



THEMATIC NETWORK PROJECT IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGES III

SUB-PROJECT THREE:

LANGUAGES AS AN INTERFACE BETWEEN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL REPORT / Netherlands

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0. General introduction

This report aims to present a general overview of the interfaces between language studies in higher education (HE) and in other sectors of education in the Netherlands. This overview is by no means exhaustive and it certainly does not cover in detail all aspects and developments related to the contacts between HE and other sectors of education in the field of language studies. However, we believe that it gives a reliable global mapping of these contacts, making visible the way in which educational sectors interact with each other, describing the most relevant forms of cooperation and indicating which measures should be taken to improve the mutual communication and to make the transition between different sectors of educations more smoothly and effective.

The data and the good practice examples have been gathered by the authors using information in national and European reports and personal contacts with colleagues at other Dutch universities, other HE institutes (Universities of Professional Education ("*Hogescholen*", henceforth referred to as UPE's), Graduate and Postgraduate Schools for Teaching and Learning) and university Language Centres.

1. Description of administrative and educational structures and policies

1.1 Responsibilities and competences

The Netherlands has an area of 41,528 km² and a population of 16,3 million inhabitants. As may be expected in a relatively small country, the national government has the authority to regulate education. However, at the same time there is a strong tradition to respect the autonomy of educational institutions.

General principles¹

One of the key features of the Dutch education system, guaranteed under article 23 of the Constitution, is freedom of education, i.e. the freedom to found schools (freedom of establishment), to organise the teaching in schools (freedom of organisation of teaching) and to determine the principles on which they are based (freedom of conviction). People have the right to found schools and to provide teaching based on religious, ideological or educational beliefs. As a result there are both publicly run and privately run schools and universities in the Netherlands.

The Constitution places public and private schools on an equal financial footing. This means that government expenditure on public education must be matched by spending on private education. The conditions which private schools must satisfy in order to qualify for funding are laid down by law.

The central authorities (government and parliament) regulate the organization of the educational system by enacting laws and regulations. To a large extent, the government is also in charge of performing quality control, but it delegated most of its responsibility to an agency called the Public Inspection Service (*onderwijsinspectie*).

¹ The information in the two paragraphs below comes from the Eurydice report about the educational system in the Netherlands,
<http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=NL&language=EN>

The inspectors see to it that institutions at all levels of education meet the conditions for governmental funding.

The freedom to organise teaching means that private schools are free to determine what is taught and how. This freedom is however limited by the qualitative standards set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in educational legislation. These standards, which apply to both public and private education, prescribe the subjects to be studied, the attainment targets or examination syllabuses and the content of national examinations, the number of teaching periods per year, the qualifications which teachers are required to have, giving parents and pupils a say in school matters, planning and reporting obligations, and so on. In addition, the exams are centrally regulated. At the secondary level certain exams are even centrally organized, namely exams developed by CITO,² a central testing company.

Autonomy at primary and secondary school level

As mentioned before, another characteristic of education in the Netherlands is the autonomy of the institutions. This has to do with the fact that over 50% of the education at the primary and secondary level is privately organized in the sense that schools have governing boards whose members are directly or indirectly elected by interested parties. Some 70% of pupils attend privately run schools.

Legally, these schools are organized as societies or foundations. The main task of such a board is to guard the identity of the institution and its teachers. This identity can be of a religious nature—most private schools are catholic, protestant, and in a few cases jewish or islamic. However, some schools adhere to educational orientations, such as so-called Jenaplan schools, Montessori, Steiner Schools (antroposophical), Daltonschools, etc. A few schools are combinations of both categories, e.g., catholic Daltonschools. As a result, the Netherlands offers a rich variety of educational institutions at the primary and secondary level.

Autonomy at HE level

No such variety exists at Higher Education level: out of the 6 so called General Universities (universities offering a wide variety of subjects), only 2 are private (namely the protestant Free University in Amsterdam and the Catholic University of Nijmegen), and there are 4 public or non-religious universities (University of Amsterdam, Utrecht University, Leiden University and the University of Groningen). The Universities of Professional Education (UPE's, *hogescholen*) consist of a similar mix: out of 59 institutions listed on the website of the Association of Universities of Professional Education,³ 10 have an explicit confessional orientation which is referred to in their name. The 8 Specialized Universities (the Technical Universities of Twente, Delft and Eindhoven; the Erasmus University Rotterdam; the University of Maastricht, Tilburg University, the Wageningen University for Life Sciences) are all public and lack a confessional orientation.⁴

Universities and UPE's

There is a certain tension between universities and UPE's. UPE's generally admit students who do not have the qualifications for admission to universities, *i.e.*, pupils

² <http://www.cito.nl/>

³ <http://www.hbo-raad.nl/>

⁴ Besides these 13 universities there is also the Dutch Open University. This institution offer distance education programmes aimed at people with a good command of the Dutch language, see <http://www.ou.nl/info-alg-english-introduction/>

who have passed high school exams (*havo*), whereas universities admit only students with '*atheneum*' or '*gymnasium*'-diplomas⁵. However, universities may admit *havo*-graduates who meet certain criteria, and students who are entitled to enrol at universities sometimes opt for a UPE instead, partly because certain types of education (e.g., arts, music performance, and drama) are only offered by UPE's, but also because these schools offer programmes of a lower level than the universities (e.g. for paramedical and paralegal professions).

In some fields, for instance journalism, the two types of higher education compete. In the area of languages, both universities and UPE's offer programmes. Language studies at universities have an academic orientation, while language studies at UPE's lead to a specific profession (teacher, translator, interpreter). Universities and UPE's work closely together in training secondary school language teachers. Graduates of University teaching programmes can teach their subjects at any level of secondary education, whereas graduates from UPE's are subject to certain restrictions.

Financial regulations

The autonomy of educational institutions is also reflected in the financing of education. Currently, the central administration determines the amount of tuition, which for 2003-2004 is fixed at € 1445.- per year. However, the students pay their tuition directly to their universities, for whom this is an important source of income. For instance, the University of Groningen collects almost 29 million euros from its 20,000 students (6,5% of the university revenues). A few years from now, the institutions will be allowed to decide on their own tuition fees. As a result, they may compete on price (the cheaper the better), or try to distinguish themselves by offering a better quality justifying higher tuition. The desirability of this development is subject of a societal debate.

1.2 Language policies and language education policies

Dutch and English at HE level

The official national language and also instruction language in all educational sectors is Dutch.⁶ However, due to the introduction of the Bachelor-Master structure in 2002 and the growing student mobility at European and global level, Dutch HE institutions are offering more and more courses in English. A lot of master's courses in the field of economics, agriculture, engineering and business are in English and are international in scope. The 14 universities, the 59 UPE's and the 15 Institutes of International Education have intensified their marketing of higher education to foreign students, following the examples of English-speaking countries.⁷ Nowadays, more than 850 courses are taught entirely in English, approximately 200 of which lead to

⁵ VWO (pre-university education: *atheneum* and *gymnasium*) lasts 6 years (age 12-18); *havo* (senior general secondary education) 5 years (age 12-17). A VWO diploma gives access to university (currently about 172000 students); an *havo* diploma gives access to UPE's (currently about 315000 students).

⁶ Frisian is a minority language with special regulations: it is taught at primary and secondary schools in Friesland, and it is also used at HE level in teacher training. It is taught at the universities of Groningen, Leiden and Amsterdam.

⁷ Especially in China: the number of Chinese students in the Netherlands has risen from a few hundred in the year 2000 to approximately 5000 in the year 2003.

an international master's. In Europe, only the United Kingdom offers a larger number of master's degree courses in English.⁸

Anyway, English is particularly promoted in the master's degree courses; the language of instruction at bachelor level is generally Dutch. In 2001, about 50% of HE students was taught at least once in English; university students had been taught in English more often than UPE's students. Other languages of instruction were scarcely used, with the exception of the economy and agricultural programmes at UPE's and language and culture programmes at universities.⁹

Command of English among Dutch students

Dutch HE students have generally a good command of English. Table 1 in the Appendix shows the end level for three school languages according to the national standards at the end of the secondary school. In a pilot project the national standards have been 'translated' into the competence levels as described in the Common European Framework. In some cases also the effective exam levels are given. According to these data, students master reading and listening at C1 level after 6 years secondary education (vwo) and at B2 level after 5 years (havo).

Foreign languages at primary level

Foreign language education starts at the primary level: at the present moment, only English is offered, but in the near future primary school pupils will be taught a second foreign language. This is in accordance with the European Commission's ideal that all school-leavers of the European Union master two foreign languages in addition to their native language. The responsible governmental department has decided that primary schools may offer either German or French in addition to English.¹⁰ In a growing number of primary schools with a rather high percentage of immigrant pupils, often referred to as 'black schools', there are of course very specific problems to be dealt with, because for these pupils Dutch is not the native language.¹¹

Foreign languages at secondary level

Currently, German and French are offered in all secondary schools as compulsory or optional courses in addition to English, which is a compulsory language at all levels. Also for Spanish, Russian, Italian, Frisian, Arabic and Turkish national exams have been developed; schools are free to teach these languages too. The catholic Gerardus-Majella mavo school in Utrecht, which has a large percentage of immigrant children, planned in 2003 to offer Arabic and Turkish language classes.¹² This initiative was halted after a broad discussion in society and in the political arena, in which it was asserted that these programmes would be harmful for the integration of these pupils in the Dutch society.

⁸ This information comes from the website of the Nuffic (Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education), www.nuffic.nl

⁹ Studentenmonitor 2001, <http://www.minocw.nl/bhw/87/print.html>

¹⁰ For the text of this decision see <http://www.minocw.nl/brief2k/2004/doc/8526.pdf>

¹¹ See Bezemer 2003.

¹² For more information see <http://www.levendetalen.nl/arabisch/artikel.htm>

Bilingual education (CLIL)¹³ at secondary level

There is a growing interest for English as instruction language also at secondary school level. In January 2004 bilingual (English-Dutch, in one case German-Dutch) education programmes were offered in 54 schools, 8 schools are going to start the programme next year. More than 5000 pupils follow CLIL programmes (about 1% of the total number of pupils). CLIL programmes differ from the programmes offered at international schools: a maximum of 50% of the lessons are in English, pupils follow the havo/vwo curriculum and get a havo/vwo diploma together with an International Baccalaureat language certificate, a lot of attention is paid to the Dutch language too.¹⁴

Schools are quite free in the choice of subjects to be taught in English: in any case history, geography and biology, but besides those subjects all other school subjects (except foreign languages and Dutch) can be offered in a CLIL programme. Schools ask a contribution (varying from 250 to 750 euro's a year per pupil atop the regular school fee, which in 2004-2005 amounts € 936) because these programmes imply higher costs, which are not funded by the Ministry of Education. Anyway, less fortunate families get a subsidy.¹⁵ Especially children of the richest middle class attend these programmes, which are more and more seen as an alternative to the traditional gymnasium.¹⁶

International schools

International schools were originally created to serve children of expats, but they increasingly attract Dutch pupils also, because parents consider it an advantage to acquire a good command of English from the beginning of the school career.

Future developments

The use of English as instruction language at different educational levels will grow in the next years. It is very unlikely however that this will affect the position of Dutch as official educational language: there are no plans to develop national secondary school exams in English, and even in the English master's degree courses Dutch students are in most cases allowed to write the final paper in Dutch.

Foreign language education at HE level

With some exceptions (see 1.3.1), BA-programmes at universities and UPE's generally offer limited room for compulsory language instruction. If language courses are a compulsory element of the curriculum, the target language is usually English. In some cases students can participate in forms of remedial teaching, mostly to enhance their academic writing skills in English.¹⁷ If languages are not compulsory, students may usually get credits for following one or more language courses at other departments or faculties. An alternative are the low budget foreign language courses offered by university language centres.

¹³ Content Language Integrated Learning, see <http://www.cilcompendium.com/>

¹⁴ <http://www.netwerkto.europeesplatform.nl/>

¹⁵ <http://www.netwerkto.europeesplatform.nl/wat/3.htm#3>

¹⁶ Het Onderwijsblad, 25 januari 2003: *Vraag naar tweetalig onderwijs groeit hard*, <http://www.netwerkto.europeesplatform.nl/artikelen/020303f.pdf>

¹⁷ In the past years different virtual writing labs have been developed; for Dutch *Online Schrijfcentrum*, <http://www.schrijfcentrum.nl/>; for Dutch, English, French, Spanish and German *World Wide Writing*, http://www.worldwidewriting.com/Nederlands/html/chapter_324_518.htm

Lectures in English

The Bologna process is a very powerful stimulus for the internationalization of academic studies. As a result, educational institutions often offer lectures in English. This is quite problematic, because teaching staff is generally not qualified to lecture in English: an investigation at the University of Groningen revealed that over 50 % of the teaching staff has an unsatisfactory command of English.¹⁸ No data are available about the students' foreign language competence. Dutch students are generally able to attend courses in English at universities abroad, but it seems likely that the inability to speak foreign languages restrains them from participating in exchange programmes in French or German speaking countries, let alone countries like Finland, Lithuania, Hungary or Spain, whose languages are completely unfamiliar to most students.

As a consequence of the growing use of English as language of instruction, most HE institutions offer academic English and English for special purposes courses for students and staff. In most institutions and departments it is still a matter of discussion if English language courses have to be integrated in the curriculum, so that students get credits for their participation.

Dutch for foreign students

Foreign students who apply for a BA-programme in Dutch can learn Dutch at the university language centres. In the months prior to the start of the academic year, most HE institutions offer Dutch lessons for foreign students at beginner's, intermediate and advanced levels. To be admitted in a study programme, foreign students have to take a national exam in Dutch as a Second Language: the *Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede taal, Examen II*. This is an examination for candidates at an intermediate level and was first set by the Ministry of Education in 1992. It qualifies successful candidates for entrance to various forms of higher education and the professions.¹⁹ The end levels are somehow related to the Common European Framework (CEF), but are not the same of the CEF.

1.3 Mapping of institutions and programmes engaged in language provision

1.3.1 Vertical axis: formal education system

Secondary level

The amount of "study load" (this indicates the hours that pupils spend on a subject working individually and in classroom) for every language depends on the schooltype. At upper secondary level, for instance, for VWO (pre-university education) 720 hours are set aside for compulsory foreign language teaching in the last three years, which amounts to 12% of the total number of hours per year. For HAVO (senior general secondary education), 520 hours are set aside for compulsory foreign language teaching in the last three years, which amounts to about 12% of the total number of hours per year. At the present moment at VWO 3 foreign languages are compulsory, at HAVO 2 foreign languages. But the current curriculum is under revision and probably there will be 2 compulsory foreign languages at VWO level and

¹⁸ See for the students' point of view this document, written by students at the University of Groningen: http://www.vosfractie.nl/docs/Notitie_Engelstalig_Onderwijs.doc

¹⁹ For more information see http://www.alte.org/members/dutch/cito/nt2_2.cfm

only 1 language at HAVO level. The third foreign language at VWO level and the second one at HAVO level will become optional (depending on the pupils choice).²⁰

Depending on the area of specialisation and the options chosen, pupils have more hours devoted to foreign languages (either compulsory or as optional subjects).²¹ In Appendix 1 an overview of the time devoted to foreign language teaching is presented.

HE level

At HE level it is possible to study languages at universities (BA and MA) and at UPE's (BA). UPE's offer **language teacher training** in different languages (English, German, French, Spanish, Frisian, Arabic and Turkish). Beside these pure linguistic programmes there are other HE programmes which incorporate attention for (foreign) language studies, such as European and International Studies, Communication, and Economical Studies. In some HE programmes (like at the Medical Faculty at Leiden University) English language courses are fully integrated in the curriculum.

The UPE in Maastricht is the only one to offer a programme for **translation and interpreting** (the Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting). This programme has to compete in the Dutch speaking area with a similar programme of the UPE in Antwerpen, Belgium (*Hoger Instituut voor Vertalers & Tolken*).

The total number of trainees at UPE's teacher training programmes has decreased in the period 1992-1999, and then it has started increasing again (Appendix, Figure 2 and Table 2). The number of students of Interpreting and Translation Studies in Maastricht is decreasing (Appendix, Table 2).

At University level, the number of students at Language and Culture departments is also decreasing (Appendix, Table 3 and Table 4). For instance, in 2003-2004 the total number of students of French is about 30% of the same figure in 1992-1993, and the total number of students of German is about 54% of the same figure in 1992-1993.

1.3.2. Horizontal axis: other language providers

Institutions and associations

Quite a few institutions closely connected with the countries in which the languages are spoken offer training in foreign languages: the Goethe Institut (Amsterdam, Rotterdam) for German, the Institut Français des Pays-Bas for Frans (with the Maison Descartes in Amsterdam, the Centre Culturel Français in Groningen and the Antenne de la Haye in The Hague) for French, the Instituto Cervantes (Utrecht) for Spanish, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura (Amsterdam) for Italian. There are also cultural associations (like Dante Alighieri for Italian and Alliance Française for French) that offer language courses at low costs.

²⁰ See for more information <http://www.heelmeesters.nl/docframes/documenten.htm>

²¹ Foreign Language Teaching in Schools in Europe, p. 112

TV and distance learning courses

Generally speaking, the fact that foreign tv programmes and films are not dubbed but subtitled offers an indirect possibility to learn foreign languages. Teleac²² offers distance training via radio and tv, there are distance training facilities via mail as well (offered by private companies like NTI²³ or LOI²⁴, also with e-learning support).

Low budget language courses

In many cities there is a so-called *Volksuniversiteit*²⁵ offering low budget language training classes. The Volksuniversiteit offer courses in 26 languages; the most popular are English, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Modern Greek.²⁶ In the biggest cities *buurthuizen*, community centres, offer low budget language courses subsidised by the city government. In most cases these programmes have rather limited goals, for instance the ability to find your way around in a foreign country during holiday. This does not usually match students' needs: HE institutions will have to offer an alternative themselves in order to meet the foreign language demand that comes with internationalization.

University language centres

University language centres offer language courses for students and staff at low costs. Students have moreover access to the language labs and/or the media library. Most university language centres are in the process of digitalizing their audio resources, and this will make remote access for students possible.

Private language schools²⁷

In the last ten years there has been an enormous grow in the market of private language schools. The results of studies aimed at determining the most requested language trainings are contradictory: the only common point is that the most popular language is English. It is not clear if the second most requested language is French, German or Spanish. The least popular seem Italian and Russian. About 40% of the students start at intermediate level, about 33% at beginner level (even for German and French) and the rest at advanced level.

Private language schools are well informed about the CEF and use the CEF descriptors for the intake procedure. The most requested skills are speaking and listening; there is an increasing demand for writing skills, especially for English. Most course participants come from companies working in the industrial, business and IT sector. The middle management is well represented (41%). The most important reasons for following language trainings are business contacts with foreign partners and necessity of working abroad.

²² <http://www.teleac.nl/>. Course materials (video's, cassettes and books) can be purchased separately, distance learning is not implemented yet.

²³ <http://www.nti.nl/>

²⁴ http://www.loi.nl

²⁵ <http://www.volksuniversiteit.nl/>

²⁶ Edelenbos and De Jong, pag. 44.

²⁷ The information comes from Edelenbos and De Jong, pag. 44-45.

2. Mapping of interfaces on the vertical and horizontal axes

2.1 Structures for co-operation in the educational sector and between the different language providers

Associations of universities and UPE's

The most important formal structures for cooperation at HE level are the *VSNU*²⁸ (the Association of Universities in The Netherlands) and the *HBO-raad*²⁹ (Association of Universities of Professional Education). The aim of these Associations is to develop higher (professional) education in relation to social developments and to promote the collective interests of all its affiliated members. As an employers' organisation, the Associations are also responsible for concluding collective labour agreements (CAOs) with the educational trade unions in higher (professional) education.

Quality Control

All universities are responsible for the quality of their own teaching and research. In addition to this internal quality assurance, universities also participate in a system of external quality assurance: periodic evaluations of the teaching and research by experts from outside the institution. This system is called Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities (QANU)³⁰ and offers universities external assessments of academic education and research programmes, and advice on ways of improving internal quality assurance. UPE's also have an independent organisation for external quality control, the Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA).³¹

International and European cooperation

The NUFFIC³² is the Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education. It is a non-profit, professional organization aimed at making education more accessible all over the world, especially in countries where educational infrastructure is lagging behind. NUFFIC's main areas of activity are: development cooperation, Internationalization of higher education (with special emphasis on programmes for international students and staff mobility and on the internationalization of curricula that prepare students for professional and academic careers) international recognition and certification and marketing of Dutch higher education.

The NUFFIC is also the Dutch National Agency for the Erasmus programme for Dutch students and administrates the system of subsidies for students and staff mobility in HE.³³

University language centres

Dutch university language centres are associated in the NUT (Nederlandstalige Universitaire Talencentra) together with the Flemish language centres.³⁴ The directors of the language centres have an annual meeting, language centres staff cooperate through different thematic workgroups (e.g. Dutch for foreign students). At

²⁸ <http://www.vsnu.nl>

²⁹ <http://www.hbo-raad.nl>

³⁰ <http://www.qanu.nl>

³¹ <http://www.nqa.nl>

³² <http://www.nuffic.nl>

³³ http://www.socrates-programma.nl/erasmus_home.html

³⁴ <http://www.taalnet.rug.ac.be/nut/index.html>

the 8 specialized universities (see 1.1) language centres are the only providers of foreign language courses; at the 6 general universities students may also follow language courses for credits at the language departments.

3. Forms of cooperation and identification of needs, obstacles, opportunities and measures to be taken to improve communication and co-operation

Other cooperation structures at university level

Besides the more formalized cooperation structures, at university level there are different forms of consultation and cooperation. For instance, the Deans of the Faculties of Arts and Humanities have regular meetings in the *DLG (Disciplineoverleg Letteren Geschiedenis, Thematic Consultation for Arts and History)*. At departmental level, there are contacts between English, German and French lecturers at different universities. English lecturers of language proficiency have an association called LOUDET;³⁵ German lecturers have also an association, the VGNU³⁶ (Association of Germanists at Dutch Universities). The association of French lecturers (VRNU³⁷) is under constitution.

2.2.1 Vertical axis

a) programmes/curricula

Consultation/cooperation between HE and secondary education: changes in the language curricula at secondary education

At the begin of the nineties, a commission nominated by the VSNU asked for a change in the German and French curricula at secondary level, both at VWO (pre university education) and HAVO (senior general secondary education). University lecturers complained that students were not longer able to read academic literature in German and French, and this was a problem for the HE curricula. Therefore, starting from 1999,³⁸ at secondary level more emphasis was given to reading and listening skills; at the same time, due to a reduction of the total amount of hours for German and French, there was little time left for speaking and writing skills. Teachers and pupils at secondary level criticized this change; pupils found that without practising the productive skills French and German had become very boring subjects, and teachers agreed.

In 2002 the Secretary of State proposed therefore some changes, that will be put into practice from 2007:

- vwo: one second modern language as a compulsory subject (instead of two languages, German and French, but only reading and listening skills)
- havo: more possibilities to choose a second modern language (both receptive and productive skills), instead of only the receptive skills in German or in French

The universities this time accepted without protests; the situation in the meantime has changed and English has become the most important vehicle for academic

³⁵ <http://www.kun.nl/engdept/louDET/>

³⁶ <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/vgnu/>

³⁷ <http://veganu.babozor.net/nieuw.htm>

³⁸ This was a part of a major educational innovation, the so-called *Tweede fase* or *Studiehuis* (see for information in English http://www.minocw.nl/english/education/pdf/kerndoelenVO_engels.pdf)

communication, not only in the science departments, but also in the art subjects and in the social sciences. Almost every university student has to read literature in English (96%), but this figure is lower among UPE's students (65%). About 30% of the university students and 15% of the UPE's students has to read literature in German. French texts are less common (7% of the university students and 4% of the UPE's students had to read them).³⁹ However, for students of humanities, mathematics and international law the lack of competence in German and French is still seen as problematic. Students usually choose the easiest way and simply only read literature in Dutch or in English; if they go abroad, they choose English speaking countries or countries where languages are spoken that they are willing to learn. About 30% of the students choose the UK, USA or Canada for a period abroad (Appendix, Table 6). About 13% of the students in 2002 had already been abroad for study or training and 24% had plans for a period abroad.⁴⁰

Needs

A better command of other languages and a deeper intercultural competence is the necessary condition for the creation of an "European space" for HE.

Measures

Universities and UPE's should stimulate students of all studies to learn new foreign languages, to improve the knowledge that they already have and to become more independent language learners.

b) entry-exit qualifications

Decreased language competence at entry and exit level

The entry level for HE is the level of the vwo-final exams for universities and of the havo final exams for UPE's (see Appendix, Table 1). German and French lecturers at language university departments and teacher training departments at UPE's have to face the problem of a decreasing language competence (see also Table 1 for the discrepancies between national standards and effective examination level), which implies adjustments in the HE curriculum. Since the amount of hours for language learning has not changed (in some cases it has even been reduced, as a consequence of the BA-MA system), this means that graduates of these departments will have a lower language competence level than twenty or ten years ago.

Needs

Decreased language competence

Measures

Adjustments in the HE curriculum

c) validation/recognition

CEF⁴¹

As far as the qualifications at university language departments are concerned, in 2001 the Deans of the Faculties of Arts and Humanities agreed to adopt the CEF for defining the target levels for language learning at the end of the Bachelor programme. The languages were divided in four groups, depending on their position

³⁹ Studentenmonitor 2001, <http://www.minocw.nl/bhw/87/print.html>

⁴⁰ Studentenmonitor 2002, <http://www.minocw.nl/bhw/87/print.html>

⁴¹ Common European Framework for Languages, http://www.culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents_intro/common_framework.html

at secondary education and their structural distance from the Dutch language (Appendix, Table 5). This was before the introduction of the BA-MA system and before the first generation of pupils who were taught in a new way at secondary school (see 2.2.1, a) arrived at the university: the target levels need now to be revised and once again defined.

Needs

Standardization among university language departments

Measures

Implementation of CEF (already started, needs revision)

2.2.2 Horizontal axis: HEI, other providers and governmental institutions

a) in-service training

Interfaces between HE and the labour market: teacher training

Postgraduate in-service and pre-service teachers training courses focus much more on general pedagogical skills than on the language and on language teaching pedagogy. It is not the responsibility of the postgraduate schools of teaching and learning to deliver teachers with a good competence in the foreign language, but of the university language departments. At UPE's level (graduate schools of teaching and learning) more attention is paid to the language acquisition process.

At the present moment, a lot of people with previous professional experience decide to start a teacher's career. Due to the decreasing number of students at the graduate and postgraduate schools of teaching and learning, the Ministry of Education stimulates this career switch (it is the case of people who, for instance, took a foreign language degree twenty years ago but never worked as a language teacher). They follow initial training courses at the graduate and postgraduate schools of teaching and learning and at the same time work as a teacher.

For newly qualified and experienced teachers no minimum language competence level is stated.

Needs

Language assessment procedures for teachers should be developed at national and European level. Instruments are needed to assess the quality of teachers and of teacher training institutions. Nowadays in different places quality control systems are developed, based on assessment procedures: intake assessment to the teacher profession for the group with non-educational professional experience, HRM policies in the schools, new forms of midterm and end assessment at the initial training institutions. But the vast majority of these instruments is not validated.

Measures

Measures should be taken to avoid an impending chaotic situation, in which different quality control systems are used by different stakeholders (Ministry, schools, training institutions). Development of validated European quality control systems could be one of these measures.

The Language Portfolio and the CEF could be used to help teachers monitoring their language competence; teachers should be stimulated to spend some time in the

country of the target languages, preferably teaching or observing language classrooms.

b) co-operation via staff

Cooperation in the Faculties of Arts and Humanities – language departments

The language departments at Dutch universities, particularly the so-called general universities, are facing a number of problems, to which the answers have yet to be found. Virtually any language can be studied in the Netherlands, in most cases in more than one university, but there is a continuous decline in the number of students interested in becoming language specialists studying a language at traditional, philology-oriented departments (Appendix, Table 3 and Table 4).

Needs

Due to the decreasing number of students, staff has also been reduced, and this means that material development will more and more need to be done in cooperation with colleagues at other universities.

Measures

Cooperation and exchange of language materials can be facilitated by the adoption of the CEF; the target levels at the end of the Bachelor have been related to the CEF, but the implementation of this instrument is still very experimental.

c) co-operation in policy development

University language policy

Due to the internationalization and the growing use of English in the academic environment, language centres and language departments may play a relevant role in the development of a broad university language policy, covering all areas (training of staff, provision of courses for students, translation of information materials and documents, etc.). To our knowledge, such documents have not been produced yet, but it is likely that they will appear in the next years.

Needs

Increased demand of English for academic purposes, internationalization

Measures

Development of a general university language policy. Examples of policy documents developed abroad should be made available to stakeholders.

d) relations with external stakeholders (business, public services etc)

Interfaces between HE and the labour market: requested language knowledge for not language-related professions⁴²

English and German are the most requested languages, in some sectors German is even more important than English. The greatest need for employees with foreign language competence is to be found among companies in the transportation and logistics sector (more than 83% of the companies need them), followed by industries (78%). Dutch companies in the Dutch-German area need employees with English and German knowledge, and at management level English and German are the most requested languages. The Federation for the Dutch Export (FENEDEX) signal that English, German, French and Spanish, in this order, are the most important languages; they are mostly used for contacts with other UE countries.

⁴² Edelenbos and De Jong, p. 39-40

For civil servants and employees in the non-profit sector English is much more important than German (while in business English and German are often equally relevant): due to increased international contacts, both oral and writing skills are requested.

Needs

Companies complain about the language skills of employees, but there are not enough data to identify specific needs in this area.⁴³

Measures

A study is needed to clearly identify the language skills needed in different sectors of the labour market.

e) language portfolio

Implementation of the European language portfolio in HE

Quite a few UPE's consider the CEF and especially the Language Portfolio as a useful instrument, different pilots have been set up to experiment with the Portfolio. The most relevant example is that of the teacher training department at EFA (Educatieve Faculteit Amsterdam, Hogeschool Amsterdam). The EFA staff developed in 2002 a digital version of the language portfolio, linked to the general student portfolio. The Language Passport is linked to the Competences section of this portfolio and the Language Biography to the cv. On the EFA website⁴⁴ the following information can be found:

A language portfolio is of interest to different groups of EFA students:

1. **Language students** can keep a record of their language development in the target language. Working with the language portfolio also prepares them for working with language portfolios with students in future classrooms.
2. For **students whose first language is not Dutch** the language portfolio can provide support for the learning of Dutch as a second language. These students will be asked to compile a language portfolio as part of Language Support.
3. For **students taking part in international exchanges** who want to document and improve their level of English.
4. For **students intending to work in bilingual classrooms** at schools with an English stream (TTO schools), who want to improve their English.

In September 2004 the Hanzehogeschool Groningen plans to start a pilot with the Language Portfolio. Also Saxion Hogescholen, Fontys Hogescholen, Hogeschool van Utrecht and Hogeschool Rotterdam started in 2004 a cooperation project about the introduction of the Language Portfolio.

Needs

Evaluation of the experiments will make clear which are the needs in this area and consequently which measures need to be taken.

f) teaching materials and e-learning

⁴³ Edelenbos and De Jong, p. 40

⁴⁴ <http://www.efa.nl/bronnen/taalportfolio/english/english.htm>

Cooperation in ICT projects at the Faculties of Arts

In the past years, university language departments closely cooperated in the development of computer programmes and computer based language learning materials. Two of those joint developed language learning programmes, *Hologram* and *Ellips* (web-based) are currently used at the universities of Groningen, Utrecht, Leiden, Nijmegen and at the Language Centre of Tilburg University. Hologram is the most widely used CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) application at university level in the Netherlands; in the past seven years, Hologram materials in twelve different languages have been developed to be used by about 1000 undergraduate students at the participating universities every year. Persons responsible for ICT and education in the humanities have regular meetings and organize an annual conference. In the field of CAL, Computer Assisted Language Learning, a spontaneous, bottom-up cooperation has arisen and will certainly grow in the next years.

Another innovation which universities are embracing is the use of web-based virtual learning environments (VLEs), especially Blackboard and WebCT. The thrust for innovation here comes mainly from the central university offices and Faculties of Arts and Humanities have to consider how they can make the technology work for them. This top-down approach may not always be compatible with earlier, bottom-up CALL initiatives like the Hologram and Ellips project. However, since language departments at different universities have to cooperate and offer jointly Master's programmes due to staff reduction, VLEs can be usefully implemented to support courses for students at different institutions.

Ellips focuses particularly on grammar training, listening and pronunciation skills; although it can be accessed on its own, it has been created with integration with virtual learning environments (VLEs) like Blackboard and WebCT in mind. As a matter of fact, Ellips offers functionality lacking in these systems, which have not been specifically developed for language learning and offer more assessment than practising opportunities. Moreover, in Ellips all learning materials are coded with language-specific metadata (mainly based on descriptors derived from the Common European Framework), so that developers can easily find and reuse materials and so-called 'semi-adaptivity' is allowed (students automatically receive more exercises on the topics which they have not yet mastered).

Other important features of Ellips are full Unicode support, extensive feedback (for every item in an exercise and for the whole exercise), a student-tracking system, the use of (streaming) audio and video, and the possibility to record student input and store it in a portfolio.

Needs

The most effective way of implementing VLEs and LCMS (Learning content management systems, database-supported systems like Ellips) in language learning in HE is still unclear.

Measures

Pedagogical reflection about the use of VLEs and LCMS and critical evaluation of the ongoing experiments.

4. Recommendations

The introduction of the Bachelor-Master structure in HE is intended, among other things, to give a strong impulse to internationalization, which will in turn improve the skills of HE graduates. There is already a trend of increased mobility of both students and teaching staff, and the expectation is that the mobility of the students will increase. As a result, teaching staff members will be confronted with students who cannot participate in education in Dutch. At the same time, Dutch students will spend a shorter or longer period of time at universities abroad, and complete part of the study programme at those institutions. This does not only place demands on the students but also on teaching staff members: they need to provide some courses in foreign languages which, as discussed earlier, they do not adequately master. This is a substantial problem, because Dutch universities aim to offer as many master's degrees as possible in English, in order to enhance their position within the international competition. This results in the first recommendation:

Recommendation No. 1:

Every HE institution should offer **teaching staff** additional training in English language skills, both speaking and writing.

To some extent this problem is expected to be solved automatically, as more and more teaching staff members will be educated in English.

With respect to the students, two problems may be distinguished. First, foreign students who are not native speakers of English apply for admission at HE institutions in the Netherlands. Foreign students often appear unable to participate in English programs, even if their scores on international standardized tests (*e.g.*, ILTS, TOEFL and CAMBRIDGE) indicate that their English language skills are satisfactory. Therefore, it is important to assess the English language skills of foreign students at an early stage: if these are below the required level, additional language training should be mandatory.

The second problem involves Dutch students who participate in programs abroad: especially in English-speaking countries, insufficient English language skills constitute a limiting factor. The internationalization also demands that measures be taken to improve the English language skills of Dutch students. This results in the following recommendation:

Recommendation No. 2:

HE students should have an adequate level of competence in English at the beginning of the study; the required level, which may vary depending on the HE curriculum, should be defined by every institution according to the **CEF**.

To reach a higher competence level in English, it is not efficient to expand the time set aside for English at secondary education; offering a substantial part of secondary education in English seems a more effective strategy. This approach, known as CLIL (see above, 1.2) seems particularly appropriate for the so-called 'zaakvakken' ("object courses"), including geography, biology, economics and history. Wherever possible, CLIL education should also be offered in other languages. Of course, this requires appropriate initial teacher education in CLIL for which sufficient funding must be made available. The government also should facilitate and stimulate CLIL at secondary schools, for

instance by facilitating the development of English course materials for these classes.

Recommendation No. 3:

The **CLIL** approach in secondary education needs to be stimulated at national level, since it enhances the cultural and linguistic competences of future HE students. However there is a strong demand for CLIL in English, CLIL should also be offered in other languages where appropriate.

The expectation is that, as a result of these developments, students entering HE will have better receptive English language skills, but their productive skills will probably be at a lower level. Therefore:

Recommendation No. 4:

HE institutions should offer facilities for improvement of the productive English language skills, in particular writing skills. Students should be stimulated to write academic papers in English already at BA level.

The European Commission's goal is that every EU resident master two languages in addition to his or her native language. In the Netherlands, English obviously should be one of these foreign languages. Since Dutch belongs to the group of the less widely taught and spoken languages of the EU, for Dutch speakers, and especially for graduates, is knowledge of more than one foreign language in addition to English important to enhance their opportunities on the EU labour market. As we have seen in 2.2.1, a), foreign language provision at secondary school level is currently under discussion.

Recommendation No. 5:

Pupils at pre-university secondary education (vwo) and senior general secondary education (havo) should be stimulated to choose, in addition to English and a second foreign language, also a **third foreign language**. Both the Ministry of Education and schools play an important role in this process.

The CEF should be used as a point of reference for the entire foreign language education system, including teacher training. The Language portfolio should also be implemented, so that lifelong language learning can be better supported and the different language experiences, also outside the formal educational context, can be properly recorded.

Recommendation No. 6:

The implementation of the **CEF** and the Language portfolio at HE level should be stimulated by every HE institution

There is, of course, a serious danger that implementation of the CEF and the Language Portfolio in the beginning will remain a pure bureaucratic operation. Even if competence target levels at different moments in HE education should be defined according to the CEF descriptors, the assessment of these standards will remain problematic; but this is a necessary step in the long term educational strategy.

We believe that the implementation of these recommendations will contribute to strengthening the position of the Dutch HE institutions on the international education market and will improve the graduates' employment opportunities.

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