

# Going going Dutch?

At the time of writing (Feb 92), most potential contributors to *ET* appear to be interested in two topics:

○ The 'great debate' on international standard English that has been fed by the views of Sir Randolph Quirk on the one side (in 'Language varieties and standard language', *ET*21, Jan 90) and Braj Kachru on the other (in 'Liberation linguistics and the Quirk Concern' (*ET*25, Jan 91). See Forthcoming (p.64) for the next developments.

○ The nature and potential of computer corpora, the discussion of which was set in train by Sidney Greenbaum (in 'ICE: the International Corpus of English', *ET*28, Oct 91), is sustained by Mike Rundell and Penny Stock (Longman) and Jane Bradbury (COBUILD) in this issue, and shows signs of running for some time to come.

There is also a strong and gratifying flow of material on all kinds of topics from many parts of the world. And yet . . . And yet . . . I keep returning to Paul Christophersen's article 'A bilingual Denmark' (*ET*27, Jul 91), and its implications for the Germanic language family. In this issue we have a response from Jens-Peter Green on German and English, and I have had a further promise from Norway, but the topic seems to need more discussion still. For example, something quite profound appears to be happening to Dutch:

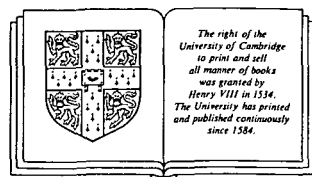
○ From 'Endpiece', by Geoffrey Kingscott, the Oct 91 editorial in *Language International*, a magazine edited in England but published in Amsterdam: 'I hereby give notice that I henceforth give up the attempt to speak Dutch when I go to the Netherlands . . . [T]he reply is invariably given in English . . . To the Dutch, it is clear, their language is just a patois for use with their own kind, and English is the language to be used for communication with anyone else.'

○ From Peter Spinks in *The Observer* (9 Feb 92): 'The Dutch are on the way to becoming the first people to abolish their own language for teaching in schools and universities across the Netherlands . . . [N]ow academics have recommended [in a commission set up by the Education Ministry] that Dutch should cease to be the country's official teaching medium . . . If the commission's proposal is acted on, most of the institutions that change are likely to opt for English, already widely used in higher education.'

These are just two of many straws in the wind now blowing across the EC, EFTA, and other territories and institutions of Europe.

Tom McArthur

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