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Guest editors' preface: [special issue: Dutch between English and German]

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Guest Editors' Preface

It is not uncommon for the naive native speaker of English to confuse German and Dutch. One reason for this lies in the English names for the languages, but another reason is that Dutch and German sound similar to the anglophone ear. Many, perhaps even most, university students of Dutch in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the anglophone world come to Dutch with a good knowledge of German and again, often draw parallels between their mother tongue, and Dutch and German. Of course, professional linguists know that English and German are neighbors of Dutch and members of the same Germanic language family. However, comments by naive native speakers serve to highlight questions about the typological contrasts between these three languages.

A landmark study of these contrasts is C. B. van Haeringen's short monograph *Nederlands tussen Duits en Engels*, published in 1956. In ten brief chapters, Van Haeringen tries to offer, if not a comprehensive then certainly a thorough comparison of various structural aspects of the three languages concerned, covering mainly a number of traditional parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, numerals, and verbs), word formation, and syntax, but also the development of the three standard languages, sounds and spelling, and the lexicon. Van Haeringen (1956: 74) concludes:

[my] comparison has shown that in what is predominantly understood as "grammar", i.e. morphology, Dutch stands midway between English and German, and in some respects crosses the midway point towards English. If, nevertheless, English sounds stranger to us Dutchmen than German, this is chiefly due to the large lexicological correspondences between Dutch and German. [...] English also distinguishes itself sharply from Dutch and German separately through characteristic syntactic peculiarities.

Although Van Haeringen 1956 did not open the floodgates of trilingual contrastive studies, a steady trickle of such work emerged in the 50 years after its publication.¹ However, in 2005, when its fiftieth

¹ A quick keyword search in the *Bibliografie van de Nederlandse Taal- en Literatuurwetenschap* (BNTL; <http://www.bntl.nl/bntl/>) of the terms *contrastief*

anniversary appeared on the horizon, a conference was organized in Berlin whose proceedings (Hüning et al. 2006) were published in that anniversary year. With subsequent events in Sheffield in 2008 and in Oldenburg in 2010, a tradition of such conferences seems to be developing, probably inspired, in part at least, by a recent resurgence of interest in contrastive language studies. Where Van Haeringen (1956) concentrated on traditional grammar and particularly on morphology, the focus in the early twenty-first century is clearly broader, as can be gleaned from the contents pages of Hüning et al. 2006 and from this special issue. A central theme in most recent papers in this area is the nature of the “in-betweenness” of Dutch, which is observed from a variety of angles, such as language acquisition and aphasia, politeness, language contact and change, and grammaticalization. New methodologies have also been introduced, in particular corpus linguistics.

This special issue, inspired by such recent developments, presents a rich sample of current comparative work on “Dutch between English and German.” It contains nine papers ranging from the origin of Dutch (Buccini), via early Frisian-Franconian language contact (De Vaan), the history of strong verbs (Dammel, Nowak, & Schmuck; Nowak) and (the history of) adverbial morphology (Diepeveen & Van de Velde), to the acquisition of the phonological systems (Simon & Leuschner) and spelling of the three languages (Borgwald, Borger, & Jakob), aphasia (Ruigendijk), and the clustering behavior of modal particles (Braber & McLelland). The authors represent institutions in Canada, Flanders, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In terms of linguistic systems, it is concerned with phonology, orthography, morphology, lexicology, and pragmatics. In terms of theory, it draws on, *inter alia*, category frequency, language contact theory, morphological economy theory, psychological grain size theory, third-language acquisition, and the transparency principle.

In addition to the contributors to this special issue, we would like to thank the editor of JGL, Robert Murray, for his guidance and patience. We are also grateful to the colleagues who by acting as referees helped to ensure the quality of this volume.

Engels Duits brings up 66 titles between 1956 and 2006. A more detailed investigation would be required to determine the relevance of each publication and to locate items not listed in BNLT.

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Matthias Hüning, Berlin
Fred Weerman, Amsterdam

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