) *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Ingleby, D. (2000) *Psychologie en de multiculturele samenleving: een gemiste aansluiting?* Utrecht: Ceres.
- Jary, D. & J. Jary (eds.) (1991) *Dictionary of sociology*. London: Collins.
- Kymlicka, W. (1989) *Liberalism, community, and culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Labov, W. (1972) *Language in the inner city: studies in the Black English vernacular*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell
- Marshall, T. (1950) *Citizenship and social class and other essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maryns, K. & Blommaert, J. (2002) Pretextuality and pretextual gaps: On re/defining linguistic inequality. *Pragmatics*, 12/1, 11-30.
- Parker, M. (1997) Organizations and citizenship. *Organization*, 4/1, 75-93.
- Rossum, M. van (1998)
- Scheffer, P. (2000) Het multiculturele drama. *NRC Handelsblad*, 29 januari 2000.
- Schnabel, P. (2000) *De multiculturele illusie. Een pleidooi voor aanpassing en assimilatie*. Utrecht: Forum.
- Vermeulen, J. (1996) De politiek van de spreekkamer. In: Gastelaars, M. & Hagelstein, G. (eds.) *Management of meaning*. Utrecht: Isor.
- Verweel, P.
- Young, (1976)

ⁱ The SCP is a government agency in the Netherlands doing independent scientific research on social aspects of government policy.

ⁱⁱ Like Schnabel also Fortuyn made careless generalizations with respect to allochtones. Both talk about allochtones, while they point their criticism especially towards Moroccan and Turkish muslims (see for similar rhetorical moves in the Belgian debate on immigrants Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998: 155)

ⁱⁱⁱ Nederlandse Moslim Omroep, “De Dialoog. Nazmiye Oral in gesprek met Pim Fortuyn”, 4 mei 2002

^{iv} “dat in culturen waarin die i.v. veel minder ontwikkeld is en het veel meer gaat om collectieve verantwoordelijkheid, dat is de familie, het netwerk, het stamverband en fin noem het maar op” (Nederlandse Moslim Omroep, 4 mei 2002)

^v “dat christendom en jodendom door een proces van secularisering zijn heengegaan waardoor ze hebben geaccepteerd dat godsdienst iets is van private individuen” (Nederlandse Moslim Omroep, 4 mei 2002)

^{vi} “dat is heel recent”; “dat was in de jaren ’50 hier ook nog niet”; “En dan zie je binnen de islam toch heel grote verschillen met ons” (Nederlandse Moslim Omroep, 4 mei 2002).

^{vii} “Alle nieuwkomers een verplichte, op maat gesneden cursus Nederlandse taal en samenleving” (Groen Links verkiezingsprogramma, 2002)

^{viii} “Toegelaten vreemdelingen moeten een inburgeringsexamen afleggen waarbij een resultaatverplichting geldt. Een permanente verblijfsvergunning is hieraan gekoppeld” (PvdA verkiezingsprogramma, 2002)

^{ix} I will give a more extended excerpt here because this text, the CDA being the largest party, can be seen as rather representative of the present discussion on the issue.

^x “**Integratie en inburgering**

In een samenleving waar mensen betrokken zijn op elkaar en op basis van respect met elkaar omgaan, is gelijkwaardige participatie van allen van fundamenteel belang. Het opheffen van de achterstand van grote groepen is een belangrijke taak van de overheid. Het gaat om een wederkerig proces: nieuwkomers dienen allereerst Nederlands te leren spreken en gedegen kennis van en inzicht in de samenleving, waarvan zij deel uitmaken, op te bouwen.

De samenleving dient nieuwkomers de kans en ruimte te geven om op eigen wijze, maar uiteraard binnen de waarden en normen van de Nederlandse rechtsstaat, in te burgeren. Daarbij wordt steviger ingezet op de actieve kennis van de Nederlandse taal.

Inburgering van nieuwkomers is niet langer een inspanningsverplichting, maar een resultaatverplichting. (...) Een definitieve verblijfsvergunning wordt pas gegeven als het inburgeringstraject met succes is afgesloten.” (CDA verkiezingsprogramma, 2002)

^{xi} The data discussed here derive from research done in 1995, see Vermeulen (1996).