

DOI: 10.1111/weng.12296

# English in the Netherlands: Functions, forms and attitudes. *Varieties of English around the World* 56

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2016. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, xv + 271

This book is a revised version of the author's University of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis. It is the 56th volume in the monograph series *Varieties of English around the world* (VEAW) that publishes texts and studies of world Englishes. Edwards' study is devoted to English in the Netherlands. Although English in the Netherlands does not have a colonial past, it has been suggested that it has almost gained Outer Circle status. On the basis of a rich picture of English in the Netherlands, the author tries to answer the research question: Should English used in the Netherlands be considered a second-language variety (ESL) or should it simply be regarded as learner English (EFL)?

Ch. 1 (1–22) provides an overview of the models used to classify world Englishes and describes a set of criteria that Mollin (2006) and Buschfield (2011) established 'by synthesizing the many relevant aspects discussed in previous literature' (19). Edwards uses these criteria to assess the status of English in the Netherlands focusing on functions of English, attitude towards English, and linguistic forms of English.

Ch. 2 (23–66) deals with the functions of English in the Netherlands. Edwards' framework suggests that English can be considered a second language if bilingualism is widespread and not restricted to the elite, and if it is used in domains that go beyond the international lingua franca domains. The author sketches a sociolinguistic profile of use and users of English in the Netherlands based on qualitative and quantitative research from herself and others, newspaper articles, anecdotes, personal communications, and so forth. Regarding functions, Edwards argues that English can be considered a second language in the Netherlands. The author observes that a sizeable—not only the elite—segment of the population may be considered bilingual, and societal bilingualism can be assumed since English quotes, advertisements, sign posts are often not translated. In domains such as education, business and the media, English would have an internal function that goes beyond the international lingua franca function.

It is a pleasure to read this well-written informative chapter, but I wonder whether the data justify the assignment of ESL status to English in the Netherlands. For example, the claims about bilingualism are based mostly on self-reporting, but it has been shown that English language proficiency of the Dutch is not as high as they themselves report. English fragments in ads are, for instance, often misunderstood (Gerritsen et al., 2010; Gerritsen, Van Meurs, Planken, & Korzilius, 2016). Regarding the use of English in different domains, no distinction is made between the use of some English words or phrases and the exclusive use of English. The former is not a real indication of the use of English in a domain, especially since the distinction between English words and English loanwords is not taken into account. Moreover, no distinction is made between active and passive use of English whereas the former is a greater indication of EFL status than the latter. Finally, some observations are rather idiosyncratic. For example, Edwards argues that inaugural lectures by newly appointed professors are so often in English that those in Dutch are regarded as somewhat radical (34).

Ch. 3 (67–104), *Attitudes towards English in the Netherlands and 'Dutch English'* addresses the following issues:

1. Where Dutch people learned English, only at school (EFL) or also in wider society (ESL) (73–74, 85–94).
2. When and why Dutch people use English and how they feel when doing so. Use for instrumental reasons is typical for EFL, whereas use for identity construction is for ESL (74–79, 85–94, 95).
3. Perceived competence. High competence of the elite only is an indication of EFL (79–81).

4. Orientation to an Inner Circle variety (indication for EFL) or accepting a local model (ESL) (81–83, 85–94, 97).
5. To extent to which English is necessary for full participation in Dutch society compared to Dutch. The more it is necessary, the more it is an indication for ESL status (83–94, 99–103).

The chapter does not discuss why these five areas are dealt with and what their relation is with attitudes. The question where people learn English (1) is, in my view, not clearly related to attitudes. The question when people speak English (2) is more related to domains, and reported competence (3) is more relevant to bilingualism. One would therefore expect the results of these areas to be discussed in ch. 2.

More than 2,000 respondents, recruited using a snowball sampling procedure, filled out an online questionnaire in Dutch. Although the questionnaire was aimed at all sectors of the Dutch population, three quarters of the respondents had at least a bachelor's degree. The results indicate ESL status for some areas: Respondents said that they had learned English in the classroom and in other domains such as media and work (1); Older people used English instrumentally, but younger people used it more for identity construction (2); High passive and active English proficiency would not be restricted to the elite (3). There are also indications of EFL status: respondents say they are oriented to 'native' models of English and not to a variety of Dutch English (4), and both English and Dutch are seen as important communication vehicles in the Netherlands (5).

Ch. 3 gives us important new insights into respondents' self-reports about attitudes, proficiency, and domain aspects of English in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, this chapter also shows a number of shortcomings apart from those mentioned above. The description of the research method is not as clear as it should be. For example, it is not always indicated which questions are used for which area of the study. Furthermore, the potential discrepancy between self-reports and actual behavior is not discussed. The significant effects of background variables such as age, sex, and occupation are hardly elaborated. Also, the question rises whether the results of this study do hold for the entire Dutch population, since three quarters of the respondents had a higher education. In this perspective, it is remarkable that the possibility of selective non-response is easily brushed aside by stating that this holds for all questionnaires (71).

Ch. 4 (105–156) explores the third criterion for determining whether English in the Netherlands has ESL or EFL status: does English in the Netherlands have widespread and systematic nativization of phonological, morpho-syntactic, lexical and pragmatic features? The author does not consider phonological aspects for various reasons (142). The chapter starts with an extensive overview of potential features of English in the Netherlands (106–113). Nativization of English in the Netherlands is for practical reasons (126) only studied on one particular linguistic feature, that is, the progressive aspect, in the corpus of Dutch English, collected by her using the same criteria as the International Corpus of English (ICE). The ICE criterion that formal education in English is required could not be applied in the Netherlands and was replaced with the criterion of at least the lower of the two secondary school diploma's (HAVO). As a consequence, the authors of the texts in the corpus of Dutch English are rather highly educated. Edwards compares the progressive aspect in her corpus with the one in the ICE corpora of American, British, Singapore and Indian English, to explore it in the whole ENL-ESL-EFL spectrum. The progressive aspect in Dutch English shows characteristics of both EFL and ESL varieties: progressive marking occurs most with frequent progressive verb types (EFL), but is not used in a narrower range of verb types than in ENL-varieties. The acceptability of different categories of progressives is also studied to find out whether the 'Dutch' progressive marking is due to its own norm developing or to insufficient proficiency. The same native speakers of Dutch as in ch. 3 were asked to assess the grammaticality of a number of sentences containing standard and non-standard progressives, for example, 'I am listening to a lot of music—especially rock and pop—lately.' If the respondent thought that the sentence was ungrammatical, he or she had to make a correction. An indication for EFL status is that there is a correlation between self-reported proficiency and acceptability of Dutch English progressives: the higher the self-reported proficiency, the lower the acceptability. An indication for ESL status is that many respondents did not correct Dutch English forms.

Although ch. 4 gives us insights into the potential nativization of English in the Netherlands and presents a nuanced quantitative picture of progressive marking, the data are too limited to answer the question whether nativization of English in the Netherlands occurs. It is understandable that Edwards has restricted herself to the analysis of only one feature, but in so doing no general conclusions can be drawn about nativization of English in the Netherlands. This

holds the more since in both the corpus study and the acceptability study higher educated Dutch people are overrepresented. As the author argues, it is plausible that respondents interpreted the question whether they found a sentence grammatically correct in another way than was intended, namely not whether they found it correct, but whether it was a correct 'native' English sentence (155). If respondents interpreted the instruction in this way, not correcting a sentence would not be an indication of 'Dutch' English, but of low English proficiency.

On the basis of the three criteria used to determine whether English in the Netherlands has EFL or ESL status, no conclusions can be drawn due to the heterogeneous results. According to Edwards, this could be due to the categorical nature and the dichotomous conceptualizations of the question, that is, EFL or ESL. In ch. 5 (157–190), Edwards discusses whether the status of English in the Netherlands can be better determined through a refined adaptation of Schneider's dynamic model (Schneider, 2007). To that end she adapts Schneider's model for postcolonial Englishes for Expanding Circle Englishes. She discusses three phases of Dutch English: foundation (1500–1945), exonormative stabilization (1945–1993), and nativization (1993–present) along with the four parameters Schneider uses to assign EFL or ESL status to a variety of English (historical/political background, identity constructions, sociolinguistic conditions, linguistic effects). Edwards concludes that English in the Netherlands has not yet reached ESL status and that Schneider's model needs refinement in order to be applicable to Expanding Circle Englishes. Ch. 5 presents a very detailed picture of English in the Netherlands. A main strength of ch. 5 is that the criteria used to determine the status of a variety are clearly stated.

This well-written book is definitely a contribution to the study of world Englishes. It gives a very rich picture of English in the Netherlands, problematizes the issue of assigning EFL or ESL status to English in non-postcolonial countries where English has become an important vehicle of communication, and shows areas for further model developing. Also, it shows that research in the world Englishes paradigm needs more scientific rigor. For example, it is not well argued why the status of English in the Netherlands is studied based on the three-part framework (19). Since these criteria are fundamental to the study, a more elaborated justification would be welcomed. Another aspect that needs elaboration in future models is a clearer definition of the criteria used. The criterion for EFL that English should be used internationally in various domains of everyday life (21) is vague. Does it concern active or passive use, or both? Is active use more important than passive use? Which domains are involved? Is the use in some domains more important than in others? This brings us to another area of improvement: the weighing of the various criteria with respect to each other. Is the function criterion pointing to ESL status of English in the Netherlands more important than the nativization criterion indexing EFL/ESL status or the other way around? It is the merit of Edwards (2016) that she does not only give us a rich picture of English in the Netherlands, but has also paved the way for developing a model to determine the status of English in Expanding Circle countries.

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