

# LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN BELGIUM

**Piet Van de Craen, Vrije Universiteit Brussel &  
Ronald Soetaert, Rijksuniversiteit Gent**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *1.1. The National Linguistic Situation*

Belgium is an official trilingual country. It consists of three officially monolingual regions and one bilingual region. The monolingual regions are (1) Flanders, in the northern part of the country (13,511 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of roughly 5,670,000) where Dutch is the official language, (2) Wallonia, in the south (16,846 km<sup>2</sup>, population 3,208,000) where French is the official language and (3) a small German-speaking region (854 km<sup>2</sup> with about 66,000 inhabitants). The capital, Brussels (162 km<sup>2</sup> with about 980,000 inhabitants), is an official bilingual region with French and Dutch as official languages.

For a correct understanding of the Belgian situation, it is important to realise that Flanders shares its official language with its northern neighbour, The Netherlands; Wallonia shares its language with its southern neighbour France, and the German-speaking parts share their language with Germany, their eastern neighbour. The linguistic difference between Dutch as it is spoken in Flanders and in The Netherlands can best be compared to the difference between American English and British English, i.e. differences in pronunciation, certain lexical items, and expressions do exist. The difference between standard Belgian French and standard French as it is spoken in France is even smaller than the differences between the two Dutch variants. The latter remark applies to Belgian German as well.

Although the Brussels region is officially bilingual French-Dutch, the number of French and Dutch speakers are currently unknown. It is commonly accepted, though by no means scientifically underpinned, that between 80 and 85% of the indigenous population consider themselves as French-speakers, while about 20 to 25% consider themselves as Dutch-speakers. The number of bilinguals is estimated at around 30% of the indigenous population. The lack of hard figures is a result of the abolition of language censuses for political reasons after 1947. Another aspect of Brussels is its substantial foreign population. It can be divided into two distinct groups. On the one hand, members of the European Union, mostly civil servants and their families and, on the other hand, migrants mostly from Moroccan and Turkish origin. Both groups together consist of about 250,000 people (cf. Van de Craen & Willemys 1988; Van de Craen 1989).

### *1.2. Description of Area Specific Understanding of Bilingual Education.*

In Belgium bilingual education does not officially exist but much attention is paid to language teaching (cf. Van de Craen 1995). Bilingual education in the true sense of the word can only be found in experimental projects and in European schools. However, the latter fall outside Belgian education policy and legislation. Despite this state of affairs there is some interest in bilingual education in Flanders, Wallonia, the Brussels area and in the German-speaking area. Due to the strict language legislation teaching has to take place in the language of the area. Consequently, teacher training for bilingual education as such is inexistent.

With respect to bilingualism and bilingual education the Belgian situation is quite paradoxical even close to being a situation of “double bind”. There is a frequent demand for bilingualism and bilingual education. Bilingual speakers are highly esteemed so high even that the prime minister of the regional Wallonian government, Laurette Onckelinx, declared in 1996 that by the year 2001 she expected every Walloon to be bilingual (sic). However, legislation does not permit the introduction of a second language until relatively late in the curriculum. Moreover, language education is introduced in a fairly traditional way as if languages were not part of the daily environment. Given the previous, it comes as no surprise that specific teacher training for bilingual education is inexistent. Even worse is the fact that in a recent report by the Flemish School Inspection the results of second and/or foreign language education are judged “poor” with respect to proficiency in French, English and German (Inspectie 1995). Such a report is to the best of our knowledge not available for Wallonia but it would be surprising if results were better in the Francophone region.

The situation with respect to bilingualism in Belgium can even be called schizophrenic in the layman’s meaning of the word. For some “bilingual education” is a taboo word to be avoided for political reasons. Others fear that bilingual education hampers mother-tongue proficiency. In contrast, others see it as the only way for improving language teaching. However, the discussion remains academic, since the strict legislation does not allow certain types of bilingual education to be implemented anyway. As a result one of the present authors has mockingly stated that one cannot remain a law-abiding citizen in Belgium if one wants to become bilingual (Van de Craen 1995b). However, all this does not prevent the existence of a number of schools trying to implement some kind of bilingual education programme more or less along the lines of content-based language teaching. These schools are dealt with in part 3 of this contribution.

### *1.3. Legislation and Language Teacher Training.*

Belgium is a linguistically heavily legislated country. The law of July 30th 1963 and its subsequent decrees stipulate the organisation of foreign language teaching, called second language education. In fact the law allows for the teaching of a second language in primary schools from the fifth grade onwards with a maximum of three hours a week. By second language is meant French for the Dutch-speaking area, Dutch, German or English for the French-speaking area and French or German in the German-speaking area depending on the fact whether it is a French-speaking school or not. It should be

stressed that these classes are not compulsory but that they should be organised on parents demand.

In the communes of the Brussels area as well as in a number of language border communes such as Komen/Comines, Moeskroen/Mouscron, etc the teaching of the second language is compulsory starting from the third grade onwards with a maximum of three hours a week increasing to five hours a week in grades five and six. By second language is meant Dutch or French. German in the arrondissements of Verviers, Bastogne and Arlon. It is interesting to see that in the latter case subjects other than languages may be treated here.

Finally, in the Brussels capital area the law permits second language teaching in grade one with a maximum of two hours a week and provided that teaching would only take place orally.

## **2. LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING IN RELATION TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION**

### *2.1. Initial teacher training*

Teacher training and the organization of language teacher training is described by Soetaert & Van Heule 1995 and Van de Craen 1995a; see also OESO 1991). It should be pointed out that contrary to many other European countries teacher training is not restricted to universities solely. In fact, depending on the level, teacher training is organized by both high schools and universities. As a result, the presentation of teacher training organization becomes a relatively complicated matter. The French-speaking community is currently conducting a long-term research project aimed at a complete reform of teacher training programmes. This "Commission scientifique d'étude" (Scientific Study Committee) is concentrating, among other things, upon the following: (a) a uniform teacher training programme at university level for all levels of education, i.e. from infant teachers to secondary school teachers; (b) specialized training for teachers of children from 3 to 8 years old and from 8 to 13 years old. For 14 to 18 years old, a thorough psycho-pedagogical training is added; (c) collaboration of institutes of higher pedagogical education and psycho-pedagogical institutions at the universities. Similar initiatives in teacher-training reforms are investigated by the Dutch-speaking authorities. Today, it cannot be predicted when - if ever - these innovations will actually take place.

Table 1 summarizes various forms of teacher training and teacher training organizations in Belgium with respect to the languages offered. To simplify things, table 1 does not take into account the various institutions according to the establishing body, namely (1) official cultural community education organized by the communities, (2) official subsidized education organized by local authorities and (3) "free" subsidized education organized by private organizations based on particular religious, philosophical or educational convictions (cf. Vercruyse & Kaufman 1991:17).

Level	Name of teacher training institute	Languages offered in the regions of		
		Flanders	Brussels	Wallonia
Primary school	Pedagogical High Schools - Short-term higher education - 3 years of study	French	French or Dutch	Dutch, English, or German
Lower-secondary school	Pedagogical High Schools - Short-term higher education - 3 years of study	One main language to be combined with two other subjects, possible another language	One main language to be combined with two other subjects, possible another language	One main language to be combined with two other subjects, possible another language
Higher-secondary school	Teacher training departments in universities - 2 years of study incorporated in university curriculum	Germanic, Romance, Slavonic languages, etc	Germanic, Romance, Slavonic languages, etc	Germanic, Romance, Slavonic languages, etc

Table 1 : Summary of teacher training institutes in Belgium for three levels of teachers in three language regions as well as the languages offered. Abstraction is made of the establishing body. No mention is made of the German region nor of the teacher training programme for “social promotion”.

Before commenting on table 1, it should be made clear that in neither of the above cases explicit training for bilingual education is offered. In the Dutch-speaking primary schools in Flanders French is introduced from the 5th grade onwards. However, the quality of French is doubtful (see also Inspectie 1995). More often than not the teachers’ proficiency is low and French is often taught through Dutch, the mother tongue. This evolution seems to be the result of a wide-spread French teaching method, called “Eventail”. In Wallonia, teachers proficiency in Dutch is hardly any better. Since language education is not compulsory in primary schools and since parental demands play a role in organizing language classes, French-speaking primary school teachers are hardly prepared for language teaching duties. The situation in Brussels is slightly better. Most Dutch-speaking teachers are bilingual and some French-speaking teachers are as well. As a result in the Brussels’ educational system proficiency in French and Dutch is higher than elsewhere.

As for lower secondary school teachers, i.e. teachers of pupils 12 to 15 years old, a wide range of options and combinations is available to them (see below for more details). This type of training provides both general language education as well as pedagogical training with the latter gaining in importance as the study proceeds. However, complaints with respects to teachers' language proficiency are not unusual (Inspectie 1995).

Teacher training departments at universities provide programmes in educational studies and an initiation in educational practice for language teachers as well as for teachers of other disciplines. Students enrolled in such programmes obtain a teaching certificate for higher secondary education. Most students follow the courses of the professionally oriented teacher education curriculum parallel with the regular university curriculum in the third and fourth year of their study. While complaints regarding the language proficiency of higher secondary school teachers seem less frequent complaints regarding their teaching ability can be heard.

The situation of initial teacher training in relation to bilingual education is easy to describe: bilingual teacher training does not exist as such. However, despite the educational system quite a number of bilingual speakers do exist and bilingualism is highly in demand.

### *2.1.1. At university level*

#### *2.1.1.1. The curriculum*

While there exists no bilingual programmes a considerable amount of time is devoted to language study at university level. The curricula of faculties such as the Arts, the Humanities and Law carry a significant amount of hours devoted to Dutch, French, English and German as well as occasionally Spanish and Italian. These courses are organized by the language centres of the various universities. They are mostly meant for undergraduate students and consists of approximately 2 to 4 hours a week. Language students, of course, have a much more elaborated programme (cf. Van de Craen 1995a). Students' language proficiency is mainly assessed along the lines of listening comprehension, oral fluency, reading comprehension and written tasks.

#### *2.1.1.2. The structure of the programmes*

There is considerable variation between regions and universities in the structure and contents of the language programmes. In general, these programmes concentrate on material related to their specific study field. In this sense they are similar to courses of language for specific purposes. That is, English for economists will differ from English for law students. Most language courses are offered during the first two years of the curriculum. In later years the language component is sometimes reduced.

The pedagogical programme is spread over two or three years when it is taken during the regular curriculum. When the pedagogical courses are followed after the degree has

been obtained the pedagogical education lasts one or two years according to the preference of the student teacher.

### *2.1.1.3. Practical training*

Practical training includes training in classrooms under the guidance of an experienced teacher. Teachers are qualified to give instruction in one or two languages according to the options in their degree courses. The practical classroom training for language teachers varies from 10 to 20 hours a year. Besides, observations of classroom practice have to be carried out. It has to be said that the reform of this programme has been under scrutiny for quite some time now by the various regional ministeries. Until today, few changes have been proposed mainly for fear that the costs will be too high.

### *2.1.1.4. Impact of community programmes*

The impact of community programmes on teacher mobility is better than for student mobility. Belgium occupied rank 6 out of twelve member states in 1993. In general there are more Dutch-speaking than French-speaking teachers involved. However, very few teachers from other member states seem to opt for Belgian programmes. Here the country's ranking order is 10 out of twelve.

## *2.1.2. At non-university level*

### *2.1.2.1. The curriculum*

Language teacher training in short-term higher education takes three years and provides both general language education as well as pedagogical training. The latter gains in importance as the study proceeds. Qualifications are not limited to languages proper as languages have to be combined with other subjects. The organisation of the training is as follows. Students opt for a main subject which means they have a choice between Dutch, French, English or mathematics. In addition, they choose one subject among, on the one hand, history, geography, physics and biology and, on the other hand, geography, humanistic studies, German, biology, economy, physics and chemistry. This implies a wide variety of combinations as is shown in table 2.

<b>Main subjects</b>	<b>First option subjects</b>	<b>Second option subjects</b>
Dutch	History or Geography	Geography, Biology, Religion/Ethics, Chemistry, Economy, German, Latin
French	History or Geography	Geography, Religion/Ethics, Chemistry, Economy, German, Latin
English	History or Geography	Geography, Religion/Ethics, Chemistry, Economy, German, Latin
Mathematics	Biology or Physics	Geography, Physics, Religion/Ethics, Chemistry, Economy, German, Latin

Table 2: Main, first and second option subjects for lower secondary school teachers (12-15 years of age).

It should be noted that this programme has undergone quite a few changes in the past decades and that previously other combinations were possible. At the time of writing, spring 1997, new combinations are introduced for the year 1997-1998 starting in September 1997. In addition to the previous subjects pedagogy is compulsory. The degree allows the holder to teach three subjects in the first three years of secondary education, i.e. lower secondary education.

#### *2.1.2.2. The structure of the programmes*

The programmes in short-term higher education are spread over three years. The first year consists of general courses and specialized subjects, such as languages, as well as introductory courses in pedagogy. In the second year, about as much time is devoted to pedagogy as to the rest of the subjects, while in the third year, about half of the time is devoted to teaching proper..

#### *2.1.2.3. Practical training*

Practical training in various schools under the guidance of an experienced teacher and the trainers of the training institute is compulsory. Examinations include theoretical as well as practical components. In most institutes, a final project is required which usually consists of an extensive paper on a didactically oriented subject.

#### *2.1.2.4. Impact of community programmes*

see 2.1.1.4.

### *2.2. In-service teacher training (INSET) at university and non-university levels*

In the Dutch-speaking community there are three kinds of centres co-ordinating in-service training. In fact, each network has its own in-service training centre. The "Pedagogical Centres" organise in-service training for the state-run schools, the "Pedagogical-didactic centres" organise in-service training for the Catholic network and local pedagogical centres organise training in cases where local school authorities are in charge, mostly in the cities of Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent. In addition, universities organise in-service training sessions by mutual agreement with school inspectors. Material help is provided by the ministry, such as informing teachers and schools, refunding travel expenses, insurance, etc. Some 300 million Belgian francs is made available annually for in-service training, of which 70% goes to the Catholic network.

After the erection of the "Autonome Raad voor het Gemeenschapsonderwijs" (ARGO) (Autonomous Board for State-run schools) in 1989, the number of in-service training programmes has increased considerably. At this writing 47 projects are on-going. Yet, it is felt that this proliferation is not well co-ordinated and should be reformed.

In the French-speaking community, in-service training is provided by the ministry and co-ordinated by the department called "Organisation des Etudes" (Service for study organisation). This service co-ordinates all activities for state-run schools and provides financial aid to all networks. In addition to this and upon the recommendation of the Council of Europe special centres for in-service training were founded in Frameries, Charleroi and Huy (OESO 1991). Distinct from this, the Catholic network provides additional in-service training as well. Furthermore, a decree stipulates that 0.12% of the annual education budget is to be used for in-service training.

#### *2.2.1.1. The curriculum*

With respect to language training, two kinds of in-service training can be distinguished, namely short-term and long-term training. Short-term training refers to individual sessions, usually one day, where teachers are introduced to new techniques and/or methodologies and/or where assessments are made of previously discussed material and/or methodologies. Long-term training refers to more extended activities such as attending particular training sessions over a period of time.

The content of the various programmes is diverse and varied because it is not structured by any authority. Ideally, these programmes should introduce the teachers to new techniques and methods as well as provide an assessment of them. In the Dutch-speaking community, it is felt that, in general, there are too many programmes covering too many subjects. In the French-speaking community some priorities have been put forward. Only those priorities dealing with language are mentioned here. Starting with the primary schools, priority is given to (1) in-service programmes dealing with learning a second language according to the principles of communicative teaching and (2) to intercultural education and its implications.

The content of the in-service training programmes dealing with language and organised by universities are equally diverse. In recent years, communicative language teaching has been the focus of attention but new ways of teaching literature and the status of grammar in foreign language education to name a few areas have equally enjoyed attention.

#### *2.2.1.2. Structure of programmes*

As has been said earlier there are short-term and long-term programmes. Short-term programmes last one day and generally take the form of a workshop or study day. Long-term programmes can last a whole year or - in some cases - cover a number of years. A special kind of long-term programme involves teachers who are temporarily relieved from classroom duties in order to follow special programmes in the home country or abroad. After their training has been completed it is their task to train their colleagues. Another kind of programme involves collaboration with Lingua. In this case teachers spend some time in a foreign institute or foreign teachers are brought in to train local teachers.



### 2.2.1.3. *Practical training*

see 2.2.1.2

### 2.2.1.4. *Impact of community programmes to date*

With respect to the Lingua in-service programmes Savage has neatly summarised the current situation. He writes: "In Dutch-speaking Belgium, there was some negative effect when LINGUA was set, as the INSET budget for courses abroad was abolished. [...] [T]his has now been replaced by a substantial budget [...] It is hopeful and encouraging that the Minister decided [...] to grant leave to teachers who, in the interests of education, are required to spend at least 14 days abroad in the framework of an exchange or in practical language experience. In practice this means that paid substitution becomes possible, which will obviously break down barriers. This is also a form of co-financing by the Flemish Community. [...] The position is similar in French-speaking Belgium, except with regard to replacement costs. In addition, as a result of LINGUA contacts, there is now much better in-service training provision for teachers of Dutch in co-operation with the Dutch Talenacademie in Maastricht" (Savage 1994:24).

## **3. NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING IN RELATION TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION**

### *3.1. With respect to the nature of schools*

Despite the legislation a number of schools have tried to respond to the demand for bilingualism in Belgium. In this section four schools are discussed: one in the city of Ghent, one in Liège and two in Brussels. These are not so much new developments with respect to methodology but rather new developments with respect to the Belgian educational situation.

#### *The "Instituut van Gent" <sup>1</sup>*

This official Dutch-speaking school consists of a kindergarten, a primary and a secondary school. The school's idea is to teach French from kindergarten onwards. In kindergarten French is occasionally used and in primary school French is taught for 35 minutes a day. In secondary school, in addition to the normal French curriculum, extra lessons are introduced called "Complementary French" in the first four years and "Culture française" in the last two years. These extra lessons have to be paid for by the children's parents. The school itself has an interesting history. It dates back to 1899 and even then bilingualism was on top of the pedagogical priority list. In the twenties a kind of immersion education/content-based language teaching method, was introduced with 65% of the lessons taught in French and 35% in Dutch.

---

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank André Mottard for this information

Unfortunately, comparative results for French and Dutch language proficiency are not available. While it is true that in most Flemish cities a number of French speakers live who are interested in French education it is also true that a number of Dutch-speaking parents are in favour of bilingual education. The facts that two thirds of the parents are willing to pay an extra fee for the French lessons is a clear indication for this.

#### *The “Lycée Leonie de Waha”, Liège*

This French-speaking school organizes a French-English immersion programme. Briquet (1996), director of the *Lycée* states its principles as follows.

“Contact time with the target language should be *quantitatively* important. The target language is the *medium of instruction* in the classroom for all subjects. Learning must take place in the early years. Immersion learning, although based on communication and concrete activities, must be *structured* and systematic. Support in the mother tongue must be given by a different teacher” (Briquet 1996:35).

During the school year 1995-1996 158 primary school pupils were enrolled for the immersion programme (kindergarten included). Native speakers of English teach ‘éveil’, technology, music, road safety and mathematics in English. In addition, the teaching of reading starts in English; reading in French starts six months later.

As yet, no detailed studies relating to the immersion programme results are available. Briquet (1996) mentions that test results indicate that these pupils score better than the average pupil who follows the regular French curriculum. He adds: “Immersion children’s capacity to work seems to be higher than that of other children. Immersion pupils have greater opportunities to develop their memory skills. Immersion children can sometimes tire more quickly, especially in the afternoons, than mainstream children” (Briquet 1996:38). Particularly relevant is the fact that failures have been non-existent since the French-speaking system is known to have many problems with “l’échec scolaire” (cf. Bastin & Roosen 1990).

In order to be officially recognized each year the regional ministry of education has to give special linguistic dispensation allowing to teach in a language other than French. Nevertheless, the schools entails a lot of enthusiasm from pupils, teachers, parents and local authorities.

#### *The Foyer Project, Brussels*

One of the oldest and well-known immersion projects in Brussels is the Foyer Project. Foyer is a socio-educational non-profit organization for migrants in Brussels. In 1981 it started organizing bilingual education aiming at “a positive reorientation of the specific languages-in-contact/conflict situation for migrant children in Brussels by providing an adequate educational setting in which integration of the home culture and the host culture is promoted” (Spoelders 1984:87). Actually, in the first year of the primary

school Italian children received mother tongue education for 60%, Dutch, 30% and the remaining 10% were used for integrated activities. Since then Spanish, Moroccan and Turkish programmes have also been introduced.

In fact, this method can be compared to the famous Canadian immersion experience in the 1970s and 1980s. Evaluation of the Italian children has shown that, besides proficiency levels comparable to native speakers of Italian and Dutch, French was also spoken by these children. Since in Brussels French is the dominant street language Foyer showed the importance of the context variable in bilingual education (cf. also Danesi 1988). The Foyer project still carries on and has made a name for itself in Brussels though restricted to migrants. It is interesting to note that although the Foyer project enjoys considerable success few school authorities are in favour of expanding this project to a non-migrant population.

#### *The “Boendael-Boitsfort” school, Brussels*

A final example comes from a primary school in Boitsfort, Bosvoorde in Dutch, a suburb of Brussels. For a number of years this French-speaking school has introduced a bilingual language policy stressing Dutch as the second language of the school. Each primary school class gets special lessons of Dutch for at least two or three times a week by a native speaker of the language. Although the lessons are loosely structured a lot of enthusiasm is engendered. Test results show that these children are much more proficient in Dutch than their counterparts receiving Dutch within the regular curriculum (cf. Van de Craen & De Grieve, to appear). The organization of Dutch lessons outside the legal framework is only allowed because the school has received special dispensation of the Ministry: the Dutch lessons are considered to be on an experimental basis.

In Belgium a number of mostly primary schools and kindergarten do experiment with bilingual education. However, the legal framework calls for special arrangements. Sometimes these lessons are not more than a reinforcement of the existent curriculum. In a few cases immersion and content-based programmes are offered. Without a doubt bilingual education is hampered by legislation. It seems that European measures are the only way to break this deadlock. With respect to teacher recruitment it is clear that if other languages than French or Dutch are introduced the European dimension should gain momentum.

#### *3.2. With respect to new technologies and autonomous learning*

A recent and interesting initiative by one of the present authors (Soetaert) is the Language Teaching on Line Project (LTOL). Its aim is to bring together initiatives related to teacher training and language teaching. Sponsored by the European Commission the project surpasses local Belgian needs. The project partners, namely the European Language Council (ELC) and the Teacher Training and Technology (TTT) group intend to give incentives in Belgium and across Europe related to teacher training and language teaching.

### *3.3. With respect to initial and INSET training*

With respect to language teacher training and bilingual education a whole world of initiatives lies ahead in Belgium. Recent reforms of the teacher training institutes in Flanders has created - apart from chaos - new incentives for collaboration between teacher training institutes and the universities. In the future, this should lead to more openness toward bilingual education in general. In Wallonia the regional prime minister's plea for bilingualism has not passed unnoticed. However, nobody quite knows how to implement this forlorn cry into (daily school) practice. Teachers' proficiency in foreign languages, which is not regarded highly in Wallonia, is only one of the seemingly unsurmountable problems on the way to wide-spread bilingualism. Therefore, INSET training should play a much more important role than it has done hitherto.

### *3.4. With respect to the mobility of language teachers trainees and trainers*

One of the initiatives undertaken by both the Dutch-speaking and the French-speaking regions has been exchange the exchange of pupils and teachers. Annually, classes move across the linguistic border to spend a week in Dutch or French speaking region. Before and after this period contact is maintained through all kind of activities such as letter writing, sending faxes, electronic mail (if available), etc. In Brussels, it is even simpler. No need to cross any border here. Dutch and French can be found on the street, so to speak. Yet, exchanges of the kind described above are rare in Brussels since both - the smaller Dutch-speaking and the larger French-speaking - networks have a tendency to avoid contact with each other for political reasons. At the moment a project aiming at installing language school policies in the Dutch-speaking schools of Brussels is under study (cf. Van de Craen & D'hondt, to appear).

### *3.5. With respect to methodology and innovations*

It is clear that in Belgium content-based language teaching methodology is considered a new methodology. The fact that gradually it can be discussed openly is an important step forwards. The Flemish Ministry of Education has ordered a study of the literature on content-based language teaching indicating that they seem to take it seriously (Rijmenans, forthcoming). The French-speaking Ministry is currently studying new measures for language teaching and language teacher trainers at all levels.

## **4. NEW NEEDS IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING IN RELATION TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION.**

### *4.1. In initial language teacher training programmes*

#### *4.1.1. At university level*

At least five needs can be identified with respect to teacher training and bilingual education.

1. More and better language teaching is needed. Although a considerable number of hours is devoted to language teaching one may often wonder if efficiency cannot be improved.
2. The fact that language teachers do not have to spend some time abroad is beginning to look more and more like an aberration. Especially since “abroad” means in Belgium next door, at least for Dutch, French and German. A stay abroad should be made compulsory for language teachers.
3. It is necessary to rethink some of the curricula in language departments as well as elsewhere. In this respect we should think of dual programmes where future teachers would be trained for teaching subjects through foreign languages. These programmes would be followed by both language teachers and non-language teachers.
4. Research in content-based language teaching should ideally accompany university curricula.
5. In Belgium, despite the educational system, there are many young bilinguals often not identified by the university even in the language departments. They seem the logical propagators for content-based language teaching in the near future.

#### *4.1.2. At non-university level*

Attention should be paid to the quality of language teaching and the quality of language proficiency. It seems necessary to organize national tests for language teachers in order to raise quality standards. The institutes training primary and lower secondary school teachers have a great responsibility in raising quality standards at all levels.

#### *4.2. In INSET language teacher training programmes*

##### *4.2.1. At university level*

The following aspects are important.

1. INSET training at this level should be much more structured and should be compulsory. Now, the training is scattered and only followed by those who take an interest in language and teaching matters.
2. There is a need for closer collaboration between universities and the ministries.
3. More support from the various ministries is needed. Teachers leaving their school for one, two or more days should be replaced. INSET training is often regarded as an unwelcome interruption of school practice which should be avoided.

4. There is a need for continuous foreign language education.
5. There is a need for the official propagation of bilingual education.

#### *4.2.2. At non-university level*

Here again one would like to see much more support from the ministries. As far as language teaching is concerned it would be a good thing if closer collaboration between the teacher training institutes and the universities would exist. Here, too, a need for the official propagation of bilingual education does exist.

#### *4.3. In relation to new technologies and autonomous learning*

There is hardly any school in Belgium without access to new technologies. However, a word of warning is needed here. There was a time when there was hardly any school without a brandnew language laboratory. However, after a while, this expensive device remained unused. While today's new technologies seem of a different nature it is not always easy to make use of them in an efficient way. Showing a list of irregular verbs on a screen is an example of inefficient use of the computer. Language teachers should be aware of this. Therefore, they should be trained in how to use new technologies.

As for learner autonomy the following reasoning is not unlike what has just been said. Most teachers are convinced of the interesting aspects of learner autonomy. But few teachers dare to bring them into practice. One reason is often repeated. Teachers fear that learner autonomy would mean a lack of control followed by authority problems. It seems that both new technologies and learner autonomy should be introduced and monitored much more closely than they have been until now.

#### *4.4. In relation to methodology*

Most teachers have adopted one kind of methodology throughout their career. It is an illusion to think that they will change. The application of content-based language teaching runs the risk of colliding with established mentalities. It is therefore important that the whole school should see this as part of a new language policy within a more integrated Europe.

#### *4.5. In relation to the mobility of language teachers and trainees*

As has been said in 4.1.1. in Belgium a stay abroad should be made compulsory. Since so many complaints from teachers and trainees alike are directed toward their

dissatisfaction with the practical use of foreign languages a compulsory stay abroad should be welcomed by all.

#### *4.6. In relation to accreditation and ECTS*

Our impression regarding the above aspects is that member states seem to distrust the whole system. Belgium is no exception. Since it is hard to leave behind traditions it will not be easy to install new measures in this area. However, if a uniform language testing programme would indeed exist it may become easier as far as language proficiency goes to make the ECTS system more transparent.

#### *4.7. In relation to educational policy*

In Belgium educational policy and regional language policy are hard to distinguish. Flanders has just come out of a period where its language was threatened by French for reasons of upward social mobility. Wallonia has just come out of a period of French monolingualism. Both regions feel they have reasons to believe that their identity is threatened by some - as yet undefined - kind of supra-European identity. All this plays a role in trying to reform language teaching. Moreover, Belgium has a long-standing tradition in language teaching. Despite reports showing that today language education is lacking in quality it will not be easy to convince authorities to bring about changes.

## REFERENCES

- Bastin, G. & A. Roosen. 1990. *L'école malade de l'échec*. Bruxelles: De Boeck-Wesemael. Editions universitaires.
- Briquet, R. 1996. Learning English Through an Immersion Programme in Belgium. *In* : G. Fruhauf, D. Coyle & I. Christ (eds) *Teaching Content in a Foreign Language. Practice and Perspectives in European Bilingual Education*. Alkmaar: Stichting Europees Platform voor het Nederlands Onderwijs, 31-43;
- Danesi, M. 1988. Mother Tongue Training in School as a Determinant of Global Language Proficiency: a Belgian Case Study. *International Review of Education XXXIV*, 439-454;
- Inspectie 1995. *Verslag van de inspectie over de toestand van het onderwijs*. Brussel: Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap. Departement Onderwijs.
- OESO 1991. *Het educatief bestel in België: van convergentie naar divergentie*. Brussel, Bruxelles, Eupen: Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, Departement Onderwijs. Ministère de l'éducation de la recherche et de la formation. Verwaltung der deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, Abteilung Unterricht. OESO Report.
- Rijmenans, R. Forthcoming. Content-Based Language Teaching. A Study of the Literature (Provisionary title). Report Prepared for the Flemish Ministry of Education.
- Savage, R. 1994. *Policies for Foreign Language Teaching in the Member States of the European Union*. Report Prepared for the European Commission Task Force Human Resources, Education, Training & Youth.
- Soetaert, R. & K. Van Heule 1995. Teacher Education in Belgium. *In* : T. Sander (ed) *Teacher Education in Europe: Evaluation and Perspectives*. Brussels/Osnabrück: European Commission.
- Spoelders, M., J. Leman & L. Smeekens 1984. The Brussels Foyer Bicultural Education Project: Socio-Cultural Background and Psycho-Educational Language Assessment. *In* : G. Extra & T. Vallen (eds) *Ethnic Minorities and Dutch as a Second Language*. Dordrecht: Foris, 87-103;
- Van de Craen, P. 1995a. Language Studies in Higher Education in Belgium. *In* : *Language Studies in Higher Education in Europe. National Reports*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Van de Craen, P. 1995b. How to Become Bilingual and Remain a Law-Abiding Citizen in Belgium? Paper Presented at the "Content-Based Language Teaching Conference", Ghent, September 1995.



Van de Craen, P. & W. De Grieve (to appear) Dutch in French-speaking schools: the result of an experiment. Report Prepared for the Wallonian Regional Ministry of Education.

Van de Craen, P. & A.-S. D'hondt (to appear) Language School Policies for Dutch-Speaking Schools in Brussels. Report Prepared for the Brussels' Regional Ministry of Education.

Vercruysse, N & C. Kaufman 1991. Belgium. *In* : A Guide to Higher Education Systems and Qualifications in the European Community. Den Haag: NUFIC