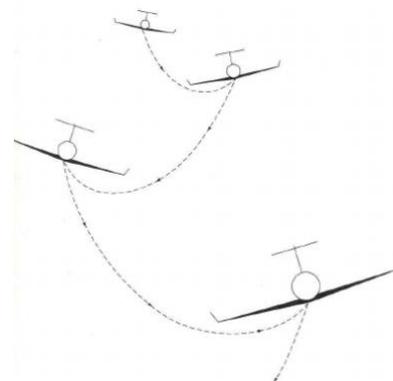


Mind Your (Aviation) Language....

The Dutch Roll

I was recently studying a bit more aerodynamics when I came across a "Dutch Roll". I quickly learnt that it's a type of aircraft motion, consisting of an out-of-phase combination of "tail-wagging" and rocking from side to side (yaw and roll). But why is it called a "Dutch Roll", I asked myself? Then I asked Garth. He knew what a Dutch Roll was from an aviation point of view but not why it was called a Dutch Roll. The conversation ensued like this:



CB: Why is it called a Dutch Roll?

GB: No idea – it just is.

CB: Is it because the roll doesn't go all the way over – it's not a real roll?

GB: Well it certainly doesn't go all the way over – but what makes you say that?

Then I told GB about the many other phrases we use in English with the term "Dutch" in them. Most of them are rather pejorative, and come from a time when the English were in fierce competition with the Dutch to control trading routes and colonies around the world during and post the 1600s when English speakers used the term for anything they regarded as inferior, irregular or contrary to 'normal' (their own practices). For example:

Double dutch	Talking in an incomprehensible manner
To go dutch	The man doesn't pay for the woman on a date – also called a Dutch date
Dutch auction	Not an official auction, but where the seller plays one buyer against another OR An auction where the price starts high and is lowered until a bidder accepts the price.
Dutch oven	A thick walled cooking pot used over or in the coals, in lieu of a proper oven
Dutch wife	A long body pillow – put between your legs to prevent back pain or friction between the legs; OR A hot water bottle; OR A prostitute
Dutch courage	Only having courage when intoxicated
Dutch treat	When someone invites you – but you have to pay for yourself.
Dutch uncle	A person who issues frank, harsh, or severe comments and criticism to educate, encourage, or admonish someone. The reverse of what is normally thought of as uncle-like (indulgent and permissive).
Dutch metal	84% copper, 16% zinc – malleable metal sold in sheets often as imitation gold leaf.

But not all "Dutch" things are inferior – think of Dutch cheese, and Dutch pancakes, and Double Dutch (skipping with two jump ropes).

It also seems that the term "Dutch Roll" also has no negative connotations. While the origin of the term is uncertain, it is believed to have been borrowed from a similar-appearing motion of a classic Dutch skating technique 'schoonrijden' – skating repetitively to the right and the left on the outer edge of one's skates.



So, my original assumption that a Dutch Roll may have been called such because the roll was in some way inferior, or not a full roll, was clearly incorrect, but it did make for an interesting Aviation/English conversation.