

The Linguistic Landscape in the Netherlands

Area: main territory in northwestern Europe (Low Countries) and several small territories in West India and the Caribbean.

Languages:

Dutch

Dutch is spoken in the Netherlands (official language), in Belgium (one of the official languages) and in France and Germany by some linguistic minorities.

Classification: Indo-European> Germanic> West Germanic> Low-Saxon - Low Franconian> Low Franconian> Dutch.

Speaker population: Dutch is spoken by a large population, including the majority of the Dutch population and some other linguistic populations within or outside Europe (Caribbean). In 2018 the population of native speakers was estimated to be around 29.000.000.

Language vitality: Dutch is considered institutional since it has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community in the Netherlands.

Dutch (Zeeuws or Zeelandic)

Zeeuws Dutch is spoken in the southwestern rural parts of the Netherlands (Zeeland province) and in Belgium.

It constitutes a family of Friso-Franconian Dutch dialects that deviate from Standard Dutch.

Classification: Indo-European> Germanic> West Germanic> Weser-Rhine Germanic> Low Franconian> Dutch (Zeeuws).

Native speakers are estimated to be around 220.000.

There is no direct danger of extinction for these dialects, given that, in many villages, 90% of the youngsters speak Zeeuws.

Frisian (Western)

Frisian is spoken in the Netherlands, mostly in Friesland province in the North of the Netherlands, in Groningen province, and also in Germany.

For over half of the inhabitants of Friesland, Frisian is their native language and for a large part of them it is a second language.

Classification: Indo-European> Germanic> West Germanic> Frisian> Western Frisian.

Frisian is very closely related to English.

It includes three dialectal varieties: Clay Frisian, Wood Frisian and South or Southwest Frisian.

Speaker population: Frisian is spoken by a mid-sized population.

In 2001, the population of native speakers was estimated to be 470.000.

Language vitality: Frisian is considered institutional since it has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community.

Nederlandse Gebarentaal

This is the Dutch Sign Language.

Classification: Sign Language> Deaf community sign language> Nederlandse Gebarentaal.

Speaker population: Nederlandse Gebarentaal is used by a mid-sized population.

In 2019, the number of speakers was estimated to be about 15.000.

Language vitality: this sign language is considered to be stable, because it is not being sustained by formal institutions, but it is still the norm for a part of the population (the deaf community) in the Netherlands.

English

Classification: Indo-European> Germanic> West Germanic> English.

English is spoken by the majority of the Dutch population (90-93%) as a second/ foreign language.

English is an official language in the municipality of Amsterdam and in the special Dutch municipalities of Saba and Sint Eustatius (BES Islands), as well as the states of Curaçao and Sint Maarten. It is widely spoken on Saba and Sint Eustatius. On Saba and St. Eustatius, the majority of the education is in English only, with some bilingual English-Dutch schools.

Papiamentu

Classification: Creole> Iberian based

Papiamentu is a Portuguese-based Creole, with considerable Dutch and Spanish influence.

It is an official language in the Dutch Caribbean (Bonaire, Curaçao, Aruba, Sint-Eustatius and Saba).

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