Dutch dictionary adds new term 'vulvalippen'

LEVEL B2


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I. WARM-UP

1. What examples of body-positive language have you seen or heard?
2. Do dictionaries change how people speak, or only record it? Why?
3. Should doctors adapt their words to patients, or teach new terms?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

dictionary
A book or website that lists words and explains what they mean.

campaigner
A person who works publicly to change something in society.

stigma
A strong feeling of shame or disapproval attached to something.

misogynistic
Showing dislike of, or prejudice against, women.

anatomically
In a way that matches the structure of the body.

adopt
To begin to use a word, idea, or practice.

petition
A formal request that many people sign to ask for a change.

terminology
The set of special words used in a particular field.

III. READING

The leading Dutch dictionary Dikke van Dale will add the term vulvalippen for the labia, alongside the traditional schaamlippen or shame lips. Campaigners say the update will reduce stigma and promote sex positivity.

Shari Klein from the Schaamteloos campaign argues a more neutral, anatomically correct word is needed, and that older terms can feel misogynistic. Esther Van der Valk of feminist group Dolle Mina says the goal is also to cut body shaming.

Next, activists will ask doctors and officials to use vulvalippen in leaflets and consultations. Editor Ton den Boon says the addition is justified because the term now appears in media, biology textbooks, medical leaflets and even veterinary settings, although it is unclear how widely the public will adopt it.

The move echoes efforts elsewhere. In Germany, journalists Gunda Windmüller and Mithu Sanyal started a 2018 petition to replace Schamlippen with Vulvalippen. In Sweden, RFSU promoted slidkrans instead of mödomshinna for the hymen. In the UK, a petition seeks uterectomy instead of hysterectomy. Researcher Dr Beth Malory warns terminology should be clear and tested so patients will understand it.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "'Make women feel seen': Why the Dutch have a...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which Dutch dictionary will include the word vulvalippen?
2. What existing Dutch term will sit alongside the new word?
3. What do campaigners hope the change will reduce or promote?
4. Who is the editor who says the addition is justified?
5. Name one country mentioned with similar language efforts.

V. DISCUSSION

1. Do words influence attitudes to bodies and health? Give an example.
2. Should medical terms favour clarity or tradition? Why?
3. How quickly will new terminology be adopted in your country?
4. Who should decide official terms: experts, dictionaries or the public?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Will vs going to (prediction)

Use will + verb for simple predictions and decisions made at the moment. Use be going to + verb when there is present evidence or a plan. Form: will + base / be going to + base.

"Look at all these news stories: the debate **is going to grow**.*"*

"Campaigners say the update **will reduce** *stigma and promote sex positivity."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the correct future form (will / be going to).

1. I don't know that word! Wait, I (check) ___ the dictionary. _____
2. It is unclear how widely the public (adopt) ___ it. _____
3. I've bought a Dutch dictionary because I (study) ___ Dutch. _____
4. Look at the board: we (learn) ___ some medical words today. _____
5. If doctors accept it, medical leaflets (change) ___ to include vulvalippen. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach key items likely to block reading (stigma, misogynistic, anatomically, terminology) and check students can pronounce the Dutch terms without needing to spell them.
- Run a quick first read for gist, then a second read for detail before pair-checking the comprehension. Sensitivity: the text discusses women's anatomy and body shaming; invite students to speak about public language and policy rather than their own bodies, and allow anyone to pass.
- For discussion, vary formats: start with pairs, then regroup into small circles to compare views, and finish with a brief whole-class poll to show how opinions changed.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Have students share one everyday example, then push for how wording changes feelings.
2. Elicit pros and cons, then pair students to rewrite one term both ways and compare.
3. Take a quick class prediction, then ask what groups or media will speed adoption.
4. Do a quick vote, then form mixed groups and have each defend a different decision-maker.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, prepare a 90-second case for or against replacing schaamlippen with vulvalippen, then deliver it.

Writing: In pairs, draft a 70-word leaflet note explaining why clinics will use vulvalippen from now on.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Will vs going to (prediction)

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which Dutch dictionary will include the word vulvalippen?
   Dikke van Dale.
2. What existing Dutch term will sit alongside the new word?
   Schaamlippen.
3. What do campaigners hope the change will reduce or promote?
   Less stigma and more sex positivity.
4. Who is the editor who says the addition is justified?
   Ton den Boon.
5. Name one country mentioned with similar language efforts.
   Germany, Sweden or the UK.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use will + verb for simple predictions and decisions made at the moment. Use be going to + verb when there is present evidence or a plan. Form: will + base / be going to + base. (Example 1 constructed.)

> *"Look at all these news stories: the debate* **is going to grow***."*
>
> *"Campaigners say the update* **will reduce** *stigma and promote sex positivity."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the correct future form (will / be going to).

1. I don't know that word! Wait, I ___ the dictionary. **will check**
2. It is unclear how widely the public ___ it. **will adopt**
3. I've bought a Dutch dictionary because I ___ Dutch. **am going to study**
4. Look at the board: we ___ some medical words today. **are going to learn**
5. If doctors accept it, medical leaflets ___ to include vulvalippen. **will change**