



Dutch: Biography of a Language

Roland Willemyns

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More than 22 million people speak Dutch-primarily in the Netherlands, Belgium, Suriname, and the Antilles. Roland Willemyns here offers a well-researched and highly readable survey of the Dutch language in all its historical, geographic, and social aspects.

Willemyns tells a story of language contact and conflict. From its earliest days, Dutch has been in intense contact with other languages both within and outside the borders of the Low Countries, particularly with French, Frisian, and German.

The first part of *Dutch* concentrates on the historical development of standard Dutch and its dialects. The second part focuses on contemporary Dutch, including its many dialects in Flanders and Holland (some of them on the verge of extinction). Willemyns pays special attention to important questions in the history of Dutch, particularly the contentious matter of the global spread of Dutch through colonization-which led to "exotic" variations such as Afrikaans, pidgins, and creoles-and whether Dutchmen and Flemings are "separated by the same language." His final chapter tries to shed some light on the future of Dutch, and the impact of such "new" varieties as *Poldernederlands* (in Holland) and *Verkavelingsvlaams* (in Flanders). Placing the Dutch story in the context of other West-Germanic languages like German and English, *Dutch: Biography of a Language* is the only English language history of Dutch and will be sure to interest a global audience of students of Dutch, those of Dutch descent, and linguists and other scholars wishing to learn more about Dutch.

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