

Ideologies of Success for Superdiverse Citizens: the Dutch Testing Regime for Integration and the Online Private Sector¹

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Abstract

This article deals with the testing regime of integration in the Netherlands. More specifically, it shows how a monoglottal and monocultural ideology inhabits the political discourses issued and authored by agencies within the Dutch government when dealing with testing for both admission (toelating) and civic integration (inburgering) of (newly arrived) migrants. Further, it shows how a vigorous private online sector in Dutch language courses has grown up, and has utilized semiotic resources that present Dutch language as the vehicle through which migrants can deliver a positive contribution to social cohesion in mainstream society. The article concludes by advancing some reflections on two issues. First, on what it means to know a language. Second, on the construction of the migrant as an economic actor whose chances for social upscaling are based on the amount and level of certifications one can afford to purchase.

1. A new form of diversity: superdiversity

Prior to the fall of the Berlin wall and the breaking off of the iron curtain, migrant groups were conventionally characterized by large, fairly well-organized ethnic communities initially made of guest workers whose temporary residence had found support in the welcoming labour policies of many northern European countries. As such, the belief of the existence of transparent and definable ethnic communities was also supported by a research tradition that goes under the label of 'migration research'. This tradition primarily dealt with immigrants own acculturation strategies, the (often underachieving) educational trajectories of their members, the language diversity that typified their presence across various sectors of social life, their (often disadvantaged) position on the labour market and, last but not least, their civic and political participation (or lack thereof) in receiving mainstream societies (cf. Extra and

Yağmur 2004; Phalet and Swyngedouw 2002; Hermans 1995; Verlot and Sierens 1997).

From then on, the face of migration in Europe has changed quite dramatically. The aftermath of the political events that have taken place from 1989 onwards, e.g., the Schengen agreement as well as Europe's several enlargements, have testified the emergence of a new pattern of migration that gives rise to new, highly fragmented, less organized, legally differentiated immigrant groups. This more recent migratory pattern differs from the previous one in two ways. First, the motives and forms of migration have changed. Immigrants today do not enter Europe mainly as unskilled labour forces alone. Rather, they enter as refugees, short-term or transitory migrants, highly-educated "knowledge workers", foreign students (to name only a few possibilities). Second, migration to western European countries is no longer supported by (ostensibly) 'welcoming' policies facilitating the entry of large groups of manual labourers (gästarbeiter) like those that characterized migration into northern Europe during the 1960s and the early 1970s and south-

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ern Europe during the early 1990s. It follows that the blending of 'old' and 'new' forms of migration has produced a diversification of the previously existing diversity, for which the term 'superdiversity' has been coined (Vertovec 2006). This diversity is of a more complex kind in that the ethnic origin of people, their motives for migration, their careers as migrants (e.g., sedentary versus short-term and transitory) and their socio-cultural and sociolinguistic biographies cannot be presupposed (see Blommaert and Rampton this volume).

This new migratory pattern is superposed upon an earlier pattern diversity wrought by migration before 1991, and it confronts the popular conceptions of 'the immigrant' with the challenge of grasping who an immigrant actually is as well as grasping his/her administrative position. Consequently, new forms of immigration also raise critical questions about the rationale and future of nation-states in westernized Europe, about the dynamics of their dense and fast-moving urban spaces, and about the embedded but yet omnipresent supremacy of majority perspectives within those institutions that regulate the entrance of migrants. In the process, questions have been raised about the capacity of nation-state bureaucracies to manage migration in a way that preserves something now seen as being under threat: the national order. As a response, politicians—regardless of their political affiliations (see Milani 2007 for the case of Sweden)—have come under increased pressure to propose and enforce measures that restrict access to the nation-state territory. In this process, the official/national language of the host country plays a critical role, as will be shown below. Across Western Europe receiving societies are all, to a greater or lesser extent, engaging with a political and public discourse that requires each individual would-be migrant to demonstrate, via testing, (a) a set level of proficiency in the official standard language, and (b) knowledge of 'mainstream' cultural norms of the host society (cf. Bauman and Briggs 2003; Extra, Spotti and Van Avermaet 2009; Mar-Molinero, Stevenson and Hogan-Brun 2009).

It is against this background that the present article deals with the testing regime for

the integration of (newly arrived) migrants in the Netherlands. It shows how a monoglot language ideology is embedded in the political and public discourses surrounding the testing for both admission (toelating) and civic integration (inburgering). Further, it shows how a vigorous private online sector in language courses has grown up, and utilizes semiotic resources that present Dutch language as the vehicle through which migrants can deliver a positive contribution to social cohesion in mainstream society. The article concludes by advancing some reflections on how the governmental side of the Dutch testing regime and the private online sector work together to construct the immigrant as an economic actor whose chances of social upscaling are based on the amount and level of language-proficiency certifications the individual can afford to purchase.

2. The integration machinery of the nation-state

It is hard to miss the degree to which the new public and political discourse of European nation-states channels indigenous inhabitants' attention to concepts of nation, national language and national loyalty. In these discourses, it is also difficult to miss the extent to which the concept of 'the nation' is being presented to its indigenous inhabitants through ideologies of homogeneity and uniformity on the basis of monoglot language ideologies that overlay the societal diversity present on the ground (Blackledge 2009; McNamara & Shohamy 2008). The nation is therefore imagined as a homogeneous entity, with one language that covers the role of official/national language and with one of its varieties – a standardized register – presented as a neutral medium of communication between and among fellow-citizens (Anderson 1991). The (official) national language triggers images of group belonging, and each citizen's mastery of the national Standard in use is seen as pivotal to the well-being of the society—even when the number of people of actually speak it is quite small, as in the case of RP in England (see Agha 2003).

Ideologies embedded in language testing are thus a very powerful force, insofar as they pres-

ent the acquisition of the national language by immigrants—would-be migrants, newly-arrived ones, and legally recognized long-term residents alike—as commonsensical and as the main tangible proof of the immigrant's progress on a continuum that goes from 'being a foreigner' to 'being an integrated citizen'. In the Netherlands, language test results not only determine who is included and who is excluded from being given the chance to become a new citizen, but also help to shape the terms in which their contribution—or lack thereof—to 'mainstream Dutch society' is understood.

Another important element to be taken up here is what the testing industry understands by the term 'language'. Often, if not always, language is regarded as a gamut of skills that someone possesses precisely because they were born, raised and schooled in a specific nation. It follows that immigrants who enter a nation, and for the case of the Netherlands also a specific slice of those immigrants who are already legally-recognized long-term residents, have to be put in state of learning these skills. The 'good' mastering of these skills triggers positive consequences. For instance, the immigrant who masters cultural norms and values well – say, an Imam who shakes hands with a female Minister of Integration – is credited as being a 'good' citizen insofar as he can be seen to be following the 'mainstream' cultural practices of the receiving society. In the same way, the immigrant who masters the majority language well is often praised by native inhabitants for being a good language user through (informal) accreditations like: 'well, you speak good Dutch for a foreigner'.

The testing industry takes this understanding of language a step further by adding a subtle yet remarkable twist. By seeing language as a stable denotational entity, language becomes something that can be not only measured but also marketed, sold and bought according to the necessities and the means that the language learner/citizen to be as at his/her disposal. As a consequence of lack of (financial) means a failure may follow. The consequences of failure are drastic. A failure on a component of a test,

in fact, stands as a tangible demonstration that the citizen is either unable or (worse) unwilling to contribute to mainstream society. Severe sanctions—e.g., the denial or curtailment of state benefits and the negation of a long-term residence permit—are presented as justifiable measures on this basis.

3. The enregisterment of minorities

Contemporary Dutch immigration policy discourse is anchored in a set of descriptive terms that are applied to immigrant minority group members qua individuals. First, the term *allochtoon*, 'immigrant minority group member' (literally, 'foreign-born') was officially introduced by the Scientific Council for government policies (WRR 1989); this term (opposed to *autochtoon*, 'native-born') refers to a person born abroad and/or who has at least one parent born abroad. The explicit rationale given by the WRR in introducing the term *allochtoon* was the need to abandon an ethnicity-based approach to immigrant minority groups, and to focus instead on migrants as individuals. More recently the term *allochtoon* (plural *allochtonen*) has been subdivided into *westerse allochtonen* (western immigrant minorities) and *niet-westerse allochtonen* (non-western immigrant minorities)—thus effecting a re-ethnicization of this allegedly de-ethnicized term. The former refers to EU citizens as well as immigrants coming from most English-speaking countries—though it also includes Indonesians and Japanese. In the political discourse, members of this category are hardly mentioned as jeopardy for social cohesion, although within the whole group Polish, Bulgarian and Romanians are often singled out as detrimental for the native manual labour workforce. The latter, instead, includes mostly members of the Turkish, Moroccan and Somali communities as well as new arrivals from other countries (Van den Tillart et al. 2000) who are presented as people in need of societal and linguistic integration. All of the above are ascription terms currently used in political and public discourse by Dutch-native people to contrast with the self-reference terms such as *autochtonen* (indigenous group members) and *Nederlanders* (Dutch people).

Any dwelling upon this ascription jargon of minorities pales when compared with the armor of terms brought by the Dutch testing regime in its most recent developments. First, we find the term *toelatingstest* (admission test) a test that takes place in the immigrant's own country of origin and it serves the purpose of making him eligible to be considered for admission to the Netherlands. Second, there is the term *inburgering* (civic integration) (De Heer, 2004). This term, that has appeared for the first time in the *Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers* (Law on the Integration of Newcomers) (WIN, 1998), deals with the need for societal and linguistic integration of *nieuwkomers* (newcomers), i.e., newly arrived immigrants on Dutch soil who are not qualified as refugees or asylum seekers. It also regards *oudkomers* (oldcomers), generally low-educated immigrants who are either long-term residents in the Netherlands and who, as it happens in the vast majority of cases, already hold a permanent residence permit.

In the following session the reader is introduced to a snapshot of the discourse contained in the laws and regulations for integration in the Netherlands from 1998 till nowadays. As much reference will be made to the measuring of language proficiency in Dutch following the terms spelled out by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the chapter deals now with the structure of the CEFR, its original purpose as well as with the use that the Dutch government has made of this instrument within the framework of testing for integration.

The Common European Framework of Reference

In many nation-states across Europe, one of the key features of integration policy is the official national language. As for the Netherlands, knowledge of Dutch language is key to admission, integration and leads to the applicant being awarded a permanent residence permit or naturalization. In order to give body and implement this policy of linguistic homogenization the CEFR has been used in order to mark the level of language knowledge and proficiency that immigrants have to achieve. The CEFR, that has therefore become a structural pillar of the integration regime,

defines levels of language knowledge and proficiency that allow measuring the advancements of immigrants during their integration trajectory. The CEFR major aim is to offer a frame of reference, a meta-language. It wants to promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries. It aims to provide a transnational basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications. A further aim is to assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts. And a final aim is to create transparency in helping partners in language teaching and learning to describe the levels of proficiency required by existing standards and examinations in order to facilitate comparisons between different qualifications' systems. It is important to emphasize that the CEFR is not a prescriptive model or a fixed set or book of language aims. Rather, it has a quantitative and a qualitative dimension. The first cater for learning development in domains (school, home, work), functions (ask, command, inquire), notions (south, table, father), situations (meeting, telephone), locations (school, market), topics (study, holidays, work), and roles (listener in audience, participant in a discussion). The qualitative dimension, instead, expresses the degree of effectiveness (precision) and efficiency (leading to communication) of language learning. A set of 6 levels and sublevels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) have been distinguished for use as common standards that should help course providers to relate their products such as course books, teaching courses, and assessment instruments to a common reference system.

As mentioned before, the cornerstone of integration policies in most European countries is the official national language. As for the Netherlands, knowledge of both Dutch language and Dutch society are the most important pre-conditions for those who aspire to be admitted to the Netherlands in the first place and for those who wish to achieve a residence permit and later on citizenship. In order to give body to this monolingual approach to language policy, the agencies involved in the making of the admission, integration and citizenship test – although as we will

see, the latter has been embodied in the integration test after June 2006 – have used the CEFR as reference point. The use of the CEFR reveals though quite problematic for two reasons. First, the CEFR is used for the admission and integration examination even when a vast majority of the people being asked to undertake these tests has low literacy levels or is illiterate (Kurvers and Stockmann, 2009). Second, the level descriptors of the CEFR are mainly aimed at the measuring of the language knowledge of highly educated people. Lower- and semi-skilled people that have no higher education background or do not study at a higher level do not belong to the target group, and from there the idiosyncratic making authored by national authorities of new CEFR levels like (A1-) employed for the admission test. The role played by the CEFR in the Dutch testing machinery becomes even more problematic when one looks at the consequences of not matching the minimum level required. On the basis of being unsuccessful, people are refused citizenship, residence or even admission. Interesting though is that the criteria employed for the descriptors of the proficiency levels were not initially thought out as measurements for the language testing of immigrants.

4. The Dutch integration regime: an overview of its development

The legislative pillars of the Dutch testing regime for newly arrived migrants are built from 1998 onwards (WIN 1998). Before that, there is but one governmental document (RRIN, 1996) that pointed to the obligation of newcomers to learn Dutch. The law approved in 1998 provided that newcomers - from the moment of their arrival in the Netherlands - were obliged to attend courses of Dutch as a second language and understanding of Dutch society with a particular focus on work situations. Further, they were also advised to take final examinations that had mostly the purpose to control whether the attendance to these Dutch as a second language courses actually happened. Although these courses were in place, there was no prescription for the level of language proficiency to be achieved. The law proposed only a level – more specifically level

3 that is comparable with level B1 of the CEFR – to which one should have strived to. The situation, instead, changed dramatically in 2003 in the General Governmental Accord (Hoofdlijnenaccord 2003) and later even more in 2004 with the introduction of the governmental resolution on the Revision of Civic Integration Regulations (Contourennota Herziening Inburgeringstelse 2004). In comparison with the law approved in 1998, there are a series of changes that show the new line of thought embraced by the Dutch government in terms of integration of newly arrived migrants. These changes are:

- the use of admission test that has to be taken before being allowed to enter the Netherlands;
- both newcomers and oldcomers are obliged by the law to undergo civic integration in Dutch society;
- this obligation is on the shoulder of the migrant both in financial and content terms. This also implies the freedom of choice in selecting which package will help the applicant in fulfilling his/her civic integration obligations;
- the obligation to civic integration is fulfilled only when all the examination components have been passed.

From the revision brought forward in 2004, newcomers to the Netherlands come across as the main cause of concern. New though is the fact that another group considered to be worthy of integration were oldcomers that were considered not to master sufficiently the Dutch language and who were receiving unemployment benefits (refer to Pluymen 2004 for a critique of the link made in these regulations between permanent residence status and social benefits). Next to that, oldcomers who had already been given a permanent residence permit or a Dutch passport were also invited – though not compelled – to participate in the integration trajectory. The following rules count for this group of approximately 85.000 allochthonous citizens (to be): compulsory intake at the immigration office of the municipality of residence, own financing of the civic integration trajectory, choice given from existing civic integration programmes and

providers where these programmes have to be approved by the government and allow the applicant to become integrated within three and a half years for newcomers and five years for oldcomers. These changes therefore have led to the introduction of the admission test abroad and the revision of the civic integration exam once arrived in the Netherlands. Concerning the norms that make up for these two exams the government has appointed in 2004 a committee that was asked to give advice on how to implement these changes. The committee, most widely known as Commissie Franssen has given its first advisory opinion in 2004. On the basis of criteria such as functionality, possibility of achievement, selection of previous educational trajectories and motivation, the committee came to the conclusion that proficiency in written Dutch language skills should not be examined while the proficiency for oral skills should be fixed below the lowest level of the CEFR. This level has then taken the classification A1- (see Franssen 2004). The committee also advised not to test Knowledge of Dutch Society because of the low level of knowledge of the Dutch language and to substitute this testing with introduction classes to life in the Netherlands. This final recommendation was not taken into consideration and it is for this reason that the admission test has a component on knowledge of Dutch society (IND 2005).

The Law for Integration Abroad (*Wet Inburgering Buitenland*) is introduced in March 2006. Immigrants who want to enter the Netherlands out of their own will ought to undergo an exam for spoken Dutch and an exam for knowledge of Dutch society before that they can enter the Netherlands. It is in June 2006, with the purpose to be enforced from January 1st 2007, that the then Minister of Integration Rita Verdonk proposes the last changes to the Law for Civic Integration (*Wet Inburgering Nederland*) These changes though have encountered strong resentment from a majority of the members of the parliament who remained against the unequal treatment of 'native' and 'naturalized' Dutch nationals. Verdonk's appeal to the parliament for 'political courage' did not succeed, not even with her own

party members in parliament, and led to a halving of the original target group numbers. Moreover, many amendments made the proposed law even more detailed and complex, and therefore even more difficult to handle in practice. In order to cope with the difficulties encountered, Verdonk in accordance with the wishes of a majority in parliament decided to introduce the new law in 2007 only partially, i.e. for newcomers without Dutch citizenship. In June 2006, the Dutch cabinet fell after its refusal, in spite of a favorable yet narrow majority, to approve a general pardon for those asylum seekers without a legal residence status who had entered the Netherlands before April 2001. The centre-left government that followed in November 2006 approved this pardon as one of its first measures. On November 13 2007, Ella Vogelaar – then Minister of Integration, Housing and Communities – released a press statement that can be taken as tangible proof of a discourse shift to a more egalitarian climate within the Dutch political discourse. Her declaration reads as follows:

“The cabinet wants to stop the increasing polarization in the Netherlands. [...] Integration can only succeed when both non-native and native accepting Dutch society as their society. They have to support the liberties, rights and duties connected with the Dutch civic state. [...] The cabinet appeals to all citizens to participate actively in society on the basis of mutual acceptance and equivalence.” (Vogelaar, 2007 [Translation MS])

Although it announces a change in the tone of the integration debate, the consequence of the two most recent laws on civic integration are remarkable. The applicant who does not manage to pass the admission exam is not allowed to be admitted to enter the Netherlands. The applicant who does not pass the civic integration exam in the Netherlands, instead, does not get any permanent resident permit (in the case of newcomers) or cannot apply for citizenship (in the case of an oldcomer). After 2007 though, other complementary measures have followed in particular those measures that deal with the actual implementation and the costs/financing of the civic integration trajectory and its shift from being partly subsidized through a loan from

the municipality to being solely a responsibility of the immigrant. In the most recent governmental resolution, we read:

“It can be expected, from anyone that comes to reside in the Netherlands, that he or she abides by the rules that are applied here and that he or she actively participates in society through the mastering of the Dutch language, attending education and work. Qualifications are the key to successful participation and integration.” [Translation MS]

Further within the government pact signed by the parties making up for the majority of the parliament, the following measures have been spelled out:

“Immigrant and asylum seekers are solely responsible for their own integration in our country. For those that for these purposes, do not dispose of enough means, the cabinet gives the possibility to loan money, which implies that the money loaned will have to be paid back. Ultimately, the resolution adopted by the cabinet is that the failing of the integration exam, with the exclusion of exceptional circumstances, brings to the confiscation of the temporary residence permit. The cabinet further proposes to accept the bilateral agreement between EU and Turkey making the due changes on the regulation that inhabitants of Turkey fall within integration regulations.” (Gedoog Akkoord, 30 september 2010 [Translation MS]).

The coalition agreement entitled Freedom and Democracy (Vrijheid en Democratie) stresses once more that immigrants who want to reside in the Netherlands have to follow the rules spelled out for civic integration and participate actively in the fields of education and work. In relation to the civic integration exams, the agreement states that:

“The examination requirements are made sharper [...] there is the planned use of a test through which it can be determined whether the loyalty to the Netherlands is deeper than the loyalty to any other country” (Vrijheid en Democratie 2010: 23 [Translation MS]).

In April 2011, the changes brought to the Law for Integration Abroad were put into practice. From this date on, the norms for oral exam abroad have been moved from level A1- to level A1 and immigrants have to take a test for Literacy and

Reading Comprehension scoring at least level A1-. On June 17, 2011 the cabinet approves another series of amendments, such as: civic integration applicants pay for their own costs with the possibility to loan for those who have insufficient means for payment; the examination must be passed within three years. The language proficiency level that the applicant has to reach stays at least at CEFR level A2 for newcomers. Also the level for knowledge of Dutch society remains untouched though the exam consists of a central part and of an ancillary part. In the meantime, the level that has been proposed for naturalization is CEFR level B1 (the level implied by the State Exam Dutch, Programme 1). The Netherlands has been the first country to introduce an examination for Dutch language in the country of origin of the applicant and on approving entry on the basis of a computerized test via the phone. The admission test puts the applicant under a strong financial strain in that not all places have a Dutch embassy ready available where the test can be taken, it further require some technology skills in being able to operate a DVD and a computer. But above all this, the exam Knowledge of Dutch society – a language test sold as a civic knowledge test – asks the potential migrant to make his or her own the norms and values of mainstream Dutch society. It is clear that these tests therefore do not tend to enhance the integration of the applicant in a shorter period of time, rather these two tests underscore the gap that there can be among applicants in terms of literacy, language skills, computer skills and socio-economic background. So doors appear open for those applicants that fall within the category of literate, financially self-supportive, technologically skilled, who can prepare for the exam and who have a high employability rate once they have entered the Netherlands. The exam for civic integration in foreign countries constructs therefore an implicit hierarchization in the immigrant population that is considered suitable to enter the Netherlands. Table 1 reports a schematic overview of the historical developments that have taken place in the civic integration regulations from 1998 till 2011:

Year	Which resolution	For who	Requirements	Consequences
1998	WIN (Law for Intergration of Newcomers)	Newcomers	To attend a course for Dutch as a second language To take an exam Obligation of participation, but no obligation to pass	none
2003/ 2004	Hoofdlijnenakkoord/ Contourennota Approval Outline/Coutours Note			
2006	WIB (Law for Integration Abroad)	Newcomers	To test for TGN (Spoken Dutch) To test for KNS (Knowledge of Dutch Society) Obligation to pass	MVV (provisional permission to stay)
2007	WI (Law for Civic Integration)	Newcomers and a specific group of oldcomers	Main part of the test: Test Spoken Dutch Digital Practice Exam Exam Knowledge of Dutch Society Part of the test centred on real life situations: Portfolio and/or assessments Newcomers to fulfill this part within 3 and a half years, oldcomers within 5 years	Residence Permit with possibility to naturalization
2011	Changes brought to the WIB	Newcomers	To set higher pass norms for Test Spoken Dutch To add GBL test (Literacy and Reading Comprehension)	
Adopted Resolution	Changes to the Integration Benchmarking Proposals for changes to the Integration Benchmarking and its examination	Newcomers and oldcomers	Pass within 3 years sanctions have been made heavier	
Proposal	Changes to the Naturalization Benchmarking		Pass level brought from A2 to B1	

Table 1: overview of civic integration regulation from 1998 - 2011

Source: Author's original table

Also worth pointing out though is that from 1 April 2011 the civic integration exam has also seen a new assessment component being included, that is the Literacy and Reading Comprehension Exam. In order to pass this part of the integration exam, the examinee has to be able to read in Dutch (through the use of the Latin alphabet) at CEFR level A1. This exam has five different tasks that are: 1) reading words out loud; 2) reading sentences out loud, 3) reading parts of texts out loud, 4) fill in sentences that have been given incomplete 5) answering questions related to a short text. As for the other two parts of the examination the answers are spoken into a phone receiver. These answers are then analyzed by a speech recognition programme that assigns a score to the answer. The whole civic integration exam costs 350 Euros. An applicant can take the test as many times as he wishes within the time given for reaching a pass level in all of the components. Each time though s/he will have to pay 350 Euros in order to take the test. Only when the applicant has passed all three parts of the integration exam will s/he be given permission



Figure 1: Coming to Holland

Source: http://www.davinci.nl/site/index.php/educatie/inburgering/cursus_inburgeringsdiploma (accessed on March 1, 2011)

to apply for a visa to enter the Netherlands and with that, a temporary residence permit.

5. The online private sector market in test-preparation materials

On the side of the integration regime industry, the online private sector holds a strong preparatory role for the migrant. This sector, in fact, does not offer preparatory courses for learning the Dutch language alone, it also advertises specific support courses that promise to help aspiring newcomers to pass the admission test and admitted newcomers to fulfill the requirements spelled out in the integration test.

Consider now Figure 1 and Figure 2 below. These are taken from the website of a regional educational centre (normally addressed in Dutch under the acronym of ROC) – a semi-governmental institution that has shifted from being directly linked to municipalities immigrants quota to having to compete with other integration trajectory providers – offering Dutch language courses for integration to (newly arrived) migrants:



Figure 2: Coming to Holland

Source: http://www.davinci.nl/site/index.php/educatie/inburgering/cursus_inburgeringsdiploma (accessed on March 1, 2011)

The title that was set on the website on top of this image in bolded caps is: **Coming to Holland**, echoing the title of the book that students have to use to prepare to the admission test. The two characters portrayed are migrants who might have passed the admission test to and who are now entering the integration trajectory that leads to a permanent residence permit. Both images provide norms of what an immigrant should do when wanting to achieve societal success (see also Blommaert et al. 2009 for the analysis of the only market sector around English accents). In both images, the clothing they wear points towards a ‘westernized’ appearance. The lady in Figure 1 wears a tunic and a headscarf, two ethnic markers that suggest a Muslim identity. These are combined with modern black trousers and high-heeled shoes indicating a white-collar work environment. The gentleman in Figure 2 instead wears a blue, long-sleeved collared shirt. Both are images of people who are literate: the male figure holds a pile of books, holding one out toward the viewer; the female figure holds a laptop. Both of them are migrants who either already had or are currently developing (computer) literacy skills before arriving in the Netherlands and who embrace education and learning the Dutch language.

Consider now Example 1 below, which reports the text used by the website of a private sector provider offering a Dutch language course in preparation to the integration exam. The text reads as follows:

Example 1

Effectief en begrijpelijk communiceren
[Communicate in an effective and understandable manner]

Goede kennis van de Nederlandse taal is onmisbaar op de werkvloer en in uw privéleven. Als u effectief en begrijpelijk met anderen wilt communiceren, zowel mondeling als schriftelijk, is het belangrijk dat u het Nederlands goed beheerst. Wilt u hogerop komen maar denkt u dat dit niet lukt door onvoldoende kennis van het Nederlands? Wilt u uw schrijfvaardigheid verbeteren of graag serieus genomen worden als gesprekspart-

ner? NUOVIA biedt u voor elke leerwens een passende cursus Nederlands.

[A good knowledge of the Dutch language is unmissable at work and in your private life. If you want to communicate with others effectively and in an understandable manner, both orally as well as in writing, it is important that you master Dutch well. Do you want to stand out but you think that it does not work out because of an insufficient knowledge of Dutch? Do you want to improve your writing skills or would you really like to be taken seriously when engaged in conversation? Nuovia offers you a suitable Dutch course for each learning wish.]

The opening line stating that ‘[a] good knowledge of the Dutch language is unmissable at work and in your private life’ uses, in the original Dutch text, the possessive adjective [uw] that has an honorific function that could easily be used in a highly professional store when a client is about to purchase something. This insight is further supported by the hypothetical phrase “als u effectief en begrijpelijk met anderen wilt communiceren [...]” where the personal pronoun [u] also has an honorific function. Dutch language is therefore sold to the hypothetical distinguished client not solely as a primary need for its settlement in the host country. Further, the course that is being advertised stresses the development of both spoken and written skills as a way to allow the possible client to achieve a position in his social network, that is both at work as well as at home. What is being sold here is language, though not just the Dutch language as a definite code with a system of rules that must be followed for correctness of one’s expression. What is also being sold to the purchaser here is a specific representation of what is valued in Dutch society and the expectations that people at work in this society may hold, i.e. that one is able to speak and write a specific register of the national language – the Standard one – that grants someone the possibility of being understood and taken seriously at home and at work. Following Silverstein (2006:485) what the private sector advertises here therefore is not Dutch language alone. Rather, it is Dutch

language together with the ‘semiotic consubstantiality’ that the migrant, now purchaser of a good, is and becomes what he speaks and writes. In example 2 below, instead, we read:

Example 2

Schrijf je brieven en rapportages maar voel je je af en toe onzeker over de spelling of over de formulering van een zin? Als je daar iets aan wilt doen, kun je aan de slag met één van onze online cursussen met personal coach. Je kunt er ook voor kiezen om zelfstandig te oefenen zonder online coach.

[Do you write letters and reports but you feel that now and then you are uncertain about the spelling or the way you should formulate something? If you want to do something about it, you can start working with one of our online courses with a personal coach. You can also choose to work on your own without an online coach.]

Example 2 employs first Dutch in its general description, possibly to market the product to someone who has already achieved a certain level of proficiency in Dutch. The example then switches to English when it comes to publicize the course packages and their prices. There are three courses being sold: Dutch for CITO; Dutch with no mistakes and Dutch for foreigners. Two things come to the eye. First – and without giving any explanation on the website – the provider draws a distinction between Dutch with no mistakes and Dutch for foreigners, possibly on the basis of the assumption that foreign learners of Dutch as a second language make other mistakes than indigenous, low educated learners of Dutch. Second, it is the selling of the course Dutch for CITO, where CITO is the examination taken by primary school pupils at the end of their primary schooling career that is intriguing. The economic urgency of achieving success through Dutch language starts as early as primary schooling. It was unspecified though whether this course was designed for autochthonous, allochthonous or newly arrived pupils. The packages and price was followed by a testimonial from a student that has rounded a Dutch language course through this provider. The testimonial states as follows:

Online courses with a personal coach

a) Dutch for cito	eur 189	more information
b) Dutch with no mistakes	eur 249	more information
c) Dutch for foreigners	eur 249	more information

Dankzij mijn cursus Nederlands ben ik nu receptioniste! Ik denk nu zelfs over een vervolgopleiding bij het hbo!

[Thank to my Dutch course I am now a receptionist! I am now thinking of a follow up course of studies at a higher vocational education institution!]

The better and the sooner someone masters Dutch well, the sooner s/he can become an active member of the workforce, as in the case of the testimonial stating that thanks to her Dutch course she is now covering the post of receptionist. The online private sector for Dutch language learning for integration abounds with offers like these. Example 1, Example 2 and the testimonial have all a metonymic function. The migrant is a language user and language use is a purchasable good that allows the well articulated/ easy to understand/ literate migrant to achieve a better social positioning through finding a job, at work as well as at home.

6 Testing regimes and the (new) citizen as economic actor

Migration itineraries have become increasingly diverse and complex. These changing dynamics have caused an unparalleled diversification of diversity in all societies hosting migrants, and have exposed the difficulties that nation-states face in dealing with migrants, their societal insertion and the determination of their legal status (see for instance Blommaert & Marijns 2008 for the asylum-seeking procedures). The nation-state reacts to this incipient diversification of diversity through language, and it sets up, at least in the Dutch case, a language testing regime that starts from the application of the migrant to enter the country and that is supported by a public and a private sector. Within this industry, language becomes a means, if not the means, through which nations respond to supranational socio-economic processes of globalization. As retrieved from the glimpse we have had at the online private sector for preparation to the integration exam, it is through one language alone that the (newly arrived) migrant can be 'taken seriously', 'improve his social position' both at work as well in his daily life. Although (newly arrived) migrants bring along linguistic resources that are perfectly valuable *ipso facto*, these resources are disqualified because they do not fit in the herderian equation of nation, language and territory. Not only is the disqualification put on the immigrant's own linguistic resources fairly heavy. Also, as showed, the economic demands

for having access and preparing for these tests as well as the sanctions that may follow from an eventual failure are deep.

The above urges to draw two considerations. The first touches upon what it is to know a language in order to be ascribed to the category of 'integrated citizen'. The second deals with the construction of the immigrant as an economic actor whose chances of social upscaling are based on the amount and level of language-proficiency certifications that he can afford to purchase. Sociolinguistics has started to rediscover the notion that no language user is equally competent in the whole of a language (see Blommaert & Backus (2011) for a more recent re-appreciation of the concept of sociolinguistic repertoires. If we turn this insight to the testing regime for integration, we can advance the claim that no indigenous inhabitant of the Netherlands neither knows nor uses all of the Dutch language equally well. Rather s/he uses registers, very specific bits of language that allow him/her to function in different situations that imply a linguistic exchange. This is the reason why, when confronted with a bit of Dutch language that has to do with the law, whether a fine for speeding or a redundancy letter from the local employment office, the 'indigenous' (autochtoon) inhabitant too may be dependent on the language knowledge of others, e.g., anyone competent in the register at hand. This somewhat trivial insight invites us to ponder the language a newly arrived migrant is asked to learn, to know and to use so as to be declared an integrated citizen. In order to tackle this point we should go back to the classical conceptualization of citizenship. The possibility that the State had to provide a citizen with means that would allow him to participate actively in society was what defined the citizen as citizen. Now instead we see that within the testing regimes industry but also more generally within a neo-liberal conceptualization of citizenship, this model of citizenship does not apply anymore. Although the ascertaining of citizenship is anchored on high modernist elements such as learning the language of the host country and learning it as fast as possible, the citizen (to be) becomes an economic actor. That is,

someone who is asked to show his potential social value through his investment in the language learning trajectory. Following this neo-liberal understanding of citizenship, the citizen has become an economic being largely based on a mechanism of market consumption. Further, his loyalty to the host nation is measured on the basis of his capacity to purchase which

becomes individual drive to participate in mainstream society. If this is so, then we are left with the question of whether language knowledge is the essential factor that gains the immigrant the way to integration or whether it is the possibility to purchase a service, i.e., an online course in support to the integration exam, that renders the him able to become integrated.

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