

## BOOK REVIEW

Alison Edwards. (2016) *English in the Netherlands: Functions, Forms and Attitudes* [Varieties of English around the World G56]. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. ISBN 978-9027249166, xvi + 271 pp., EUR 99.00 USD 149.00.

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While it has been suggested that English in the Netherlands is transitioning from a norm-dependent learner variety to a second-language variety in its own right (Berns 1995: 9–10; Jenkins 2009: 16–17), this view is not widely accepted within the country. For instance, Gerritsen et al. (2016: 468) hold that, despite relatively widespread use in the Netherlands, at present English is not used actively and systematically in all domains associated with second-language varieties, so that a strong endonormative orientation is missing. However, as Edwards (2016: 8) and others have argued, theoretical frameworks such as Kachru's (1985) Three Circles Model and Schneider's (2003, 2007) Dynamic Model (DM) were not designed to deal with the specific circumstances of non-post-colonial countries. Consequently, any insistence on positioning these in the Expanding Circle (EC) is largely a reflection of the "limitations" of such frameworks (p. 9), possibly requiring their re-evaluation. In addition, the exclusion of any Dutch variety of English from the Outer Circle would leave its local users "out in the cold" (p. 4), whereas its "promotion [...] may benefit further inclusivity, in that greater awareness and acceptance of Dutch English may result in less stigmatisation of, and negative attitudes among, people with less native-like English" (p. 103). Evidently, given the implications for other non-post-colonial countries, the stakes are high. If the prospect of Dutch English as an attractive new research area is also taken into consideration, it becomes almost imperative to know what evidence may be adduced to re-evaluate the variety status of English in the Netherlands.

Drawing on different methodological approaches, Edwards' monograph on Dutch English entitled *English in the Netherlands: Functions, Forms and Attitudes* provides both empirical and anecdotal evidence to answer two research questions (RQs): "1. Should the English used in the Netherlands be considered a second-language variety or should it simply be regarded as learner English? [... and] 2. Can Schneider's Dynamic Model be extended to account for non-post-colonial, Expanding Circle settings such as the Netherlands?" (p. 18). These RQs, inspired by Buschfeld's (2011) work on Cyprus English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL) variety, and Schneider's (2014) attempt to apply his

Dynamic Model to EC countries, are contextualised in the Introduction (pp. 1–22) with enviable clarity. In this chapter, Edwards foregrounds the forces of globalisation, and even mentions the role of the EU, as an alternative explanation for the spread of English in countries unaffected by colonialism. Some work on Dutch and European Englishes is also discussed critically, notably Mollin's (2006) research on European English, whose three-part framework Edwards has applied to the analysis of English in the Netherlands. Chapter 2 focusses on Mollin's "functions of English in society", Chapter 3 on her "attitudes towards English" and Chapter 4 on "the linguistic forms of English" (p. 19). In these three chapters, it is discussed whether the Netherlands meets any of the criteria associated with second-language status, as in RQ1, whereas in Chapter 5, "a genuinely all-encompassing" attempt is made to extend Schneider's (2003, 2007) Dynamic Model to account for the Netherlands, as in RQ2 (p. 21).

Chapter 2, "The functions of English in the Netherlands" (pp. 21–66) provides a sociolinguistic profile of the Netherlands based on a wide range of sources and observations and, could thus easily be criticised for being incomplete or quickly outdated (especially since most references are pre-2014). Yet it remains an attractively written, informative overview, appreciated by anyone interested in a concise and occasionally entertaining representation of the role of English in Dutch education, research, commerce, public administration and the print media. A key argument is that English is so very widespread that numerous Dutch organisations routinely assume that almost all Dutch people are suitably proficient in English to appreciate English-language texts in print media, advertising and public signage (pp. 61–63). For Edwards, this is an important criterion for second-language as opposed to foreign-language use. However, some of the sources and surveys quoted (e.g. Nortier 2011; Education First 2013) do not warrant this assumption – at least not in terms of active language skills. Additionally, if some organisations in the Netherlands resort to English exclusively, they could well be concerned more with symbolic uses (cf. Van Meurs 2010) or economic benefits than with inclusivity. Edwards also emphasises how, within the Netherlands, English "serves as an expression of status and prestige and allows users to construct cosmopolitan, academic or subculture identities" (p. 66). Since this is also common in many EC countries, it would be helpful to evaluate this claim against the backdrop of local attitudes to English – a subject taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 3, "Attitudes towards English in the Netherlands and 'Dutch English'" (pp. 67–104), discusses a large-scale survey ( $N = 1939$ ) in which Dutch respondents were asked to self-report on different aspects of their use of English: where they learnt the language, how they use it, what their proficiency is, how they relate to native and local models of English, and how they view the relationship with Dutch. Highly relevant because of the granularity of the data and the ample

consideration of interactions between attitudes, the survey shows how attitudes to English are generally positive and instrumental, and that only a minority of respondents can be classified as either “anti-English” or “anglophile” (p. 102). English is not widely seen as a threat to Dutch, and attitudes to Dutch English are overwhelmingly negative, except in respondents with “lower English proficiency and more negative attitudes towards English” (p. 88). While the latter would seem to point to an exonormative orientation (and is consistent with Mollin’s [2006] findings on Euro-English), Edwards stresses the fact that a quarter of her respondents “admit to speaking Dutch English” despite only 6 per cent accepting a “Dutch ‘flavour’ in their target model” (p. 98). This “linguistic schizophrenia”, attested in relatively few participants, is supposed to be an early stage of a transition to a more endonormative position (p. 104). However, it is unclear to what extent Edwards’ results have been affected by the phrasing of the questions, and any terminological confusion between “Dutch English”, “Dunglish”, and their Dutch equivalents (a point conceded to some extent by Edwards on p. 104). At any rate, very few respondents appear to be resorting deliberately to Dutch English to express their identity or status.

Despite its title, “The forms of English in the Netherlands”, Chapter 4 (pp. 105–156) is essentially a case study of only one potential feature of Dutch English, based on data drawn from a corpus of “200 texts in eight different genres, totalling approximately 400,000 words” (p. 119). The chapter starts with a section on the potential morphosyntactic features of Dutch English, partly drawn from the corpus (pp. 107–113), with characteristic learner errors such as using “*beamer* for *projector*” (pp. 110) being presented as potential forms or innovations. Little or no attention is paid to pragmatics, stylistics or phonology. The remainder is dedicated to what promises to be an in-depth analysis of progressive marking in Dutch English, on the basis of which “it can be ascertained if the traditional classification of EFL still holds for the Netherlands” (p. 126). The latter would be the case if Dutch users over-rely on prototypical uses of the progressive, instead of extending these. Even though Edwards argues that the results show characteristics of both second-language and foreign-language varieties (p. 141), it is unclear if her data allow her to reach this conclusion without a deeper semantic analysis – as Van Rooy and Kruger have pointed out (2016: 208). The corpus analysis is followed by a study of Dutch respondents’ acceptability ratings of progressive uses, based on their corrections of Dutch English sentences. Despite the clear link between higher self-reported proficiency levels and rejection of nonstandard usage, as would be expected in an EC context, Edwards also draws attention to a few examples of nonstandard usage in the respondents’ corrections (some unrelated to the use of progressives) and on this basis once again invokes the notion of “linguistic schizophrenia” (p. 154).

Chapter 5, “The Dynamic Model and the Netherlands” (pp. 157–190) opens with a review of RQ1 in the light of the previous chapters. Based on the findings, “the dichotomous approach implied” in this question is challenged, and attention is consequently turned to RQ2 (p. 158). An elaboration on Schneider’s DM is proposed in terms of “foundation-through-globalisation” (p. 159) to kick-start what may be described as a “fairly imaginative application” of some of the parameters of this model (p. 193) to the Netherlands, focusing on the socio-political history of English in the country, together with any corresponding identity constructions and linguistic effects (p. 160). In the absence of any colonial settler strand in the Netherlands, which is an important organising principle of the DM, the difficulty of applying this model is acknowledged, although similarities are also noted. The discussion itself contains pertinent observations about the use of English in the Netherlands, with ample references to Loonen (1991) and Sprunger (1982) rather than Wilhelm (2005), but tends to revolve around British perceptions (cf. p. 163), with limited reference to American or other, possibly global, perspectives. Surprisingly, the discussion of pre-1945 linguistic effects focuses on Dutch loan words in native-speaker English (p. 166), rather than, for instance, the early nativisation of English loan words in Dutch (such as *tram*, first attested in 1843; “Tram”, n.d.). Overall, more emphasis on phonology would have been helpful, given its importance in Schneider’s DM, but this is only mentioned briefly within the context of learner errors, spelling and punning (pp. 175, 177).

As argued in Chapter 6, “Conclusion” (pp. 191–197), it is difficult to capture the sociolinguistic dynamics of English in the Netherlands with Schneider’s (2003, 2007) model, and revisions to the latter may need to be proposed. In Edwards’ view, the emerging picture of the Netherlands is that of a country that appears to defy existing models, with inhabitants who, as regards English, are “[n]ot quite users, not quite learners” (p. 195). The author appears to be expressing the hope that “progressives” in the Netherlands will start to “embrace the linguistic expression of their Dutch identities, and eventually wear it as a badge of pride” (p. 197). (Consequently, it would have been interesting to investigate the link between political views and attitudes to Dutch English – especially in order to examine if it is indeed progressives, nativists, or any other group who favour distinctly local forms of English.)

In a pioneering work of such scope and originality, it would be easy to pinpoint lacunae, deficiencies, and inaccuracies. Apart from the typos and spelling mistakes also noted in Leuckert (2016), it will have been clear from the above that a number of issues have been left unexplored. For a study conducted within a WE framework, too little attention is paid to the linguistic effects that Dutch as a diverse, pluricentric language may have had on local Englishes not only within the Netherlands, but also in Belgium, Surinam, and possibly South Africa and North

America. In addition, there is more focus on overlap between error and innovation than on any principled distinction between them (Van Rooy 2011). Still, it is hugely to Edwards' credit that she has put Dutch English on the research agenda in the first place, and in such a persuasive and engaging manner that she has her readers wanting more. Even so, the author may have taken on too much – and it may be felt that the emphasis on interpreting the data within the framework of models deemed inappropriate distracts from what would have been a legitimate subject in its own right: a comprehensive, descriptive account of a commonly used WE variety, regardless of its status. Yet in this landmark study, which all serious scholars of English in Dutch-speaking countries will need to acknowledge, the groundwork has been laid to pursue a wide range of different approaches within the field. If scholars follow up on Edwards' proposal (p. 195) to flesh out the diachronic aspects of this variety, possibly along the lines of Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (2012), we might see the publication of more detailed accounts of Dutch Englishes – which, as in Bolton's (2006) *Chinese Englishes*, would have to be resolutely in the plural.

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