

Sociolinguistics in the Netherlands

Durk Gorter, Universiteit van Amsterdam/Fryske Akademy

In: *Jahrbuch Sociolinguistica*, nr 17, pp 168-180.

Introduction

Sociolinguistics has a long tradition in the Dutch language area. This simple opening sentence implies three issues of demarcation one has to deal with in a report on the state of affairs in sociolinguistics in the Netherlands: the boundaries of the field, when chronologically to begin and which geographic area to cover. These three points will first be dealt with in brief, thereafter I will present an overview of the institutional embedding, the publications, the central themes and the productivity of sociolinguistics in the Netherlands.

First of all, the question of demarcation of the field. It is well known that to draw the boundaries between sociolinguistics and overlapping fields such as applied linguistics, dialectology or psycholinguistics is a difficult task. A lot of research work in the Netherlands is done under one of these labels, but it would be equally defensible to designate much such work sociolinguistics. When Van Hout, Huls & Verhallen (1992) try to give an overview of the state of affairs in Dutch sociolinguistics, they point to the wide variation in object, aims and research methods. They find it almost impossible to give an all-embracing definition. After quoting Hymes (1984:41) on the lack of an actual field of study, they use the following working definition of sociolinguistics “a shared perspective in combination with a heterogeneous interest in the relationship between language and the social context of language and language behaviour” (Van Hout, Huls & Verhallen 1992:7). It is not my intention to draw more narrow boundaries.

Secondly, the tradition of a field and its historical development determine to some extent the current situation. Long before the term was used sociolinguistic themes were under discussion. The most prominent theme in the 19th century was undoubtedly what we would today call the ‘standardisation’ of Dutch. Pronunciation and vocabulary have played a role in the linguistic debate at least since the first *Dutch Linguistic and Literary Conference* of 1849 (Hagen and Van Hout 1998: 44). Publications also appeared on themes such as language variation in education and geographic distribution of language. Topics such as dialect in school and bilingualism were amply studied in the early twentieth century, thus long before the term ‘sociolinguistics’ was used for the first time in a Dutch publication in 1969 (Van de Ven 1969) or the term ‘sociology of language’ two years earlier (Daan & Weijnen 1967).

Since the early 1970s the field has gained momentum. Important in this regard was the undertaking of some large-scale empirical studies. The most widely known project of this era is the study of dialect and education in Kerkrade (Hagen, Stijnen and Vallen 1975, Hagen 1989). Sociolinguistic studies have proliferated since then. There is a degree of continuity in the themes that have been investigated, although the focus and perspective may shift. At the same time, changes in society have an influence on the problems that are explored by sociolinguists. The most important social change has been the immigration of minority groups which has led to an increase in the variety of mother tongues, in particular in urban areas (Extra et al 2002, Extra and Gorter 2001). In the bilingual Dutch province of Friesland, sociolinguistic research is closely related to the development of the language situation, as is shown in overviews by Feitsma (1990) and Ytsma (1999). My emphasis will be on the developments in sociolinguistics in the Netherlands since 1990.

The third issue in drafting an up-to-date overview of sociolinguistics in the Dutch-speaking area is the problem of the geographic or state boundary. The Netherlands and the Belgian region of Flanders share the same language area but the annual bibliography of *Sociolinguistica* works with two state correspondents. It is well-known that language problems in the two countries differ in some important respects. At the same time, they share many research themes, for instance language variation, standardisation and dialects or immigrant languages. In 1980 the *Nederlandse Taalunie* (Dutch Language Union)¹ was established by the governments of Belgium and the Netherlands as a communal organisation that has as its aim the joint development of the Dutch language, as well as the promotion of the study and spread of Dutch language and literature abroad. A fair number of Belgian researchers in the field of sociolinguistics work in Dutch universities, but fewer the other way around. The fact that studies are interwoven is demonstrated by publications such as the ‘Sociolinguistics in the Low Countries’ (Deprez 1984) and the ‘Sociolinguistics of Dutch’ (Stalpers and Coulmas 1988). In 1991 the Dutch applied linguistics association organized the ‘First Sociolinguistic Conference’. The explicit aim of this conference was “to organise Dutch and Flemish sociolinguists in their field of study and to promote the exchange of results of research” (Van Hout and Huls 1991: i). Sociolinguistics in the Netherlands is hard to separate from the same field in Belgium. This overview focuses on the Netherlands, although further

¹ Addresses of websites of Dutch organisations and journals mentioned in the text may be found at the end of the article.

on contributions to these sociolinguistics conferences, which have taken place every four years, will be used to discuss the major themes in sociolinguistic research.

Institutionalisation

Between 1977 and 1988, the *Werkgemeenschap Sociolinguïstiek* (Working Community on Sociolinguistics) of the National Organization for Scientific Research (ZWO, now NWO) was important for the institutional development of the field of sociolinguistics in Netherlands. The primary task of the Working Community on Sociolinguistics was to evaluate proposals for new research projects to be funded by ZWO. Its first project was a large-scale survey of language relationships in Friesland (Gorter et al 1984). At the same time, the Working Community had special thematic groups e.g. on language and social interaction or on language variation. These groups were important meeting places and offered a forum for many researchers presenting research results. After a reorganisation the Working Community lost its independence and became integrated within the research council for the humanities and in different thematic programmes. Evaluation and funding of project proposals became its only task. An example of a recent large scale project funded by the National Organisation for Scientific Research, NWO, is the so-called *TCULT*-project (1998-2001). This is an interdisciplinary study of one multilingual and multicultural urban neighbourhood in Utrecht. Researchers from the Universities of Amsterdam, Leiden, Tilburg, and Utrecht and the Meertens Institute (Amsterdam) co-operated in the project (Bennis et al 2002). Another example is the programme on 'Endangered Languages', which emphasises anthropological-linguistic studies outside the Netherlands. Starting in 2003, NWO will have a new programme on 'Language acquisition and multilingualism', which has a strong psycholinguistic emphasis but also a sociolinguistic dimension.

The function of providing a meeting place for researchers has been taken over by the Working Group on Sociolinguistics of the *Anéla*, the Dutch association of applied linguistics. One of the main activities of this working group has been the organisation of a series of Sociolinguistics Conferences in 1991, 1995, 1999 and 2003. Moreover, a group of researchers in interaction studies (IAWA) organised between 1993 and 1999 five time a one-day conference on 'oral communication in organisations'. This group is now also part of *Anéla*.

At the beginning of the 21st century, sociolinguistics can be considered a widely accepted branch of linguistics in the Netherlands. The field, however, has not established

itself as a coherent academic discipline but still has the characteristics of a ‘shared perspective’. This also implies that it is not always easy to distinguish sociolinguistics as a topic of teaching, as a field of specialisation or as a research discipline.

Seven universities in the Netherlands have a faculty of arts. In all of them courses are taught in sociolinguistics or at least there are courses in which sociolinguistic topics play an important part. Also in tertiary level institutes for teacher training, social work, nursing or communication studies the study of sociolinguistics is frequently included in introductory courses.

However, there are no full professorships in sociolinguistics and only few have the designation ‘sociolinguistics’ in the formal description of their chair. Application of an even more informal criterium, such as the keyword 'sociolinguistics' being named as field of specialization in the Dutch Research Databank on experts results only in the names of six full professors.

Academic research in linguistics in the Netherlands has a complicated organisational structure. Six of the seven university departments collaborate in the Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics (*Landelijke Onderzoeksschool Taalkunde, LOT*), the administrative office being with the *Utrecht Institute of Linguistics*. That institute has, among seven research areas, groups on 'language use' and on ‘language development’. Four other centres and research groups are also participants in the *LOT*. The largest of these is the *Center for Language Studies*, a collaboration between the University of Nijmegen, the University of Tilburg and the *Max Planck Institute of Psycholinguistics* in Nijmegen. Sociolinguistics is one of the four main fields addressed by this centre. Sociolinguistically oriented projects are carried out by research groups in Applied Linguistics and in General Linguistics and Dialectology in Nijmegen and by *Babylon*, the Center for Studies of Multilingualism in the Multicultural Society, in Tilburg. *Babylon* specialises in studies of immigrant minority languages, in particular Turkish, Arabic and Berber. The *Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication (ACLIC)* has three research programmes, of which the two on ‘the language user’ and ‘language use’ comprise sociolinguistically inspired research, e.g. on language acquisition and on language contact. The *Leiden Centre for Linguistics* has three thematic groups, of which the groups focused on 'language use' and 'language diversity and variation' are of relevance to sociolinguistic research. Finally, at the Free University of Amsterdam there is a research group with the name 'shape of language' that focuses on "the interfaces between discourse, pragmatics, semantics and syntax".

The *Center for Language and Cognition (CLCG)* at the University of Groningen does not take part in the national school. The *CLCG* has not a special group on sociolinguistics, but it has groups on 'educational linguistics' and on 'discourse and communication'.

Outside the university system there are two research institutes under the umbrella of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (*KNAW*) which are relevant for this overview. The *Meertens Instituut* in Amsterdam looks into the diversity of language and culture. One of its two research groups looks at 'variation linguistics'. The members of this group study geographic and social variation in phonological, morphological and syntactical phenomena, as well as onomastics, e.g. the *SAND*, a syntactic atlas of Dutch dialects. Two senior-researchers of this institute have sociolinguistics among their assignments.

The *Fryske Akademy* in Leeuwarden/Ljouwert is the scientific centre for research and education with respect to Friesland and its people, language and culture in the widest sense. One research group there focuses on social sciences and it carries out several projects on sociolinguistics, e.g. language surveys, bilingual and trilingual schooling and analyses of language policy. Three senior researchers of this institute have sociolinguistic research among their assignments. The Akademy also hosts the *Mercator-Education* project, which investigates and compares problems of regional or minority languages in education within the European Union.

Seminars, workshops and conferences with sociolinguistic themes are regularly organised. The four sociolinguistics conferences organised by *Anéla* have already been mentioned. Over the past decade and a half several international conferences have been hosted by universities or research institutes in the Netherlands. A few of these may be mentioned: in 1988, 1992 and 1998 a series of conferences on 'Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages' organised by the universities of Nijmegen and Tilburg, in 1989 in Leeuwarden the 'Fourth International Conference on Minority Languages' (4.ICML) organised by the Fryske Akademy, in 1991 in Nijmegen 'The interface between Sociology and Linguistics' organised by the Working Group on Sociolinguistics of the International Sociological Association (ISA), in 1993 in Amsterdam the 10th Congress of the International Applied Linguistics Association (AILA), in 1994 in Leeuwarden the Summer School Codeswitching of the European Science Foundation, in 1996 in Nijmegen the European Second Language Association (Eurosla 6), in 1999 in Wassenaar a Conference of the Study Centre on Language Contact by the NIAS, in 2000 in Oegstgeest the Regional, Minority and Immigrant Languages in Multicultural Europe by the European Cultural Foundation, and in

2001 in Leeuwarden the second International Conference on Trilingualism by the Fryske Akademy.

All of these conferences had a positive impact on Dutch sociolinguistic researchers and resulted in the publication of proceedings or of selected papers.

Publications

Several linguistic journals accept contributions from a sociolinguistic perspective, but there is not a specialised Dutch journal. It is impossible to provide a complete overview, but some relevant names can be given of journals that regularly publish academic articles on sociolinguistic topics. *Toegepaste Taalwetenschap in Artikelen* is a Dutch journal for applied linguistics and *Gramma/TTT* is a Dutch journal for general linguistics. *Nederlandse taalkunde* (Dutch Linguistics) publishes on the linguistic study of the Dutch language in its widest sense. *Neder-L* is an electronic newsletter which came into existence in 1992 and which has some 1,600 subscribers. There is also a fully electronic journal of Dutch studies at www.neerlandistiek.nl, which accepts academic articles falling within the widest sense of the study of the Dutch language. Sociolinguistic studies are also well represented at the annual Dutch linguistics day (*TIN-dag*) of which the proceedings are published as *Linguistics in the Netherlands*. *Taal en Tongval* (Language and dialect) was a journal for dialect studies, which in 2001 changed its subtitle to a journal for language variation. *Driemaandelijks bladen* is the quarterly journal for language and folklore in the eastern part of the Netherlands. *Us Wurk* from the University of Groningen and *It Beaken* from the Fryske Akademy occasionally publish articles on Frisian sociolinguistics.

There exists a score of more or less scientific journals which include some sociolinguistically oriented articles every now and then. The website of *Onze Taal* (Our Language) provides an overview. *Onze taal* is a popular monthly aimed at the general public. It has 40,000 subscribers and contains information on correct language usage, clear writing, speaking and presentation, language and computers and argumentation. The website of the department of Dutch studies in Vienna (Austria) is recognised as a rich source on the study of Dutch (as well as Afrikaans and Frisian). Several Dutch publishers in the field of linguistics also have sociolinguistic books in their fund of publications. Over the years, many PhD theses on sociolinguistic topics have been defended at each of the seven universities mentioned above. A number of general introductions to sociolinguistics have appeared in Dutch: Appel,

Hubers & Meijers (1976), Boves & Gerritsen (1995), Pietersen (1976) and Van der Plank (1985). The two volumes by Geerts & Hagen (1980) are a combination of Dutch studies and translations from English into Dutch of important introductory articles. The introductions by Dittmar (1978) and Hudson (1982) have been translated from German and English into Dutch. More specialised are Houtkoop & Koole (2000) and Huls (2001).

Dutch sociolinguists also contribute a lot to international journals, books and other publications. For instance, special issues have been published by the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* on 'The Sociolinguistics of Dutch' (nr 73, 1988) as well as 'The Sociology of Frisian' (nr 64, 1987).

Themes

The collections of papers published in preparation for the four sociolinguistics conferences in 1991, 1995, 1999 and 2003 respectively provide an interesting overview of recent sociolinguistic research in the Netherlands and Flanders (Van Hout and Huls 1991, Huls and Klatter-Folmer 1995, Huls and Weltens 1999, Koole, Nortier and Tahitu 2003). On the basis of these conference proceedings a sketch was made each time of the state of affairs in sociolinguistics in the year of the conference. The authors of the articles nicely show the central theme's and trends in Dutch sociolinguistics (Van Hout, Huls & Verhallen 1992, Cucchiari and Huls 1995, Huls & Weltens 1999). These three articles, together with the summaries submitted for the fourth conference in 2003, are the basis for a summary of the dominant themes in Dutch sociolinguistics below. At the same time, the articles provide us with an outline of the developments in the field in terms of the continuity and change in the theories that inspire the research undertaken which will also be summarised.

In the analysis of the content of the papers presented at the first three conferences, four main themes have been distinguished: (1) 'interaction and conversation analysis', (2) 'language acquisition and socialisation' (3) 'language variation and language change' and (4) 'multilingualism and language contact'. Other topics such as 'language and gender', 'methodology' or 'creole languages' are less well represented and summarised here by me as 'various other topics'. In the Table the topics of the papers at the four conferences have been categorised according to these themes.

Table 1: Thematic categorisation of the articles of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sociolinguistic Conferences in 1991, 1995, 1999 and 2003 (number of papers).

	1stSC-91	2ndSC-95	3rdSC-99	4thSC-03
(1) interaction, conversational analysis	13	10	9	15
(2) language acquisition and socialisation	4	15	11	28
(3) language variation and language change	4	5	10	12
(4) multilingualism and language contact	7	5	4	5
(5) various other topics	7	16	9	6
Total	35	49	43	66

(A summary and adaptation of Table 1 in Huls & Weltens 1999: 11, plus my own count of the summaries for the 4th conference in 2003).

Van Hout, Huls & Verhallen (1992), Cucchiarini & Huls (1995) and Huls & Weltens (1999) remark in each article again that such a system of categories is to a large degree arbitrary. It is mainly based upon the categories already distinguished by Muysken (1984) in his provocative article on the lack of progress in Dutch sociolinguistics. These authors in their evaluative papers place each paper in one category, but recognize at the same time that many papers deal with several aspects of a problem and could also have been classified differently.

‘Methodology’ scores low because few papers take a methodological issue as the central topic, but several papers discuss the methodological problems of the research project.

‘Language and minorities’ does not appear as a theme in the Table, but about half of the papers deal in one way or the other with immigrant minority languages. Notwithstanding these shortcomings of any categorisation, the Table provides insight into the development of these main themes in the Netherlands.

At the first conference ‘interactional research and conversational analysis’ was the most strongly represented of the four themes. Over the series of conferences this has remained more or less stable in terms of absolute numbers. Besides these sociolinguistics conferences there have also been a number of special conferences on language and interaction at which Dutch researchers have found a forum. A core group of researchers based in different

universities in the Netherlands has been working actively on this theme. A shift inside the theme may be observed from studies of spontaneous conversation in everyday life to more research focused organisational contexts.

The theme of ‘language acquisition and socialisation’ emerged as the strongest theme at the second conference and has since remained ranked first. This development reflects increased research attention for the problems of language learning by immigrants. In the first conference the focus was only upon children, but later also the language acquisition of immigrant adults was studied by several researchers. The topic of intercultural communication receives hardly any attention which, in a European context, is remarkable. This theme has a base in the university of Tilburg (*Babylon*). The interest in the process of language acquisition by members of language minorities in the Netherlands and Flanders, appears to be structural. In 1995 and in 1999 almost half of the contributions were related to this theme; for 2003 it is more than half.

The theme of ‘language variation and language change’ experienced a substantial boost in the mid-nineties. Since then it has been an important focal point. This may also reflect a gradual long-term shift from traditional dialectology to more language variation studies. This includes a second shift towards more attention for variation in the standard language and less focus on dialects. Another aspect is the use of sophisticated acoustic models for the study of variation. This theme finds a stronghold in the university of Nijmegen.

The theme of ‘multilingualism and language contact’ took second place at the first conference. It seems as if its importance has decreased over the years. However, an attempt to ‘maximise’ the category might, for instance, show that in 1999 there were not just four but thirteen contributions on this theme. Many studies that deal with immigrant languages could also be categorised under this heading.

The remaining category has many ‘secondary’ themes. For instance, relatively few studies focus only on ‘language and gender’, but several studies include male-female differences as a factor in variation or in language learning strategies. It is also interesting to note that the topic of ‘language and ideology’ was never presented in a regular paper, although at least three plenaries were strongly related to the topic. Another theme which is not directly visible in the Table is ‘language loss’ (Weltens 1997), which has a tradition that dates back to the late 1980s. Similarly, other themes such as ‘codeswitching studies’, ‘creolistics’ and ‘critical discourse analysis’ are important themes on which sociolinguists from the Netherlands have made important contributions.

The three papers that assess developments in Dutch sociolinguistics on the basis of the conference papers (Van Hout, Huls & Verhallen 1992, Cucchiarini & Huls 1995 and Huls & Weltens 1999) further pose the question of whether there has been any theoretical progress in Dutch sociolinguistics. The authors provide a detailed analysis of the use of different theories or theoretical concepts, or even inspiration from international literature. This analysis of the three conferences would seem to suggest that a considerable amount of sociolinguistic research is conducted without reference to a specific theory or a conceptual framework. The following main points were made by the authors concerning the different themes.

Studies in conversational analysis usually take as their departure point that these are data-driven and that not to have a pre-established theory is a matter of principle. Other interactional studies are inspired mainly by the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson; others by the underlying theoretical notions of Goffman, or, only at the first conference, by the framework suggested by Maltz and Borker. Over the years a development may be observed whereby interaction studies have become associated with multiple theoretical sources and interaction research has become less descriptive.

Studies on socialisation found their original inspiration in studies by Bernstein in the 1960s and 1970s and although his influence disappeared in the 1980s at the 1995 conference there was a paper clearly inspired by his work. Other sources of theoretical concepts are to be found in the work of Bourdieu, Cummins and later Swain. Ideas of Cummins are present in one way or another at all conferences. These socialisation studies focus strongly on the school as a context for language proficiency. An all-embracing educational or developmental theory to inspire sociolinguistic research is lacking. One development would seem to be a more idiosyncratic use of theories. Researchers find inspiration in many sources, including older or classic theories.

Language variation studies are very broad and cover a range of different topics. Many of them are orientated towards structural linguistics, often taking a functionalist linguistic theory as point of departure. Acoustic analysis has increased in importance over the years. The link between phonological theory and language variation is the subject of a lot of attention in Dutch sociolinguistics. A difference between European and North-American variation studies is pointed out. In European studies, dialect loss takes an important place and in American studies, dialect formation. Standardisation is also more frequently studied in a European context. Of the different categories, variation studies were presented most often without any theory at all. There has been some increase in theoretical reflection, but little attention is given to explicit development of theory. To this summary I may add that although

the work and the names of well-known scholars such as Labov, Krashen or Scotton-Meyers are not explicitly mentioned, it is clear that they and many others have also inspired the work of sociolinguists working in the Netherlands.

The following conclusions are drawn concerning the theoretical content of sociolinguistics. Interdisciplinarity can be seen as strong point. Over the years the research presented at the conferences has become increasingly embedded in theories or conceptual frameworks. However, these are so diverse that they fail to lead to thematic unity.

Van Hout & Huls (1991: 15) concluded that it makes no sense to try to determine exactly what is sociolinguistics and what is not. The heterogeneity of the field is better seen not as a *testimonium paupertatis*, but as a reason for inspiration regarding further sociolinguistic research. Four years later Cucchiarini and Huls (1995: 19) concluded that the diversity in themes had increased. For them, it is positive that problems and questions develop in interaction with social developments. The direction research takes is moulded by changes in society. They consider as negative the fact that over half of the papers have no reference whatsoever to theory or a conceptual framework, a circumstance that they consider could erode sociolinguistics in the long run. The overview article by Cucchiarini and Huls elicited reactions on the part of some young sociolinguists not all of whom agree with the negative conclusion of erosion and a lack of theoretical foundation for the work. It is pointed out that, in many cases, presenting the theoretical framework is not a priority because it is more relevant to present data or to discuss the results of a specific research project.

In relation to the third conference, Huls & Weltens (1999: 21) saw an increase in theoretical reflection and conceptualisation, but no unity. Sociolinguistics should find strength and vitality in its diversity. The multiplicity of perspectives seemed not to be problematic leading rather to a good exchange among sociolinguistic researchers.

It is also important that Dutch sociolinguistics be embedded in an international context. Dutch sociolinguists do not just meet at national conferences or seminars, but they also actively participate in the international debate, collaborate in international projects, participate in international conferences and publish in international journals.

The series of four conferences also gives me the opportunity to look at continuity and change in terms of the persons that actively participate. As may be calculated from the Table above, a total of 189 papers were contributed to the four conferences. A few persons contribute to two or even three papers at one conference and many papers are co-authored. The total figure excludes the three or four plenaries every time. About half of the plenaries were offered by speakers from abroad and none of their papers were included in the pre-

conference proceedings. Altogether there are 169 names of different persons from the Netherlands or Belgium who have written a paper (single or co-authored). The most faithful participants are the four persons who contributed a paper to all four conferences. There are thirteen researchers who contributed to three conferences and 27 were present at two of the four conferences. Taken together, 44 persons contributed to more than one conference and thus 125 to only one. One thing these figures show is the continuous flow of young researchers, many of them PhD candidates, who do not stay in academic research because there are hardly any jobs for them at universities or research institutes.

Productivity

As from 1985, the bibliographies of sociolinguistic publications have appeared annually in *Sociolinguistica*. The editors of the yearbook point out that they want with their survey, to fill a gap by making researchers aware of publications in their own country as well as those originating from neighbouring countries (Ammon, Mattheier and Nelde, 1987: 126). The editors have built a network of correspondents across Europe, beginning with twenty correspondents in 1987 and reaching 31 in the 2002 edition. This network pretty well covers all the countries of Europe. The collection of bibliographic entries has its limitations. Among others, it is pointed out that the sociolinguistic concepts of the countries are heterogeneous and that standardisation of the contents is neither a possibility nor a realistic goal.

The annual bibliographies in *Sociolinguistica* provide a fairly extensive overview of the publications in a certain country in one year. These overviews give an indication of the quantitative production in the field of sociolinguistics in a certain country, or within Europe as a whole. It is possible to trace the development in size of production in a certain country over a number of years (from the first issue of *Sociolinguistica* in 1987 with the bibliography on 1985, or since the country was first included).

It is not difficult to count the number of entries for each country and rank the countries accordingly. Such a simple count is, of course, fraught with difficulties, because one correspondent may be more active than another, one may be more restrictive in accepting a title or someone else may apply the instructions more precisely (e.g. a publication has to have a length of at least eight pages, book reviews or articles in daily and weekly publications are omitted). These are the shortcomings of such a counting exercise. I here present the results of

counting the entries for the Netherlands. First of all, the development over the years, from 1985 to 2000.

Table 2 Number of entries for the Netherlands in the annual bibliography of *Sociolinguistica* from 1985 till 2000

year	number	year	number
1985	54	1993	107
1986	73	1994	192
1987	85	1995	239
1988	94	1996	117
1989	106	1997	102
1990	62	1998	116
1991	125	1999	93
1992	88	2000	101

The total number of publications listed over sixteen years is 1,740. Over the last five years (1996-2000) a total of 539 publications have been entered. On average there are about 108 entries of sociolinguistic publications in the Netherlands each year. The range is quite wide, from a low of 54 in the first year to a high of 239 in 1995. The low figure can probably be explained by the fact that it was the first time and thus new. The peak in 1995 was caused by a number of *Festschriften* and by including all the articles of the second Dutch sociolinguistics conference (which was not done for the first or the third conference).

We can also compare the Dutch production to that of other countries. With a total production in sixteen years of 1,740 publications, the Netherlands scores third place behind Germany (2,305) and France (1,907). At rank-number four we find Norway (1,691) and in fifth position is Sweden (1,473 entries). If we take only the last five years (1996-2000), the top five changes quite a bit. Germany (618) is still in the lead, but the runner-up is Spain (614), and in third place we find Switzerland (595). Norway (591) is again at number four and France (579) has come down to place number five. The Netherlands (529) has fallen to place number seven, after Sweden (532) in place six. Whether these changes reflect real shifts in academic priorities in the different countries remains to be seen. One could even refine these

rankings by taking the size of the country or the number of university departments into consideration and thus calculating the number of publications per capita or per department. Although this would probably be fairer to countries with smaller populations such as Norway, Sweden or Switzerland, it would also suggest that these counts have a higher degree of precision than they in fact do, due to the reasons given before. It is better to see the relative value or to take them with a pinch of salt.

Another interesting aspect of the bibliographic overviews in *Sociolinguistica* is the fact that entries are listed in many different languages, or as the editors put it nicely “Since even linguists cannot know all the languages of Europe, titles in less common languages will, in future, be translated into one of the publication languages of the yearbook i.e. English, French or German.” (Ammon, Mattheier and Nelde, 1987: 127).

There is a general trend toward more and more scientific publications being written in the English language (Ammon 1999: 25-26). The Netherlands is seen as one of the countries where this process of anglicisation of science is far advanced. When we take a closer look at the publications listed in *Sociolinguistica* as coming from the Netherlands we may observe that Dutch is the most frequently used language of publication. There are some fluctuations over the years, but between 40 and 70 per cent of the entries from the Netherlands are in Dutch. Less than half are in English, varying in number from 20 to 50 per cent. Relatively few publications, between 1 and 19 per cent, are in other languages, either major languages such as French or German, or minority languages such as Frisian or Turkish.

Conclusion

What conclusion can be drawn about sociolinguistics in the Netherlands on the basis of the foregoing description? Did sociolinguistics make more progress in the years after 1984, when Muysken (1984) wrote his challenging article on stagnation in sociolinguistics? His article led to several reactions from other Dutch sociolinguists, most not agreeing with his bleak sketch of the future of sociolinguistics in the Netherlands. Would they today agree with Muysken that there remains little attention for issues of methodology or for the development of theory? There may seem to be an increase in attention for theoretical issues, but still half of the papers at the third sociolinguistics conference were presented without any reference to theory or theoretical concepts. Many publications still seem an “endless stream of descriptions”. At the same time it is true that collaboration and connections with other fields of study, such as

dialectology, educational studies and psycholinguistics have grown in importance. These links have a positive influence. In the Netherlands, as elsewhere, sociolinguistics is still mainly a “shared perspective” and the field has not developed into a coherent discipline. Huls & Weltens (1999: 21) suppose that the strength and vitality of sociolinguistics are to be found in its diversity. The sociolinguistics conference of 2003 has attracted more participants than any conference before it.

References:

- Ammon, U. (1999) Language in science communication. *Toegepaste Taalwetenschap in Artikelen*, nr 62, jrg 1999, nr 2, pp 25-37.
- Ammon, U. K.J.Mattheier and P.H.Nelde (eds) (1987) *Sociolinguistica, International Yearbook of European Sociolinguistics*, nr 1. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Appel, R. G.Hubers and G.Meijer (1976) *Sociolinguïstiek*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Bennis, H, G. Extra, P. Muysken & J. Nortier (red.) (2002) *Een buurt in beweging. Talen en culturen in het Utrechtse Lombok en Transvaal*. Amsterdam: Aksant.
- Boves, T. and M. Gerritsen (1995) *Inleiding in de sociolinguïstiek*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum.
- Cucchiari, C. and E. Huls (1995) De sociolinguïstiek in het Nederlandse taalgebied anno 1995: centrale thema's en theorieën. *Toegepaste Taalwetenschap in Artikelen*, nr 52, jrg 1995, nr 2, pp 9-22.
- Daan, J. & A.Weijnen (1967) *Taalsociologie*. Amsterdam : Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij
- Deprez, K. (ed) (1984) *Sociolinguistics in the Low Countries*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Dittmar, N. (1978) *Handboek van de sociolinguïstiek*. Utrecht: Het Spectrum. (translated from German original (1973) by W.K.B.Koning).
- Extra, G. et al (2002) *De andere talen van Nederland: thuis en op school*. Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho.
- Extra, G. And D.Gorter (2001) *The Other Languages of Europe*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Feitsma, T. (1990) Taalsociologie en sociolinguïstiek in Friesland, in: *TTT, Interdisciplinair Tijdschrift voor Taal & Tekstwetenschap*, jrg 9, nr 4, pp 243-253.
- Geerts, G. & A. HAGEN (1980) *Sociolinguïstische studies 1/2. Bijdragen uit het Nederlandse taalgebied*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff.
- Gorter, D. et al (1984) *Taal yn Fryslân*. Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy.

- Gorter, D. (ed) (1987) The sociology of Frisian. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, nr 64.
- Hagen, A., P. Stijnen & A Vallen (1975) *Dialekt en onderwijs in Kerkrade*. Nijmegen: NCDN/Nivor.
- Hagen, A. (1989) The Netherlands, in: Ammon, U. et al (hrsg.) *Sociolinguistica 3: Dialekt und Schule in den Europäischen Ländern*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp 61-74.
- Hagen, A.M. and R. Van Hout (1998) De sociolinguïstiek van taal en tongval. *Taal en Tongval*, 1998 nr 11, pp 44-64.
- Houtkoop, H. and T.Koole (2000) *Taal in actie: Hoe mensen communiceren met taal*. Bussum: Coutinho.
- Hudson, R.A. (1982) *Sociolinguïstiek (taal, mens, maatschappij)*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff. (Translated from English original by J.Daan).
- Huls, E. and J.Klatter-Folmer (eds) (1995) *Artikelen van de Tweede Sociolinguïstische Conferentie*. Delft: Eburon.
- Huls, E. and B.Weltens (eds) (1999) *Artikelen van de Derde Sociolinguïstische Conferentie*. Delft: Eburon.
- Huls, E., G.Meijers and H. Van de Velde (1999) De sociolinguïstiek in het Nederlandse taalgebied anno 1999: centrale thema's en theorieën. *Toegepaste Taalwetenschap in Artikelen*, nr 62, jrg 1999, nr 2, pp 9-24.
- Huls, E. (2001) *Dilemma's in menselijke interactie; een inleiding in de strategische mogelijkheden van taalgebruik*. Utrecht: Lemma.
- Hymes, D. (1984) Sociolinguistics: stability and consolidation. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, nr 45, pp 39-45.
- Muysken, P. (1984) 20 jaar sociolinguïstiek? *TTT, Interdisciplinair Tijdschrift voor Taal- & Tekstwetenschap*, jrg 4, nr 4, pp 259-268.
- Koole, T., J.Nortier and B.Tahitu (eds) (2003) *Artikelen van de Vierde Sociolinguïstische Conferentie*. Delft: Eburon.
- Pietersen, L. (1976) *Taalsociologie (minderheden, tweetaligheid, taalachterstand)*. Groningen: Tjeenk Willink.
- Stalpers, J. and F.Coulmas (eds) (1988) The Sociolinguistics of Dutch. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, nr 73.
- Van der Plank, P.H. (1985) *Taalsociologie (Een inleiding tot de rol van taal in het maatschappelijk verkeer)*. Muiderberg: Coutinho.

Van Hout, R., E. Huls and M. Verhallen (1992) De sociolinguïstiek in het Nederlandse taalgebied anno 1991. *Toegepaste Taalwetenschap in Artikelen*, nr 42, jrg 1992, nr 1, pp 7-16.

Van Hout, R. and E. Huls (eds) *Artikelen van de Eerste Sociolinguïstische Conferentie*. Delft: Eburon.

Van de Ven, M.C.H.J. (1969) *Taal in Noordoostpolder : een sociolinguïstisch onderzoek* Amsterdam : Swets & Zeitlinger.

Weltens, B. (1997) Vijftien jaar Nijmeegs taalverliesonderzoek. *Toegepaste taalwetenschap in Artikelen* 56, jrg 1997, nr 1, pp 63-74.

Ytsma, J. (1999) Taalsosjology en sosjolingwistyk yn Fryslân, in: A.Dykstra and R.H.Bremmer Jr (eds) *In skiednis fan 'e Fryske taalkunde*, Ljouwert [Leeuwarden]: Fryske Akademy, pp 213-227.

Websites:

Journals:

Driemaandelijks bladen (quarterly journal for language and folklore in the eastern part of the Netherlands) <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~vandelle/dmb2.htm>

Linguistics in the Netherlands: <http://odur.let.rug.nl/orgs/avt/bundel.htm>

Neder-L: www.neder-l.nl

Nederlandse taalkunde (Dutch Linguistics) <http://atd.let.kun.nl/nt>

Onze taal (Our Language) www.onzetaal.nl The overview of journals is at www.onzetaal.nl/tijdschr/inzicht/inztijd.htm

Organisations/institutes:

Taalunie: www.taalunie.nl or www.taalunie.be

Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics (LOT): <http://www.lot.let.uu.nl/>

Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication (ACLCLC): www.hum.uva.nl/acclc/

Center for Language and Cognition (CLCG): <http://odur.let.rug.nl/clcg/>

Babylon: <http://babylon.uvt.nl/>

General Linguistics and Dialectology, Nijmegen: <http://atd.let.kun.nl/>

Applied Linguistics, Nijmegen: <http://www.kun.nl/ttmb/>

Meertens Instituut: www.meertens.nl

Fryske Akademy: www.fryske-akademy.nl

University Vienna, department of Dutch studies: www.ned.univie.ac.at

NIWI-NOD (experts-databank) www.niwi.nl/us/nod/nod.htm

TCULT-project: <http://let.kub.nl/tcult/>

Mercator-Education project: www.mercator-education.org

Ethnomethodology/Conversational Analysis website: <http://www.pscw.uva.nl/emca/>

Fourth Sociolinguistics Conference 2003: www.anela.nl/lunteren4/programma.htm

* I would like to thank my Dutch sociolinguistic colleagues Leonie Cornips, Guus Extra, Marinel Gerritsen, Piet Hemminga, Erica Huls and Jacomine Nortier for helpful comments and additions to this overview. Of course, any shortcomings remain mine.