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**Intercultural Aspects of  
Specialized Communication**

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**Linguistic Insights**

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## Fact or Fallacy? English as an L2 in the Dutch Business Context

### 1. Introduction

On the main road leading into our university there are two large billboards. In the last week of November 2003, the billboard on the left read *Stop AIDS Now*, and the billboard on the right read *Stop brushing, Start Sonicare. Sonicare, The Sonic Toothbrush. Philips, Let's make things better*. Not particularly surprising perhaps, until you remember that Nijmegen is located in the East of the Netherlands on the border with Germany, more than an hour away from the major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Hague. A pertinent reminder that English is increasingly used in Dutch business communication and it is this phenomenon that we will focus on in this chapter.

The use of English in international business contexts is now beyond dispute, particularly in situations where English is used as a *lingua franca*. Recent studies in the European context, for instance, by Burrough-Boenisch (2002) and Van Oostendorp (2002) in the Netherlands, Ammon (2000) in Germany, Poncini (2002) in Italy and Charles / Marschan-Piekkari (2002) in Finland, all confirm that English is in widespread use in specialist fields and that it is particularly prevalent in workplace discourse. This has obvious implications for intercultural communication, i.e. communication situations in which the interactants may use the same language or code, but may not share the same cultural background and therefore the same communication styles and related strategies. For example, where Dutch business people are in communication with business people from the other member states of the EU or beyond, although English may be used by all the interactants involved, each of them may in fact continue to use the communication style associated with

culture. In terms of intercultural communication in business contexts, it would therefore seem to be of particular relevance to investigate whether English has retained the status of a foreign language within a given culture, or if it has acquired the characteristics of an L2, not only referring to its own cultural norms, but also developing its own linguistic strategies. As a major economic player within the EU where there is already some evidence that English is moving towards the status of an L2 in some domains (see for example, Berns 1995; Graddol 1999; van Oostendorp 2002), the Netherlands provides us with a relevant example of a country with the potential to transition inwards from the expanding circle to the outer circle. In this chapter we will investigate this further with particular reference to the use of English in specialised contexts. We will refer to examples taken from within the Dutch business community and also to a number of recent experimental investigations looking at how the business community communicates with their stakeholders.

## 2. Background: Theoretical work on the status of English in the Netherlands

Writing in the mid-nineteen nineties, Crystal (1997) observes that the spread of English as a first or second language began around 1500 and was most rapid in the last fifty years of the twentieth century. He considers that the ascendancy of English, which was plausible by 1950, was unavoidable by 1997, such that by 1997 worldwide, there were almost two billion speakers of English with a reasonable language competence. Clearly this situation has continued to be the case into the twenty-first-century, and nowhere has this had more impact than in the Netherlands. Appel (1989), for instance, observes that by the nineteen seventies the translation of English film titles into Dutch was discontinued, although it had been common practice until that time, and furthermore by the mid-nineteen nineties, Loonen (1996) reports that not only were English books, newspapers and magazines commonplace, BBC1, BBC2, five other all-English

channels were available, and the local population were generally able to give directions effectively in English. This is confirmed by Blockmans (1998), who reports that in March 1998, 83% of the TV series shown on the Dutch national broadcasting service originated in inner circle (L1) countries alongside 62% of the films shown.

In the wider European context, Graddol (1999) refers to Labrie and Quell's (1997) analysis of the data collected in the Eurobarometer<sup>1</sup> survey, and concludes that English will be most likely to attain the status of an L2 in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. For instance, according to the study, 77% of Danish adults claimed that they could hold a conversation in English, as did 75% of the Swedish respondents and 71% of the Dutch. Despite some variations across the EU in terms of English language competence, e.g. only 13% of Spanish adults claimed that they could hold a conversation in English, Graddol reports that by 1995 there were 95 million English speakers of varying degrees across Europe alone. He comments: "Europe is rapidly integrating and reinventing itself as a multilingual area in which English plays an increasingly important role as a second language. In effect, it is becoming more like India as a geolinguistic space" (1999: 64). For Graddol, English within the EU, particularly in countries like the Netherlands, is already on the way to becoming an L2. Further support for this is provided by Quell (2002), in his report on the age differentiation in English language competence across the EU according to the 1994-Eurobarometer study. Whereas only 11% of respondents aged 55-plus claimed that they could speak English, as many as 41% of respondents in the age group 15 to 24 claimed that they could do so.

Graddol's view of the changing status of English within the EU, is similar to the position taken by Berns (1995). In her study, she refers back to Kachru's model (see Figure 1 above) classifying the speakers of English according to the status of English as an L1, L2 or foreign language and re-applies it in the European context. Figure 2,

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1 In this study, a representative population from across the European Union provided data on their foreign language competency and the foreign languages spoken in communication with the other member states. The study was conducted in 1994 using a sample of 13,029 respondents in the 12 countries which then made up the EU.

shows her distribution of the European countries according to the status of English, such that the UK and the Republic of Ireland are in the inner circle as native varieties of English, and Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain are in the expanding circle, as Berns' views the English used within these countries as a foreign language. In Berns' view, the outer circle remains empty, since English as an L2 according to Kachru's definition, does not occur in Europe. She maintains, however, that three of the European countries are in the process of developing English as an L2, i.e. Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. She therefore adapts Kachru's original model and adds a fourth possibility – the expanding/outer circle – to account for this (see Figure 2), referring to the three functional criteria provided by Kachru to determine whether a country falls in the outer circle, i.e. whether English is used in a variety of settings, whether English has its own norms and whether English is used in intranational communication. For all three of her expanding/outer circle countries, she maintains that English is in a process of acquiring the status of an L2 – although it has yet to do so definitively as in countries elsewhere, such as Singapore and Malaysia.

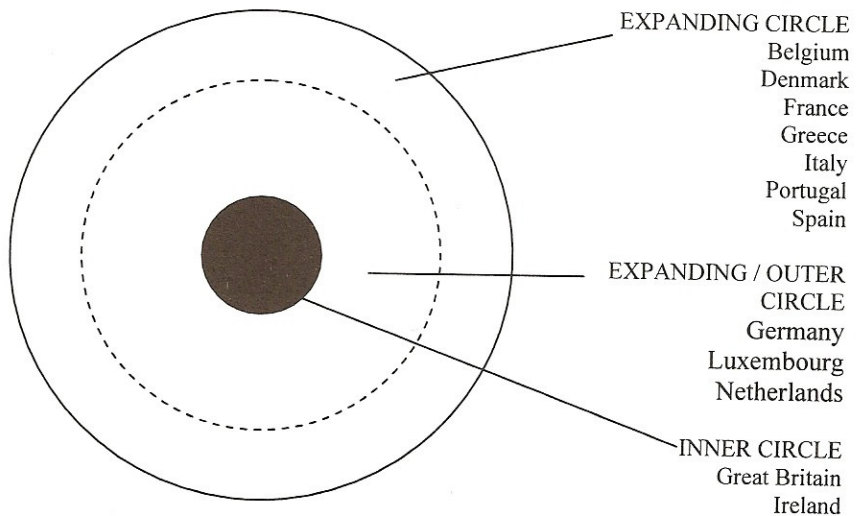


Figure 2. The concentric circles of European Englishes. (Berns 1995)

The accounts given by Graddol (1999) and Berns (1995) of the development of English within the EU use different criteria in their selection of L2-expanding/outer circle countries. Graddol refers to the percentage of people within a population who claim to be able to hold a conversation in English, and Berns refers to Kachru's criteria. As a result, different countries are accorded a different status. For instance, Graddol places Denmark in the potential L2 category whereas Berns places Denmark in the expanding circle (English as an FL). In contrast, Berns places Germany and Luxembourg in the expanding/outer circle on the way to L2 status, whereas Graddol does not include these countries as potential L2 candidates.<sup>2</sup> The exception to this is the Netherlands, where the criteria used by both Graddol and Berns predict that English in the Netherlands will attain the status of an L2. The following section will look in detail at the current status of English within the Netherlands to determine whether it has attained the status of an L2 in the decade since the studies by Berns and Graddol, or whether it has yet to do so.

### 3. English in the Netherlands: L2 or FL?

Kachru (1985) provides two general characteristics and three functional criteria that define whether a country can be placed in the outer circle, i.e. English as an L2. The first general characteristic is that English is only one of two or more codes in the linguistic repertoire. It is clear within Dutch society as a whole that English is considered as the major foreign language. Within the educational system, for instance, English is the only compulsory foreign language and English language studies begin in some cities from the age of five. Certain schools also provide a bilingual programme in Dutch/English, coupled with an International Baccalaureate, which is increasingly

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2 We have not included Sweden here in our discussion, since it was not a member of the EU at the time of Berns' study in the mid-nineteen nineties. It is not clear to us why it is included by Graddol in his account as a potential L2 country, since it was not part of the Eurobarometer data in 1994.

viewed by parents, employers and the children themselves, as the best option over and above the traditional Dutch language high school programme. In addition, in the higher education system, there are government incentives providing extra funding for institutions offering Bachelors and Masters Programmes in English – and by January 2003, there were a total of 660 programmes in English on offer (De Koning, 2003). At least for the higher educated sector of society, it seems that English is already seen as a feasible alternative to Dutch.

The increasing importance of English is also reflected in workplace discourse, at least in some organisational contexts and in some communicative genres. For example, all the corporations listed on the Dutch Stock Exchange have bilingual web-sites and they also publish their annual reports both in Dutch and English. Some corporations have even decided recently to communicate with their stakeholders exclusively in English, such that, for instance, Koninklijke Wessanen have an English-only web-site, and, at the time of writing in 2003, the major Dutch corporation Philips had decided to produce their annual report only in English. A further prominent example is the Dutch Railway system, which uses English to refer to a number of their departments, e.g. Dutch trains are currently repaired by Nedtrain Refurbishment & Overhaul. English is also widely used in other forms of external corporate communication. In TV commercials and print advertising, even those created to advertise traditionally Dutch corporations, English is used both on its own and in combination with Dutch (Gerritsen *et al.* 2000, Gerritsen 1995).

Research into the use of English in a variety of different promotional genres, including TV advertising on the Dutch broadcasting service (Channel 1), print advertising in the Dutch versions of *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle*, print advertising in the Dutch woman's magazine *Libelle* and print advertising for the teenage girls magazines *Girlz* and *Fancy*, in July and August 2003, revealed that more than one third of the commercials and advertisements were partly or completely in English.<sup>3</sup> Examples of the English used in

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3 In the analysis, a word was considered as English if it did not appear in the most recent edition of the Van Dale Dutch dictionary, the authoritative dictionary of the Dutch language equivalent to the OED.



these most recent advertising campaigns intended *only* for the Dutch market, are *Dare to wear... tasty underwear*, from an underwear retailer, *Hartman taste better than any other shoe*, for an exclusive shoe shop, and *I love rookworst*, for a sausage maker. And as in L1 contexts, a common characteristic of this type of language use, is that English is often used creatively in getting the message across to the Dutch consumer, such that *Bodylicious* is used in an advertising campaign for underwear, *Stayokay* is used for the Dutch youth hostel organization, and, *Railtender* was used to refer to the (now defunct) trolley on the Dutch Rail system that brought food and drink through the carriages. An excellent example of this creativity is provided by a recent campaign for a well-known Dutch temping agency, that used the phrase *Doont joe sink it is taiijm toe ket ben toe wurk uken* (Don't you think it is time to get back to work again), a phonetic rendition of a Dutch speakers' pronunciation in English. Similarly the Rover Corporation used the following, *Rhovâh 100. Whòtah kjuudh lithl khá'h!* to represent a phonetic rendition of how a Dutch speaker hears a 'posh' British accent. Examples of word play and language play such as these imply that advertisers are assuming that the average Dutch consumer has a high proficiency in English – high enough in any event to appreciate the play on words or on pronunciation. In the Rover example, the reader is first required to 'translate' the text into English and is then required to comprehend the text and the underlying association between the product and the variety of English referred to. Outside of the Dutch domestic market, in slogans and international advertising campaigns, there have also been a number of instances where English has not been translated into Dutch for the Dutch consumer in contrast to the other European markets. For example, *Let's make things better*, is used by Philips in the Netherlands, as opposed to *Faisons toujours mieux* in France, and the 2003 campaign from the MacDonalds corporation uses *I'm loving it* for the Netherlands and *Ich liebe es* for Germany (*De Volkskrant* 17/9/2003).

A similar situation is also the case for internal communication within Dutch multinational corporations, such that Hemmes (1994) reports that half the employees she interviewed at a Dutch multinational had to use English on a daily basis. Six years later, Nickerson (2000) reports on a similar multinational with similar

communication patterns, such that English was used extensively (together with Dutch) within the Dutch divisions of the Shell corporation at all levels in the hierarchy, across all positions regardless of the activities involved and across all forms of communication. The dominance of English is less clear for business-to-business communication between Dutch companies and their foreign business partners, since there is some evidence that Dutch business people also adapt to the first language of their business contact. In a large-scale study of European business, Vandermeeren (1999) shows for instance, that although English was widely used in cross-border communication, other languages also play an important role, e.g. 70 percent of the Dutch businesses she surveyed in fact corresponded in German with German business partners. Although other languages may continue to play a role in business-to-business communication with the German- French- and Spanish-speaking world, these languages are unlikely, however, to remain any other than foreign languages. In the Dutch business context, English is undoubtedly the most important foreign language, and it seems that it is used as an L2 in certain genres, e.g. promotional documents, and in some contexts, e.g. communication within multinational corporations, but perhaps not (yet) all. In other words, Kachru's first criterion for L2 status is met for much, but not all, Dutch business communication, and it will be interesting to see how the situation develops further in the future.

Kachru's second general characteristic of English as an L2, is that it is enshrined in the language policies of the country concerned, and indeed, the fact that English is used in the Netherlands is no longer a matter of national debate. As described above, English is the only compulsory foreign language and the need to provide education and publish in English is taken as a given. In the business world, there is a similar acceptance of English as an intrinsic and necessary part of the communication process, with a corresponding effect on internal language policies. For example, in the case of Shell's Amsterdam division, a senior management decision at the end of 1996 made the use of English as an official language mandatory within the division, despite a majority of Dutch employees (see Nickerson 1998 for further details), and again, as we have described above, other Dutch multinationals such as Philips, are increasingly producing promotional

documentation in English for the Dutch. Despite this widespread acceptance of the *need* for English, however, there is a continuing – and well-founded – debate on the *consequences* of adopting English. Current discussions on English in the Netherlands in general centre on the fact that the standard of English among Dutch native speakers may not be sufficient to communicate successfully. Likewise in the business world, the reality of opting for English is not entirely unproblematic, since not all employees may in fact be able to communicate effectively in English. Nickerson (2002), for example, reports on a discussion at Shell on whether official corporate documents should be produced in English or in Dutch, in which a Dutch employee replies that he (and his department) have no preference, but then goes on to say “But there are certainly employees within the group who neither speak or write English, who still have to be able to work with manuals and procedures (in English)” (2002: 31). This suggests that despite the best efforts of the language policy makers at both national and local corporate level, the situation may be somewhat complex and there may still be considerable obstacles before English achieves L2 status. As in the case of Kachru’s first general L2 characteristic, there is only partial evidence for English as an L2 and at least some suggestion that the adoption of English has not been universally successful. We will discuss this further in the section below about the comprehensibility of English and the attitude towards English in the Netherlands.

#### 4. Functional criteria

The three functional criteria that Kachru identifies to determine L2 status are as follows: (a) the extent to which English is used in socio-cultural, educational and business settings, (b) the development of language norms for English within a given culture, and (c) the use of English in intranational communication. As far as the first criterion is concerned, English clearly plays a role in educational settings in the Netherlands (see above) and it is also used in a number of socio-

cultural settings. For example, Dutch poets regularly publish their work in English, the Dutch contribution to the Eurovision Song Contest has been in English since 1999, and it is possible to get married in English in the Netherlands without a single word being spoken in Dutch. In business contexts, again as we have discussed, English is used across a variety of different genres and in a variety of different organisational contexts. In job advertisements, TV commercials and print advertising intended for the Dutch labour and consumer market, English is used in combination with Dutch, in the incorporation of single lexical items and English phrases into texts otherwise in Dutch and it is also used on its own in texts completely written in English (e.g. Gerritsen *et al.* 2000; Korzilius / van Meurs / Hermans 2002; Gerritsen 1995). In addition, in slogans, in annual general reports and in the genres used in internal communication within multinationals in the Netherlands, there are numerous instances of an English-only policy being followed in communication with Dutch readers. The consequence of this is that English is used in intranational communication, both in business contexts and in general.

In general, in the Netherlands, it seems clear that there is a trend towards an increasing use of English, particularly in promotional information targeted at young, and sometimes, very young, consumers. For example, in recent months, the Fox-Kids commercial television channel has run advertising campaigns with texts such as *Je bent trendy, hip en cool* (You are trendy, hip and cool) and *Je kan talk, talk, talk* (You can talk, talk, talk) during afternoon programming intended for children of six and upwards, and Dutch teenage magazines published in the summer of 2003 intended for a female readership aged 12 and upwards, with (pseudo-)English titles such as *Fancy* and *Girlz*, contain texts exemplified by fragments such as, *Voor supersofte en kissable lips...* (For super soft and kissable lips) and *Zo leuk en allemaal in 5.1 Dolby Digital ... Echte musthaves* (So nice and all available in 5.1 Dolby Digital ... Real must haves). Furthermore there is at least some evidence that English has begun to develop its own norms for use specifically (and only) within the Netherlands, not only in terms of grammar, e.g. *supersofte lips*, but also – and perhaps – most prevalently in terms of lexis and semantics, e.g. *pukkelface*, *colorlenzen*, *beautymiddag* (pimple face, colour lenses, beauty afternoon – in *Girlz* magazine), where a combination of Dutch and

English lexis as a compound noun, is common. Commentators such as Van Oostendorp (2002) advocate the conscious development of what has been referred to as Stonecoal English, characterised by the use of English lexis with a specific 'Dutch' meaning, e.g. *smoking* to refer to a tuxedo/dinner jacket, the use of Dutch sentence structure and the use of Dutch communication strategies such as the direct rather than hedged presentation of information. Anecdotal evidence from the programmes offered in English by the Dutch universities would suggest that Stonecoal English is indeed being used as an alternative to the norm-dependent approximation of native speaker varieties of English, so much so that the students at Delft university even have a WORST TEACHER AWARD, for the lecturer with the "worst" i.e. least native speaker norm-dependent, English.<sup>4</sup> However, most recent reports suggest that measures are being taken to counteract this. For instance, Groningen University introduced an examination in written and spoken English at the beginning of 2004, for two hundred lecturers in Economics and Business Studies who were scheduled to teach on the Masters programme in English (*NRC Handelsblad*, 14 January, 2004). The intention was to test their level of proficiency and if need be to provide them with a (compulsory) English course.<sup>5</sup>

The examples we have discussed above make clear that English in the Netherlands partly satisfies the two general criteria and three functional characteristics that Kachru proposes as necessary for membership of the outer circle, suggesting that English may well be on its way to becoming an L2. The predictions by Graddol (1999) and by Berns (1995) that English in the Netherlands will attain the status of an L2 in the future therefore appear to have some foundation. However, there are other criteria that we believe should also be taken into account in evaluating whether English is an L2 or an FL, and these are comprehensibility and attitude. Does, for example, the target group really understand the English used in TV advertising, or internal communication, or an annual general report, and what is their attitude

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4 In 2003, this was won by the lecturer who wrote "Those who only do one *gedeelte* get until 10.30" (*U-blad* 22 May 2003, Delft University).

5 See also <http://www.uk.rug.nl/archief/jaargang33/16/dezeweek-aank1.frames.htm>.

towards the use of English in a particular genre? It seems clear to us that comprehensibility is an important criterion for L2 status, and although the same may not hold strictly true for attitude towards the use of English, it is certainly the case that a negative attitude towards the use of English will have a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of the communication. Nowhere is this more likely to be felt than in the business context, where the image of an organization is unavoidably linked with the form of the messages through which it communicates with its stakeholders. It is to these two additional factors that we turn in the next sections.

#### 4.1. Comprehensibility

Very little research has been done into the comprehensibility of English for Dutch consumers. As we have discussed above, there is a generally held assumption that English is understood. Within the past decade, two studies have been carried out to investigate whether or not English is indeed understood by a Dutch target audience. Gerritsen (1996), for instance, investigated the comprehensibility of English in print advertising, and in a later study Gerritsen *et al.* (2000) looked at TV commercials. Both studies investigated comprehensibility in two related ways; respondents first had to say – or self-report – whether or not they thought they could understand a given text fragment, e.g. *Life time precision without a battery*, and they then had to give a global description of the meaning of the same text fragment.

The findings for both studies were very similar, such that the number of respondents who claimed to be able to translate a given fragment was always greater than the actual percentage who could give a convincing explanation of the meaning. For the printed advertisements, this was 65% versus 35% and for the TV commercials 82% versus 36%. Almost two thirds of the respondents were unable to give a good global description of the meaning of the English text fragments, including fundamental miscomprehensions such *splash proof* understood as *water proof* and *have all but disappeared* understood as *anything but disappeared*. A further significant finding in both studies was that younger and better-educated respondents did considerably better on the global description task than older lesser-

educated respondents, although there was no differentiation between the groups in the self-reporting task.<sup>6</sup> In short, the situation looks somewhat bleak in terms of comprehensibility; English is used in a myriad of different situations in promotional communication, but a large percentage of the target audience simply do not understand it.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.2. Attitude

Gerritsen (1996) and Gerritsen *et al.* (2000) also investigated the attitude of respondents to the use of English in print advertising and TV commercials respectively. Respondents were presented with a print or TV advertisement and were asked to evaluate the use of English using a five point semantic differential scale. Both studies indicated that respondents' attitude to English was not particularly positive. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 was positive and 5 was negative, respondents under the age of 25 scored 2.18 for print advertising and those over 45, 3.08, and for TV commercials, respondents under 20 scored 3.0 and those over 55, 3.7. Although younger respondents were significantly more positive than older respondents in both studies, the findings did not indicate that they were very positive towards the use of English. An interesting finding, considering the increasing use of English in promotional genres specifically targeted at younger consumers (see discussion above). In a similar study, Renkema, Vallen and Hoeken (2001) also looked at the use of English specifically related to image, investigating whether

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6 A 2003 study by the Dutch agency Multiscope looking at the use of international, i.e. non-Dutch language, web-sites versus national, i.e. Dutch language, web-sites, revealed that 84% of the respondents went to Dutch language sites and only 16% to international sites – providing further evidence for the over-estimation of English language proficiency by both consumers and organisations alike in the Netherlands (cf. [www.Multiscope.nl/persbericht-volledig](http://www.Multiscope.nl/persbericht-volledig), 30-11-2003).

7 A similar situation also appears to be the case in Germany. Research in June/July of 2003 by the German agency Endmark revealed that only 29% of a total of 1104 respondents were able to provide a correct meaning for the English fragments occurring in a set of twelve advertisements (cf. Endmark 2003).

or not there is a difference between English terms and their Dutch counterparts in consumer response to the image projected by an organization, the perceived-exclusiveness of the organization and evaluation of the text by respondents. Respondents representing two age groups, 19-25 and 45+, were presented with 3 shop names in Dutch and English versions, e.g. *Fashion and Style 2000* versus *Mode en Stijl 2000*, and 2 job advertisements Dutch and English versions, e.g. *Technician* versus *Technicus*, and were asked to evaluate the texts on a series of questions related to image, exclusiveness and the text itself. The findings of the study indicated that the use of English in shop names and in job advertisements has hardly any effect on how exclusive the company or the job was viewed, and it did not appear to lead to a better image for the company. In this case, there were no significant differences between the two age groups; both younger and older respondents think the English name is more attractive and more appealing, but this had no apparent effect on the company's image.

## 5. L2 or not?

There is some evidence that English may well be on its way to becoming an L2 in the Netherlands, at least according to the characteristics and criteria proposed by Kachru. English is used in a variety of different business genres, and it is a common feature of promotional business genres. Evidence from previous studies on print advertising and TV commercials indicates, however, that potential consumers consistently over-estimate their proficiency in English, and also that English is not in fact, well-understood by a large percentage of the target groups that organizations are intending to reach. In addition, although studies on the attitude of potential consumers to the use of English are as yet inconclusive, they do seem to indicate that at best, English has no apparent positive effect on consumer response, and at worst, that the inclusion of English may be viewed as negative. To date, many questions remain unanswered, not only in terms of the effects of using texts that are partly or completely written in English



with a majority Dutch audience, but also on the effects of introducing English across the board within the Dutch educational system, from kindergarten through university. Many people believe, for instance, that the widespread use of English, coupled with the lack of proficiency amongst Dutch teaching staff, will ultimately be detrimental to the quality of education provided, if only because Dutch teachers will only be able to provide pre-prepared classes and will not be able to interact with their students outside of that lesson plan (Appel 2003). These are clearly fruitful areas of investigation for the future.

## 6. The implications for intercultural communication

In this overview of the use of English in the Netherlands we have sought to shed light on what we believe to be a number of significant factors in intercultural encounters in English involving Dutch interactants, i.e. factors that we believe are likely to lead to success, or indeed failure, in intercultural communication. Firstly, the research we have reported on above gives a clear indication that the Dutch overestimate their ability to comprehend English along with the organizations that need to communicate with them, in intranational communication contexts. We see no reason to believe that this will not also be the case in international settings, suggesting that a dependence on English coupled with a consistent over-estimation of language proficiency may create the potential for communication breakdown in intercultural encounters. Secondly, although the development of syntactical and lexical norms in Dutch-English may as yet be in its infancy – despite the best efforts of commentators such as Van Oostendorp (2002) – we believe that the adoption (and adaptation) of English will only increase in the future and that this will ultimately lead to difficulties in intercultural encounters. We note, for example, the use of lexical items such as *beamer*, *annex* and *smoking* by Dutch speakers (in Dutch and in English) to refer to a *projector*, *appendix* and *tuxedo/dinner jacket* respectively. Thirdly, we believe that the

negative attitude towards the use of English in intranational communication that some studies have reported may also be of influence in intercultural encounters, not least because this negative attitude may largely be ignored. We would therefore welcome research looking at attitudes to the use of English in intercultural communication in business contexts, and the effect that this may have. Finally, we predict that the transfer of Dutch pragmatic norms directly into English, as advocated by Van Oostendorp (2002), implying, for instance, the use of a direct, non-hedged variety of English, may not contribute in a positive way to intercultural encounters, not least with those L1 speakers in the UK and the US who constitute major trading partners for the Dutch.

There is a widely held belief in the Netherlands that "English is a must". For the time being at least, the Dutch Railways will continue to *refurbish* and *overhaul* their trains, Dutch consumers will continue to weigh the benefits of *brushing* their teeth rather than using *The Sonic Toothbrush* and the Philips Corporation will most certainly continue to *make things better*. In this chapter we have attempted to show how this belief in the need for English has influenced society in general, how this has in turn been reflected in the genres used by business organizations to communicate with their Dutch stakeholders, and finally how a complex series of factors combine in determining whether or not the message gets across. We have drawn some tentative conclusions on the current status of English as an L2 in the Netherlands and on its future, and we have speculated on what this future might imply for intercultural encounters involving Dutch-English speakers. In the coming decades as the EU expands its borders to encompass more languages and cultures than ever before, we believe that many of the issues that we have raised here using the Netherlands as an example, will come to be of relevance in the wider European geolinguistic space.

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