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FUNCTIONAL AND FACILITATING

A LOOK INTO THE PROMOTION AND STANDARDIZATION OF DUTCH AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN THE NETHERLANDS[1]

ABSTRACT   Dutch society is open and international-oriented. A long standing tradition of world trade has contributed to the English proficiency of Dutch citizens. This, however, brings challenges to the status of Dutch as the national official language in the Netherlands. This paper takes the framework of national language capacity building proposed by Wen Qiufang and inspects the Dutch language policy in official language promotion and standardization. Results of the research show that coming from other languages that undermines the position of Dutch as national official language is gradually increasing. The Dutch solution is to put facilitating measures in place and to develop functional tools to support language users and learners. This solution can be valuable for the building of European multilingual landscape with its facilitating feature.

Keywords: Dutch language policy, national language capacity, language policy planning, European multilingualism

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INTRODUCTION

The Dutch language with its 24 million users in the world holds the position of the official language in the Netherlands, Belgium, Aruba, Sint-Maarten, Curaçao, and Suriname. Two of them are European countries. Yet there is a major difference between studies on language policies in these two European countries in related literature. On the Belgian side, scholars have invested massive amounts of energy in various relevant aspects regarding the Flemish region.[2] This is, of course, a result of the multilingual nature of Belgium. At the same time, aside from historical studies into language policy in the Netherlands and its former colonies,[3] little scholarly attention has been paid to the current language policy implemented by the Dutch government.

With the Netherlands being an active player in the international trading arena, the English proficiency of the Dutch people is commonly seen as a must. On the other hand, immigration from countries such as Turkey and Morocco has been raising concern about possible language arrears for the second generation immigrant children. In this light, the Dutch language in the Netherlands is actually facing challenges, both on the front of upholding its position as the official language and ensuring that the language that is being used remains within the scope of the standard and does not deviate from it under pressure coming from other languages around it.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study aims to apply the framework designed by Wen Qiufang to inspect the current regulations in place to actively promote and standardize the Dutch language in the Netherlands as the national official language. Within the scope of national language capacity building, Wen proposed that the promotion and standardization efforts of a country can be assessed in three dimensions: policy strength, capacity for implementation, and performance evaluation. Policy strength shows whether a country possesses and has set in place a fully developed policy, detailing when and where the official language should be used and which standards should be met by the language being used. Capacity for implementation builds on policy strength and should reflect whether policy can be fully implemented. Performance evaluation completes the picture by looking into the actual effect of the said policy.[4] After the publication of Wen's article, this

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[2]   See for example: S. Delarue, J. De Caluwe, "Eliminating Social Inequality by Reinforcing Standard Language Ideology? Language Policy for Dutch in Flemish Schools", *Current Issues in Language Planning*, vol. 16, no. 1-2 (2015), pp. 8-25.

[3]   S. Paauw, "One Land, One Nation, One Language: An Analysis of Indonesia's National Language Policy", *University of Rochester Working Papers in the Language Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2009), pp. 2-16; G. Rutten, A. Krogull, B. Schoemaker, "Implementation and Acceptance of National Language Policy: The Case of Dutch (1750-1850)", *Language Policy*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2019), pp. 1-21.

[4]   Q. Wen, "Reexamining the Concept of 'National Language Capacity' – The Achievements of and

framework for language policy research has been employed by several scholars to look into language policies of several European countries, such as Great Britain,[5] Romania,[6] and Germany.[7] A series of studies on European countries applying the same framework would also offer research material for comparison between the European countries and constitute an overview of the European linguistic landscape with similar perspective.

The current study is built on Wen's three dimensions of policy study. The promotion policy is inspected first with an overview of legislation ensuring the official status of Dutch. The standardization policy is handled in the second part, illustrating the Dutch approach. The abovementioned three dimensions will be respectively applied to these two areas of language policy, aiming at delivering a general picture of how the current language policy on official language promotion and evaluation is contributing to the linguistic landscape in the Netherlands.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE PROMOTION

Dutch society is international-oriented and multicultural. The long lasting tradition of world exploration and international trade has left the Dutch people with an open and tolerant mentality in the eyes of expats in the Netherlands.[8] One may assume that, with its openness and free-thinking, it won't take much effort for Dutch people to substitute their own national language with a lingua franca such as English when the situation calls for it. That is indeed the case for the Dutch international enterprises. According to Van Onna and Jansen, English is still the most commonly used foreign language, followed closely by German.[9] Yet, there are challenges raised by powerful lingua francas and languages spoken by generations of immigrants, while the policy in place to promote Dutch as the national language remains quite 'soft.'

Policy Strength

The status of Dutch as the national official language is not guaranteed by the Dutch constitution, but by legislation in several key sectors. According to the General

Challenges on National Language Capacity Development in China in the Past 70 Years", *Journal of Xinjiang Normal University (Edition of Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, vol. 50, no. 5 (2019), pp. 57-67.

5   S. Pu, "Foreign Language Curriculum Reform in Primary and Secondary Schools in the UK: Revisiting the Notion of 'Scientificalness' of Foreign Language Education", *Foreign Language Education in China*, vol. 3, no. 4 (2020), pp. 11-17.

6   X. Dong, "International Expansion of Romanian Common Language from the Perspective of National Language Capacity", *Foreign Language Research* 2021, vol. 38, no. 1 (2021), pp. 42-48.

7   N. Ge, "The Characteristics of Foreign Language Education in German Primary and Secondary Schools and their Implications", *Foreign Language Education in China*, vol. 3, no. 3 (2020), pp. 18-25.

8   *Blik van buiten op de Nederlanders*, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, Den Haag 2019, p. 16.

9   B. Van Onna, C. Jansen, *Talen in Nederlandse Organisaties. Een Enquête*, in C. van den Brandt, M. van Mulken (eds.), *Bedrijfscommunicatie II. Een bundel voor Dick Springorum bij gelegenheid van zijn afscheid*, Nijmegen 2002, p. 185.

Administration Law (Algemene wet bestuursrecht) from 1992, the government agencies and its personnel are required to use Dutch in communication with Dutch citizens.[10] With this in mind, it is also relevant to note that there is exception to this requirement, namely, when the use of another language can better serve the purpose at hand and that the rights of a third party would not be harmed in a disproportionate way.[11] Aside from a manifestation of the open and tolerant Dutch mentality, it is also an excellent example to illustrate the 'soft' approach of the Dutch promotion policy.

Second, education legislation ranging from primary to higher education dictates that the education practice (and examinations) should be conducted in Dutch.[12] However, in each education phase, exceptions are made for various circumstances which can be summed up in two categories. One is to guarantee that students who come from a different cultural and linguistic background can be given the chance to gradually integrate into the all-Dutch learning environment.[13] The other is to facilitate foreign language learning or to promote an internationally oriented learning environment. For instance, the Higher education and scientific research law (Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek) stipulates that when the instructor is not a native Dutch speaker or that the use of a foreign language can better benefit the teaching practice, exceptions can be made.[14] Thanks to this soft policy in the education sector Dutch higher education enjoys a reputation for its open-minded and international-oriented spirit. Scholars and researchers from all over the world can settle in the Netherlands and continue their work in English without any extra headache. According to the most recent published yearly report, at the University of Maastricht, for example, the percentage of academic staff had continued to grow from 2017 to 2019, reaching 44% in 2019.[15] International students can find themselves in a friendly and open learning environment. Innovations are born out of this vital environment and therefore provide extra drive to the economic development. A win-win situation for the Dutch case.

One may argue that the Media law (Meidawet) should be seen as the softest legislation of all that concerns official language promotion. Of all the air time of the public broadcasting system, no less than 50% should be occupied by programs in Dutch or Friesian.[16] With commercial broadcasting channels, the requirement is even lower:

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[10]   *Algemene wet bestuursrecht*, Rijksoverheid, Den Haag 1992, art. 2.6.1.

[11]   Ibid., art. 2.6.2.

[12]   *Wet op het voortgezet onderwijs,* Rijksoverheid, Den Haag 1963, art. 6a; *Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, Rijksoverheid, Den Haag 1992, art. 7.2; *Wet op het primair onderwijs*, Rijksoverheid, Den Haag 1981, art. 9.

[13]   *Wet op het voortgezet...*, art. 6c.

[14]   *Wet op het hoger...*, art. 7.2b, 7.2c.

[15]   Feiten en cijfer, Maastricht Universiteit, at https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/nl/over-de-um/organisatie/feiten-cijfers, 20 May 2021.

[16]   Friesian is the language that holds the position of common language in the province Friesland in the Netherlands. Due to the limited geographical use of this tongue, the article will not go further with a relevant policy analysis.

40%.[17] Policy in this area provides a unique balance for the promotion of the national language and a language-rich environment. Programs or other media contents made in a foreign language are often broadcast only with Dutch subtitles, without Dutch voice-over. This contributes, to some extent, to the high English proficiency of the younger Dutch generation.

All in all, this promotion policy matrix shows that the Dutch policy on the official language appears to be moderate. Combined with the fact that the official spelling of Dutch is only compulsory for government agencies and the public education sector,[18] there is also no punishment stipulated by law to enforce these regulations. This policy design requires the government to lead by example, education to function as a fertile ground, and media to create a language-rich environment. The strength generated by this policy pattern is quite 'soft,' especially when compared with Belgium. There, the official status of Dutch is ensured by the Belgian constitution. Moreover, the use of Dutch in business organizations within the Flemish region (i.e., the Dutch speaking region) is also stipulated by law,[19] whereas the same sector is left with no regulations in the Netherlands.

Capacity for Implementation

While the promotion policy for Dutch as the national official language appears to be 'soft,' it is the question of whether the implementation of it can provide enough drive for it. Capacity for implementation calls for practicality of the policy in place. The Dutch case can be analyzed on two fronts. Citizens who grow up in a Dutch speaking environment usually require no further encouragement to learn and use the language. It is those that have immigrated to the country and those who are growing up in another linguistic background that need such support.

Regulations are put in place to meet such a demand. First, it is required that those who have already obtained a residence permit and wish to apply for the Dutch nationality obtain a Certificate of Dutch as Foreign Language (CNaVT) on A2 level at the lowest. Any diploma or certificate of other kind that suggests the same language proficiency is also recognized. Second, exceptions are made in education legislation, as mentioned above. To be more specific, Secondary education law (Wet op het voortgezet onderwijs) stipulates that students who fall behind on Dutch proficiency can be given specially designed programs on the basis of the languages these students are more familiar with to improve their Dutch language skills. The two above-mentioned areas together can ensure that families with other cultural and linguistic backgrounds can better integrate into the Dutch society and that Dutch can become the language used in their social life in a more natural way. Yet, whether this policy set combined with facilitating practicing ability is enough to secure the status of Dutch in the open and internationally oriented society needs to be proven by actual data.

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[17]   *Mediawet*, Rijksoverheid, Den Haag 2008, art. 2.122, 3.24.

[18]   *Spellingwet*, Rijksoverheid, Den Haag 2005, art. 2.

[19]   *Wet taalgebruik in bestuurszaken*, Federale overheid, Brussel 1996, art. 1.

Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation provides such data. Since the 'soft' regulation of the Netherlands only ensures the status of Dutch by stipulating its use in the four key sectors and does not penalize instances where the regulation is not lived up to, it is important to see whether this 'soft' approach can lead to a firm position of Dutch as the official language among the inhabitants of the Netherlands.

The European Language Monitor (ELM) is based on recurrent questionnaires that deliver data about official language regulations and their implementation of European countries. Data collection is organized by member institutions of the European Federation of National Institutions for Language. In the Dutch case, this is the Dutch Language Union (De Nederlandse Taalunie).[20] The most recent edition of the European Language Monitor from 2019 (ELM4) shows that over 75% percent of participants recognize Dutch as the only national official language.[21]. Aside from Dutch, 5% of participants in this research are of the opinion that Frisian, Papiamento, and English are also official languages, but are used only regionally.[22] Yet, this is only the case for Frisian. Papiamento (a creole language spoken mainly in the Dutch Caribbean) and English have absolutely no legal foundation when it comes to official status either on national or regional level. In an earlier edition (ELM3), Dutch was being listed as the only official language of the Netherlands based on the data collected.[23] Between the two editions of ELM, a possible trend can be observed that the official status of Dutch as the national language has actually been gradually declining over the years. Although the percentage of people considering Dutch the official language remains the same, there emerged three other languages that also enjoy 'official status' in people's eyes. Again, this view is not supported by law, yet it shows that the official status of Dutch is indeed under some pressure.

This suggested trend is confirmed by data collected within the Dutch language region. The Dutch Language Union launched a research project 'Status of Dutch' (*Staat van het Nederlands*) which aims at painting a general picture of the actual language environment people in the Netherlands find themselves in by means of an online survey and collecting existing data. The first round was carried out in 2016, two further rounds of the survey and data collection were held in 2018 and 2020, respectively. For each round, more than 3,000 Dutch participants took part in answering the online survey about their language preference in various aspects of their daily life. While the final reporting from the third round in 2020 is still pending, the results from the first two rounds provided data that are sufficient to confirm the trend that transpires from

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[20] The rounds of surveys are carried out by the member institutions. Thus, the demographic information of the participants is not available in the database of elm.

[21] *Elm4*, at https://juniper.nytud.hu/elm4/browse#, data selection: the Netherlands, questions 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3, 7 May 2021.

[22] Ibid.

[23] *Elm3*, at http://clara.nytud.hu/elm3/_v2/index.php/query, filter setting: Nederland, questions 1.1 and 1.2, 7 May 2021.

the two ELM reports. According to the final report of the second round published in 2019, around 85.2% of the respondents participating in this research reported that they only use Dutch in their direct environment.[24] In the 2017 report, it was 88.8%.[25] While the research also includes questions targeting people who use both Dutch and English on a daily basis, the difference between the results from the two round is not significant for all participants: 4.2% in 2018[26] and 3.9% in 2016.[27] It is also important to note that the results do show a clearer preference of young participants to use English besides Dutch or English only in their direct environment when compared to older respondents.[28] This may suggest that, with time, a growing number of Dutch people will be using English more extensively in their daily life. Although the increase in 2018 is not yet significant compared to 2016, it may become so in the 2020 round. Further research will tell.

Besides language use in daily life, language choice in the working environment is also inspected. While the 2018 round is mainly focused on the linguistic situation in Suriname, where Dutch is also the official language, the 2016 round provided data in this respect. Almost 80% of the participants reported they only use Dutch for internal communication at their workplace. This is confirmed by a report from the research project 'Thinking of the Netherlands' (*Denkend aan Nederland*) initiated by the Dutch Societal and Cultural Planning Office (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau). Report shows that the Dutch prefer to use the Dutch language in informal situations, even when there is a foreign employee in their midst who knows for sure that their Dutch colleagues are fluent in English.[29] The 'Status of Dutch' research is conducted mainly among Dutch nationals, while the 'Thinking of the Netherlands' research is more focused on the impression of foreign employees living in the Netherlands about the Dutch people. The answers from both sides lead the same conclusion: at workplaces in the Netherlands, Dutch is used far more often than English. Despite the fact that the majority of Dutch people strongly believe their country benefits from a multicultural society,[30] they are still prone to use their own language in their direct social and working environment. The question whether the next generation will stay this way remains open, especially when we combine these results with the fact that the young Dutch are gradually using more English in their daily life.

As far as official language promotion is concerned, Dutch has a relatively firm position as the official language. Yet, due to the fact that the policy strength in this area is quite 'soft' and that performance evaluations show possible future threat coming from

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[24] K. Rys et al., *Over de taalkeuzes van Surinamers in het dagelijks leven en meer over die van Nederlanders en Vlamingen* 2019, p. 29.

[25] K. Rys et al., *Over de taalkeuzes van Nederlanders...*, p. 17.

[26] K. Rys et al., *Over de taalkeuzes van Surinamers...*, p. 29.

[27] K. Rys et al., *Over de taalkeuzes van Nederlanders...*, p. 17.

[28] K. Rys et al., *Over de taalkeuzes van Surinamers...*, p. 272.

[29] *Blik van buiten...*, pp. 23-24.

[30] L. Mulder, A. Doedens, Y. Kortlever, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, Amsterdam 2008, p. 266.

English, measures should be taken to limit the impact of it. In the next section, whether this potential threat can be confronted by the standardization policy will be discussed.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION

Since the promotion policy of Dutch appears to be 'soft' in nature and evaluation also shows that the official language is indeed under some pressure, the standardization policy of Dutch may be a counter-balance for it is very practically oriented. According to UNESCO, one of the parameters to assess the vitality of a language is to inspect whether this language has sufficient documentation, as in *comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts*.[31] It can be inferred that documentation of these standards can lead to a greater use of the language and ultimately contribute to its vitality. For Dutch, it does not stop at comprehensive documentation. Easy-to-use tools are also developed to facilitate this process further. This section offers an overview of the Dutch standardization policy and the functional tools it generated.

The Dutch Language Union is the policy organization that supports the development of the Dutch language. It was founded by the Dutch and Belgian government in 1980. Surinam joined it later while Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint-Maarten work with the Union now under Framework agreement.[32] It is essential to note that the policy this research is focusing on is not only of Dutch design, but a result of a successful cooperation between a group of countries where the Dutch language holds an official status.

Before painting a general picture of the policy standardizing the Dutch language in the Netherlands, it is necessary to clarify what the term 'standard Dutch' represents. The Dutch Language Union sees standard Dutch as the language that is commonly used during exchanges between people in an environment that is not their immediate personal space (e.g., in secondary relations).[33] Two points can be inferred from this definition. First, that the definition of standard Dutch is accompanied by legislation regarding the promotion of Dutch as the official language since the interaction between citizen and government agencies, education practice, and various media contents construct together this 'secondary environment.' The second point is that in the eyes of Dutch Language Union, standard Dutch should be actively practiced for it to remain vital as the official language.[34] This is the very foundation of the design of the Dutch standardization policy. The set of guidelines and tools that will be analyzed below all derive from these principles as they aim to support and facilitate active language use so that the vitality of Dutch can be safeguarded.

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[31] Language Vitality and Endangerment, International Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages, UNESCO, Paris 2003, p. 17.

[32] *Wie we zijn*, de Taalunie, at https://taalunie.org/over-de-taalunie-/wie-wij-zijn, 20 May 2021.

[33] *Wat is standaardtaal? (algemeen)*, at https://taaladvies.net/taal/advies/tekst/85/, 7 May 2021.

[34] K. Rys et al., *Over de taalkeuzes van Nederlanders...*, p. 7.

Among its five major responsibilities, promoting the use of standard Dutch is listed as top priority of the Dutch Language Union. Four major fields of standardization comprise: spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and practical advice.

Policy Strength

To make up for the 'soft' promotion policy concerning the use of the language, the Dutch standardization policy mainly focuses on facilitating the standardization process. The current standardization policy in place is guaranteed by the Spelling law (Spellingwet) from 2005 and, similar to the promotion policy on the use of the language, has a limited scope of implementation, since it only stipulates the spelling rules set by the Dutch Language Union should be followed by government agencies and the public education sector.[35] Without compliance required by law, it is through functional tools and platforms that the standardization policy is generating strength.

The official spelling guide of Dutch is named *Leidraad*, first published by the Dutch government in 1804. It sets the rules regarding spelling for vowels and consonants, capitalization, punctuation, accent in pronunciation, etc. What makes the spelling rules of Dutch worth looking into is the fact that when they were first published, they were accompanied by a complete list of Dutch words, consisting of both words that fit the spelling rule and words for which exception to the spelling rules applies (for instance, loan words from other languages). After the first edition, the Dutch spelling rules were updated as the language kept evolving, each new edition accompanied by a new version of the word list. The establishment of the Dutch Language Union and technical developments brought new possibilities for the standardization. In 1995, the word list is officially called *Woordenlijst Nederlandse taal*, or *the Dutch language word list*. During the last ten years, both the spelling rules and the word list went through a major update and have been enriched with new words and their lexical information.

Both the spelling rules and word list are made available in print and online versions. The latest print version of *Het Groene Boekje* (The Green Book) was published in 2015. This *Green Book* is one of the most important reference sources for Dutch language users, both native speakers and foreign learners.

In the perspective of the analytical frame, the *Leidraad* can only generate limited policy strength since it is only binding for government agencies and the public education sector.[36] Employees of the above-mentioned agencies and institutions must regulate their own language use according to rules set by this single policy. More importantly, this would only happen when they choose to use Dutch as the medium of communication. This choice is offered by the 'soft' promotion policy. The same choice is also given to the media sector, with no restriction to the Dutch being used by law. In other areas of society, citizens are not even required by law to use Dutch, let alone to use the standardized language. In short, there is no forcing of a policy of using Dutch,

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[35] *Spellingwet…*, opschrift.

[36] *Spellingwet…*, art. 2.

but should people choose to use Dutch, their linguistic practice is going be facilitated by various functional tools.

That is most possibly why the Dutch standardization policy in general is more focused on developing facilitating tools that can support language users and learners in need of solutions to their questions at hand. Through these functional tools, the Dutch standardization policy can compensate the strength it lacks due to its limited areas of mandatory application. This will be discussed in the capacity for implementation section.

Capacity for Implementation

This dimension focuses on whether the policy in place can be successfully applied in practice. The spelling rule (*Leidraad*) is the only policy in standardization required by law. Based on this policy, a series of tools were developed.

The word list website (www.woordenlijst.org) is closely related to the *Leidraad* and het *Groene Boekje*. On this website, one can easily search through all the Dutch words which spelling and lexical information have been pre-approved by the authority on standard Dutch. Instead of having to buy and carry around a heavy book, the website provides its user with free and trustworthy information on an instant basis.

It is obvious that while *Leideraad* is the most authoritative reference work for any issue regarding the spelling and the lexical nature of the words, language users and learners cannot and mostly would not refer to general rules when facing specific questions. This makes the word list the easiest and handiest tool for anyone interested in writing in standard Dutch. It is of important to have rules in place to standardize the official language, but it is even more important to make sure that these rules are lived up to by providing functional tools.

The online version of the spelling rules and word list are available free of charge for all and easy to access from any device connected to the internet. In the digital age, it is not only the monetary cost that one has to consider, but also time and effort it takes to obtain information. The easy access and quick answer that the word list website provides can make up for the limited strength generated by the spelling rules since it lacks mandatory power in sectors other than government administration and public education.

Another device has been put in place to facilitate the standardization of spelling, namely the *Keurmerk* (Mark of approval). Language users and learners can turn to the print version or digital version of the standard spelling when they are writing in Dutch, yet it is also important to make sure that the words they are exposed to in written materials live up to the rules. Publications, dictionaries, websites, and most importantly, teaching materials that are certified by the Dutch Language Union on their correct spelling can display the official Mark of approval (figure 1) in the publication or webpage. Despite the fact that people can easily turn to the word list with their daily spelling questions, it is unrealistic to achieve the goal of promoting standard spelling solely owing to this single tool. One must constantly be exposed to high quality texts in order

for the standard rules to be absorbed and then applied when producing own messages. This is where wider implementation of the spelling rules comes from. The cost for selecting trustworthy material by language users and learners is further reduced, while the Dutch Language Union only has to vet existing printing and online content to ensure that the spelling rules are upheld.

Fig. 1. *Officiële Spelling Taalunie* mark of approval for official spelling

The Dutch word list maintained by the Dutch Language Union is not a dictionary because it only provides lexical information such as accent, word class, and plural form. Correct use of language is not limited to the words being written correctly but also used in a correct manner. This is what the *Algemeen Nederlands Woordenboek* (General Dutch Dictionary) can contribute to the language standardization policy implementation capacity. Like in most countries, the publication of dictionaries, monolingual or multilingual, is mainly a commercial endeavor. Yet it is notable for the Dutch language to have an online monolingual dictionary that is both free of charge and trustworthy.

The General Dutch Dictionary is a corpus-based digital dictionary of contemporary Dutch.[37] First, material in the ANW-Corpus, which is driving the dictionary, is largely generated from newspaper, published works, and the existing corpus. This provides safeguard that the lexical information and definition being included in the General Dutch Dictionary reflect how people use this particular word in the actual language environment. As Sinclair emphasized, a dictionary should be *a device through which the user will observe the living language*.[38] It is of utmost importance for a dictionary to be trustworthy; that the description of lexical items and the examples provided are in accordance with the language reality. The texts in the ANW-Corpus come mostly from high quality publications so that the realistic side of the language material can be guaranteed. In view of the fact that the Dutch Language Union is the policy organization responsible for the standardization of the Dutch language, this dictionary can support language users and learners and offer them trustworthy information. While their questions are provided with answers, the language they will be producing gets standardized. Once again, it's the facilitating tool that provides the standardizing policy with more implementation possibilities.

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[37] F. Moerdijk, "Het Algemeen Nederlands Woordenboek (ANW)", *Nederlandse Taalkunde*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2004), pp. 175-182.

[38] J. Sinclair, "The Dictionary of the Future", *Library Review*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1987), pp. 268-278.

Other fields of language standardization are not mandatory by nature and value the importance of developing functional and facilitating tools even more. The standard grammar of the Dutch language is *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* (General Dutch Grammar), often referred to as ANS. The idea of having a standardized Dutch grammar dates back to the 1960s. It was a time when teaching staff who gave courses in Dutch to non-native learners as well as Dutch journalists and civil servants raised the concern for clear and practical grammar rules.[39] In 1976, researchers from the Netherlands and the Flemish region in Belgium began working on the first edition of ANS. It wasn't until 1984 that this first edition was published. Soon after that, a revised version was put on schedule and finally published in 1997. Although numerous scholars put their minds to make these two editions of Dutch grammar, yet their public impact has mostly been limited to academic methodological discussions and coverage in the media.[40] To promote ANS further as standardization policy, the Dutch Language Union and Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen in the Netherlands joined forces to develop its digital version: E-ANS. This online version of the standard Dutch grammar has been available since 2002 and provides all the information contained in the print version, enriched with advanced search options.

The official grammar is a crucial component to language standardization. Yet it is often the least favorite part of language learning for native and non-native speakers alike. An electronic version provides somewhat more convenient solution to bulky and uninviting grammar books. More importantly, the addition of a searchable grammar can significantly lighten the effort of finding answers to specific questions. Furthermore, with language evolving constantly, a digital version makes it possible for the grammatical rules to be updated constantly. After first being launched in 2002, the E-ANS has undergone two major revisions, providing standard rules for emerging language phenomena.

The last field in the standardization policy implementation is the *Taaladvies* website (Language Advice website). Even with an electronic version of the complete grammar rules, it is still not as convenient as a 'language coach' that can provide answers to questions regarding specific matters. The Language Advice website fills this gap. In the question-and-answer format, one can easily find the solution to the most common questions in language use. Same as other practical tools, it is an open access website. All suggestions posted are provided by professional linguists, sometimes even designers of the standardization policies, making these practical tips trustworthy to the utmost. When facing a specific question, a language user or learner only has to open the webpage or simply type the question in a search engine to find authoritative answers and suggestions. The functional feature of this facilitating tool needs no further explaining.

But it is important to note that, although almost all standardization implementation aspects are equipped with functional tools to facilitate the standardization process,

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[39]   *Korte ontstaansgeschiedenis van de ANS*, at http://ans.ruhosting.nl/ansboek/index.html, 7 May 2021.

[40]   *De receptie van de eerste druk van de ANS*, at http://ans.ruhosting.nl/ansboek/#Receptie, 7 May 2021.

none of them is being taken to the next generation of portable devices, e.g., mobile applications. While webpage in combination with search engines can be quite convenient, a click on the smartphone screen may be even more functional and handy.

Performance Evaluation

Evaluation of the standardization performance needs data that show the actual effect of the policy in place. On this front, quite little has been done to quantitatively inspect how the functional and facilitating tools are actually helping people with respect to language standardization. The Dutch Language Union launched a research in Dutch language education in secondary education. Yet this research mainly focuses on how the education took place and how different groups (adults, students, and teachers) viewed Dutch language education.[41] Little attention has been devoted to the effect of language standardization policy.

In the other field where using standard language is compulsory, the 'Directly Clear' campaign (*Direct duidelijk*) provides some insight into the performance of the standardization policy. This campaign is an initiative brought by the Dutch Language Union in cooperation with the Dutch Ministry of State Affairs and Kingdom Relations (het ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties). It aims at helping government agencies to communicate in a clearer way so that the interaction between administrators and citizens can be further facilitated. Unfortunately, the focus of this campaign is also not on whether standard language is being used, but whether meaningful communication is being conducted.

Unlike performance evaluation in official language promotion, the field of standardization of the Dutch language could use more targeted research to show whether the supportive and facilitating tools in place can indeed contribute more to the use of Dutch than merely having comprehensively documented language standards.

In summary, the promotion policy of the Dutch language appears to be 'soft' in nature. This article argues that this is compensated by the distinctive functional character of the standardization policy so that language users are encouraged to utilize these facilitating tools when in need. This may come in handy in the context of facilitating foreign language learning in European countries. According to the European Council, it is important to [e]*xplore ways of increasing the attractiveness of, and ensuring greater commitment towards, language learning, including through the use of ICT and Open Educational Resources*.[42] Many of the abovementioned standardization resources in other European languages are already available in printed or digital forms. It only takes simple design and developing effort to translate them to functional tools. The study has shown that *more efficient and less time-consuming* tools could further facilitate the language

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[41] "Feiten, cijfers en meningen over het onderwijs Nederlands in Suriname, Nederland en Vlaanderen?", *Taalpeilonderzoek*, Nederlandse Taalunie 2007.

[42] European Council, *Council Conclusions on Multilingualism and the Development of Language Competences*, Brussels 2014, p. 4.

learning process of adults acquiring additional languages.[43] Promoting foreign language learning with language courses can only advance learners so far. Their active use of these foreign languages, facilitated by functional and easily accessible tools, can contribute to the European multilingual landscape.

CONCLUSION

The 'soft' promotion policy for Dutch as the national official language is facing threat posed by English as upcoming language of choice of the young generation. This threat is met with functional and supportive language tools to facilitate the standardization of Dutch and with other facilitating measures to promote the knowledge of Dutch among non-native speakers. These measures may have a positive effect on the extent of the use of Dutch by people who acquire it in childhood or learn it in later life.

The Dutch case can be of reference for the European multilingual landscape in two ways. First of all, when it comes to official language promotion, many European countries are facing the challenges presented by other languages spoken by immigrants as well as by lingua francas such as English. Introducing new legislation and implementing new rules are only part of the solution. Creating a fertile ground for language learning could contribute to this integration process. On the other hand, European multilingual policy encourages the learning of two non-native languages. As knowledge of the language is a key to mutual understanding and familiarizing oneself with other cultures, convenient and easily accessible tools should be developed on the basis of the existing resources to facilitate the learning process of foreign languages.

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[43]   V. Dmitrenko, "Language Learning Strategies of Multilingual Adults Learning Additional Languages", *International Journal of Multilingualism*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2017), p. 19.

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