Dutch in Indonesia: Language Attrition or Language Contact?

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1 Introduction

This paper reports on an investigation of changes in the use of the Dutch standard language by one person, Freddy (fictitious name), who migrated from the Netherlands to Indonesia at the age of thirteen. For several reasons this case study can be seen as important in the discussion in the field of language attrition.

Generally speaking, a case study provides the opportunity to study in depth the changes that take place in an individual’s first language when s/he has been living in a second/foreign language environment for many years because all levels of the grammar as well as receptive skills can be closely observed.

More specifically, Freddy’s case is an interesting one because he was fully socialized in Dutch (until the age of thirteen he lived in the Netherlands), but had been living in Indonesia for more than thirty years at the time of the data collection (see section 2). Moreover, Freddy had always lived on his own, i.e., he was not a member of a community of Dutch immigrants nor was he married. Although he regularly speaks to Dutch tourists, reads Dutch newspapers, and writes letters in Dutch, it can be expected that Freddy provides a good example of how an individual can maintain his first language without the continuous support of a broad speech community and even without an L1-stimulating family life. In other words, Freddy’s case can give us some insights into the process of L1 maintenance and attrition on a purely individual level.

Finally, Freddy’s case is an interesting one because of the typological difference between Dutch and Indonesian, the latter belonging to the Austronesian language family (Malayo-Polynesian subfamily). The question is whether possible patterns of language change are the same or different compared to a situation in which two more or less similar languages are ‘in contact’, such as Dutch and English or Dutch and German. Another point may be that possible influences from the L2 are more easily traced in the case of a typologically different second language. For an extensive overview of Indonesian grammar in English, including some information on informal spoken Indonesian, see Wolff et al. (1987).
2 Background and data

At the end of the Dutch colonial period in the 1940s, Indonesia ceased to be an emigration country for Dutch citizens. On the contrary, many Dutch and Indo-Europeans returned to the Netherlands, in particular following the economic and political turmoil in Indonesia in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The nationalization of Dutch properties, the struggle for New Guinea (Indonesia’s present province of Irian Jaya), and Soekarno’s Confrontation Politics were some of the many problems which forced Dutch and ‘Indo’ people to leave the country.

Nowadays, there is a small community of Dutch ‘expats’ in Indonesia, most of them living in Jakarta, and for the greater part diplomats, employees of multinationals and the like. These people live for a number of years in their ‘host country’ and then move to another destination. Needless to say their situation is vastly different from ‘traditional’ emigrants to countries like Australia, the USA or Canada. There are but a few individual cases like Freddy who have started a new life in Indonesia outside Jakarta and therefore do not form part of a greater L1 community.

Freddy lives in Malang, in the province of East Java. Because of its colonial past, Malang has an unequivocally Dutch ‘flavour’ and, what is more important to the present paper, the percentage of Dutch visitors to Malang is very high. Many of them are older people who want to see again the locales of their youth and/or want to come to terms with experiences from the past.

At the time of the data collection, Freddy was 45 years old. He was born of a Javanese father and a Dutch mother. Freddy’s father worked in the Dutch navy and we can assume that his proficiency in Dutch was excellent considering the fact that his own father (Freddy’s grandfather) had been the headmaster of a Dutch school in colonial Indonesia. Freddy’s mother is a native of the city of Heerlen in the Dutch province of Limburg.

Freddy grew up and went to school in the Netherlands (The Hague) until the age of thirteen when he left for Indonesia with his parents and brother. According to Freddy’s own information, he had already learned some Indonesian during his youth in The Hague, particularly in his contact with friends of his father’s. Now, after more than thirty years living in Indonesia, Freddy speaks Indonesian, Javanese, and some (Malang) Chinese.

At present, Freddy is joint proprietor of a restaurant in Malang that attracts many tourists from abroad. Recently, the restaurant was extended with a Tourist Information Office that also offers tour arrangements and the like. In particular, this ‘tourist division’ is Freddy’s responsibility.

Naturally, Freddy speaks a lot of Dutch to the many Dutch clients of the restaurant and his Tourist Office. In addition, there are Dutch newspapers and magazines in the restaurant, and Freddy still writes letters to the Netherlands. However, we have to assume that Freddy does not have contact with the Dutch language or culture apart from his working environment. Yet, Freddy himself
stated that ‘My thoughts are always in Holland’, a quote that clearly demonstrates an ongoing orientation towards the Netherlands.

The data for the present study come from an interview with Freddy in his Tourist Office that lasted some 55 minutes1. He was told that the interview/conversation would be used as data for a linguistic research project on ‘Dutch in Indonesia’. Generally, this kind of information is very comforting to informants and, therefore, conducive to an informal conversation.

The main topics in Freddy’s conversation involved his background, his present work in Malang, the history of his restaurant, the Dutch visitors to Malang, and other related subjects. Included in the interview was a retelling task in which Freddy had to summarize in Dutch a short news item (some 325 words) from the Jawa Pos, a regional newspaper from Surabaya. This article, Bandara dan Pesawat Kebanjiran (Airport and airplanes flooded), reports on unforeseen floods in St. Louis which hit the airport, the total damage caused by floods of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers in the previous days, and the reaction of the Clinton administration as opposed to that of the local poor with respect to this disaster.

The interview was conducted by the author and was audiotaped using a small unobtrusive memo recorder plus an extra pocket-size microphone.

Freddy’s speech was fully transcribed except for some short intermezzos in Indonesian when he was speaking to other people. See the Appendix for transcription conventions. The data analysis comprises the comparison of Freddy’s language use with ‘normal’ spoken Dutch. All questionable transcriptions were excluded from the analysis.

The first question is to what extent Freddy’s language use diverges from Dutch as it is currently spoken and widely heard. This analysis was done on all grammatical levels (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and lexicon) as well as on the discourse level. Frequencies presented in section 3 always involve frequencies of tokens. Moreover, some of the misunderstandings most probably due to an accidental lack of knowledge of Dutch idiomatic expressions by Freddy are also discussed.

After the inventory of findings (section 3) we discuss the extent to which these findings can be interpreted as clear manifestations of language attrition/loss or as a result of usual processes of language contact and language variation. To structure this discussion, we followed Boyd & Andersson (1991), who give six possible patterns of variation which, in their opinion, can be distinguished in situations of an L1 in an L2 environment, and from which only one pattern can unequivocally be termed as language loss (section 4).
3 Findings

3.1 Discourse

Two discourse-related phenomena can be shown: the use of some typical Indonesian-like discourse structuring markers, and an overwhelming use of the element ja (Indonesian: ya) as a ‘phatic’ or ‘pragmatic’ particle (Kridalaksana 1990:111-117).

An example of the first phenomenon is in (1) in which the phrase even ja is undoubtedly a literal translation of the frequently used Indonesian sebentar ya.

(1) ((Freddy and Herman are looking at photographs))
Maar DEze meneer even ja: daar hebben we nog eentje.
(But this gentleman DISCOURSE MARKER there have we still one)
(But this man, a moment please, here is another one)

Ja at the end of a clause or sentence, with or without a rising intonation, is typically used to elicit some reaction of confirmation and agreement, or possibly even harmony. It is the high frequency of use of such ja’s by Freddy (106 observations) that gives his language use an indisputable ‘touch of Indonesia’ (cf. Kridalaksana 1990:115-116). See the clause final ja’s in (2) for a random example.

(2) ((Freddy does not know whether his father was of mixed descent))
Ja:, eh dat weet ik ook niet precies ja, of die ook gemengd is weet ik ook niet ja?
(Ja:, uh that know I also not exact PHATIC PARTICLE, ((hence: PHATIC)) whether that also mixed is know I also not PHATIC)
(Yeah, actually I don’t even know whether he was mixed too, I can’t tell you, you know)

3.2 Phonology

In our opinion, a remarkable finding here is that the most frequent deviations were found on the suprasegmental level. Of a total of 48 phonological cases, 19 observations involve incorrect word stress assignment, and another 11 observations show an incorrect sentence intonation pattern, i.e., the wrong word is stressed given the intention Freddy wants to convey.

Some examples of incorrect word stress assignment are overstroming for overstróming (flood), transit for tránsit (transit), óngeveer for ongevéer (approximately), informatie for informátie (information), pláttegrond for plattegrónd (street plan).

Contextually, wrong sentence intonation patterns can be seen in (3) and (4).
(3) MIJN vader, die komt van Midden-Java (-)
(My father, that comes from Central Java (-))
(My father comes from Central Java (-))

(4) Dus de TAAL van mijn vader moet ik kennen, en de taal van mijn moeder.
(So the language of my father have-to I know, and the language of my mother)
(So I have to know my father’s language and my mother’s language)

By emphasizing mijn in (3), Freddy is actually contrasting his father with someone else’s father, but his intention is to make a distinction between his Javanese father and his Dutch mother, so the word vader should have been stressed. More or less the same is true in (4); vader should have been stressed together with a secondary sentence stress on moeder. Because of the emphasis on taal, the literal meaning of the first part of (4) is roughly ‘I have to know not only the language of my father, but also something else’.

All other phonological findings are less frequent. Eight times, we found a consonant cluster reduction through word-final (t) deletion as in wan < want (for), diens < dienst ((military) service), maan < maand (month), and afkoms < afkomst (descent) (but see section 3.3 regarding the omission of -t as a suffix).

We found a lax vowel for a tense vowel four times, and the opposite twice, all cases involving the /a/ - /a/ opposition. Examples are [læŋzo:m] < [læŋza:m] (slow), [te.leyRoːf] < [te.leyra.f] (the name of a Dutch newspaper), and the opposite in [kantɔːr] < [kantoːr] (office).

The remaining observations are somewhat tricky. In two of the cases, it is because they are related to the process of devoicing voiced fricatives which is now a widespread phenomenon in Dutch, while two other observations seem to be due to ‘spelling pronunciation’; for example [misisipi] versus Dutch [misisipi] could be triggered by the Indonesian text from the Jawa Pos. Devoicing cases like [sa.k] < [za.k] (business) are very conservatively coded for the aforementioned reason, and thus only two cases were identified.

3.3 Morphology

A total of 56 observations are related to the morphological level. Most of these (25) involve the non-realization of the suffix -t, 21 times concerning the 2nd/3rd person singular present tense, and four times the past participle. Some relevant examples are: kom < kom-t (comes), loop < loop-t (walks), werk < werk-t (works), speel < speel-t (plays) and begin < begin-t (begins) and in the case of a past participle ge-woon < ge-woon-d [ɣəwo.n̩] (lived), or ge-maak < ge-maak-t (made).

Of course, a caveat is of primary importance here because it is very difficult in cases such as these to distinguish between the phonological process of word-final (t) deletion and a possible morphological process of paradigmatic simplifi-
cation. This applies in particular to the data in Freddy’s speech. All our findings show positions of -(or: (t)) which are very susceptible to (t) deletion (see Van Hout 1989 and Hinskens & Van Hout 1994 for a discussion of this problem).

More likely to be indisputably morphological in character are the six instances of the incorrect form of the present tense 2nd/3rd person singular of the irregular verb hebben (to have), mostly heb for heeft (has), but it should be noted that variants of this kind are not uncommon in colloquial Dutch, particularly in varieties from the western part of the country.

The second most frequent phenomenon on the morphological level is the improper use of the definite article de. With regard to word gender, contemporary Dutch distinguishes between two word categories, i.e., words which require de (feminine or masculine) as a definite article and those which require het (neuter). Ten times Freddy used de while het was required, as in de vliegtuig instead of het vliegtuig (the airplane) or de punt for het punt (the point). We did not meet with the opposite, i.e., het where de is required.

The de/het distinction has rather complicated consequences for the declination of attributive adjectives. Relevant to this paper, however, is that this declination (adding the suffix -e to the adjective) depends on whether the noun is a de or het word. Four NPs show an improper adjectival declination, in all cases because the noun has incorrectly been interpreted as a de word. An example is ‘n zware trauma instead of the correct ’n zwaar trauma (a heavy trauma).

In five cases, Freddy does not succeed in a correct derivation of the designation of inhabitants or languages, thus, he uses Japan for Japan-s ‘Japanese (language)’ and even Limburg instead of Limburg-s ‘Limburg (adjective)’, although he is talking about the province of birth of his mother. All these cases comprise the derivation from a noun.

In only three cases was the omission of plural suffixes observed: for example, vijf gids < vijf gids-en (five guides).

Lastly, we have to point to three observations which we would like to call ‘miscellaneous’ because it is not at first glance clear how to categorize them. The first one is the phrase honger lij (starve) where the infinitive lij lacks the infinitive marking as in the correct form lijd-en. No other comparable cases were found in Freddy’s speech.

Further, consider the following sentences.

(5) (-) ze kennen nog niet eh: calculatie, hoeveel ze: rugi hebben, ja? 
((-) they can ((vernacular form)) still not uh: calculation, how-much they: damage have, PHATIC) 
(They are not yet able to calculate how much damage there is)
(6) En ’t is ingeschreven ook, in de New York Times. ((p))
(And it is in-written too, in the New York Times)
(And it has also been written in the New York Times)

Of course, calculatie in (5) should be an infinitive (in Dutch: calculeren) because of the finite verb kennen (= kunnen). In Section 4 this phenomenon is further discussed. Rugi is Indonesian for Dutch schade (damage). In (6) the problem is with the past participle ingeschreven where in has to be separated from geschreven, thus the correct utterance being En ’t is (or: staat) ook geschreven in de New York Times. Literally, the meaning of ingeschreven is different from what is meant by Freddy, namely, ‘registered’ and the like.

3.4 Syntax

We did not find very many deviating patterns on the syntactic level, only 14 in total, but it should be kept in mind that, with respect to spoken language data, it is very difficult to decide whether a given speech pattern is possibly due to a lack of or change in syntactic knowledge or just to speech planning phenomena such as pausing, hesitating, looking for the right words and similar strategies. Consider (7) as just one example illustrating this point.

(7) ((Freddy talks about a foreign language school in Malang))
   Je ken daar ’n taal (.) de jongens die daar op school zitten ook meisjes, (-)
   (You can ((vernacular form)) there a language (.) the boys that there in school sit also girls, (-))
   (One can [learn] a language there, the boys who study there, girls too, (-))

It is immediately obvious that it will make no sense to interpret such an utterance as being ungrammatical because Freddy is unmistakably developing his point, among other things, made clear by the micro-pause after taal. Therefore, syntactic observations involve only clear cases which are syntactically problematic considering the broader context of the utterance and with all other characteristics of spoken language in mind.

Four such cases bear upon an incorrect subject - finite verb congruence as in (8) where the subject ik requires doe. Doet is the 3rd person singular form.

(8) Nee dat doet ik niet.
   (No that does I not)
   (No I don’t do that)

Another three observations relate to the omission of an anaphoric element, e.g., in:
Before (9), Freddy had already spoken about some elderly tourists who, after their return to the Netherlands, invited his guides for a stay in the Netherlands; consequently, he has to use a definite NP to refer to the aforementioned people. In (9), however, he refers to these tourists with the indefinite NP _mensen_, which, strictly speaking, implies that Freddy is introducing some other, not yet introduced, people.

Three observations revolve around the omission of another linguistic element, i.e., the omission of the article _het_ (the) in the PP _van jaar 1930_ (from [the] year 1930), another two involve wrong word order, and the last two observations involve difficulties with the final clause introducing elements _om te_ (in order to).

### 3.5 Semantics

Our 22 observations on the semantic level can be divided into two categories: the use of lexically correct words in the wrong context and/or with a different meaning compared to Dutch, and the incorrect use of the Dutch tense system in expressing temporal relations. Note that the second category of observations must not be confused with morphologically related problems with the tense system like the attrition of verb conjugation paradigms, such as the loss of plural present tense suffixes should be. On the contrary, what is meant here is that the speaker uses tense to convey a specific temporal relationship between his utterances in a manner that is different from a native speaker of Dutch. It is likewise for this reason that the observations with respect to tense in this section comprise discourse units as opposed to separate linguistic units.

With regard to the first category, nine words were found which formed part of the Dutch lexicon, but which were used incorrectly by Freddy. A first instance can be found in the retelling task, when Freddy translates the Indonesian _ramalan cuaca_ (weather forecast) into Dutch _meteorologie_ (meteorology) instead of the correct _weersvoorspelling_. Another instance is the use of the word _binnenkant_ (inside) when Freddy is obviously referring to the ‘interior’ of his restaurant, which requires the word _interieur_. In the given context, _binnenkant_ sounds rather odd. An interesting example is provided by the word _kinderen_ (children), which Freddy uses to refer to the university students who work as guides in his Tourist Office. In Dutch (and English), this would be interpreted as belittling or even insulting, but most probably this semantic extension has come about under influence of the Indonesian _anak_ (child/children) which can be used to refer to all young people in a subordinate relationship (students, soldiers, members of a soccer team, etc.) without any denigratory connotation.
Thirteen stretches of discourse show a deviating use of tense with respect to time reference. Clear examples are provided by (10) and (11) where the conjunction toen (then) and the PP in die tijd (in that time) call for the past tense. Note, however, the correct past tense in the second finite verb, viz. bood (made an offer) in (10).

(10) dus: toen die eigenaar deze saak e wil verkopen, bood er iemand van Surabaya (-)  
    (so: when that owner this business uh wants sell, offered there somebody from Surabaya (-))  
    (so when the owner wanted to sell this business, someone from Surabaya made an offer (-))

(11) Dus, in DIE tijd, kunnen we ook al 'n klein beetje Indonesisch.  
    (So, in that time, can we also already a little bit Indonesian)  
    (So, we already had some command of Indonesian at that time)

Disambiguating elements such as toen are not always present, which can give rise to misunderstandings, at least at first glance, when a reference to the past is expressed by the present tense. Consider:

(12) ((About a guest who happened to be a childhood friend))  
    [Na] zooveel jaren, heb ik 'm pas hier ontmoet, en (-) HIJ weet niet (-) dat we vroeger samen zaten te spelen.  
    (After so-many years, have I him only here met, and (-) he knows not (-) that we previously together sat to play)  
    (After so many years, I just met him here, and he did not know that we used to play together)

It could be concluded from (12) that at present Freddy's former playmate does not yet realize that he used to play with Freddy in childhood. Only from the broad context of (12) are we able to conclude that this man did not know this at the moment of their 'reunion'.

Although most of the observations involve the incorrect use of the present tense where a past tense is required, some other cases also occurred. In three fragments, a phenomenon could be seen which is also very common to Indonesian-speaking learners of Dutch, the use of the pluperfect when the perfect should be used. A very clear example is (13), in which the presence of gister (= gisteren) (yesterday) unequivocally calls for the perfect.

(13) De KLEINZOON van B, (-) die was gister hier geweest.  
    (The grandson of B, (-) that was yesterday here been)  
    (And B's grandson, he has been here yesterday)
Finally, we can point to two cases of a present tense where the perfect should have been used. One of these is (14), an utterance concerning the many people in Malang and its surroundings who learned Dutch during and shortly after the colonial period. Actually, (14) is the closing of a conversational episode with this kind of information as its topic and, therefore, the VP ought to be hebben geleerd (have learned). The use of the present tense here is much more confusing than in (12), because it suggests that at this very moment, in 1993, many people were learning Dutch.

(14) ((p)) VEE.L leren 't hier.
    (Many learn it here)
    (Many people learned it here)

3.6 The lexicon

Not surprisingly, of course, the most frequently observed phenomena in Freddy’s speech relate to lexical problems. In the eyes of nonlinguists, this is the most obvious, not to say the only observable consequence of a long stay abroad. The same is also true of the immigrants themselves when they are discussing the linguistic consequences of their emigration. Freddy, too, states in the interview that he sometimes has to search for words and that words from Indonesian or Javanese can suddenly occur in his speech when he is speaking Dutch. This information is reflected in the 71 lexically related cases we encountered. Of this group, 45 could be categorized as evidence of ‘retrieval problems’, while 21 observations could be traced to problems with idiomatic units or combining lexical elements. The last five observations were ‘miscellaneous’ in character.

The term ‘retrieval problems’ refers to all of those moments that Freddy does not get the right word at the right moment (see also Ammerlaan in this volume). Note, however, that this does not yet imply the loss of the relevant lexical items, but at most a momentary problem in choosing the word that best fits the circumstances.

Freddy’s retrieval problems usually lead to codeswitching to Indonesian together with some switches to English. This codeswitching can be interpreted as a compensatory strategy to fill in the occurring lexical gap. A clear example is the Indonesian word rugi (damage) in (5). Examples from English involve ‘cleaner’, ‘gap’, and ‘feeling’. It has to be admitted, however, that this kind of codeswitching was especially prevalent in the retelling task.

However, other instances of codeswitching also seem to have been triggered by the fact that the relevant words are very similar to the equivalent Dutch words and thus can be termed as ‘performance switches’ (Giesbers 1989; Poulisse & Bongaerts 1994). It will come as no great surprise that such words are predominantly loan words from Dutch (Grijns et al. 1983; De Vries 1988). Some examples in this respect are switches like Indonesian ransum (rantsoen/ration).
kasir (kassier/cashier), kursus (cursus/course) (the Indonesian /u/ replacing the Dutch /ʌ/), Indonesia (Indonesië/Indonesia), etc.

Furthermore, retrieval problems appear to result in the choice of a wrong word (e.g., bewijs (proof) for vergunning (licence), druk (pressure) for accent ([language] accent), sometimes probably influenced by Indonesian equivalents (e.g., personelen (Indonesian: personil) for Dutch personeel or werknemers (personnel, employees)), and in the ad hoc construction of ‘new words’ for the concept concerned (e.g., gekleurde foto’s (coloured photos) for kleurenfoto’s (colour photos), harde wind (strong wind) for orkaan (hurricane)).

Idiomatic and collocational problems arose in instances like bang zijn tegen for bang zijn voor (being afraid of), als burgemeester zijn instead of just burgemeester zijn (being a mayor), ‘n gedachte hebben for denken (to think), and in what could be called ‘Indonesianisms’, loan translations from Indonesian and/or lexical units which have been heavily influenced by similar Indonesian idiom. Examples of such Indonesianisms are van jaar hoeveel (Indonesian: dari tahun berapa) for uit welk jaar (from which year), and stereotypical shibboleth-like instances such as al (Indonesian: sudah) (already [and many other meanings and functions]) or waarom (Indonesian: kenapa) (why) in a context where the equivalent of ‘what’s going on’ or a similar phrase is required.

A typical ‘miscellaneous’ observation is the ‘overuse’ of the indefinite article in NPs as in ’n informatie geven for informatie geven (give information) or ’n sensatie maken for sensatie veroorzaken (cause a sensation).

3.7 Some receptive aspects

At least five times, misunderstanding occurred because elements of a question or statement were incorrectly interpreted by Freddy. These misinterpretations seemed to occur primarily with idiomatic expressions or non-frequent words. An example of the latter is the word rentenieren (to live off of private means) which Freddy interpreted as ‘to lend money’, perhaps because of the association with rente (rent).

A misunderstanding of the use of an idiomatic expression came about while the topic of tourist guide books was being discussed. Freddy’s restaurant is highly recommended in most tourist books and therefore Herman said ‘dan is je kostje wel gekocht’, i.e., ‘then you are a made man’. However, Freddy objected saying, ‘ik hoefde niks te betalen’ (I did not have to pay anything [for this kind of free publicity]), thus probably reacting to the literal meaning of the expression which can be translated freely as ‘then your living has been bought’.

Obviously, attrition problems of this nature are related to the lexical and semantic observations in 3.5 and 3.6. Unfortunately, the receptive aspects of these semantic-lexical problems are difficult to explore in informal spoken language.
Freddy's case suggests, however, that it is relevant to study productive as well as receptive semantic-lexical attrition in a systematic fashion.

4 Discussion and conclusion

From a general perspective, the data shows that Freddy still has a very good command of Dutch despite his thirty year stay in Indonesia as an individual; in other words, there is little attrition in Freddy's LI proficiency.

The frequencies of the observed deviations from contemporary Dutch are not very high, particularly considering the length of the audio-taped conversation (55 minutes). Moreover, all phenomena presented are variable, not only within the levels of analysis, but also with regard to separate linguistic elements, as far as their frequencies allow that conclusion to be drawn. Thus, the 3rd person present tense form kom-t (comes) was not always realized as kom, the correct het vliegtuig (the airplane) alternates with de vliegtuig, etc. Finally, most of the problems were detected on the lexical level and were for the greater part retrieval problems. It is clear that the latter observations are not immediately an indication of language attrition, although the receptive aspects of lexical knowledge do deserve more attention in this respect.

On the other hand, we did find deviations from 'normal' (spoken) Dutch and it is theoretically relevant to ask to what extent our data can be accounted for in terms of language attrition, language change, language contact, a combination of these factors, or other reasons.

As was already indicated, Boyd & Andersson (1991) can serve as a point of departure in this discussion. They correctly argue that phenomena resulting from LI use in an L2 environment should be studied against the general background of language variation, or as they themselves argue:

While certain variation patterns may fall into the category of what we consider language loss, we believe that many may be considered as broadening of existing variation patterns, others as a speeding up of change processes already underway in the homeland, and some as innovations resulting in varying degrees from transfer from L2 (-). (Boyd & Andersson 1991:33)

They list six possible patterns of variation in 'immigrant varieties' (Boyd & Andersson 1991:17). These six possibilities can be summarized as follows:

1. Patterns of variation in the immigrant varieties can be attributed to transfer from L2 and, thus, be unique to the language used in the new country. Codeswitching and borrowing from L2 belong in this category.
2. The immigrant varieties can exhibit a wider range of variation as compared to homeland varieties. Reasons might be that the immigrant varieties are not subjected to conservative norms of L1 or transfer from L2.
3. Relic forms, i.e., preservation of older patterns which have changed in L1 in the homeland.

4. Immigrant varieties can exhibit simplification or reduction of forms in relation to L1 as spoken in the homeland.

5. Unique change processes can develop, however, which cannot be attributed to L2 transfer nor to simplification or reduction ('spontaneous' differentiation).

6. There may be no difference between the immigrant bilingual and homeland monolingual varieties on some points of comparison.

Boyd & Andersson (1991) only see the fourth variation pattern as a possible instance of language loss, given that such changes do not involve change processes already underway in homeland varieties. Indeed, all other patterns can also be accounted for in terms of already existing concepts like language variation and language change. ‘Language loss’ has to be restricted to linguistic processes which reflect a disappearing knowledge of grammatical features as opposed to changing knowledge. Within this framework, the data in this study can be looked at more closely.

The first variation pattern, influenced by transfer from L2 and including codeswitching and borrowing, is reflected in our data by the following phenomena.

First of all, the discourse related phenomena in section 3.1 can undoubtedly be accounted for by L2 transfer.

Unequivocal L2 influence on the phonological level is only exhibited in the weakening of the tense-lax opposition in the vowels /a./ versus /a/, this phonological opposition being unknown in Indonesian, and in possible ‘spelling pronunciation’. See below for further discussion.

On the morphological level too, we are not able to point to much direct L2 influence, the only cases being the use of a singular noun where the plural is obligatory, and the use of an N instead of a Vinf in (5).

The only syntactic L2 transfer, the omission of the definite article in a time adverbial, is most probably an ‘Indonesianism’; in this case, it is the translation of the equivalent Indonesian PP.

Semantic L2 influence has to be seen in the use of present tense forms in the case of past time references and as a replacement of the perfect form and, furthermore, in incidental semantic extensions as in the anak for kinderen example. Most L2 transfer can be shown in the lexicon, that is, through retrieval and performance codeswitching to Indonesian and in Indonesianisms.

The second pattern, exhibiting such phenomena as a larger number of variants of a variable compared to homeland varieties, is reflected in the (t)/suffix -t deletion (3.2, 3.3), the devoicing of fricatives, the incorrect forms of the irregular verb hebben (3.3), and the incorrect subject - Vf congruence (3.4).

Pattern 3 was not evident in our data.
Pattern 4, in Boyd & Andersson’s opinion a possible reflection of language loss, can be shown only on the morphological level. The replacements of the neuter article *het* by *de* and the consequences for the adjectival declination as presented in section 3.3 could be the start of a generalization process resulting in simplification. An additional argument supporting the generalization interpretation is that the process is unidirectional, i.e., that *het* is never used to replace *de*. Note in passing that violating these *de/het* distinctions barely affects the contents of an utterance.

The second finding which probably belongs to pattern 4 is the unsuccessful derivation of the designation of inhabitants/languages from a proper noun. Unlike the *de/het* case, this problem can cause serious misunderstandings. Consider again the instances in section 3.3.

In our opinion, several findings have to be categorized as belonging to pattern 5, ‘spontaneous’ differentiation, including findings that at first instance seem to be linked to L2 transfer.

On the phonological level, word stress and sentence intonation data are interpreted as ‘spontaneous’ differentiation. Naturally, it could be argued that these phenomena result from the difference between Dutch and Indonesian in this respect (cf. Teeuw 1984 and Wolff *et al.* 1987), but the stress patterns realized are not Indonesian either, with the exception of a few incidental word stress cases like *transit* (3.2), *Jáván* versus *Javáan* or *sympathie* versus *sympathie* which sound rather similar to their Indonesian equivalents.

Here, L2 influence is at best indirect in that the L2 differs from the L1 and that the speaker lacks feedback from an L1 speech community, but this reasoning also applies to the *de/het* cases above, among others.

Other cases of ‘spontaneous’ differentiation are those given in (6) in section 3.3, syntactical observations like the omitting of (anaphoric) elements and incorrect word order, and the most productive and receptive semantic-lexical phenomena apart from those already mentioned above.

There are no clear examples of pattern 6, but it is possible that the incorrect (or regional) finite forms of *hebben* should be attributed to 6.

Relating the data to possible patterns of variation, it can once more be concluded that language attrition proper occurs only very rarely. This is even more so the case if we consider the deletion of present tense *-t* suffixes as instances of a variational phonological process of word-final (t) deletion which is similar to comparable developments in the homeland. In addition to the arguments in favor of this position previously given in section 3.3, we can refer to Weijnen (1966:239-240) who observed (t) deletion in the province of South Holland, the province of Freddy’s youth in the Netherlands.

Thus, changes in Freddy’s L1 use seem predominantly due to processes of language contact. This point is supported by comparing the data from Freddy’s
language use to characteristics of Dutch in Indonesia and Dutch as it is produced by Indonesian learners of Dutch as a foreign language.

Since the end of the 19th century, several articles and theses have been written on the specific features of varieties of Dutch spoken in Indonesia. See De Vries (1992) for an overview and De Gruiter (1994) and Van Rheeden (1994). Van Hengst (1989) delineated 19 frequently observed characteristics from the literature. Some of these regularly occurred in Freddy’s language use, such as word-final (t) deletion, incorrect word stress and sentence intonation, incorrect use of the tense system and, not surprisingly, codeswitching and/or borrowing. Other features were less frequent in Freddy’s speech (intermingling of de and het, the omission of articles and anaphoric elements, and the incorrect use of prepositions), while a final group of features did not occur at all, including some pronunciation features and incorrect use of pronouns.

Freddy’s language use also showed similarities with features of Dutch as a foreign language, i.e., the use by present learners such as university students of Dutch. Hartveldt (1992) analyzed the written material of rather advanced university students of Dutch, while we analyzed spoken material collected within the same framework as Freddy’s data (cf. note 1).

Similarities between Dutch as a foreign language and Freddy’s language use involve phenomena concerning Dutch as a language in contact with Indonesian, as mentioned above, and including the use of the singular form for a plural noun. Contrarily, it is remarkable that the frequent use of ja (Indonesian: ya) as a phatic particle does not occur in the learner’s Dutch except for beginning learners who are learning Dutch both in the classroom and through everyday contact.

Quantitatively, Freddy’s data exhibited the same distribution as that obtained in Hartveldt’s analysis, in that the most frequent ‘errors’ were semantic-lexical in nature, while syntactic errors occurred with the lowest frequency. However, it is clear that learners of Dutch as a foreign language make more frequent errors and within a greater range than Freddy does.

Once again, it can be concluded that in an individual case like Freddy’s there is little or no evidence of language attrition, even if a flexible criterion is used such as the simplification of paradigms. Apart from some superficial lexical problems, we found only two possible manifestations of language attrition, viz., the gradual generalization of de as definite article, and a decreasing proficiency in derivating the names of languages/inhabitants from a proper noun. The first phenomenon could be due to the low semantic load of the given distinction, the latter to its possible low frequency in Freddy’s everyday language use.

On the other hand, there are clear indications of gradual processes of language change which appear to relate to the ongoing situation of language contact, i.e., changes which are not comparable to similar developments in the homeland, but are, in fact, very similar to language contact phenomena in the country of residence and to phenomena in the varieties of language use of foreign language learners of the given L1.
Obviously, such a statement does not explain much about the details of change processes in a situation of language contact, and it has to be admitted that it is not immediately clear why phenomena such as those which have been categorized as ‘spontaneous differentiation’ occur in the manner they do.

On the other hand, we would like to draw attention to those changes which seem to be predominantly the result of L2 transfer. At least some of these instances seem to be triggered by the speaker being influenced by semantic or cognitive patterns from the second language.

In this respect, consider the NP *vijf gids* (section 3.3). Indonesian does not have inflection for tense, person, number or gender, but there is an extensive derivational morphology including, e.g., affixation for forming causatives, transitives, passive forms, and the like. In Dutch, a plural noun is obligatory, whereas in Indonesian a plural form would be ungrammatical because of the preceding numeral⁵. Although there is a limited set of idiomatic NP’s with a singular form after a numeral in Dutch as well (*vijf gulden* (five guilders), *veertig jaar* (forty years), *twee man* (two men), etc.), Freddy’s usage was most probably triggered by the Indonesian manner of expressing number, because it can be assumed that *gids* had only recently become a relevant word for Freddy.

Secondly, deviations from the Dutch tense system are mostly ‘neutralized’ by the context of the utterance(s) or even by disambiguating elements as in (10) and (11), section 3.5. In Indonesian, tense, aspect, and modality are expressed by lexical and contextual means. In other words, temporality tends to be expressed according to Indonesian grammatical concepts.

Finally, a very intriguing, though incidental, example is provided by (5), section 3.3, in which an N is used where a Vinf is called for. Kridalaksana (1989; 1990:44) notes that Indonesian, especially its non-standard variants, tends to interpret several phenomena as processes rather than objects, linguistically resulting in the re-interpretation of nominal loan words as verbs or adjectives. A well-known example is the case of ‘success’ as in Indonesian *saya sukses* (I am successful). Against this background, it is not too far-fetched to perceive Freddy’s *calculatie* as a manifestation of the same tendency. This would be an additional argument in favour of our hypothesis that cognitive-semantic L2 patterns can influence the immigrant’s L1.

In conclusion, it can be stated that while individual immigrants like Freddy exhibit hardly any language attrition in the literal sense of the word, differences from the L1 as it is spoken in the homeland are unmistakably present, although never invariable. Some of these differences relate to variation patterns already known from homeland varieties, and perhaps these increase because of promoting characteristics of the L2. Other differences are more unique to the given situation. On further consideration, however, these ‘unique’ differences or deviations appear to be very similar to phenomena from situations of language contact and language learning in which the given L1 plays its role. The study of two typologically different languages like Dutch and Indonesian suggests that cognitive-
semantic patterns from the L2 in particular can eventually affect the L1. The same is true for L2 discourse patterns which, at least in this study, appeared to influence an immigrant’s L1 rather rapidly. Finally, it can be noted that possible attrition phenomena, apart from the lexicon, occur primarily with grammatical elements with a low semantic load, or with less frequent grammatical features. The receptive aspects of language attrition should, therefore, also be given attention in this field of linguistics.

Notes

1 Actually, Freddy’s interview was the first in a series meant to provide the data for a research project on ‘Dutch as a language in contact in Indonesia’. The complete data collection from August to October 1993 was made possible by the Ministry of Education and Sciences of the Netherlands.

2 The feminine/masculine distinction has almost completely disappeared in standard Dutch unlike many, primarily southern, dialects in which it is still current.

3 Words denoting Indonesian food, drinks, institutions, etc. (‘cultural loans’) as well as words being discussed (‘self-referring position’) are not included in the data.

4 This interpretation seems especially valid in Freddy’s case because he used to live in The Hague, in the province of South Holland, where this phenomenon is quite common. Consider also Freddy’s frequent use of the variant *kennen* for standard Dutch *kunnen* (can/to be able to) in this respect.

5 Although plurals in Indonesian can sometimes be expressed by doubling, this is always ungrammatical after a quantifier.

References


Appendix

Transcription conventions

Current Dutch and Indonesian spelling is used except where the informant’s pronunciation deviated dramatically from everyday language use. Each example is explained by two translations in English: a morpheme-by-morpheme translation and a paraphrase; both are placed in brackets ( ). Additionally, the following symbols are used:

- sentence final falling intonation
- clause final intonation
? question
: elongation of the preceding sound
* cut off sounds
( ) micro pause
((p)) relatively long pause/silence
CAPITALS emphasized syllable(s)
(-) omission by the transcriber
((words)) comment or description by the transcriber/analyst
[words] additional information by the transcriber/analyst