Talk Tutor Lab

Design Process — Dutch Learning for Expats

Role: UX/UI Designer | Timeline: 8 weeks

A structured, low-friction Dutch learning experience

Master the Dutch language through interactive flashcards. Start your journey with basic vocabulary and advance to fluency.

15	54	7,700
Levels	Sections	Flashcards

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01 The problem

Why expats struggle

Moving to the Netherlands means daily life in Dutch from day one. Most expat Dutch products assume a beginner level or a classroom setting. Neither fits someone who needs to read a letter, talk to a neighbor, or navigate a government website this week.

01 No clear starting point
Users don't know their level and feel blocked before they even begin. The first screen is a wall of options.

02 Irrelevant content
Existing apps focus on generic phrases instead of real life Dutch needed for daily tasks — bills, shops, bureaucracy.

03 Low consistency
Lack of structure and visible progress leads to drop-off within days. No system means no habit.

> *I don't even know where to start. Everything feels random.*
> — Typical user feedback

Key insight: The problem is not motivation — it's lack of clarity and structure.

02 Research

Understanding the user

Research conducted between January and February 2026 to ground design decisions in real expat experiences.

INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

- **Practical vocab** — Real words for daily life, not textbook phrases
- **Short sessions** — 10–15 minutes max — No commute or couch
- **Clear progress** — Streaks/visible progress keeps users coming back

PERSONA CARD

Sara M. — 29
Software Developer · Amsterdam, NL

Motivation: Learn practical Dutch for daily life without structured classes
Frustration: Doesn't know her level, loses progress, apps feel children
Goal: Learn in short bursts — commute, couch, before bed

> *"I just want something simple I can do every day."*

03 Design principles

3 design principles

1. **Reduce thinking → increase action**
   No discussion first task. Select choices in seconds and start immediately. Zero barriers to entry.
2. **Make progress visible at all times**
   Users always know where they are, what section they're on, and how much is left.
3. **Focus on real-life Dutch**
   Content designed around expat needs — groceries, transport, housing — not generic classroom phrases.

04 The product

The product

- **15 levels (A1 → Master)** — Clear path across Dutch speaking ability
- **Section-based structure** — Each level: 3–6 topics (Transport, Housing, Food, ...)
- **Flashcard learning** — Flip, Scramble, Match — Short, focused sessions
- **Persistent progress** — Users resume exactly where they left off

Flashcards · Flip · Scramble · Match · Progress tracking

05 Decisions & trade-offs

Decisions & trade-offs

Why flashcards?
Fast, flexible, works in short sessions.
Matches real user behavior — it lets us ship faster to validate core learning.

Why no placement test?
Adds friction before value.
Users start immediately instead of overthinking their level. Self-selection works because all levels are visible.

Why visible structure?
Reduces anxiety and guidance.
Users understand the whole system on the levels page — no surprises, no dead ends.

Trade-Offs – What we left out intentionally

Trade-offs — intentional choices
No speech recognition — Avoids distractions, helps focus on the words
No streaks — Prioritizes quality over compulsive loops

06 User flow

How users move through the app

Landing Page → Sign Up Page → Choose Level → Section Flashcards → Flashcard Mission → Progress Tracker

Sign Up Page: Email, Password, Confirm Password
Choose Level: A1 Beginner, A2 Elementary, A2 Pre-Intermediate
Progress Tracker: Streak, Completed Levels, Recent Activity

Returning users: Sign in → instantly resume at their level. No friction, no onboarding.

WHAT USERS SEE ON THE LEVEL CARD

Level 1	Level 3
A1 Beginner	A2 Pre-Intermediate
Greetings & Phrases — 120 cards	Body & Health — 120 cards
Family & Relations — 120 cards	Travel & Directions — 120 cards
Food & Daily Life — 96 cards	Shopping & Money — 120 cards

07 Visual design

Clarity over personality

Dutch flag inspired palette. Neutral backgrounds to let the content stand out.

COLOR PALETTE

Background	Text	Red	Card BG	White	Border
#1C1C1C	#F5F5F5	#AE1C28	#2A2A2A	#FFFFFF	#3A3A3A

Learn Dutch

Choose Your Level

Master Dutch through interactive flashcards.

PROGRESS · SECTIONS · LEVELS

KEY COMPONENTS

BUTTONS: Primary · Secondary

PROGRESS BAR: Progress — Learn Dutch — Flashcards — Mastered

TEXT FIELD: Enter your name

KEYS MISSING: Sign Up · Send Message

08 Implementation

Testing & fixes

QUICK FIX ON TESTING
Users hesitated when a section had no progress — the button looks ambiguous.

Fix: Add text: "Start" / "Continue" / "Review"

EDGE CASE ON TESTING
Long section names like "Conditionals & Complex Sentences" broke the card layout.

Fix: Truncate with ellipsis + full name visible when the section is opened

09 Implementation

Handling the unexpected

- **Incorrect login** — Clear error message, password reset — never reveal which field is wrong
- **Empty fields** — Inline validation, highlights missing field without clearing the form
- **Bot protection** — Honeypot + rate limiting (2 / 1 h), hidden analytics fields, then reCAPTCHA
- **Lost progress** — Local storage + Supabase sync, recovery on next login
- **Long names** — Truncation with ellipsis, full name visible when opened
- **Slow connection** — Loading states, no duplicate submissions, Sonner toasts for all actions

10 Outcomes

User Growth

OUTCOMES

Platform engagement increased reach
After launch, Talk Tutor Lab attracted new users through targeted channels.

Growth metrics
- **+500** First signups in first month
- **+12%** Week-over-week growth (compounding)
- **+42%** Week-over-week active users
- **87%** Retention after 7 days

11 What comes next

- Referral program Let satisfied users invite friends. Word-of-mouth is strongest in tight-knit networks
- Community features Discussion board where users share tips and practice together. Peer learning is the most effective way to reach newcomers early.
- Content expansion Add workplace-specific sections for professional contexts.
- Community features Discussion board where users share tips and practice together.

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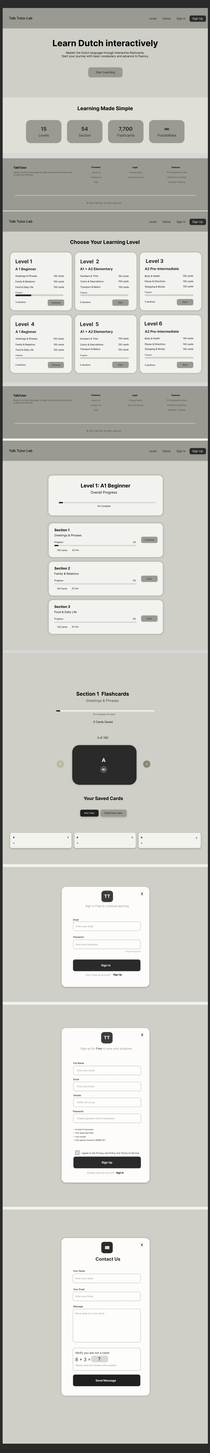
Talk Tutor Lab

Learn Dutch interactively

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