

The Acculturation of Dutch Immigrants in the USA: A Linguist's View¹

Jaap van Marle, Open Universiteit Nederland,
Heerlen, The Netherlands

Introduction

In the oral presentation of her paper "Dutch Reformed Worldview and Agricultural Communities in the Midwest" (Curry 2000) at the conference in honor of Bob Swierenga at Hope College in June 2000, Janel Curry raised the question of which type of immigration, Protestant or the Roman Catholic, represents the 'normal case'? Her answer the Roman Catholic type of immigration - caused some surprise among the audience. In its turn, this reaction is quite expected, of course, since it is the Protestant immigration which has always received much more attention. That is, in studying the Dutch immigration to the US it is the Protestant rather than the Roman Catholic migration that has received concentrated examination, although there are notable exceptions. As such, this particular interest in the Protestant immigration is quite understandable. First, it is the Protestant migration which has resulted in settlements, which, to this very day, exhibit a 'typically Dutch' character. Second, it is the Protestant immigration which is intimately linked to the history of Protestantism in the Netherlands. However, this overwhelming interest in the Protestant immigration has as one of its side effects that the unique character of this type of immigration has faded somewhat into the background. In short, for many students of the Dutch immigration to the US, the Protestant migration has become the normal type of immigration, which it is not.

In this paper I will discuss the Protestant immigration, taking language as a starting point. My central claim is that from a linguistic point of view it is very clear that the Roman Catholic type of immigration represents the normal case, whereas the Protestant type of immigration is the exception.

Language maintenance: some general comments

As is well known, immigrant groups may differ considerably in their inclination to cling to their ethnic language. In some cases it is the first generation of immigrants who switch to the language of the new country, whereas other groups maintain their language for many generations. In the case of Dutch immigrants it is not hard to find examples of both experiences. Many of the post-World War II Dutch emigrants to Australia, for instance, switched to English before they arrived in their new homeland.

There are stories of immigrants who already began to speak English on the ship before it had passed the locks of IJmuiden, i.e. before they had left the Netherlands (Van der Meiden 1983).² On the other hand, the descendants of the 17th century settlers in New Jersey and upstate New York maintained their ethnic language for more than three centuries. These Dutch arrived beginning in 1624 and three centuries later there were still people in that region who could speak the variety of Dutch that developed in these areas and which is usually referred to as *Leeg Duits* (Low Dutch) (Van Marle, to appear).

In relation to the many and diverse groups of immigrants who left Europe in the second half of the 19th century, it is hard or nearly impossible to come up with a both general and detailed picture as to the way in which they maintained their ethnic language and/or switched to English. Yet, it is my impression that by far, in most cases, it is hard to find third-generation immigrants who can still speak their ethnic language fluently.³ This conforms to the literature on language maintenance, which claims that the general picture is as follows: the first generation sticks to the language of the country of origin, the second generation is truly bilingual, whereas the third generation has the language of the new homeland as their linguistically dominant language, and the ethnic language, if known at all, is clearly secondary. In short, according to this 'three generation rule' it is quite common for third-generation immigrants to have a far less profound knowledge of their ethnic language than their predecessors.⁴ Therefore, they generally speak their ethnic language less fluently, while they may even be true 'semi-speakers' (Dorian 1981). In the latter case, the speakers have a primarily formulaic knowledge of the language.

Crucially, among the Dutch Protestants exceptions to the above pattern are by no means rare. During our fieldwork in the US, Caroline Smits and I found many third- and fourth- (and sometimes even fifth-) generation immigrants who could still speak Dutch fluently.⁵ Evidently, this mere fact makes clear that the Protestant type of immigration is the marked case and does not represent the normal type of immigration. In sharp contrast to the Protestant immigrants, the Roman Catholic immigrants do conform to the above pattern. Shetter (1957) points out that even in a highly homogeneous settlement such as Little Chute, Wisconsin, Dutch already was nearly extinct in the mid-1950s, some 100 years after the founding of the settlement. This view corresponds to my own findings. When Caroline Smits and I did fieldwork in that part of Wisconsin in 1989, we were not able to find one person with a Dutch background who could still speak some Dutch.⁶ In short, the

Roman Catholic immigration by and large joins with the general pattern of 19th century immigration to the US. In general, for third-generation immigrants the ethnic language has become a secondary language at best, while many third-generation immigrants have become true semi-speakers knowing some fixed phrases and a number of words, but being unable to really converse in that language. In relation to the Roman Catholic immigrants from the Netherlands, it has been claimed that they were among the very first migrants who gave up their language. See Van Hinte (1928: 857) where in relation to the Roman Catholic immigrants the following is noted: "...their bond with the Netherlands is so very minimal that Van Heertum [the leader of the only Dutch parish in Chicago, JvM] was recently able to declare that of 'all non-English-speaking people,' the [Roman Catholic] Dutch settlers, and especially their children, have more rapidly learned and adopted the language and customs of the United States."

Clearly, this should not be misconstrued. As will be discussed, it is certainly not the case that all or even most Protestant immigrants maintained their ethnic language for several generations. What is essential, however, is that it is among the Protestants that clear, and even quite a few, exceptions to the 'three generation rule' can be found whereas in the case of the Roman Catholics it seems that by far the majority of the third generation settlers hardly spoke Dutch at all.

The Protestants and their language

Although it is not generally known that even today, it is not uncommon to find third- and fourth- (and sometimes even fifth-) generation immigrants who can still speak Dutch fluently, the special link between Dutch Protestants and their ethnic language has often been stressed. This close link between religion and language has been approached differently, but the essence seems to be that many of the Dutch immigrants had the conviction that "the pure Reformed doctrine could be preached only in 'the Holland tongue'" (Taylor 1983: 149). In more objective terms, it was Dutch that was the language which gave access to the religious texts that were crucially important to Dutch Calvinism. Among these were first the famous translation of the Holy Bible (the so-called *Statenvertaling* completed 1637), and also works such as the Heidelberg Catechism. (Evidently, this is why the ability to read Dutch was considered so important, cf. Webber 1988: 28-29, 64-65.) Even today, the ethnic Dutch hold these texts in high esteem, irrespective of the fact that for nearly all of them English has become their linguistically dominant language. This becomes clear from the fact

that Dutch Psalm singing is still very popular (people travel long distances to attend these meetings). Also, some informants still prefer the Dutch text of the Bible to English, claiming that the former is 'clearer,' 'more precise' and 'more beautiful.' The latter may be considered to be a reflex of the feeling shared by many of the immigrants for a long time that "Dutch was somehow a more religious language than English" (Mulder 1947: 243, and see below). Note, finally, that Dutch was also the language of the sermon, and that many of the ministers excelled in 'eloquent preaching' (DeJong 1975:198).

Another well-known aspect of the 'language issue' among Dutch Protestants is that of the two main Protestant denominations – the Reformed Church of America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) – the CRC is generally considered to be more Dutch oriented than the RCA.⁷ In this connection it has often been noted that the shift from Dutch to English took place earlier in the RCA than in the CRC (e.g. DeJong 1975). In general, this is no doubt correct (although there are some complicating factors) and one may even start from the orthodoxy hypothesis, according to which the maintenance of Dutch in church is considered to be a direct exponent of the degree of orthodoxy. That is, the more orthodox a given denomination is, the stronger is the tendency to maintain Dutch. This is directly supported by the fact that in smaller, more orthodox Calvinist denominations such as the Protestant Reformed Church and the Netherlands Reformed Congregation (NRC), Dutch was maintained even longer than in the CRC (DeJong 1975). In some churches of the 'ultraconservative' (DeJong 1975: 199) - NRC, for instance - Dutch is maintained till the present day (Van Marle & Smits 1996; 2000).

This inclination to cling to Dutch for religious reasons has been a serious difficulty for a long time in the Americanization process. The general issue has been as follows: "How can we become Americanized and at the same time remain loyal to Reformed principles" (Lucas 1955: 597). In the course of time, however, all the churches which have their roots in Dutch Calvinism switched to English. For many of the ethnic Dutch, this shift, no matter how gradual, was a painful process, but most of them seem to have considered it unavoidable (see below).

In my view, there can be no doubt that the above picture, well known as such, of course is generally correct. Yet, there can be no doubt either, that as far as the maintenance of Dutch is concerned, this cannot be the whole story, since there are too many questions relating to this issue that cannot be answered on the basis of the above.

On the maintenance of Dutch I

The general idea that the long maintenance of Dutch is primarily, or even exclusively, linked to religion has several problems. To begin with, third- and fourth-generation immigrants who can still speak Dutch are not equally spread over the Dutch settlements. For instance, to the inhabitants of the State of Washington, the 'Dutch' town of Lynden is known for its industrious and God-fearing population, and indeed the ethnic Dutch who settled there are nearly always members of one of the Calvinist denominations. However, Caroline Smits and I found that in Lynden knowledge of Dutch is generally absent among second and third-generation immigrants. During our stay in July 1993, we were unable to find a single second or third-generation immigrant who could be considered a semi-speaker, none who were fluent speakers.

Similarly in the Midwest, consider Iowa. In the smaller settlements of Sioux County such as Hull or Boyden, third and fourth-generation immigrants who can still speak some Dutch appear to be far less common than in Pella and surroundings, or her daughter colony Orange City. This, at least, is what Caroline Smits and I experienced when we did fieldwork in northwest Iowa in 1989 and 1994. In a way, the latter is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that many of the ethnic Dutch in the Hull and Boyden regions arrived in the New World some fifty years after the Dutch immigrants in Pella. Similarly, in the Cadillac region in northern Michigan, speakers of Dutch appear to be rare. During my fieldwork in Lucas and Vogel Center (June 2001), I have not been able to find one single speaker of Dutch. Interestingly, this is in clear contrast to the Holland, Michigan area where, particularly in the smaller settlements such as Graafschap and Overisel, quite a few excellent speakers of Dutch can still be found.

In my view, this points to the fact that factors other than religion are crucially important to the maintenance of Dutch as well. These factors relate to the socio-cultural setting of Dutch immigration. First, I will explore the demographic factor. Second, I will discuss some socio-cultural differences between the several groups of immigrants and the settlements in which they lived.

As to the demographic factor, I hold that Dutch only had a chance to survive if the demographic conditions were favorable. By favorable, I mean that the settlement had to be Dutch from its beginning, or 'had become' Dutch in the course of time. As is well known, some settlements became more and more Dutch over the years, Pella itself being a nice example of this development, but the same trend can be found elsewhere. Second, the position of Dutch

was stronger if no large American town was nearby. In short, for Dutch to survive both Americans and America had to be far away, allowing the Dutch to live in relative isolation. Evidently, this directly explains why the position of Dutch was much stronger in rural areas than, for instance, in the Dutch enclaves in American cities such as Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids or Chicago. In the latter cases there is no question of isolation.

The above also underlies a clear difference between Pella, Iowa and Holland, Michigan, as far as the position of Dutch is concerned.⁸ In my view, there can be no doubt that for a long time the position of Dutch was much stronger in Pella than in Holland. This claim is confirmed firstly by the fact that in Pella the number of third and fourth-generation immigrants who can still speak Dutch is much higher than in Holland (again, this is what Caroline Smits and I found when we did fieldwork in Michigan in 1992, 1997, and 1998). Secondly, many of our informants in Pella, Iowa told us that till the 1950s it was quite common to speak Dutch in the shops and in the local restaurant, while in the latter some Dutch may be heard even today. However, in Holland, Michigan, Dutch was no longer used in shops and restaurants by the 1950s. As a matter of fact, all our informants assured us that they never used Dutch when they went to Holland. In my view, the explanation must be that rural Pella⁹ was much more isolated than Holland. Further, the number of people with a non-Dutch background who came to Holland is much higher than to Pella. That is, even today Pella is predominantly Dutch, something which cannot be said of Holland.

This does not imply that I doubt the role of religion in the maintenance of Dutch. What I do claim, however, is that religion was only decisive if the demographic factor (which, of course, defines part of the socio-cultural context) was favorable. Put differently, the question whether Dutch was maintained is not exclusively determined by religion, but it is determined by a combination of religion and demography.

Further evidence in favor of my thesis can be found in the linguistic behavior of the members of the NRC. As noted, in this denomination the role of the Dutch language is very important. However, when the leader of its Dutch counterpart (the so-called *Gereformeerde Gemeente*), Reverend G.H. Kersten, visited the churches of this ultraconservative denomination in the US in the 1930s, he found that only in the 'Far West' (Rock Valley and Sioux Center, Iowa, and Corsica, South Dakota) could the younger generation still speak Dutch. In contrast to this, many members of the younger generation in the other settlements he visited hardly spoke or

understood any Dutch. This was not only the case in the East (Paterson and Passaic, New Jersey and West Sayville, New York), but also in the Midwest (Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, Michigan, South Holland, Illinois and Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Kersten 1936: 22-23). As early as the 1930s many members of this denomination had succumbed to large-scale Americanization. What Kersten's observations also make clear, is that in the case of the NRC, it too is a combination of the demographic factor and religion which determines whether or not Dutch is maintained. For the Dutch immigrants, regardless of their depth of orthodoxy, it was much easier to live in relative isolation in the West than elsewhere. This implies that acculturation was much harder to avoid in the towns in the East and Midwest than in the smaller and isolated towns of Northwest Iowa and South Dakota.

The uneven spread of third- and fourth-generation immigrants who can still speak Dutch has another socio-cultural dimension. The fact is, that these latter generations are much more likely to be found in the earliest settlements (roughly, those that were founded before 1865) than in settlements founded later. From this perspective it is no coincidence that both in Lynden, and in towns such as Lucas or Vogel Center such speakers are absent or very rare.

To my mind, this aspect of the uneven distribution of third- and fourth-generation immigrants still able to speak Dutch may relate to the following. As is well known, the earliest groups of immigrants left the Netherlands for a combination of religious and economic reasons, whereas later immigrants went to the United States primarily for economic reasons.¹⁰ For many of the later immigrants religion had not been a factor at all in their motivation to leave the Netherlands. For the former groups of immigrants this was different. The earliest settlements had been founded on the basis of the conviction that they should completely conform to Reformed doctrine.¹¹ In addition, many of the early immigrants "cherished the false ideal of founding a little Holland in the wilderness" (Henry E. Dosker, as cited in Bruins 1970: 41). Interestingly, their linguistic behavior was in conformity with their wish to found settlements which were New World replicas of Holland. The fact is that many of these immigrants "worshipped their Dutch and clung to it with an iron grip" (Henry E. Dosker, as cited in Bruins 1970: 41).¹² Of course, the latter is nothing but a direct repercussion of the fact that for many of these early immigrants there was a direct link between their language and their faith.

Many of the later immigrants were different, however. They emigrated to the United States

primarily for economic reasons, meaning that among these latter groups there was considerably less opposition to Americanization. Consequently, these latter immigrants did not cling to their ethnic language as vehemently as many of their predecessors did. Specifically, this led to the following situation. The later immigrants either went to an already existing purely Dutch settlement, or they went to more recent settlements. In the former case, they, to a greater or lesser extent, adopted to the culture that they encountered. This may imply that they opted for the maintenance of Dutch. In the latter case, however, the forces preventing rapid Americanization were relatively weak, meaning that in these settlements the position of Dutch was considerably weaker and that the switch to English was readily made.

Given the above, it is by no means surprising that the oldest, 'purely Dutch' settlements maintained their Dutch character longest, meaning that in these settlements the position of the Dutch language was strongest. On the basis of the preceding it may also be hypothesized that the so called rapid shift scenario, which involves the rapid giving up of Dutch in favor of English (Van Marle & Smits 1996; 2000) was especially popular among the later immigrants, and particularly among those who were not living in one of the older settlements.¹³ Also, in some of the more recent settlements the number of inhabitants who did not have a Dutch background was considerable. This was, for instance, the case in Northwest Iowa (Van Hinte 1928: 515). As we have seen, this factor weakens the position of Dutch considerably and it may have played a part in the relatively weak position of Dutch in towns such as Boyden or Hull.¹⁴

In sum, the above is tantamount to the claim that it was the earliest groups of settlers who largely determined the socio-cultural character of a settlement, and it was only among these groups that adherence to the idea of founding New World replicas of Holland was strong. Evidently, these latter facts, too, underlie the uneven spread of third- and fourth-generation immigrants who can still speak Dutch. As far as their socio-cultural characteristics are concerned, there were considerable differences among the settlements founded by the Dutch, a fact which had direct repercussions for the position of the Dutch language.¹⁵ Generally speaking then, third- and fourth-generation immigrants still speaking Dutch are most likely to be found in the isolated, earliest founded settlements, since it was these settlements which were 'most Dutch' in all respects.

On the maintenance of Dutch II

Above it was noted that religion, i.e. orthodox Protestantism, is a factor which has promoted

maintenance of Dutch very strongly, be it with the understanding that the socio-cultural context must be favorable. There is still one other aspect of the maintenance of Dutch, however, which is not clear on the basis of the above explanation. An intriguing aspect of the present-day speakers of American Dutch is that it is by no means the case that they can only be found among members of the CRC and the smaller more orthodox denominations. Specifically, present-day third- and fourth-generation immigrants still knowing Dutch can be found among members of both the CRC and the RCA.¹⁶ That is, the present-day speakers of Dutch cannot simply be characterized in terms of orthodoxy, meaning that in this respect the so-called orthodoxy hypothesis does not fully hold.

Also remarkable about the present-day speakers of American Dutch is, that many of them were born between 1910 and 1935 a period during which Americanization of the ethnic Dutch was well on its way. Particularly in the period between the two World Wars, the pace of Americanization is generally considered to have accelerated considerably (DeJong 1975: 207). A phenomenon which deserves special attention is that it was also in this period that Dutch was exchanged for English in the churches. Evidently, the latter switch represents a crucial moment in the process of acculturation that the Dutch immigrants and their descendants underwent. For many of the ethnic Dutch Protestants this aspect of the Americanization of their culture represented a particularly painful development, be it an unavoidable one, too. The shift in the churches was a reaction to the younger generations who experienced more and more difficulties in understanding the Dutch church services and who even considered the possibility to leave the ethnic Dutch churches. Of course, the gradual switch¹⁷ to English did not take place with the same pace in the different denominations. But in general both in the CRC and the RCA the last Dutch services were held in the 1950s (or early 1960s). In sum, the gradual shift to English started at the end of the nineteenth century and it progressed during the first half of the twentieth century, in the RCA faster than in the CRC, in the CRC faster than in the NRC.¹⁸ Particularly after World War I, the pace with which this process took place increased considerably.

Crucial to the present-day third- and fourth-generation immigrants who can still speak Dutch is that they were born in the period in which the switch to English was taking place. Importantly, for quite a few of my informants it even holds that Dutch is their first language, while they only learned English when they went to school.¹⁹ In my view, the fact that there were still children brought up monolingually in Dutch at the moment that the Americanization of the ethnic

Dutch society/churches was well underway, points to a very important factor in the maintenance of Dutch. Its implication cannot but be that there were families who maintained Dutch as the language for in-group communication, even at the moment that institutions such as the Protestant churches were in the middle of the process of Americanization. Put differently, a crucial factor why ethnic Dutch are still fluent speakers of American Dutch is that in some cases Dutch was maintained as a family language. This inclination to cling to Dutch may, to a certain extent, be inspired by religious considerations, but religion was certainly not the all-dominant factor in this connection. A very important factor in maintaining Dutch as a family language was the nearby presence of grandparents, which for instance among farmers was quite common. That the maintenance of Dutch as a family language is not exclusively determined by religion, is also corroborated by the fact that in this connection the orthodoxy hypothesis does not hold. As noted, the present-day speakers of American Dutch can be found both among RCA and CRC members. This clearly suggests that it was not exclusively religion which determines whether Dutch was chosen as family language or not.

Interestingly, the implication of the above is that the maintenance of Dutch is a matter that is not only institutionally determined, but that it has an individual dimension as well. The latter is also evidenced by the fact that there is a second factor which has also contributed to the long maintenance of Dutch. In the last stages of its existence, Dutch functioned as a male language. The fact is, that several informants have stressed that they primarily spoke Dutch with other men (father, grandfather, as well as neighbors). When the men were together in the fields, in the bakery, or when they were helping each other on the farm (in this connection threshing is often mentioned as a social event) they seem to have had a preference for Dutch for a very long time. And some informants rightly claim that Dutch is still used in this context! Another situation in which Dutch has been maintained for a long time, is the coming together of the men in the local restaurant to have breakfast or a cup of coffee. This, too, is a context within which, even today, some Dutch may be heard. The implication must be that, among the men, Dutch has had covert prestige for a very long time. Interestingly, covert prestige in general is a phenomenon which seems to be a typical exponent of male culture (Trudgill 1972). As a consequence, it is common to find an ethnic Dutch couple of which the man is a fluent speaker of American Dutch, whereas the woman only has some passive knowledge of Dutch.²⁰ Crucial to this latter factor contributing to the

maintenance of Dutch is, that it is not linked to religion.

The factors promoting the maintenance of Dutch which came up for discussion in this section have in common that they are primarily linked to individuals or groups of individuals. It was not institutions such as the churches which promoted the use of Dutch. As we shall see in the next session, both factors primarily relate to the fact that for a long time many of the Dutch immigrants did not want to completely submerge in mainstream America.

American Dutch: its function in society

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that for the Dutch Calvinists their ethnic language was very important. As a rule, one may start from the idea that the more orthodox a given denomination, the more important Dutch is within that denomination. Another component of the important role of religion in the maintenance of Dutch is that the position of Dutch is strongest in the oldest settlements, i.e. the settlements founded by immigrants who left the Netherlands for a combination of religious and economic reasons. It was these settlements which came close to New World replicas of the Netherlands with a largely theocratic character and it was in these settlements that Dutch had the strongest position. Note, however, that on an institutional level, the churches do not seem to have propagated the use of Dutch very intensely. On the contrary, since the church leaders were afraid to lose the younger generation they were convinced that the churches had to introduce English services, however orthodox the denomination. Consider, once again, G.H. Kersten who in relation to the NRC noted that it was essential to the preservation of the youth that church services and catechism class were also conducted in English (Kersten 1936: 22).

From the above it follows that the link between religion and language represents a phenomenon that relates to individuals rather than to institutions. "Many Hollanders for a long time continued to feel that Dutch was somehow a more religious language than English. The feeling sometimes found definite expression as a fixed conviction, but for the most part it was an unexpressed assumption. But not the less strong because it was held half-unconsciously" (Mulder 1947: 243). Evidently, this attitude also explains why it was by no means uncommon among the early immigrants to refuse to learn English. In this respect the difference between many of the common immigrants on the one hand and their leaders on the other is striking; Van Raalte, Scholte, and Vander Meulen taught themselves English as quickly as they could (see Mulder 1947: 243). Many of the Dutch

immigrants believed that Dutch was the language of the hereafter and that it, therefore, was not necessary to learn English. Also, many of my present-day informants mentioned that their grandparents, and sometimes even their parents, had a very limited knowledge of English, meaning that among the ethnic Dutch the aversion to learning English lasted remarkably long.

In the above it was also stressed that the maintenance of Dutch was not exclusively determined by religion. First of all, there is the demographic factor. This factor defines part of the socio-cultural context that was favorable to the maintenance of Dutch. The fact is, that Dutch could survive only in relative isolation. That, of course, is why Dutch is particularly long maintained in rural areas. Second, the maintenance of Dutch is also promoted by forces of a more individual nature. In many families Dutch was maintained as a family language, even at the time that in the churches Dutch was already being replaced by English, either completely or partly. In addition, Dutch also seems to have had covert prestige among the men. In the first case there may have been an indirect link with religion. However, in the second case of the covert prestige of Dutch among the men, such an indirect link with religion seems to be absent. In my view, the latter force is a typical exponent of the wish of many of the ethnic Dutch not to become fully American. Many of the Dutch immigrants "cherished the false ideal of founding a little Holland in the wilderness" (Henry E. Dosker, cited from Bruins 1970: 41), although this was certainly not the attitude of all the immigrants (see note 12). Evidently, the choice of Dutch as a family language may be inspired by the same consideration, the wish not to submerge into mainstream America.

Importantly, the relatively long maintenance of Dutch resulted in a situation in which the Dutch language in the US has developed a number of specific properties, so that it became a specific variety of Dutch ('American Dutch'). I will not go into these properties in any detail (see Van Marle & Smits 1996; 2000 for a general discussion), but I will confine myself to one remark. A general property of many of the immigrant languages which are rooted in the 19th-century immigration to the US is the enormous number of loan words (Hirvonen 2001). In American Dutch, however, this is not so.²¹ In American Dutch there are remarkably few loan words, and the present-day speakers, even those who come close to being semi-speakers, are very keen on not using English words when they speak Dutch. This may be an artificial aspect of their attitude towards Dutch, but it may also be considered an indication of how important to these people pure Dutch still is,

irrespective of the fact that most of them do not speak it anymore on a regular base (something which is generally deplored). In my view, this may be one of the last repercussions of the fact that, again in the words of Henry E. Dosker, many of the Dutch immigrants in Holland, Michigan "worshipped their Dutch and clung to it with an iron grip" (cited from Bruins 1970: 40). One of the reasons why they did so is that for many of the Dutch Protestants there was a direct link between their faith and their language. Another reason was that for the Dutch Protestants the maintenance of Dutch was one of the most powerful tools to prevent complete Americanization.

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NOTES

¹ In this paper I have incorporated the results of a number of fieldwork trips, carried out by Caroline Smits (till 1998) and myself in the period 1989-2001. We investigated the position of Dutch (and Frisian) in Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Washington State, New York, and Massachusetts. Clearly, some of the insights relating to this fieldwork were arrived at during the many discussions relating to the position and status of American Dutch that we have had. In addition, I am indebted to her for her critical remarks on a previous version of this paper.

² The rapid shift to English usage by the post-war immigrants to Australia has recently been confirmed in Pauwels (1986).

³ By a first-generation immigrant, I mean a person who has migrated himself/herself. A second-generation immigrant is one born in the new homeland and whose parents (either one or both) migrated. By a third-generation immigrant, I mean a person who is born in the new homeland and whose grandparents (or at least one of them) migrated, etc.

⁴ This view was corroborated by the contributions presented at the Conference on State Linguistic Profiles, held in Columbus, Ohio in May 2001.

⁵ Note that there can be no doubt that American Dutch is an obsolescent language (Webber 1988: 26). Only few present-day speakers use it on a regular basis. In addition, nearly all present-day speakers are in their sixties or older. On the whole, ethnic Dutch under the age of 60 do not speak Dutch at all, meaning that they are not even semi-speakers! (However, some of them have a restricted passive knowledge of Dutch.) To this latter rule, there are only very few exceptions. Not surprisingly, most present-day speakers of American Dutch are more fluent in English than in Dutch. This, however, may be the effect of the fact that most of them use Dutch only sporadically (Smits 1996). There are exceptions, however. Some present-day speakers not only have a profound knowledge of their ethnic language, but also a remarkable fluency. Some of them even claim to be equally fluent in English and in Dutch. Interestingly, one informant (a fourth-generation immigrant) claimed to be more fluent in Dutch than in English.

⁶ The same is true for Victor, Iowa where Dutch-speaking Flemish immigrants have settled (Webber 1980). When we did fieldwork there in 1989, we were unable to find semi-speakers of Dutch.

⁷ The idea that the CRC is much more Dutch-oriented is wide-spread, also among the ethnic Dutch themselves. Consider the following anecdote. When I did fieldwork in the Cadillac area in Michigan in 2001, I visited the RCA church of Lucas and asked the women who were doing charity work there whether they knew of people who could still speak Dutch. They did not but they advised me to go to Vogel Center, because they considered the inhabitants of the latter settlement to 'have kept up the Dutch much more than we did.' Irrespective of the question whether this is true (as far as I can tell, it is not), it is interesting that in Vogel Center and surroundings, the CRC churches are clearly dominant, whereas in Lucas this is not so.

⁸ My remarks exclusively bear upon Holland, Michigan and do not relate to the surrounding, much smaller Dutch settlements such as Overisel, Drenthe, Graafschap, etc. In contrast to Holland, these latter towns have generally maintained their Dutch character for a very long time. Note, however, that the position of Dutch in much bigger Zeeland resembles that of Holland (Van Marle 1997). The majority of my informants in Zeeland had recently moved in from the other much smaller settlements.

⁹ In Daan (1987: 49) Reverend Piersma is quoted. In 1966 he considered the strong position of Dutch in Pella, Iowa to be an exponent of the agricultural character of this settlement.

¹⁰ This striking difference between the early immigrants and many of the later immigrants is well-known. See for instance Van Hinte (1928: 605 ff). In these later settlements immigrants of the new type clearly outnumbered immigrants of the old type. Note also, that after 1880 emigration to the US increased considerably (Lucas 1955: 475).

¹¹ In these Dutch settlements "[t]he ministers were held in high regard and had tremendous influence" (DeJong 1975: 198). In addition, these ministers "assumed various mundane tasks in looking after the needs of their parishioners" (ibid.: 198). Consequently, the Dutch settlements have been characterized as 'theocratic', due to the fact that worldly and religious matters were not separated (e.g. DeJong 1975: 140).

¹² Dosker stresses that not all immigrants were like that. Some of them were much more open to their new environment and it was the latter immigrants who "came to be converted into bona fide Americans" (Henry E. Dosker, as cited in Bruins 1970: 41).

¹³ The rapid shift scenario resulted in a shift to English as early as the last two decades of the 19th century. This early shift is evidenced by Dosker (1880). In Van Marle & Smits (1996/2000), this rapid shift scenario is contrasted to the 'gradual shift' scenario, which involved the maintenance and regular use of American Dutch till the second half of the 20th century. Evidently, the fact that American Dutch still exists is an extreme effect of the latter scenario. That is, the majority of speakers taking part in this scenario have already definitively switched to English, meaning that the ethnic Dutch who still speak Dutch are the exception.

¹⁴ Note that Orange City is different. Due to the fact, among other things, that it is no grain elevator town (cf. note 15), it still has a remarkably homogeneous population. My impression is that the position of Dutch is relatively strong there.

¹⁵ Although the approach is somewhat different, Van Hinte (1928: 509 ff.) also stresses the socio-cultural differences between the various Dutch settlements. He does so when he distinguishes between 'church villages' and 'elevator towns'. Recall, also, that in many cases the population of the elevator towns was rather heterogeneous since they were located near the railroads. As we have seen, the presence of Americans with other ethnic backgrounds affected the position of Dutch.

¹⁶ It may well be that, in conformity with the orthodoxy hypothesis, the majority of the present-day speakers of American Dutch belong to the CRC. Note, though, that I have no evidence that this is really the case. What I do know is that RCA members still speaking Dutch are not particularly rare. I observed the latter

in Iowa (both in Pella and in Sioux County), Michigan (in the Holland area) and Wisconsin (Alto). Bear in mind that in the course of time by far the majority of Dutch Calvinists have switched to English. That is, although third- and fourth-generation immigrants who can still speak Dutch are not particularly rare, there is no doubt either that the number of third- and fourth-generation immigrants with a Dutch background who do not know Dutch at all is much higher. No doubt this holds both for RCA and CRC members.

¹⁷ English was gradually introduced as church language. First, only one of the church services was in English, while the remaining two were still in Dutch. At a later stage, two services were held in English and only one in Dutch. Evidently, the definitive switch to English involves the situation in which all church services are held in English.

¹⁸ The NRC's 'normal' services are presently in English as well. If there is still a service in Dutch (which is not the case in every congregation), it is the afternoon service which mainly consists of reading of some of the old texts.

¹⁹ Other scenarios of learning Dutch exist. Other informants learned both Dutch and English in their early childhood, the former from their parents and/or grandparents, the latter from their elder brothers and sisters who had already learned English in school.

²⁰ Exactly the same holds for the use of American Frisian, see Van Marle (2000).

²¹ Note that I am discussing American Dutch, and not the mixed variety of Dutch (grammar and sounds) and English (lexicon) that is often referred to as 'Yankee Dutch' (Harper 1993). Yankee Dutch was spoken in the late 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century in Grand Rapids.