

Frans Hinskens, Johan Taeldeman (eds.)

*Language and Space:
An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation
Volume 3: Dutch*

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With more than 40 authors contributing, *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation. Volume 3: Dutch* edited by Frans Hinskens and Johan Taeldeman is a monumental work, whose aim is to give an overview of existing and ongoing research into the standard and non-standard varieties of Dutch. The book presents the historiography of the research field in question (Part I), the main dialect areas and regions, including the variations between and within them (Part II), some miscellaneous supra-segmental and less region-bound phenomena (Part III), and the dynamics in varieties of Dutch resulting from (language) contact (Part IV). We are limited by space (but not by language), so in addition to giving a general description of each of these parts, we will zoom in on only a few chosen chapters, offering words of praise and (constructive) criticism as well as advice for possible future reprints of the book.

Part I ("History of the Field"), which consists of 3 chapters (2-4), gives a detailed report on the history of dialectological research in the Low Countries: the reader is familiarized with how the field has developed from a period of total lack of interest in dialects (which the authors consider quite remarkable because the awareness of differences between certain dialects was actually quite large) through a negative attitude in the Enlightenment and growing interest in the Romantic period to diachronic and synchronic studies from the 19th century onwards. In Chapter 2, Taeldeman and Nieubaum depart from diachronic research into dialects and provide an overview of the first grammar books and glossaries focusing on the interest points of dialectical geography (the comments are mostly focused on works of Te Winkel and Kloeke, pioneers in this type of research). Then they go on to discuss synchronic research, making it clear that from the beginning Flanders

was more focused on synchronic research than was the Netherlands. Chapter 3, by Hinskens and Van Hout, concentrates on the latest developments in dialectal research in the Low Countries. The discussion of trends that nowadays deal with sociological aspects are limited to three, namely the social turn, the re-orientation of theoretical debates in linguistics and the improvements of recording equipment that comes along with the rise of digital research techniques. For reasons reaching far beyond the clear and to-the-point way in which it is written, Chapter 4, by Hinskens and Van Oostendorp, is the most exciting one as it considers all possible directions in which dialectal research can still evolve in the Low Countries, bringing to the fore a very much up-to-date aspect: what is the relationship between the need for digitization and our research goal.

This 'historical' part is rather focused on a reader who already has some background knowledge. In such a large book, one must obviously make choices, but if there ever were an opportunity to publish a customized edition, a few things could be clarified for less specialized readers. One such example could be the German tradition in dialectological research and the Marburger Schule (p. 14-15), whose work has provided much inspiration for dialectologists from the Low Countries. Another example is the description of research into functional and structural dialect loss, where first an overview (p. 40) of already existing research is given, followed by a general conclusion of which factors guarantee that a particular dialect feature can survive. The reader does not know which attributes of those dialects are studied.

Part II ("The major dialect regions of Dutch: linguistic structure, spectrum of variation and dynamics") is divided into 22 chapters (5-26). Chapter 5 does exactly what the title suggests: it presents a brief history of the Dutch language as a Germanic language, placing it in a geographical, political and social context, and it explains both the emergence and some problematic aspects of Flemish intermediate language. This explanation is important as it helps the reader better understand other chapters in Part II (especially 9-14 but also 15-16). Chapters 6-8 serve as a much needed theoretical and historical background for the subsequent discussion on the Dutch dialectal landscape and on variation and change in general, while Chapters 9-26 zoom in on the six dialect regions which are first presented and outlined in Chapter 7. Following a discernible pattern and allowing for a clear organisation, there are three chapters devoted to each group of dialects – one on phonetics and phonology, one on morphology and syntax, and one on recent developments.

As much as we understand the premise to adopt a wide scope, attributing dialects to a larger dialect area, and appreciate the organisational uniformity of Part II, we feel the reader, in addition to feeling confused at times, may miss out on some important details. Even though there is a map of regions and provinces on p. xx, it is not always obvious which areas the various dialect regions cover. Besides, the map does not cross-reference with (the content of or division provided in) Chapters 9-26. To exemplify, if a reader looks at the description of the Brabant dialects on p. 278 and the map on p. xx, it may not be clear whether the Brabant region includes only both Brabant-provinces (Noord-Brabant in the Netherlands and Vlaams-Brabant in Belgium) or also the province Antwerpen, which lies between the two aforementioned, nor to what extent the western part of the

Belgian province Limburg is covered. The same goes for other regions. Chapter 7, particularly the description on p. 138-139, does slightly help but the division/distribution still seems unclear. We feel a detailed map at the beginning of each first chapter devoted to a group of dialects would have done the trick here. Finally, by adopting a wide perspective, the authors sometimes fail to include variations that are typical of and important in/for specific regions. Examples could include the pronunciation of the adjective 'schoon' as 'skön', the use of 'als' instead of 'dan' in the comparative form or the possessive pronoun 'hullie' instead of 'hun', the use of phrases such as 'iets gèèr doen' instead of 'iets graag doen' (in the meaning 'to like doing something') or 'wòdde gij' instead of 'wilde jij'/'zou je willen' (in the meaning 'Did you want'/'you'd love that'), all common in an area in the south-eastern part of the Dutch province Noord-Brabant that includes towns like Helmond, Gemert and Beek en Donk.

However, these words of (constructive) criticism are not meant to downgrade the level of professionalism put into preparing Part II, nor are they supposed to suggest that the theories and examples presented in it are inadequate. Quite to the contrary, the authors give an account of the dialectal landscape of Flanders and most of the Netherlands which on the whole is comprehensive and well-researched.

Part III ("Supra-regional and regionally-unbound aspects") comprises 10 chapters (27-36) that deal with supra-regional patterns and geographical distribution of dialects and national varieties of Dutch in the Netherlands and Flanders. Three main issues emerge in this section, namely: dialectology and the theoretical issues thereof, methodological focus on data collection and measurements within the field, and the non-standard variety of contemporary Dutch known as informal Dutch or colloquial Dutch. In their contributions the authors first of all provide the reader with an (essentially critical) overview of the most relevant studies in the field (departing mainly from Tældeman and Weijnen), but, again, they also propose quite rich desiderata for future work. The sheer variety of topics discussed in this part reinforces the statement of Heringa and Narbonne that "Dutch dialects are undoubtedly among the most well-documented in the world" (p. 638). It is important to stress, however, that Belgian Dutch seems to come to the foreground as more stratified (than Netherlandic Dutch) when it comes to non-standard variations. The contributions include a detailed overview of supra-regional divergence in domains such as phonology, morphology and syntax (extending the research with prosody analysis on a supra-regional level seems to be an interesting conception), perceptual dialectology, where the authors give an insight into linguistic variation by non-linguists (or laymen as they are referred to in the chapter), dialectometry and attitude approach in the Low Countries. We feel it is praiseworthy that the section also provides the reader with modern data analysis, technological advances and new media (social media, websites) as potential (and becoming more prominent nowadays) data channels.

Whereas most of the contributors draw on available data and studies in the fields, some also present results of surveys conducted among native speakers of Dutch (both the standard variety and dialects) as well as databases. As a result, many of the chapters seem to be suitable for a non-linguist reader. Some, however, better serve linguists,

especially when they concern the analysis of dialects from theoretical perspectives, including sociolinguistics but also structuralist (Van Keymeulen) and generative (Bennis, van Oostendorp) approaches.

Chapters 28 and 32 seem to be particularly interesting for those who learn Dutch, also outside the Dutch-speaking area, as they discuss the stratification of Dutch within its Flemish and Netherlandic variants. In chapter 28 the authors give an overview of linguistic features typical for non-formal (colloquial) Dutch in the Low Countries as well as “deviations from the norm.” Colloquial Dutch is situated between base dialects on the one hand and standard language on the other hand. This division seems to be very accurate especially in relation to the position of Flemish interlanguage (*Vlaamse tussentaal*), which is considered as “larger and more sociolinguistically marked” (p. 549) and therefore more distinguished from the standard variant. Both variants are compared with reference to three points, i.e. grammar, sociolinguistic distribution and reception. The list of typical colloquial phenomena in Belgian and Netherlandic variants has not been exhaustively discussed, but it definitely provides the reader with a general overview of the most important variances from standard Dutch and therefore encourages the reader to go deeper into the subject. The only part that might make the reader a bit confused is the polemics on Polder Dutch (p. 547). We would like to refer those readers to work done by Jan Stroop, who coined the term in the late 1990s, and Irene Jacobi, who later refuted a number of his claims.

Part IV (“Dynamics of contact varieties of Dutch”) consists of 11 chapters (37-47) and focuses not only on ‘basic’ varieties of Dutch (e.g. Belgian Dutch) but also on socio- and ethnolects (e.g. Turkish and Moroccan Dutch) and its daughter languages (e.g. Afrikaans), which are all approached from the perspective of language contact. This part is probably particularly interesting for learners of Dutch abroad and can undoubtedly be used as a valuable resource by teachers of Dutch linguistics or the history of the Dutch language. It begins with a chapter on Belgian Dutch wherein the reader can be a little bit confused about which variety is meant by the author. Especially when he gives an explanation of the key terms: Flemish and Belgian. The author says that his overview on the differences between Belgian and Dutch Dutch is based on, among others, quality magazines, radio and television news and the language of highly educated speakers of Dutch. These situations and language users he considers “intended standard language” but he adds immediately that it does not necessarily have to be considered as standard language. He also mentions other names used in relation to the non-dialectal, supra-regional, national differences in the language used in Belgium and the Netherlands. ‘Belgian Dutch’ and ‘Dutch as spoken in Belgium’ can, of course, refer to the standard but also to *Vlaamse tussentaal*, Flemish in-between language. However, this term does not appear in this chapter. There is no reference made to the third part of the book, where Flemish in-between language is discussed as colloquial Belgian Dutch. This is followed by an overview of the phonetic, grammatical and lexical differences. Some of those lexical differences could be updated in the next edition of the book, as some terms have changed since the Netherlands now has a king instead of a queen: *Koningsdag* en *commissaris van de koning* (710 p.).

Among the chapters on other varieties, there are at least two that in our view deserve a lot of praise, namely 39 ("Ethnolects or Dutch") and 43 ("The Dutch Language in the USA"). Like the rest of the book they are very informative but what constitutes the added value in these chapters is the discussion of research (ROOTS respectively in Chapter 39 and study the standards in American Dutch in Chapter 43), illustrated with a number of examples. The reader may, however, get the slight impression that the chapters do not form a unity. This may partly be due to the final editing of the entire section and/or to the content of certain chapters. In chapter 37 ("Belgian Dutch", p. 701) and 39 ("Ethnolects or Dutch", p. 745), there are for example two different dates for when Suriname became an associated member of the Dutch Language Union. Another example considers the bibliography lists at the end of each chapter, in which one can notice that in some of them the titles in other languages than English are translated in English but in others they are not. This is especially the case in chapters 37 ("Belgian Dutch"), 42 ("Between Dutch and Indonesian: Dutch Colonial in Time and Space"), 44 ("Dutch in Suriname") and 47 ("Afrikaans"). On the other hand, in Chapter 46 ("Dutch Creole in the Caribbean"), in which several varieties are covered, the bibliography list is divided in such a way that each examined variety gets its own list. We feel a similar approach could (or should) have been taken in other chapters that cover more than one variety. Finally, one can see that the last chapter, on Afrikaans, is slightly different compared to the rest of Part IV in that it does not provide the reader with examples to explain the presented research to the extent that this is done in the other chapters.

Overall, despite its large size, this book turns out to be quite reader-friendly. But since this book, as we suspect, is read as individual chapters rather than as a whole, it could, or should, perhaps be made even more reader-friendly. To exemplify, even though they are sometimes mentioned in introductory section and even in ensuing chapters, it is not always clear what the abbreviations AND, ANKO, FAND, MAND, RND and SAND refer to or stand for, so we feel clear reference to the full list provided on pp. xviii and ix would be useful. Another example refers to references to other chapters of this book, which could be made more specific. For instance, when on p. 743 it says "as noted by De Kleine (this volume)", it would be better if the reader was told where exactly he or she should look. Also, if the publishers were planning a reprint, they could make some editorial changes. Sometimes there is no uniformity in the bibliographical references in the text when referring to the second and subsequent issue of a publication (e.g. p. 13: Goossens 1977², Weijnen 1966², p. 14: Goossens 1977², p. 15: Bach 1969³, Weijnen 1966², Goossens 1977²). This sometimes includes different page references that relate to more than one page, for example in: Taeldeman 2010: 367-69 (p. 65) and Dunn et al. 2011: 231-232 (p. 75) in the same chapter. Finally, the right page header on pp. 49, 51, 53, 55, 57 and 59 appears to contain an error: instead of the title of the chapter it contains the title of one of the subsections.

To sum up, one could easily argue that the book is too general and lacks details. In fact, different authors themselves admit to leaving out various aspects (for instance, in Chapter 6 it is stated that there is no compounding, derivation or lexical contrasting, and on p. 101 we can read that "... it is only possible to provide a very rough sketch of

the differentiations in question”), all for lack of space (which is quite ironic in a series entitled *Language and space*). We feel, however, that to a large extent this is justifiable and, in fact, justified since this book is only meant to be an overview. So if the reader feels the need to learn more about a particular issue/topic, he or she can use the extensive reference sections for a more in-depth analysis and/or the suggestions for further research offered by most authors.

Robertus de Louw
rdelouw@wa.amu.edu.pl

Małgorzata Szczypińska
info@vertalerpools.com

Katarzyna Wiercińska
kwiercinska@wa.amu.edu.pl

Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza