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# Less Is Not More: A Small-scale Study of Corrective Feedback

M.H. van Spaandonk

## Abstract

This study deals with one specific aspect of classroom interaction through an additional language: corrective feedback. By drawing on research and theories from bilingual, immersion and international contexts the study attempts to chart the grey area between corrective feedback and scaffolding, and to distil results that might be relevant across all contexts. As such, this study examines how subject teachers in an international setting correct language mistakes when interacting with students in the classroom, which types of corrective feedback are used in response to different types of errors, and which language goals can be deduced from the types of corrective feedback used. In order to find the answers to these questions, several lessons given by two international school teachers were observed, transcribed and analysed. The results show that the subject teachers focused mainly on meaning and mostly used recasts, but also used two as yet uncharted types of corrective feedback ('confirmative' feedback and corrective feedback in response to non-verbal language) in order to negotiate both meaning and form.

## Introduction

Recent research into bilingual classroom settings has stressed the need for studies that try to find (productive) common ground rather than (unproductive) differences. Dalton-Puffer and Nikula (2014) argue that "there is great potential in researching [Content and Language Integrated Learning] precisely to showcase the integration of epistemologies that are traditionally separate in policy and research but inevitably converge in the mind of the learners as they experience formal education" (p. 121). Similarly, Dalton-Puffer, Llinares, Lorenzo, and Nikula (2014) "call for researchers from different research traditions to develop a common non-hierarchical matrix, for the identification of features of bilingual/multilingual education programmes all over the world, to help researchers carry out comparative studies across contexts" (p. 217). According to Llinares and Lyster (2014), "comparing contexts is key for understanding the effect of different interactional patterns on successful second language acquisition" (p. 192). This research paper attempts to contribute to the "non-hierarchical matrix" by drawing on research and theories from bilingual, immersion and international education contexts while analysing a specific aspect of interaction in the international classroom that might be relevant across all contexts: oral feedback.

This research paper will zoom in on one aspect of international education and classroom interaction, namely oral feedback during classroom interaction. As such, this paper addresses the grey area between corrective feedback (correcting mistakes implicitly and explicitly) and scaffolding (helping students to express themselves accurately). The main questions guiding this research are: *How do teachers in an international setting correct language mistakes when interacting with students in the classroom? Which types of corrective feedback are used in response to different types of errors? Which language goals can be deduced from the types of corrective feedback used?* In order to find the answers to these questions, several lessons given by two international school teachers were observed. The theoretical framework, and in particular the linguistic setting and the concepts of corrective feedback and scaffolding, will be discussed as well as the methodology used. The research findings will be shared

and discussed. This article will end with the main conclusions of the project and offer suggestions for further research.

## Theoretical framework

As touched upon in the Introduction, both CLIL and immersion settings “share the goal of developing functional proficiency in an additional language by teaching content through that language (Llinares & Lyster, 2014, p.181). While the label “CLIL” explicitly indicates that this approach aims to integrate language and content, various theories applied to other settings (such as immersion) have demonstrated a similar focus. One example is the so-called “counterbalanced approach” that “calls for a more systematic integration of form-focused and content-based instruction in order to ensure continued language growth in immersion settings” (Llinares & Lyster, 2014, p.182). What many of these theories have in common is that they are rooted in systemic functional linguistics and constructivism, and that they stress the importance of feedback and scaffolding.

Gibbons (2015) places her discussion of (language) learning within the framework of constructivism, specifically Lev Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development,” which “refers to the distance of the cognitive gap between what a child can do unaided and what the child can do jointly and in coordination with a more skilled expert” (p. 13). Gibbons explicitly links the zone of proximal development to the integration of content and language. When Gibbons argues that “all learners” can benefit from lessons that integrate content and language, she means both native speakers and second language learners. However, in order for this latter group to make as much progress as possible, “they need ongoing language development across the whole curriculum and the recognition by all teachers that they are teachers of English, not simply of subject ‘content’” (Gibbons, 2015, pp. 10-11). Gibbons suggests that teachers can support language development by offering “scaffolding ... a special kind of help that assists learners in moving toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding” (p.16). In other words, scaffolding helps learners to move from conversational language to academic language, defined by Cummins (2000) as “basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)” and “cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)” (p. 58). Feedback is one of the ways in which teachers can scaffold learning.

The importance of giving feedback has been recognized both in CLIL methodology and in immersion settings. CLIL teachers are expected to “give feedback on content as well as language” (Dale Van der Es, & Tanner, 2011, p. 172). Equally, Lyster’s counterbalanced approach calls for “corrective feedback” as a strategy to ensure that “a reactive approach to focus on form” is integrated “into subject-matter instruction” (Llinares & Lyster, 2014, p. 182). Lyster’s research into corrective feedback has resulted in several landmark studies in this area (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 1998; Llinares & Lyster 2014). These studies have both defined the different types of corrective feedback that teachers use and analysed the effectiveness of these types of feedback.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) define six different types of feedback: explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition (pp. 46-48). Llinares and Lyster (2014) have simplified this list into explicit correction, recasts and “prompts – which include elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and repetition” (p. 182).<sup>1</sup> In this simplified list “prompts” have been grouped together because they “withhold correct forms and instead provide clues to prompt students to self-repair” (Llinares & Lyster, 2014, p. 182). In addition, Lyster and Ranta (1997) have

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<sup>1</sup> Lyster (1998) also simplifies the list, but uses the term “negotiation of form” where Llinares and Lyster (2014) use “prompts.” Because their definition is the same but their terminology different, and because Lyster and Ranta (1997) use the term “negotiation of form” with a different definition, I have adapted citations from Lyster (1998) to say “prompts” where he uses “negotiation of form” for the same concept.

further defined the different types of negotiation in the second language classroom by building on theories by Pica and Swain. Lyster and Ranta distinguish between “negotiation of meaning” and “negotiation of form,” which they link to Van Lier’s “distinction between conversational and didactic repair” (pp. 41-42). Whereas negotiation of meaning is concerned with “mutual comprehension,” negotiation of form is concerned with “accuracy and precision” (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, p. 42). Most types of corrective feedback fall within the latter category. An exception is formed by “conversational recasts” (as opposed to “didactic recasts”), since they “implicitly reformulate a student utterance in an attempt to resolve a communication breakdown and often take the form of confirmation checks” (Llinares and Lyster, 2014, p. 188). The occurrence and effectiveness of the different types of corrective feedback has been analysed in a number of research papers.

After comparing the results of several studies, Llinares and Lyster (2014) conclude that recasts occur most frequently, followed by prompts and explicit correction (p. 188). Although there are no studies that have been able to analyse the effectiveness of corrective feedback over an extended period of time (e.g. a form is corrected in January and used correctly by the student in May), several projects have studied the immediate effect of corrective feedback. As Llinares and Lyster have pointed out, “recasts and explicit correction can lead only to repetition of correct forms by students, whereas prompts can lead, not to repetition, but either to self-repair or peer-repair (p. 182). Both repetition and repair by students are defined as “learner uptake” (Llinares and Lyster, 2014, p. 182). Lyster (1998) concludes that

lexical errors favoured [prompts]; grammatical and phonological errors invited recasts, but with differential effects on learner repair. Overall, [prompts] proved more effective at leading to immediate repair than did recasts or explicit correction ... [p]honological repairs resulted primarily from recasts. (p. 184)

Llinares and Lyster (2014) conclude that recasts of a “didactic and explicit nature” tend to lead to repair, while recasts of a “conversational and implicit nature” do not (p. 192). Similarly, in their study of cognitive engagement in a content-based language teaching environment, Kong and Hoare (2011) found that language learning was maximized by the “use of questions and elicitation in the [feedback] move in the predominantly [initiation-response-feedback] pattern of classroom interaction” (p. 322).

Gibbons (2015) suggests that teachers scaffold classroom conversations by “clarifying, questioning, and providing models for the speaker” and refers to this technique as “teacher-guided reporting” (p. 34). In principle, then, students and teachers are negotiating meaning and form simultaneously. This paper will therefore not only investigate which types of corrective feedback can be observed in an international classroom where many students are learning through an additional language and which aspects of language this corrective feedback addresses, but also which connections can be observed between negotiation of form and negotiation of meaning and between corrective feedback and scaffolding.

## Method

### Context of study and participants

This research project aims to chart instances of corrective feedback given during subject lessons by two different teachers at an international school. The chief aim of the project is to analyse different types of linguistically incorrect student utterances in English and how teachers responded to these errors. The school was selected for practical reasons (convenience sample). However, since the students and

teachers were not explicitly prepped for the project and the school does not have an explicit focus on CLIL or immersion methodologies, the school could be said to represent a fairly average example of an international, multilingual, multicultural educational environment in which many students learn through an additional language.

In order to observe authentic student and teacher utterances, subject lessons given by two different teachers were observed in Grade 8. The lessons were observed in an international school in Austria. The school implements the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IB MYP) and generally teaches through English (exceptions are additional language classes such as German, Spanish and French, and the mother tongue programme that enables IB students to take Language A in their mother tongue with the help of a tutor).

The decision was made to focus on two humanities subjects that make extensive use of language: History and Geography. Other subjects, such as mathematics and physical education, are also taught through English. These subjects could also provide interesting data and might benefit from future research. However, for the sake of the current project, subjects were chosen that require more extensive reading and writing by students in English. These subjects were not only more likely to produce relevant data during lessons, but students would also benefit to a larger extent from correct language use in these subjects in exam situations. Biology and other language-heavy subjects could also have been used instead of or in addition to Geography and History, but here practical (scheduling) considerations also played a role.

The decision to observe only Grade 8 lessons was based partly on practical considerations: it was possible to schedule observations for both History and Geography lessons given by two different teachers. In addition, Grade 8 students are an interesting group because they are halfway through the IB MYP, and can therefore be expected to be both subject and language learners (since even native speakers need to develop proficiency in academic and subject-specific language use, see. The linguistic background of the students will be explored further below.

The Geography group consisted of seventeen students and the History group of eighteen students, although not all students were present at all lessons (on average there was one student absent during each lesson). There was no overlap of students between the two classes.

## Instruments

In total, three Geography lessons (240 minutes in total) by one teacher and two History lessons (120 minutes in total) by another teacher were observed, resulting in a total of five lessons and 360 minutes of observed teaching.<sup>2</sup> This quantity was expected to produce sufficient data for a qualitative analysis.

In order to gain insight into the students' linguistic background and level of English, the students in both groups were asked to fill in a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaires were filled in during lesson time.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Geography teacher gave permission for the lessons to be recorded, the History teacher did not. Although it was beneficial to listen to the Geography lessons afterwards in order to transcribe specific student-teacher dialogues in more detail, enough notes were made during the History lessons to enable an analysis of the types of corrective feedback given. See Appendix B for transcribed lessons and Tables 6-11 for observation results.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this research project, the students' self-description and self-assessment was deemed sufficient. Therefore, the students' language abilities were not formally assessed. A larger-scale project, in particular a project with a focus on learner uptake and error repair, might choose to include formal assessment of language abilities, and link specific student utterances to the speaker's language ability, especially in a group with many different levels. In this paper, student utterances will not be linked to specific speakers or their language abilities.

## Data analysis

The observations were transcribed, and instances of corrective feedback were categorized by type (see below for the types of corrective feedback defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997))<sup>4</sup> and by aspect of language (grammar, vocabulary, style). The vocabulary category was further divided into pronunciation, lexis and CALP (subject-specific and/or academic lexis).<sup>5</sup>

Due to the small-scale nature and practical limitations of the current research project, learner uptake and repair will not be analysed in this paper, which will focus instead on the different types of feedback used by teachers. The findings will, however, provide insight into those aspects of language that are addressed by specific instances of corrective feedback and into the length and depth of verbal exchanges occurring between teachers and students. One of the difficulties anticipated in this project is that negotiation of meaning and negotiation of form might be tricky to separate when lessons integrate content and language goals. This issue will be discussed further.

Language is socially constructed and always changing. The purpose of the current project is not to chart the use of prescriptive language rules, nor to encourage teachers to start imposing these rules. Rather, the project aims to chart constructive and productive exchanges between students and teachers. Language needs to be understandable, and in exam situations, of a high linguistic standard. Students need to master academic language, and subject-specific terms (see the discussion of scaffolding). The current project hopes to identify opportunities for teachers to help students to use appropriate language in an understandable manner.

## Findings

### Students' linguistic background

The questionnaire was filled in by thirty-five students: eighteen in the History group and seventeen in the Geography group. Students were asked to indicate which languages they speak and at what level, ranging from beginner to (near-)native speaker. In total, the students listed nineteen languages, thirteen of which are spoken at (near-)native level (see tables 1 and 2). Many of the students indicated that they are native speakers of more than one language. However, English is not a native language for the majority of students.

The most common native languages among the students are English (fifteen students), German (fifteen students) and Russian (ten students). Fifteen students indicate that they speak more than one language at (near-)native level, six of whom speak both German and English at this level. Interestingly, two students indicate that they do not speak any languages at (near-)native level. For example, one Geography student speaks Dutch with both parents and siblings, but assesses his language ability in Dutch as mediocre (3 out of 5, see table 3) and has not assessed his speaking ability in any language above good (4 out of 5).

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<sup>4</sup> In Appendix B, the types of corrective feedback have been coded: 1=explicit correction, 2=recast, 3=clarification request, 4=metalinguistic cue, 5=elicitation, 6=repetition.

<sup>5</sup> Although every effort was made to only categorize subject-specific or advanced vocabulary as CALP, it stands to reason that different readers may interpret utterances differently. For transparency, all categorized utterances are clearly marked as such in Appendix B.



Speak						
	1	2	3	4	5	Totaal
English	0,00% 0	5,88% 1	11,76% 2	35,29% 6	47,06% 8	17
German	5,88% 1	5,88% 1	23,53% 4	23,53% 4	41,18% 7	17
Russian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	16,67% 1	83,33% 5	6
Spanish	25,00% 3	50,00% 6	16,67% 2	0,00% 0	8,33% 1	12
Italian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	2
Georgian	50,00% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	2
Armenian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	1
Chinese	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0
Ukranian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0
French	33,33% 2	33,33% 2	33,33% 2	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	6
Thai	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0
Bulgarian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	0,00% 0	1
Latvian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0
Japanese	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0
Croatian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0
Arabic	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	0,00% 0	1
Serbian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 2	0,00% 0	2
Dutch	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	0,00% 0	1
Irish	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	1

TABLE 1. Languages spoken by Geography students, sorted by (near-)native ability (5)

Speak						
	1	2	3	4	5	Totaal
German	6,67% 1	0,00% 0	33,33% 5	6,67% 1	53,33% 8	15
English	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,56% 1	55,56% 10	38,89% 7	18
Russian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 5	5
Ukranian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	2
Italian	0,00% 0	75,00% 3	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	25,00% 1	4
French	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	66,67% 2	33,33% 1	3
Thai	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	1
Bulgarian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	50,00% 1	2
Latvian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	1
Arabic	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	1
Spanish	40,00% 4	30,00% 3	30,00% 3	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	10
Chinese	100,00% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	1
Japanese	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	1
Croatian	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	100,00% 1	0,00% 0	1

TABLE 2 Languages spoken by History students, sorted by (near-)native ability (5)



Speak	
Russian	
German	3
English	4
Spanish	
Chinese	
Ukrainian	
Italian	
French	2
Thai	
Bulgarian	
Latvian	
Japanese	
Croatian	
Arabic	
Serbian	
Dutch	4
Georgian	
Armenian	
Irish	

**TABLE 3** Self-assessment for spoken language by a Geography student (scores are out of 5)

All students indicate that they speak English, but only fifteen students assess their spoken English as (near-)native: seven in the History group and eight in the Geography group. Moreover, only five students indicate that they speak English with one or both of their parents: two in the History group and three in the Geography group (see tables 4 and 5 in Appendix B). Although sixteen students assess their level of spoken English as good (4 out of 5), four students assess their level of English as mediocre (2 or 3 out of 5).

Main language	Russian	German	English	Spanish	Chinese	Ukrainian	Italian	French	Thai	Bulgarian	Latvian	Japanese	Croatian	Arabic	Serbian	Dutch	Georgian	Armenian	Irish	Totaal	
Moeder	23,53% 4	29,41% 5	11,76% 2	5,88% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,88% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,88% 1	0,00% 0	5,88% 1	5,88% 1	5,88% 1	5,88% 1	0,00% 0	17
Father	23,53% 4	29,41% 5	17,65% 3	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,88% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,88% 1	0,00% 0	5,88% 1	5,88% 1	5,88% 1	5,88% 1	0,00% 0	17
Stepmom	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	2
Stepdad	0,00% 0	33,33% 1	33,33% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	33,33% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	3
Siblings	26,67% 4	46,67% 7	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	6,67% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	6,67% 1	6,67% 1	6,67% 1	6,67% 1	0,00% 0	15
Other	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0

**TABLE 4** Main language Geography students speak with family members

Main language	Russian	German	English	Spanish	Chinese	Ukrainian	Italian	French	Thai	Bulgarian	Latvian	Japanese	Croatian	Arabic	Totaal
Mother	27,78% 5	27,78% 5	5,56% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	11,11% 2	0,00% 0	5,56% 1	5,56% 1	5,56% 1	0,00% 0	5,56% 1	5,56% 1	18
Father	27,78% 5	38,89% 7	5,56% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	11,11% 2	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,56% 1	5,56% 1	0,00% 0	5,56% 1	0,00% 0	18
Siblings	33,33% 5	40,00% 6	6,67% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	6,67% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	6,67% 1	0,00% 0	6,67% 1	0,00% 0	15
Stepmom	33,33% 1	33,33% 1	33,33% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	3
Stepdad	0,00% 0	50,00% 1	50,00% 1	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	2
Other	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	0

**TABLE 5** Main language History students speak with family members

Concluding, it seems fair to say that the majority of students in these two groups are English language learners. Although many students have learned *through* English for a number of years, the majority do not speak English with their parents, and assess their own level of English as below (near-)native.

## Observed lessons

In total, forty-five instances of corrective feedback were observed during 360 minutes of teaching; see table 6 below. Thirty-one instances occurred during 240 minutes of Geography and fourteen during 120 minutes of History, which means that on average both teachers made equal use of corrective feedback (see tables 7 and 8).

Type of feedback	Grammar	Vocabulary	Style	Total
1	0	13	0	13
2	4	14	1	19
3	0	3	0	3
4	0	0	0	0
5	0	8	1	9
6	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	4	39	2	45

**TABLE 6** All instances of corrective feedback

Type of feedback	Grammar	Vocabulary	Style	Total
1	0	8	0	8
2	3	8	1	12
3	0	3	0	3
4	0	0	0	0
5	0	6	1	7
6	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	3	26	2	31

**TABLE 7** All instances of corrective feedback, Geography lessons

Type of feedback	Grammar	Vocabulary	Style	Total
1	0	5	0	5
2	1	6	0	7
3	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0
5	0	2	0	2
6	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	1	13	0	14

**TABLE 8** All instances of corrective feedback, History lessons

The type of corrective feedback used most was recast (19 out of 45 instances), followed by explicit correction (13/45) and elicitation (9/45). Similar patterns were observed during Geography (12/31, 8/31 and 7/31) and History (7/14, 5/14, 2/14). Interestingly, not a single occurrence of a metalinguistic cue was observed, and only one instance of repetition. In addition, there were a few small differences between the teachers: the History teacher did not use clarification requests and relatively little elicitation (2/14 compared to 7/31).

The aspect of language that was corrected most often was vocabulary (39 out of 45 instances). Again, a similar pattern was observed during the Geography lessons (26/31) and the History lessons (13/14). Most of the corrective feedback in response to vocabulary concerned CALP (23/39; see table

9). The feedback during the Geography lessons showed a similar pattern, but the History lessons did not (17/26 compared with 6/13; see tables 10 and 11).

Type of feedback	Vocab	Pronunciation	Lexis	CALP
1	13	6	4	3
2	14	0	3	11
3	3	1	1	1
4	0	0	0	0
5	8	0	1	7
6	1	0	0	1
	39	7	9	23

**TABLE 9** Corrective feedback related to vocabulary

Type of feedback	Vocab	Pronunciation	Lexis	CALP
1	8	4	1	3
2	8	0	2	6
3	3	1	1	1
4	0	0	0	0
5	6	0	0	6
6	1	0	0	1
	26	5	4	17

**TABLE 10** Corrective feedback related to vocabulary, Geography lessons

Type of feedback	Vocab	Pronunciation	Lexis	CALP
1	5	2	3	0
2	6	0	1	5
3	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0
5	2	0	1	1
6	0	0	0	0
	13	2	5	6

**TABLE 11** Corrective feedback related to vocabulary, History lessons

Recast (14/39) and explicit correction (13/39) were used most in response to incorrect vocabulary. CALP issues were mostly addressed with recast (11/23) and elicitation (7/23). Pronunciation errors were mostly responded to with explicit correction (6/7), while lexis was corrected both with explicit correction (4/9) and recast (3/9). The type of corrective feedback used most in response to grammatical errors was recast (4 out of 4 instances). There were only two responses to stylistic errors: one recast and one instance of elicitation.

Some of the observed exchanges did not entirely fit within the predefined categories. There was one instance of explicit correction that contained both vocabulary and grammar but addressed content rather than language.<sup>6</sup> On five occasions, a correct answer was recast (and in four of these cases also repeated), with a focus on both vocabulary and grammar.<sup>7</sup> On two occasions, the Geography teacher responded to non-verbal language with a verbal recast.<sup>8</sup> In both of these instances the students struggled to find the right vocabulary and used pauses and gestures to aid understanding. If one were to add these exchanges to the totals previously mentioned, the observed patterns do not change drastically. Rather, the reign of the recast would merely be affirmed.

<sup>6</sup> This instance was labeled “1a” in the observation transcript.

<sup>7</sup> These recasts were labeled “2a” in the observation transcripts.

<sup>8</sup> These recasts were labeled “2b” in the observation transcripts.

## Discussion of Findings

The majority of students observed during this project were found to be English language learners, which means that the educational setting is not only international but also falls within the scope of CLIL and immersion.

Since most corrective feedback occurred in response to vocabulary issues, and within this category in response to the development of academic and subject specific language, the observed lessons clearly demonstrate more negotiation of meaning than negotiation of form. In other words: the teachers place the emphasis on comprehension of the lesson content rather than accuracy in language use. This emphasis becomes more tangible through the teachers' use of different types of corrective feedback.

In line with the findings by Llinares and Lyster (2014), this study shows that recasts were the most-used type of corrective feedback. However, whereas Llinares and Lyster observed considerable more use of prompts than of explicit correction, this study shows equal use of prompts and explicit correction. In line with findings by Lyster (1998), this study has found that recasts were used in response to grammar issues. However, in contrast with Lyster's observations, this study also found that explicit correction was used in response to pronunciation issues (rather than recasts), and that both explicit correction and recasts were used in response to vocabulary issues (rather than prompts).

A limitation of the present study is that it has not gathered data on learner uptake and repair. Therefore, it is not possible to say whether these different findings affected student performance positively or negatively. However, previous studies and theories do provide food for thought. After all, Kong and Hoare (2011) stress the importance of questions and elicitation (which both fall within the category of prompts) for language learning, while Gibbons (2015) stresses the importance of clarifying and questioning in order to scaffold learning successfully. Taking these studies and theories into account, the relative lack of prompts could be seen as a negative factor. In addition, a few comments can be made on the use of prompts in combination with the length of exchanges and the apparent goal of comprehension.

Two of the longer exchanges observed during the Geography lessons contain one or more prompts and relatively more language production by students. During the first exchange the student manages to communicate the incorrect form ("lava plate") successfully and repeatedly, encouraged by a clarification request ("A lava what?") and repetition ("Plate or plain?"). When the student keeps repeating the incorrect form, the teacher responds with an explicit correction ("No, I think they talked about the plain, the pumice plain"). During the second exchange, the teacher interacts with multiple students at the same time, and elicits vocabulary from them. In response to the teacher's first recast ("They carry what?"), the students start offering various forms, which the teacher writes down. He elicits further suggestions by repeating answers and pausing in between each suggestion. When the students appear to have depleted their supply of words, the teacher concludes with a recast that includes a new, and better, form ("Sediment is a good summary of everything in there"). These two exchanges demonstrate the usefulness of prompts.

One of the feedback types that did not quite fit the mould also relates to negotiation of form as well as meaning. The feedback type described as type 2a is not strictly corrective, as it recasts (and often repeats) a correct answer. However, this feedback does address issues of both form and meaning. For example, the Geography teacher introduces an adjective and a type of eruption by repeating and expanding on a student's answer: "Pliny. Plinian, this is called a Plinian eruption." Similarly, the History teacher introduces a noun and an alternative adjective by repeating and expanding on a student's answer within his response: "Roman-Catholic, yeah. Catholicism. ... Most people were Catholic." Since Llinares and Lyster (2014) found that didactic recasts that explicitly correct result in more learner uptake and repair, this feedback type would probably be more effective if it had an explicit didactic nature.

However, even in its current form, this feedback type appears well-suited for classrooms in which content and language are integrated.

Finally, the occurrences of feedback type 2b (see Appendix B) raise an interesting question. Should verbal recasts of non-verbal language be included as a specific type of corrective feedback? After all, these recasts provide the student with the vocabulary and grammar that they could not produce independently. For example, during one of the Geography lessons, a student paused at the end of a question due to a lack of vocabulary (“Is that the reason the animals looked like...”). As a result, the teacher’s response did not provide an answer and the student tried again, pausing at the same point (“Yeah, that is what I meant. Is that’s is that the reason why they looked so...”) and the teacher provided several suitable options (“Like coal. Charcoal. Like charcoal, burnt”). During another Geography lesson, one of the students used sign language to complete an answer (“Because it’s [gestures steep]”), and the teacher repeated the utterance including the correct word (“Because it’s steep.”). Of course, teachers can also respond to non-verbal language by asking questions or providing metalinguistic cues: information that “provides either some grammatical metalanguage that refers to the nature of the error ... or a word definition in the case of lexical errors” (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, p. 47). The question, then, becomes whether non-verbal language should be included in future research into corrective feedback. Based on the exchanges observed during this project, and their link to the discussion about scaffolding and CALP, it is tempting to say that they should. Including non-verbal ‘errors’ would still make it possible to analyse learner uptake and repair in response to different types of corrective feedback.

## Conclusion

This research paper has analysed several Geography and History lessons in an international school in order to chart the use of corrective feedback in an educational setting that does not explicitly focus on (bilingual) language teaching. In line with the results of previous research projects in immersion settings, the current project found that the subject teachers mostly used recasts, and that recasts were used in response to grammatical issues. Interestingly, the observed subject teachers used explicit correction only in response to pronunciation and vocabulary issues. Previous research in immersion settings had not only found that recasts were generally used for these types of errors as well but also that explicit correction actually tends to be more effective than recasts. Although learner uptake and repair were not analysed in the current project, the teachers’ preference for explicit correction in these situations suggests they have indeed experienced success with this strategy.

This paper has also charted the grey area between corrective feedback (negotiation of form) and scaffolding (negotiation of meaning and form). The research results showed a distinct focus on meaning, since the subject teachers mostly focused on vocabulary and the development of academic and subject-specific language. The exchanges between the teachers and the students therefore mainly scaffolded content knowledge. Although the subject teachers made less use of prompts than the immersion teachers observed in other projects, several exchanges that did include prompts were shown to encourage negotiation of form. Therefore, it can be concluded that an increased use of prompts might indeed help subject teachers to include more language scaffolding.

Interestingly, the subject teachers used additional types of corrective feedback in order to negotiate both meaning and form. Both teachers used a type of corrective feedback that combined repetition and recasting, and could be described as ‘confirmative’ feedback. This type of feedback was used to introduce new or more suitable linguistic forms such as adjectives and nouns. Although this type of feedback encourages negotiation of meaning and form, it lacks an explicit didactic nature and might therefore be less successful than intended. Future research projects could investigate the use of ‘confirmative’ feedback further and analyse its effect on learner uptake and repair. The Geography

teacher also used corrective feedback in response to non-verbal language (e.g. pauses and gestures). Again, future research projects could investigate this type of corrective feedback further.

Finally, the research results raise questions regarding the specific aspects of language that subject teachers could or should dedicate attention to during their lessons. Should they focus on all issues that students' oral output presents? And if subject teachers focus mostly on vocabulary and subject-specific language, does that mean that language teachers should focus more on grammar? In order for all teachers to negotiate both meaning and form, and to scaffold language as well as content learning, it appears that subject teachers and language teachers need to collaborate. Collaboration enables them to define specific linguistic issues and skills that subject teachers should focus on in a particular class. Equally, the content that subject teachers use to negotiate meaning could be used by language teachers to negotiate form.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Questionnaire

Which languages do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which language(s) do you speak?

*Please circle the correct number: 1=beginner, 5=very good / native speaker*

Language	Speak	Read	Write	Listen
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

**In which language(s) can you easily...**

2. ... read a book or newspaper?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. ... follow a movie?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. ... tell / understand a joke?

\_\_\_\_\_

**In which language(s) do you usually...**

5. ... think?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. ... swear / curse? (if you do this at all ;-))

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Which language(s) do you speak with family members?

Family member	Main language	Other language(s)
<b>Mother</b>		
<b>Father</b>		
<b>Stepmom</b>		
<b>Stepdad</b>		
<b>Brother(s) or sister(s)</b>		
<b>Other: ...</b>		

8. Which country/countries have you lived in?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Have you been to a school that taught through a different language? Which language?

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!



## Appendix B: Transcribed lessons

### Geography 22 April 2015, 13:45-15:05

1	S	Until tomorrow, right?				
	T	By tomorrow.			2	grammar
2	S1	Strato?				
	T	Composite or strato.				
	S2	Stratus.				
	S3	StraTO				
	T	Layers, stratifying layers. That was our first type, remember. That's the most common type. Strato or composite.			2	CALP
3	S	May 18 1980				
	T	1980, May 18th			2	grammar
4	T	Is that a lot?				
	S1	Yeah!				
	T	Is that a lot?				
	Ss	[inaudible]				
	T	Shh, one at a time.				
	S2	Compared to how many people die in a tsunami, it's very less.				
	T	Of course fifty-seven is a lot, but it's not compared to other eruptions of other natural disasters. In that way, not so many.			2	grammar
5	S1	Four hundred square metres, um, metres squared.				
	Ss	Square miles.				
	T	So we're talking here roughly four hundred square kilometres then. In America, it's square miles.			1a	content
6a	S1	But isn't there also a lava plate as well?				
	T	A lava what?			3	CALP
6b	S1	A lava plate?				
	T	PLATE or plain?			6	CALP
6c	S1	Plate. Didn't it say there was a lava plate?				
	T	No. I think they talked about the plain, the pumice plain, but we're going to write about this now, don't worry about that, I just want you to look at the main shape of the volcano.			1	CALP
7	T	They saw something there which was very conspicuous, that would indicate something's going to happen. [...] Just by looking at it. They took photos every day, every hour, and they saw something was happening on this mountain. [...]				
	S1	Maybe the smoke?	S2	The bult.		
	T	That's another thing. There was smoke, but what did they see with the cameras?				
	S3	Like, ah, I don't know what it's called.				
	S2	The bult.				
	T	The bulGE. The gorge is there. The bulge was the main indication .			1	lexis
8	T	So there would have been the lava, the ash and... A special rock which is then found there, which is?				
	S	Pummick.				
	T	PumiCE.			1	pronunciation
9a	T	And they call this the?				
	Ss	Blast	Ss	[inaudible]		
	T	What kind of blast would they call this? [...] Because it goes out to the side. [2]				
	Ss	Side blast.				
	T	It's like a side blast but it has a special name. [4] For people that are interested in medicine as well, how do you call the side of the body? [3] When you go to the doctor you talk about? Anterior, this is the posterior, and this is the?			5	CALP
9b	S	Interior.				
	T	That is inside. [3] LATERAL. Have you heard about that? It's a lateral blast. Or it also talked about a HORIZONTAL blast.			1	CALP
9c	S	So that is what collateral damage means.				
	T	No. Well, collateral. Side damage. These muscles are called what again? Latissimus, LAT-issimus. Side.				
10	T	And then ash will fall everywhere. This is all going to come down, all this ash. We then have massive ash fall.				
	S	Is that the reason why the animals looked like...				
	T	No. That deer you saw is [inaudible].				
	S	Yeah, that's what I meant. Is that's is that the reason why they looked so...				
	T	Like coal. Charcoal. Like charcoal, burnt.			2b	lexis
11	S	Hunger!				
	T	Hunger. Famine. They couldn't grow crops.			2	CALP

**Geography 29 April 2015, 13:45-15:05**

1	T	What would a typical earthquake be measured in? That is a?			
	S	Rischter			
	T	Richter, that is a measuring scale			1 pronunciation
2	S1	It's the thing that [inaudible].			
	T	It's a thing, what is this thing?			5 CALP
	S1	It's a thing that measures the waves.			
	S2	A device, that measures.			
	T	A simple one was mounted on a stand [etc].			
3	S1	I have the Mediterranean Strogli island.			
	T	What was it called?			3 lexis
	S1	STROGLI.			
	T	I'm not so happy with the [inaudible].	S2	I have San Torini.	
	T	SAN TORINI, Thera or San Torini, very famous tourist destination			
	S3	It's in Greek			
4	S	Is he doring?			
	T	Is this thing sleeping, yes.			2 lexis
5	T	There was an eye witness though. Who was that person? That was the person that also gave this kind of eruption its name.			
	S	Pl... pl... pleen something.			
	T	Pliny.			1 pronunciation
	S	Yeah, Pliny.			
	T	Pliny. Plinean, this is called a Plinean eruption.			2a vocab+grammar
6	T	When was that?			
	S1	Fifteenfifty---			
	T	FifTEEN, fifty?			3 pronunciation
	Ss	Six.			
7	S	Gas!			
	T	Pipes break. That's the problem, huh. Earthquake, the pipes break, the gas leaks out.			2 style
8	S	Laher?	Ss	[inaudible]	
	T	LaHAR, what is a lahar?			1 pronunciation
	S	It's when the mud and water [inaudible].	Ss	[inaudible]	
	T	Mud! They drowned in mud. Now you tell me how this can happen. Think. [pause] The Andes, snow-capped mountains.			
	S	They just fell.	Ss	They fell [inaudible].	
	T	A volcano erupts on a snow-capped mountain.			
	S	Which is hot.			
	T	What is the snow doing. It melts, right?			
9	S	The waves did not go...			
	T	The waves hit those beaches as well, but?			2 CALP
10	S1	Because the people are uncivilized maybe.			
	T	Okay, that's not the right word, but I know what you mean.			5 CALP
	S2	Maybe it wasn't organized.			
	T	Yeah, they're not registered. They live in squatter camps, they don't know how many people live there. When they get to a very organized country they get told there are exactly 543 people missing. But in a lot of these economically less developed countries you see the numbers vary immensely.			2 CALP
11	T	How many deaths?			
	S	Um, many deaths.			
	T	Many, I don't like many, I can't work with many. [pause] 15000?			5 style
	S	15891			
	T	How come this number is so exact? Because it's Japan, not Haiti.			

**Geography 6 May 2015, 13:45-15:05**

1	T	... formed by which two main agents?				
	S1	Glaciers				
	T	And				
	S1	Rivers				
	T	Frozen water, which is ice, and flowing water. So you could say glaciers and rivers. Water in its frozen or liquid state.			2a	vocab+grammar
2	T	And what does the water do?				
	S1	It cleans				
	T	It cleans, another good word is?			5	CALP
	Ss	Purify				
	T	Purify. Purification. It purifies the soul. ... Water for them is a purification symbol.			2a	vocab+grammar
3	T	These rivers, what do they do?				
	S	They carve out their soil.				
	T	They carry what?			2	lexis
	Ss	Material, soil [inaudible]				
	T	... [draws] So I see a lot of material in here. Huge amounts of sediments. Of course in brackets you could say it's soil, it's sand, it's pebbles...			2, 5	CALP
	S1	Mud.				
	T	Mud. It's sediment. Sediment is a good summary of everything in there.			2	CALP
4	T	What else do they use the water for, apart from drinking it.				
	S1	Farming	S2	Washing		
	T	How do they farm, what is it called?			5	CALP
	S1	Watering	S2	Irrigation!		
	T	If irrigation systems fail...				
5	S1	Because it's [gestures 'steep']				
	T	Because it's steep			2b	lexis
6	T	What is this river used for, what is thrown into it?				
	S	[inaudible]				
	T	And from about here [marks] I would say 'I would drink this water no more' By the time it's here, it's sewage, basically.				
	S1	Industrial waste				
	T	Industrial waste, what else?				
	S2	Rubbish.				
	T	Rubbish				
	S3	Ashes.				
	T	Ashes from funeral pyres. There are funeral sites. They burn corpses on the river. What else?				
	S4	Garbage				
	S5	He said that				
	T	SEWAGE. Let's change the word into sewage. Garbage is just solid waste, but faeces, lulu und?			1	CALP
	Ss	[inaudible] [laughing]				

### History 28 April 2015, 12:00-13:00

1	S	Trinidad? (German pronunciation)		
	T	Trinidad, yeah. (US-EN pronunciation)	1	pronunciation
2	S	... voyage ... (French pronunciation, chuckles)		
	T	Voyage. (US-EN pronunciation, smiles)	1	pronunciation
3	S	... slow ...		
	T	They slew, so they killed ...	2	grammar
4	S	... make it up ...		
	T	... make it up, or FICTIONALIZE it ...	2	CALP
5	S	... exaggerating ...		
	T	Now there's a good word. It makes it hard to believe and it makes us question how reliable the source is.	2a	CALP
6	S	... it skipped things ...		
	T	... it is only an EXTRACT, only a piece ...	2	CALP
7	S	... overreacted a little ...		
	T	EXAGGERATED	1	lexis

### History 5 April 2015, 12:00-13:00

1	S	Roman-Catholic		
	T	Roman-Catholic, yeah. Catholicism. [later] Most people were Catholic.	2a	vocab+grammar
2	S1	Evangelisch (German pronunciation)		
	T	Yes, Evangelisch or EVANGELICAL. Another word, does anyone know? [...] [Name] you just said it.	1, 5	lexis
	S2	Protestants?		
	T	Yeah, Protestants		
3	S	... when you are against something ...		
	T	Alright, like a protest...	2	lexis
4	S	A representative of the Church		
	T	Yeah, a representative of the Church. Any other words that come to mind?	5	CALP
5	S	... you could buy them ...		
	T	It was a DOCUMENT ...	2	CALP
6	S	... Church readings, I don't know what they're called.		
	T	Mass.	1	lexis
	S	Yeah. [continues]		
7	S1	... journey to another country ...		
	T	... journey to a HOLY PLACE ...	2	CALP
	S2	... important objects ...		
	T	... HOLY objects ... [later] RELIGIOUS objects	2	CALP

# Translanguaging as a tool to preserve L1 languages and promote multilingualism

*M. McCracken*

## Abstract

Linguists have become increasingly more aware and active in the field of Language Revitalisation since Michael Krauss' call to action in 1992. In his article 'The World's Languages in Crisis' Krauss estimated a ninety percent extinction rate for the world's languages by the year 2100. Changing global and regional economies, as well as increased language contact, have created both external and internal pressures for many minority and indigenous populations to shift to dominant languages (Bradley, 2010). Bradley (2010) argues that the modern situation of globalisation does not lend itself to supporting monolingual situations, but multilingualism doesn't have to mean indigenous languages are lost. He believes instead that indigenous languages can still be maintained alongside of additional languages in a bilingual or multilingual model, where the indigenous language can still be used in the ways the people choose to use it. With Bradley's thesis in mind, this paper will explore a 'translanguaging' case study trialled at the International School of the Hague from 2011. This multilingual teaching approach will be examined through both theoretical and practical perspectives, demonstrating how domains of L1 language use (minority, indigenous or additional) can be strengthened and preserved within the context of English language instruction.

**Key words:** Multilingualism, Domains of usage, Preserving minority and indigenous languages, translanguaging, language status, cross-lingual transfer, L1 maintenance

## Introduction

Multilingualism is a complex concept that can be defined in a multitude of ways, through a variety of real world contexts. The two definitions below provide a basic idea for what multilingualism can mean, informing later discussions about how it could be pursued as a potential solution for language loss.

The Oxford English dictionary defines multilingualism as 'the ability to speak many languages or the use of many languages.' For the purposes of this paper, bilingualism can be subsumed under this broader category as well (Todd, 2008).

Garcia (2009) has a more dynamic definition of bilingualism and multilingualism to offer:

Much like the banyan tree so common in Southeast Asia, bilingualism, and especially multilingualism, needs to be recognized for its interconnectivity and multiplicity, grounded not only vertically, but also horizontally. (p. 143)



**PICTURE 1.** Banyan Tree (Retrieved from [https://www.tes.com/lessons/\\_9CVDbOO-pgpyw/banyan-tree-art-lesson](https://www.tes.com/lessons/_9CVDbOO-pgpyw/banyan-tree-art-lesson))

It is this definition that will feature when examining the multilingual teaching practice of translanguaging.

In the remainder of this paper, I will draw together a variety of theoretical research which supports the cognitive and identity-based advantages of promoting multilingualism, and translanguaging as a specific multilingual strategy. From this theoretical context, I will move into a specific school-based case study where translanguaging is used as a vital, language learning tool, raising student academic achievement and motivation to retain their L1 languages. The conclusion of this article aims to prove that translanguaging can be an easy-to-implement learning tool which can accelerate language learning and help to preserve minority, indigenous or additional languages within educational contexts that promote majority languages.

## The Benefits of Multilingualism and L1 Maintenance

The benefits of being bilingual or multilingual are numerous and provide strong evidence for people to maintain their L1 languages, and indeed add additional languages to their repertoire. In multilingual people “blood flow (a marker for neuronal activity) is greater in the brain stem.” (Marian and Shook, 2012, p. 6). This can be interpreted to mean that heightened neuronal activity is occurring within a multilingual person’s brain, more so than a monolingual’s brain. Multilinguals build up more connections between concepts and words, in different languages. These complex neural networks allow multilinguals to access and retrieve more information, simultaneously in different languages, than that of a monolingual person, who builds conceptual links in only one language:

Research has overwhelmingly shown that when a bilingual person uses one language, the other is active at the same time. When a person hears a word, he or she doesn’t hear the entire word all at once: the sounds arrive in sequential order. Long before the word is finished, the brain’s language system begins to guess what that word might be by activating lots of words that match the signal. If you hear “can,” you will likely activate words like “candy” and “candle” as well, at least during the earlier stages of word recognition. For bilingual people, this activation is not limited to a single language; auditory input activates corresponding words regardless of the language to which they belong. (Marian and Shook, 2012, para. 2)

In addition, multilingual people have a heightened ability to monitor their environment (Batthacharjee, 2012), as they switch between languages depending on the setting or speaker they are addressing. The use of multiple languages is therefore a kind of exercise for the brain, as research shows multilingual people are “...more resistant [...] to the onset of dementia and signs pointing to

Alzheimer's disease: the higher the degree of bilingualism; the later the age of onset." (Batthacharjee, 2012, para. 1).

Multilingualism also brings greater employment opportunities, as many jobs in the modern economy require proficiency in multiple languages, to be able to meet the needs of diverse people in diverse settings. This is especially true as the world economy becomes more interconnected and people move freely and flexibly around the globe in pursuit of economic well-being.

Preserving one's home language (L1) beneath a broader umbrella of additional languages (L2, L3, etc.) holds many educational advantages as well. In light of language acquisition, the more developed a person's L1 is, the easier it becomes for them to develop additional languages alongside it. This principle is detailed in Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis (1979), under which knowledge, concepts and skills transfer between L1 and L2 languages. Therefore, if a person has academic level content knowledge in their home language, this does not need to be relearned in their new language. A person with a well-developed L1 needs only the new word label in their L2. The new word label can then be connected to the concept they already know in their L1 and comprehension is achieved with minimal effort. For students who are able to learn through their L1 in mainstream classrooms, learning can take place more rapidly and comfortably, as they are able to connect new knowledge to familiar words and ideas. Students are also better able to express themselves in the language they know best, making the learning a more interactive process (Lameta-Tufuga, 1994).

Mwaniki (2014) also argues L1 language learning should be given priority in classrooms as: "The mother tongue is the basis upon which all other learning is anchored...it is a sound educational principle to proceed from the familiar to the new" (p. 1). The collective prior knowledge of the child is therefore wrapped up in their mother tongue or tongues. At the core of most teaching training programmes, is the central idea that lessons should begin with what students know, and then move them into the new learning they need. The mother tongue is inextricable a part of this learning process.

Furthermore, maintaining one's home language (L1), alongside additional languages, has significant implications when the topic of identity is raised. Language and culture are interconnected; therefore, keeping up with one's home language(s) allows for greater participation in the home culture and builds stronger ties between different family generations. Mwaniki again reinforces this close link between mother tongue languages and culture:

For children, language provides the power to start, in a more efficient and differentiated way, a dialogue with their world, and also with the people in their world. Through mother tongue, a child gains a whole cultural heritage, which will to a large extent determine his further thinking, feelings, desires and attitudes. (2014, p. 7)

Additionally, in the modern world, identity formation is not as straightforward as it used to be, as people travel and live between many different settings, from the home, to the community, to the region, to the larger world. These distinct environments may require them to navigate both multiple identities and languages flexibly and fluidly:

Each of us is a complex being with multiple roles that we attempt to balance and live out daily. We all move in and out of belonging to many different groups, and as such we each have a number of different and evolving identities. Our identities are often defined according to who we are by birth and by what we do, know and value. Some aspects of our identity will be strong and others weak and this may change over time. Some aspects we choose and other are placed upon us by our family, society or employment. Some aspects fit comfortably and others seem ill-fitting and at times create an inner conflict for us as we seek to maintain harmony between the various elements of our identity (Custance, 2012, p.1)



Under this additive worldview, it is advantageous for people to have the tools and balanced mind-set to maintain all their identities. This balance could be critical in helping people into future life successes and opportunities. Not at the expense of their community and family ties, however, which are also necessary for a well-developed confidence and healthy cultural heritage.

In the literature on Mother Tongue Education (MTE), development of one's home languages (L1), or mother tongues, can be also classified as a human right (Ife, 2001). Maintaining their mother tongues can help children to develop their potential more fully, as they would be given the chance to learn through their strongest language. This could perhaps lead to wider employment opportunities in people's mother tongues as well.

Unfortunately, the numerous advantages that come with being multilingual are not widely known outside of academic circles. Even within school-based contexts, misinformation and misunderstandings on second language acquisition run rampant. The research on the topic needs to be distributed more broadly if it is ever to have a greater impact on people's lives. In today's world, with its variety of complex settings, it should be possible for people to balance multiple identities which allow them to participate in the larger world, as well as within their own communities and family. What kinds of support can we give people to help them realise that this is indeed an attainable goal?

In the next subsections, I will explain how translanguaging, as a learning tool, promotes multilingualism and can be considered a form of multilingualism. In addition, L1 preservation, beneath the umbrella of multilingualism, will be examined in light of pre-colonial world. The power of mother tongue education will also be touched upon as an important means of unlocking people's potential and enhancing their well-being. Finally, theoretical perspectives that support the use of translanguaging will be presented to demonstrate how this multilingual strategy can enhance academic learning and promote positive student identity formation.

## Translanguaging as a Form of Multilingualism

Mother Tongue Education is yet another way to develop minority and indigenous languages and promote multilingualism. However, mobilizing political will and community action to establish mother tongue or bilingual schools can be a challenging and long-term process. Creating the right circumstances to establish these schools, within either a monolingual, nation-state or a former colonized country, requires committed individuals with powerful connections or larger, mobilised grassroots groups who are willing to fight for long-term change. As channels of change within political systems can move slowly, and the status of many endangered languages remain critical, something more immediate and action-oriented should be done to give a stronger status and more opportunities for minority and indigenous languages, indeed all languages, to thrive.

Translanguaging may be one such option. It is defined as flexible language use that occurs naturally among populations of bilingual people. Translanguaging can open up any teaching space to multiple languages, rather than just one. Within any educational system, it has both practical and political implications for raising the status and usage of one's mother tongue against the backdrop of additional languages. It also has the added benefit of accelerating the learning of these additional languages. Translanguaging in mainstream classrooms could be a solution for how to maintain endangered and minority languages in countries where bilingual or mother tongue immersion schooling does not yet have governmental or community-based support. Below, translanguaging will be viewed through practical examples, that encourage both multilingualism and L1 usage at school and subsequently, home domains.

## World Context (prior to colonization) and Mother Tongue Education

According to García (2009), “throughout the world, bilingual children are the norm” (p. 140). Though the goal of many nations, through deliberate language planning, is to create competent monolinguals; this is not the way the majority of children start out. Most have begun life learning a different language, not the dominant language of their country, in their home. In the powerful words of Canadian, second-language specialist Mary Ashworth, delivered at a Canadian ESL conference in (1978):

Many students come to school either already bilingual in their home language and English or in the process of becoming bilingual. However, 12 years later, a large proportion of these students leave school essentially monolingual in English. The whole point of education is to make students *more* than they were when they entered school. But when the messages bilingual children receive in school cause them to replace their L1 with English, education has made them *less* than they were. The very essence of the term *education* -- the nurturing of students’ abilities and talents—was negated by the education they received in Canadian schools. (as cited by Cummins, 2011)

Why should the aim of school be to make students ‘less than who they were’, by subtracting the languages and connected identities they came into the school with? This provocative statement lends credence to translanguaging: a multilingual approach that can be trialled in any school. Additionally, literature that supports mother tongue education suggests that

...multiculturalism (and therefore multilingualism) is a defining feature in the former colonised world. In this part of the world, multiculturalism is a way of life, not an unintended social and cultural consequence of immigration. (Mwaniki, 2014, p. 6)

Under this lens, a return to a plurality of cultural and linguistic identities would be a return to a former way of life: a healing prospect for many minority and indigenous groups. World languages are, of course, necessary for widespread communication; however, this does not mean personal and cultural identities must be sacrificed as a result. Co-existence should be possible between dominant and minority groups, between personal and international identities. Ethically, efforts should be made to allow people to balance different sides of themselves, and achieve their full potential. Translanguaging in schools offers a possible way forward under this vision of balanced identities.

## The Theoretical Context behind Translanguaging

It was Cen Williams (1994) who first coined the term translanguaging, through his work in bilingual schools in Wales. This approach to language learning was further publicised and promoted through the work of Colin Baker (2003) and Ofelia García (2009). García (2009), who has further researched translanguaging practices in New York’s English-Spanish bilingual schools, defines it as

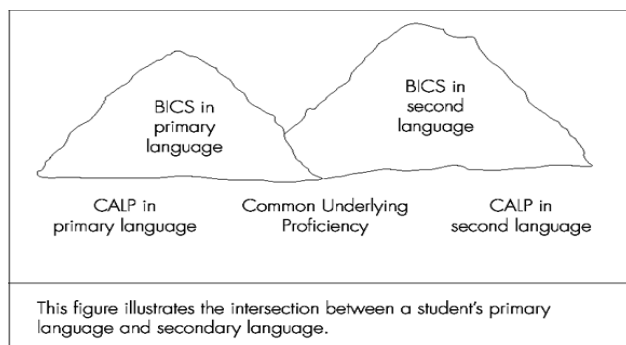
...the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential. Translanguaging is centred...’on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable in order to make sense of their multilingual worlds. (p. 140)

Translanguaging allows children to draw on all the languages they know to access new languages or communicate a message using more than one language. Contrary to widespread belief, switching between languages, for a communicative purpose shows an understanding for how languages work and reveals a developing competency in different languages. Under researchers like García (2009), this mixing, formerly called ‘codeswitching’ is not a sign of language confusion in children, but rather signals a growing awareness for how they use multiple linguistic systems to create purposeful meaning. This means that when children are translanguaging, they may substitute a word from their L1 in place of the word they do not know in their L2. Therefore, a bilingual English-Dutch child might say: My teacher gave me a hard *oefening* (exercise) to do in class today. This process is referred to as gap-filling (Genesee, Nicoladis, & Paradis, 1995). Children may also use a specific word from one language in an utterance constructed from another language because that specific word-concept does not exist in the language they are trying to use, such as: It was *gezellig* (cosy) out on the terrace today.

This positive view on the mixing of languages for communication, seen as both a natural and beneficial learning process, marks a huge shift from previous educational thinking. In the past decades, bilingual educators were convinced that languages needed to be taught separately from one another to avoid cross contamination. They were worried that languages mixing into each other would result in children developing one language composed of two systems mixed incoherently. This separatist approach was considered common sense by a generation of educators and therefore not researched in any great detail to prove its accuracy (Jacobson & Faltis, 1990). According to Cummins (2005) this separatist mind-set was responsible for the dominance of monolingual instruction and strategies employed in Canadian and American schools from the 1960’s into present day, where it lingers still. There are a number of damaging assumptions built into this bilingual teaching approach. They are as follows:

1. Instruction should be exclusively in the target language (TL) without recourse to the students L1.
2. Translation between L1 and L2 has no place in the teaching of language or literacy. Encouragement of translation in L2 teaching is viewed as a reversion, linking back to the discredited grammar-translation method...or concurrent translation method.
3. Within L2 immersion, and bilingual/dual language programmes, the two languages should be rigidly separate: constituting two solitudes (Cummins, 2005) or *parallel monolingualism* (Heller, 1999).

All of these assumptions run contrary to Cummins’ Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (1979), which has shown through a multitude of corroborating studies (2017) that academic concepts and linguistic skills, like reading, transfer from a student’s L1 to additional languages they are learning. Therefore, Cummins advocates for language learning classrooms, where L1-L2 similarities and differences can be explored side-by-side to make cross-lingual transfer more effective for L2 acquisition. Under this viewpoint, learning to understand how languages work, by exploring the differences between their linguistic systems, is not considered to be a negative process. Rather, differences between languages are reframed as ‘teachable moments’, capable of enhancing students’ overall knowledge of multiple linguistic systems. When students learn additional languages, similarities between the languages can of course be utilised as a learning scaffold or tool to accelerate L2 learning. When L1 and L2 languages work differently from one another, Cummins argues that students need to be made aware of these differences. Raising this explicit awareness in students, for how their L1 relates to their L2, could potentially increase their linguistic accuracy in applying rules from contrasting linguistic systems. Cummins argues that all learned concepts and linguistic knowledge are processed through a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) in the brain, which feeds directly into all the languages we use .



**FIGURE 1.** The Interdependence Hypothesis (Source: Cummins, J., 1979)

In recent years, a number of studies have been conducted on ‘translanguaging’ or ‘code-mixing’ used by children simultaneously acquiring multiple languages before the age of three. In particular, one study which focused on code-mixing in native Inuktitut and English children revealed that its regular use did not lead to language confusion or the mixing of two grammatical systems into one.

Child bilingual code-mixing is grammatically constrained because children usually mix the two languages at points in an utterance where the grammar of both languages is concordant; they seldom mix at points where the grammar is not concordant. (Allen, Genesee, Fish, & Crago, 2002 as referenced by Genesee and Nicoladis, 2008)

This study, one among many in the language acquisition field, documented the level of accuracy young bilingual children displayed when acquiring their first languages simultaneously (Allen et. al., 2002). They discovered that when children applied a grammatical rule to both of their languages, it was because the rule worked similarly or ‘concordantly’ in each system. Children were therefore able to access grammatical constraints from each of their linguistic systems and apply them with a high degree of success to the correct language system.

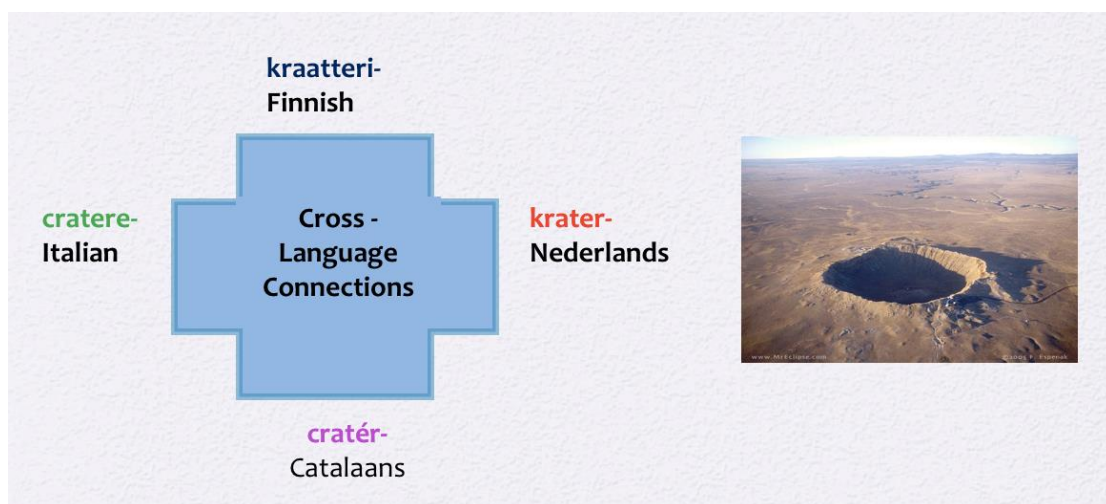
In addition, Meisel (1994) and Köppe (2014) argue that when grammatical errors are made by ‘simultaneous bilingual’ children, they indicate where they are developmentally in the acquisition of their language systems. Children generally apply the grammatical constraints they are learning to the languages they belong to, however, it takes time for them to grow into the complete grammatical knowledge an adult language user has. Consequently, there does not appear to be a stage in a child’s bilingual development when grammatical constraints do not operate (Meisel, 1994) and (Köppe, 2014).

To clarify, there does not seem to be any point in a young child’s simultaneous L1 and L2 development where words are produced without grammatical constraints. Children are naturally tuned into grammatical structures from the start and very naturally separate out which rules apply to which languages without much intervention. When adding additional languages to the language(s) the child already knows, he or she will transfer and apply their previous linguistic knowledge to these new languages. This transfer will also support L2 or L3 acquisition, if the L1 transfer is concordant.

Under this theoretical context, translanguaging, or flexible language use, allows students to tap into their L1 and knowledge of additional languages. Students can then use what they already know as a springboard into learning new languages. Within common language families, there can be a multitude of connections including word cognates, grammatical functions and even phonetic sounds. Allowing children to work with multiple languages side-by-side in a school setting enables them to discover these connections, thereby retaining new linguistic knowledge more easily. Likewise, as mentioned previously, differences between languages can also be explored to enhance knowledge and application of contrasting linguistic systems.

To illustrate this principle practically, I draw on my practical experience as an English support teacher. In 2011, I worked with a Year 5 student who came to the International School of the Hague as a complete English beginner. Though new to English he was already fluent in French (from his parents) and in Dutch (from his previous schooling). In the first months of my English beginner lessons, he seemed frustrated though I was sure he had not yet encountered the English words I was using. These vocabulary sets were around themes like feelings, basic verbs, adjectives, and body part names. No matter how much I tried to make his lessons more challenging in vocabulary level, his frustration with the material grew. I finally decided to reassess his passive English understanding through an academic-level vocabulary test. He passed the multiple-choice test of twenty questions with only two errors. Completely surprised, I asked him how he was able to know what descriptive words, like ‘opaque’ and ‘autonomous’ meant, as he had only been studying English for the past two months. He read out the list of words on the test, pointing at each one along the way and saying to me: “From French, From Dutch, French, French, Dutch, Dutch.” The languages he brought with him were tools that allowed him to unlock new English vocabulary because of their similarity to words he already knew. From that moment, I began working with him in books I usually gave second and third year students of English. This boy was very bright and had, on his own initiative, naturally tapped into his multilingual resources. Within two years of international school, and additional EAL support, he reached grade-level standard in his English speaking and literacy skills.

The majority of children I teach English to, however, often need more reminders to make these L1 links and use their prior languages to acquire English. When they do find these connections between their languages, they become very enthusiastic about the learning process, as it ‘affirms their identity’ (Cummins, 2011) and helps them to retain new word meanings more easily. I also encourage children to use this strategy when taking standardised reading and writing tests in English, as they do come across words they do not recognise. I ask them to think about whether or not an unknown word resembles a word in their mother tongue and if that might help them find a meaning. Often it does.



**FIGURE 2.** Cross-Language Connections (International School of the Hague 2013)

Becoming more aware of the differences between linguistic systems is also useful for students to learn. These differences can lead to mistakes being made in a L2 language they are acquiring. For sequential bilinguals, who learn one language from birth, and then another later on in childhood, L2 errors often emerge as they apply their L1 linguistic system to the L2 language ‘non-concordantly’, where a difference occurs. Otto (2010) summarises this general conclusion from the field:

Some [researchers] have documented what they call language interference, when children appear to confuse knowledge of one of the aspects of L1 language with that of L2 language. For example, a child might use the vocabulary or syntactic structure of one language when attempting to communicate in the other language. (para. 4)

To illustrate more concretely, French and Spanish students need to be reminded that adjectives are placed before the nouns in English (e.g. the red car), as opposed to their L1 where the adjectives follows the nouns (e.g. the car red). Many Asian languages do not have verb tenses. This means tenses in English, from basic to more complex, must be taught explicitly for these children to become accurate English speakers. Likewise, in Russian, indirect and direct articles do not exist and thus native Russian speakers must be frequently reminded how and when to use this English linguistic feature. Under this perspective, as an English teacher in an international school, I must continue to develop my awareness of how syntactic systems in other languages work, drawing also on my students' L1 knowledge and explanations for how their languages work. Consequently, I can better assist my multilingual children through the differences in linguistic systems, developing their total meta-linguistic knowledge of languages to higher levels. In summary, exploring languages side-by-side in the classroom, allows these similarities and differences in systems to be revealed, making students more effective and knowledgeable users in their many languages.

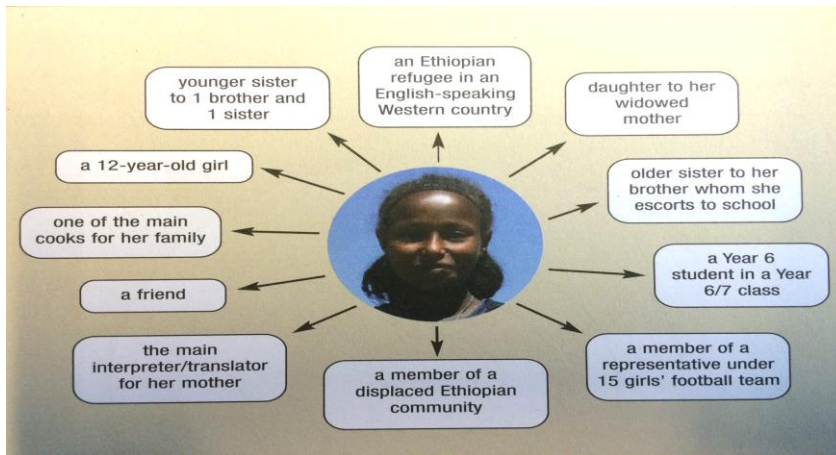
## Translanguaging and Identity Formation

Translanguaging is also supportive of student identities. It allows all languages through the classroom doors, making the whole child feel welcome (Cummins, 2001). Translanguaging gives greater status to children's mother tongue or L1, as it is utilised as a learning tool in classroom. This enables children to create their own voice, comprised of many languages. This multilingual practice is referred to as heteroglossia (Bailey, 2007). Heteroglossia particularly addresses the inequalities and invisible power structures that marginalise and suppress minority and indigenous groups (García, 2009). When a space for all languages is opened up for learning, the status of those languages equalise. For students, this step is crucial for their confidence, as their identity undergoes a positive shift: from being a struggling L2 learner to an emerging bilingual or multilingual child with many linguistic resources to draw from (Cummins, 2011). It has since been discovered that acknowledging student identity, by recognising their culture and language, is key in keeping students engaged and invested in their schooling... This factor can affect their school achievement more than language level (Cummins, 2011)

People can have very complex identities, with very different expectations attached to each one. They may not all be visible to the eye, though they can have a large impact on people's values, attitudes and behaviour (Teaching ESL students in mainstream classes, 2013).

Identity in the modern world can be complex and formed through a multitude of diverse cultural and personal experiences. As an educator, it is my priority to ensure every child feels welcome and comfortable enough to show who they really are. Only then may their true talents and abilities surface, when they feel good enough about themselves to reveal them.





**FIGURE 3.** Teaching ESL students in mainstream classes (Teacher Course, 2013)

## The International School of the Hague: A translanguaging case study promoting multilingualism

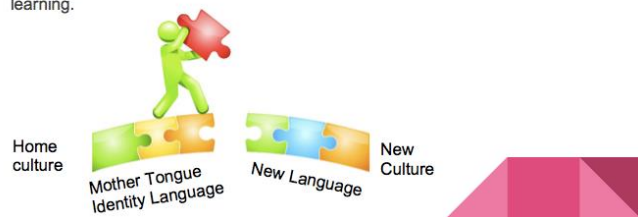
According to García, Skutnabb-Kanga, & Torres-Guzman (2006):

Translanguaging takes place in multilingual schools that exert educational effort, which takes into account, and builds further on, the diversity of languages and literacy practices the children...bring to school. This means going beyond acceptance and tolerance of children's languages, to 'cultivation' of languages through their use for teaching and learning. (p. 103)

Bringing in all student languages to enhance student learning is the same vision the International School of the Hague aims to bring into reality.

### What is translanguaging?

Translanguaging allows children to connect their previous life experience to new learning.



**FIGURE 4.** Translanguaging (International School of the Hague, 2016)

## The Educational Context and the Influence of the ECIS MT/EAL Conference

The International School of the Hague (ISH Primary) was founded in 2003 under the *Stichting* (=‘Foundation’) *Het Rijnlands Lyceum*. Since its inception, it has grown into a four-stream school that hosts over sixty different nationalities and language backgrounds. Though the school's core instructional language is English, Dutch and Mother Tongue instruction are prominent in its learning environments as well.

The English ‘as an additional language’ (EAL) department within our school was founded by an educational consultant with expertise in assessing second language learners. She established our



English support department in-line with the current research around second language learning and brain development. We continue to keep up with this field by regularly attending the European Council of International Schools: EAL and Mother Tongue Conferences. This specialised conference draws the leading experts in second language acquisition together to present their findings every three years. Our role as educators is to then try to translate their research into best practice for our students.

Currently, we provide structured English language support, on top of the curriculum mainstream teachers deliver. We provide this support for all of our students who speak a language other than English at home. Second language learners represent eighty percent of our student population, and of this percentage our department gives extra support to approximately half. Our support programme offers a combination of ‘pull out’ and in-class lessons for students who are building a beginning fluency in English, all the way up to students who are developing speaking, reading and writing to academic levels. Since becoming academically proficient in any language can take between four to nine years (Cummins, 1979), children are allowed access to our support services for as long as they need to reach grade-level performance.

Our Mother Tongue department, whom we liaise with, provides a traditional after school programme for all language groups we can find a native teacher or tutor for. Under this programme, mother tongue lessons are focused on expanding students’ academic language, as well as developing their reading and writing skills. When students reach higher-levels of mother tongue literacy, they follow an additional spelling and reading programme. The aim of our school’s after school programme is language sustainability and lessons are held on a weekly basis. Currently, we run the following language groups for Upper and Lower School children: Arabic, French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, German, Hungarian and Slovakian.

The Mother Tongue department is also responsible for supervising the in-class mother tongue session, where children complete mainstream curriculum projects, over a period of weeks, in their mother tongues. Although, instruction is provided in English, google translate and secondary students are brought in to support the diverse language needs of each class. This unique mother tongue slot happens every Tuesday at the end of the school day and lasts for approximately forty-five minutes.

## Getting the Message out: L1 maintenance

It is our mission as a language support team to spread current theories on language acquisition and best practice, such as translanguaging, to our student, parent and teacher populations, as well as the wider communities we come into contact with. The more we spread this message, the more people we are able to encourage towards L1 maintenance. L1 preservation matters, for both better learning and positive identity formation. Here are some of the ways we carry this message out to others:

- Hold annual EAL/Mother Tongue evenings to present current language practice and theories to parents;
- Hold regular trainings with teaching staff about the philosophy and practicalities of developing our student’s mother tongue at school;
- Include articles about how to practically develop the mother tongue and support children with their homework in the school newsletter ;
- Discuss the importance of maintaining the mother tongue in parent teacher conferences and in EAL reports;
- Celebrate International Mother Language Day 21<sup>st</sup> February through assemblies and various classroom activities;

- Create interactive presentations with student-created videos that bring the research around mother tongue development in a child-friendly manner (so students also understand why maintaining their L1 is important).

Many parents come to us each year, having received the wrong message about their L1 languages from other national and international schools, and indeed even schools down the street. When they first arrive at our school, many children are sadly already on the path to losing their home languages, or indeed have lost them already. Still, we try our best to stimulate parents to recover what L1 language use they can and give them all the research that justifies future investment in their L1 languages. This is knowledge they can hopefully take with them to new schools and countries in the future. In this way, through the parents, we aim to positively influence L1 usage in the home.

## Translanguaging and L1 Usage in the School

Translanguaging is frequently used in EAL lessons to promote cross-lingual transfer and develop metalinguistic knowledge in students. Some classroom teachers also use it as a learning tool, to support students at every language stage. What we tend to observe is that once children know they are allowed to use other languages in their class lessons, they naturally begin to use them when they need to. For example, two French students may find each other in a Maths class, when they are unsure about a math concept. A quick discussion in French may help them to resolve their questions before they move on to their exercises.

Additionally, completing work in the L1 is an option frequently given to English beginner students, so they may complete classroom tasks that are not yet accessible to them in English and, therefore, not fall behind on the academic concepts others are learning.

## Translanguaging Strategies

### Translanguaging and Vocabulary

*(Below are several video transcripts that model how translanguaging can be practiced in small group, EAL lessons.)*

#### **VIDEO CLIP 1**

#### **EAL Audio Transcript, Spanish and English**

This Year 5 student explains how connecting new English vocabulary to his Spanish mother tongue helps him to remember new academic words. Building up his vocabulary will help this student to develop greater spoken and written fluency in classroom subjects like science, history, geography and art. In EAL lessons, explicit vocabulary instruction is a regular part of introducing new curriculum topics to children who are still developing their English. When they make the link between a new English word and a familiar mother tongue word or concept, it helps them to retain and retrieve word meanings more easily. Pictures that illustrate word meanings also help children to overcome the English language barrier and demystify what new words mean.



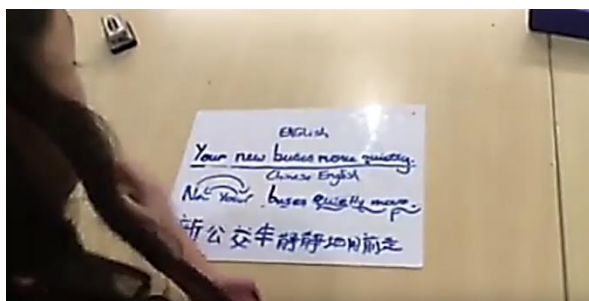
**Boy:** This is really easy because ‘structures’ in English is the ‘structures’ and ‘structures’ in Spanish i...is *estructuras* so that he...helps me to remember the word ‘structures’ and what it means.

## Translanguaging and Grammar

### VIDEO CLIP 2

#### EAL Audio Transcript, Chinese and English

This language activity involved constructing a simple English sentence from coloured word strips broken into nouns, verbs, adjectives etc. As a group, we examined the English word order of a basic English sentence (Subject-Verb-Object). We then compared this English word order to the Chinese word order, using the same sentence. This is a Year 6 girl explaining how the word order of Chinese and English differ drastically from one another and why understanding these differences are important for her English writing.



**Girl:** My English sentence is: ‘Your new buses move quietly’.

And my Chinese sentence is: [*reads aloud in Chinese*].

Then if you translate it straight away from Chinese to English, it’s going to be [*in the Chinese word order*]: ‘New your buses quietly move.’

You changed the ‘your move’ [*in the English word order*] to the ‘new your’ buses [*in the Chinese word order*]. And you also change move quietly [*English*] into quietly move [*Chinese*].

**EAL Teacher:** So when you are doing some English writing, how might this help you?

**Girl:** Well, let’s say I’ve got a really good sentence in Chinese, well then, I have to...think in like what the rules of English is...so I can’t translate it straight away, otherwise it will sound totally incorrect [*laughs*], so I have to think of the rules and write it down and...yeah....

## Mother Tongue process: English Process

### VIDEO CLIP 3

#### EAL Audio Transcript, Chinese and English

This is a Year 2 boy who first sings a song in Chinese and is then asked to explain the song's meaning in English. First, he sings in Chinese for about 30 seconds. Then his EAL teacher asks him to explain the message of the song in English.

**EAL Teacher:** Can you tell me what the song is about?

**Boy:** A flower.

**EAL Teacher:** Tell me a little bit more.

**Boy:** Dat (That) flower is wed (red) and is beautiful an (and) somebody wan (wants) to take it.

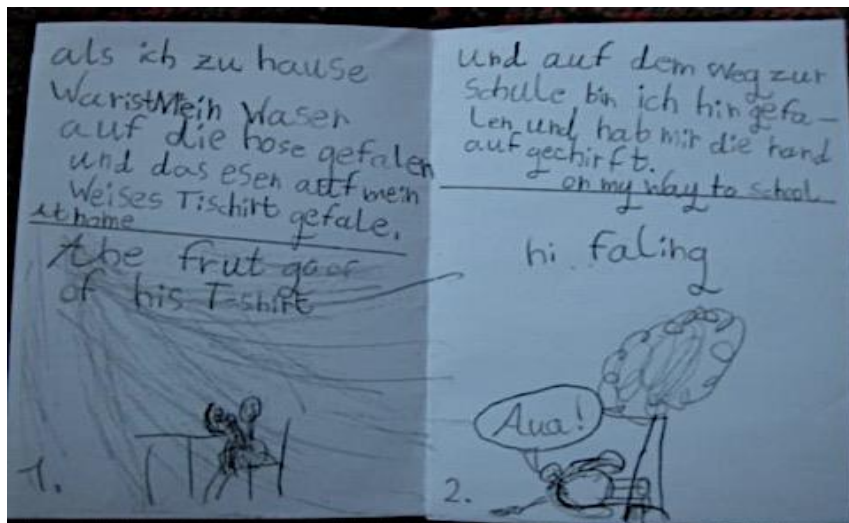
**EAL Teacher:** Oh? And does he take it?

**Boy:** [*nods silently*] And gave somebody she frens (friends).

**EAL Teacher:** [*teacher models the correct form back to him*] He gave the flower to his friends.  
That's a beautiful song, thank you.

## Classwork in Mother Tongue

This piece of writing comes from a Year 3 boy, whose English was still at a very basic stage. Something upsetting had happened to him and the teacher allowed him to recount his problem in both German and English.



The pictures make his message clear and the inclusion of his L1 (German) enables the boy to express his worries more easily and show his class teacher a more realistic measure of his academic writing abilities.

## What Primary-aged children say about how mother tongue use impacts on their learning

A group of Upper and Lower School children, between the ages of 4 and 11, were asked the following questions (2014) to see how L1 usage impacted their daily learning:

1. How does it feel to speak your mother tongue at school?
2. How does using your mother tongue help you learn?

Here is a sample of their responses:

#### VIDEO CLIP 4

(5-6 year olds)

1. (Swahili) **Girl:** Happy.  
**EAL Teacher:** Why does it make you feel happy when you speak it [*Mother Tongue*] at school?  
 (Swahili) **Girl:** Because...I speak with my Dad and it's my language.
2. (Dutch) **Boy:** Nice....cuz...um..uh...'ecause (because) it makes you more comfortable.  
**EAL Teacher:** Why does it make you feel more comfortable?  
 (Dutch) **Boy:** 'ecause (because), uh, there's a lot of children by school you can play with.
3. (Dutch) **Girl:** English is almost the same as Holland....almost the same language because...like many things are the same.  
**EAL teacher:** Does that help you learn?  
 (Dutch) **Girl:** [eyes widen] Yes [said with emphasis].

#### VIDEO CLIP 5

(9-11 year olds)

4. (Czech) **Boy:** I feel free to speak my mother tongue and it's amazing to speak our mother tongues because we know more words in our mother tongues than in English, so I think we should speak in our language even though we are in ISH (*International School of the Hague*) and speak English, we should we speak our language also because it can help us with learning.
5. (Korean) **Boy:** I feel really comfortable when I'm a...at EAL, when I am allowed to speak mother tongue...
6. (Japanese) **Boy:** It makes me feel happy and...[*thinks for a moment*] comfortable.
7. (Dutch) **Boy:** I...I feel a bit different 'cause I, I can speak English (L2) better than Dutch (L1). So, if, I, it's a bit harder to speak it, like sometimes, I have to think about what word I am trying to use, but in English I usually don't have to. Sometimes it [*a word*] is spelt very similar [*between the two languages*], and sometimes it's spelt very different.
8. (Korean) **Boy:** Um, I don't feel comfortable to speak English with my family 'cause (because) I think my brain just changes...If...I think I...the thing is, that if I speak English, my brain just changes into English if the place or setting is really matches to English or Korean for example so if it's for example my home, my brain just changes into Korean...  
**EAL Teacher:** How can using your Korean help you to learn English?

9. (Korean) **Boy:** I think it helps 'cause (because) if you know the meaning in Korean, for example, to say waterfall is 폭포 (pogpo) in Korean and if you know the meaning...you just know the name in English so it's basically waterfall, then it's...you know the meaning in Korean but the word in English. That'll be easy.
10. (Kenyan) **Boy:** Uh, I guess that sometimes if I forget an English word, I try to figure it out in my mother tongue. That might give me an idea...I'll maybe find out the word.  
**EAL teacher:** What are you looking for?  
 (Kenyan) **Boy:** Connections...or something that might have been spelled together...  
**EAL teacher:** Something similar?  
 (Kenyan) **Boy:** Yeah, like a pronunciation...

After spending approximately four years at the International School of the Hague (Primary), L2 students consistently outperform the average standardised test norms set by UK children (Learning Support Department ISH, 2017). This performance trend repeats itself year on year on year (Learning Support Department ISH, 2017). Though this standardised result is partially due to high levels of parent involvement (Cummins & Swain, 1986), and the strong abilities the children bring with them, the vast majority of our students are learning through English as their second or third language. The third factor in the mix is therefore language development. The EAL department at the ISH is well-equipped with both the knowledge and tools to accelerate the language development of its students. EAL teachers accomplish this through explicit English teaching in modelled contexts and through mother tongue linking strategies like 'translanguaging'. Throughout the years, a number of EAL students have progressed from low English proficiency to grade level in a matter of 2-3 years, considerably faster than the norm of 4-9 years. These students' accelerated English acquisition could also be partially attributed to a combination of positive, school-created factors: namely their heightened linguistic awareness (stemming from regular translanguaging practices) and having regular access to clear, differentiated language input from both the EAL and mainstream classroom teams.

## Conclusion

The research around acquiring and maintaining multiple languages posits many provoking conclusions for governments and educational systems to consider.

Firstly, being multilingual brings with it numerous cognitive advantages in light of information retrieval, cross-lingual transfer and the slowing down of dementia in older age. Being multilingual, on these fronts, is healthier for the brain than remaining monolingual. Maintaining one's L1 language, as a strong foundation for learning new languages, has been proven to be the best language practice and offers minority and endangered language communities the scientific justification they need to continue using their L1 languages, next to majority languages.

Secondly, the diverse, international world requires flexible individuals capable of navigating complex settings requiring multiple identities to be successful. Being multilingual lends itself towards having many identities and cultures, over just one. Electing to keep personal identities in balance can enhance well-being, as it allows a person to develop their complete identity without shame or rejection of certain sides. Mother Tongue, or L1 languages, then operate as an identity marker but also as a foundation from which new learning can spring, as all multilingual students move from what is known (L1) into the unknown (L2 or L3).

With this premise in mind, translanguaging is presented as an important, language-learning tool that opens up an educational space for both multiple languages and identities to thrive side-by-side



equally. It allows students to utilise all their languages in their repertoire flexibly, enhancing both their general learning and communicative potential. In the past, based on very little evidence, educators kept languages in strict isolation from one another for fear that code-mixing would inevitably lead to language confusion and random language mixing. Recent studies on simultaneous bilingual language acquisition have overthrown this still widely-held and practiced assumption. Children learning two languages from birth naturally acquire and separate out the grammatical systems that constrain their languages. Grammatical errors made by children in their early years reflect either the linguistic, developmental stage they are in, or a 'gap-filling' scenario they employ to make their meaning clear. Code-mixing is therefore not done at random and does not threaten bilingual linguistic acquisition or competence. On the contrary, finding connections between languages accelerates new language learning.

Finally, it has been found that incorporating L1 usage throughout a school raises students' linguistic knowledge, while simultaneously bringing them into a multilingual vision where all languages and identities are valid. Translanguaging and mother tongue programmes mandate L1 usage in mainstream classrooms, helping students to realize that their languages are indeed, valuable learning tools for school and the world beyond. As ISH educators allow student languages into the classroom, it reveals to children that we value who they are and where they come from; that their identity is something worth protecting, and a learning resource to draw from as well.

It is especially promising to see how articulate and conscious the older primary kids can be of their linguistic and cultural identities. These students live our school's vision by being able to balance their personal and international identities side-by-side. They are proud multilinguals who stand a good chance of taking their confidence and sustainable L1 language practices into the world wherever they go. It is our hope they carry this message further and farther into national institutions and systems, transforming monolingual expectations and norms into a more dynamic, pluralistic society reflecting its true population.

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# Using verb + noun collocations to facilitate language production in GSP courses<sup>1</sup>

K. Maes

## Abstract

In this paper, the ARC (Awareness-raising, Recognizing, and Constructing) teaching method is outlined. This method is used in German for Specific Purposes (GSP) courses and aims at increasing second language (L2) learners' (technical) vocabulary, specifically verb + noun collocations. These combinations of verbs and nouns constitute useful building blocks that facilitate language production. The ARC teaching method is based on a combination of awareness-raising activities and production exercises that help learners entrench the collocations in memory. A description is provided of the three phases of the ARC teaching method: Awareness-raising, Recognizing verb + noun collocations in authentic texts, and Constructing sentences. In addition to that, the role of the teacher and the autonomous learning aspect are discussed and some ideas for future research are presented.

## Introduction

When asked to formulate their learning needs, second language (L2) learners often mention their lack of both grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Learning vocabulary is a central aspect of language learning. The problem is that L2 learners generally “see the collecting of new single words as the hallmark of good vocabulary development” (Henriksen, 2013, p. 41). Their “analytical mode of processing” (Boers, 2009, p. 27) makes them focus their attention on single words, and prevents them from noticing word combinations such as collocations.

Collocations can be defined as “frequently recurring two-to-three word syntagmatic units which can include both lexical and grammatical words, e.g. verb + noun (*pay tribute*), adjective + noun (*hot spice*), preposition + noun (*on guard*) and adjective + preposition (*immune to*)” (Henriksen, 2013, p. 30). Learning collocations has advantages over learning single words, “because they [i.e. collocations] serve a number of communicative functions: they are ubiquitous in language; they allow more fluency in language output, and their use makes FL learners come across as more proficient” (Peters, 2014, p. 79). It is important to implement learning collocations in language courses because research shows that “even high-level learners seem to experience problems in relation to using and developing L2 collocational knowledge” (Henriksen, 2013, p. 30).

Recent studies indicate that learning collocations through an explicit instructional approach can improve the learner's language proficiency (AlHassan & Wood, 2015; Eyckmans, 2009; Rahimi & Momeni, 2012) and that learners have positive opinions toward the teaching of collocations (Dorkchandra, 2015). It is with this in mind that I have developed the ARC (Awareness-raising, Recognizing, and Constructing) teaching method to enhance language learners' collocational knowledge, bridging at the same time the gap between learning single words and sentence production. The ARC teaching method is based on a combination of awareness-raising activities and production

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Catia Cucchiarini, Roeland van Hout and Helmer Strik for their insights and detailed comments.

exercises that enable learners to entrench the collocations in memory. It centres on a subcategory of collocations: verb + noun collocations. The reason to specifically focus on verb + noun collocations is that these combinations tend to form the communicative core of utterances where the most important information is placed (Altenberg, as cited in Gyllstad, 2007). For L2 learners they constitute useful building blocks, making them a starting point from which sentences can be constructed. For example, if an intermediate L2 learner of German knows the combination

eine Entscheidung	treffen
a decision	to make

he will probably be able to construct sentences like

Haben Sie	schon	eine	Entscheidung	getroffen?
Have you	already	a	decision	made?

'Have you already made a decision?'

or

Wir	müssen	eine	Entscheidung	treffen.
We	have to	a	decision	make.

'We have to make a decision.'

I have used the ARC teaching method in tailor-made German for Specific Purposes (GSP) courses. These courses are organized by the Radboud University's language centre (Radboud in'to Languages) in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Most of the GSP courses are 3-5 days intensive training programs, in which I teach learners individually or in small groups of up to 8 participants. During these 3-5 days, the L2 learners are immersed in the target language, in this case German. They are encouraged to speak and write German the entire day. The participants are adult language learners with L1 Dutch working in different professional areas, such as higher education, health care, business, and public service. Emphasis is on speaking in professional contexts, such as meetings, presentations, negotiations and small talk conversations. The majority of the participants have an intermediate German language proficiency level (B1-B2). Learners are usually highly motivated and determined to improve their language skills, since they have to communicate with German counterparts on a regular basis. They feel the need to improve their language skills, especially speaking, in order to be able to communicate more self-confidently.

Before each GSP course an assessment is planned, in which I discuss the learning goals with the participants and assess their language proficiency. When I ask them to formulate their learning needs, participants often mention their uncertainty in conversations with German native speakers, as a result of their lack of vocabulary knowledge (especially technical terms used in their specific discipline).

It would be almost impossible to provide German-Dutch vocabulary sets for every learner in every professional field. More importantly, there is little reason to believe that this would be useful for all learners, since every individual learner has his own vocabulary deficit. Therefore, instead of providing vocabulary sets, I have designed a more sustainable approach that helps learners develop strategies to cope with technical vocabulary. In the ARC teaching method, learners are stimulated to discover and collect (technical) verb + noun collocations in their own authentic texts and to formulate sentences with these collocations.

## Teaching method

The ARC teaching method outlined in this paper provides L2 learners with their own set of (technical) collocations, which can be used to produce sentences more fluently in different professional contexts. The ARC teaching method comprises three phases, through which the teacher guides the L2 learner:

- Awareness-raising
- Recognizing verb + noun collocations in authentic texts
- Constructing sentences

These three phases are described in more detail below.

Before the teaching method starts, it is important to inform learners about the purpose of the method. The teacher can explain that the teaching method aims at enhancing the learners' vocabulary knowledge, particularly (technical) terms. However, instead of merely focussing on single words, word combinations like *eine Entscheidung + treffen* ('to make + a decision') are learned. The fact that the words are combined with verbs makes it easier to formulate sentences. By collecting word combinations from authentic texts, learners can build a sizable repertoire of (technical) collocations which are actually used in their professional contexts.

Most L2 learners are not familiar with the word 'collocations'. To avoid this rather technical term, Lewis (1997) recommends to use a more comprehensible term like "word partnerships" (p. 257). To increase the learners' motivation, the teacher can provide them with a specific learning goal. For example, after the exercise, learners will be able to express themselves more fluently in a product presentation or a meeting. The teacher can point out that the collected word partnerships constitute useful building blocks that facilitate language production in this specific communicative situation.

Having explained the purpose of the teaching method, the teacher can start with the first phase.

### Awareness-raising

To make language learners familiar with the concept of verb + noun collocations (or word partnerships), it is recommended to use awareness-raising exercises<sup>2</sup> (AlHassan & Wood, 2015; Dorkchandra, 2015; Lewis, 1997; Lewis, 2000; Targonska, 2014). Without already mentioning the words 'noun' and 'verb', L2 learners can be asked to combine words in a matching exercise like the following (based on exercise 5 in Lewis, 2000, p. 109):

Welche Wörter kann man miteinander kombinieren?  
(Which words can be combined?)

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Entscheidung | a. stellen     |
| 2. Frage        | b. vereinbaren |
| 3. Termin       | c. erhalten    |
| 4. Angebot      | d. treffen     |

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis (2000) provides examples of activities and exercises which teachers can use to introduce collocations to their learners. The purpose of these exercises is "to make learners more aware of collocation as a powerful way of improving their ability to write precisely and well" (p. 88).

By using this awareness-raising exercise, the teacher can avoid the explicit use of the rather technical terms 'noun' and 'verb'. Most language learners instinctively feel that there is a relation between the words *Entscheidung* + *treffen* (to make a decision), *Frage* + *stellen* (to ask a question), *Termin* + *vereinbaren* (to make an appointment) and *Angebot* + *erhalten* (to receive an offer).

Another more challenging matching exercise that can be used to raise the learners' awareness of verb + noun combinations (based on exercise type 2 in Lewis, 1997, p. 261) is:

Welche Wörter aus dieser Liste kann man mit den 4 Wörtern kombinieren?  
(Which words from this list can be combined with the 4 words?)

- ablehnen
- annehmen
- beantworten
- haben
- erhalten
- fällen
- festlegen
- machen
- respektieren
- stellen
- treffen
- vereinbaren

<b>Entscheidung</b>	<b>Frage</b>	<b>Termin</b>	<b>Angebot</b>

The verb list can be prepared in advance by the teacher. In some cases, multiple combinations are possible. For example the verb *machen* ('to make') can be combined with *Termin* ('appointment') and *Angebot* ('offer'). The teacher can help the learners to reflect on these possibilities to raise their awareness of strong and weaker word combinations (Lewis, 1997). To find the strong verb + noun combinations in this exercise, learners can look up the four nouns in the online *Kollokationenwörterbuch*<sup>3</sup> ('collocation dictionary'). Verbs that are in the so-called 'core area' and build typical collocations with the nouns are indicated by the abbreviation 'ty'. By looking up the words in the collocation dictionary, learners will find that *einen Termin machen* ('to make an appointment') is a strong, typical collocation (core area), whereas *ein Angebot machen* ('to make an offer') is a weaker, although still common collocation.

If learners find it difficult to understand why these nouns and verbs go together, it might be useful to refer to their L1. For some learners it is easier to understand the partnership between the two words in their native language. Referring to the learners' L1 also has the advantage of making them aware of differences between the L1 and L2 (Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Yamashita & Jiang, 2010). Some collocations are congruent, which means they have an equivalent first language (L1) construction. For example the Dutch collocation *vraag* + *stellen* (ask a question) is equivalent to the German collocation *Frage* + *stellen*. On the contrary, non-congruent collocations do not have an equivalent in the learner's

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kollokationenwoerterbuch.ch/web/>

L1. The Dutch collocation *beslissing + nemen* translated into German is *Entscheidung + treffen* and not *Entscheidung + nehmen* as Dutch L2 learners might expect. Since these non-congruent collocations are “far more difficult for the learner than the congruent ones” (Nesselhauf, 2003, p. 236), it could be useful for learners to already become aware of L1-L2 collocational differences.

## Recognizing verb + noun collocations in authentic texts

After finishing the awareness-raising exercise, the teacher can move on to the next phase: assisting learners to recognize (notice) verb + noun collocations in their own (specialist) texts. As Henriksen (2013) points out, “[t]echnical and special purpose contexts and language materials are classic examples of input rich in specialized vocabulary” (pp. 47-48). Using authentic texts can also have a motivating effect on learners (Lewis, 2000). Dorkchandra (2015) argues that “in teaching collocation noticing, authentic texts from various newspapers [...] should be used because they are appealing to students and contain various collocational patterns” (p. 9). Specialist texts are of course different from newspaper articles. However, the fact that they are rich in much needed specialized vocabulary does indeed have a motivating effect on the L2 learners. Before the GSP course starts, learners are explicitly asked to provide their own specialist texts, e.g. articles, reports or brochures. If learners cannot supply such texts, the teacher can also search for authentic, relevant text sources on the internet, e.g. scientific websites, company websites or Wikipedia articles.

Because L2 learners tend to focus on single words, they usually do not recognize possible relations between words such as verb + noun collocations. This is the main reason why learners “fail to notice them in the input” (Henriksen, 2013, p. 41). Therefore, according to Lewis (2000) an important teacher skill is “guiding the learners' attention so that they notice those items likely to be of most benefit in expanding those particular learners' lexicons” (p. 186). Peters (2012) also emphasizes the importance of recognizing (noticing) collocations in language input. In a small-scale study, she uses typographic salience (bold typeface and underlined) in texts to direct learners' attention to collocations. Her findings indicate that “typographic salience facilitates FL learners' noticing and learning of unknown lexical items and of FS [i.e. collocations] in particular” (p. 65).

To ensure that L2 learners will recognize verb + noun collocations in their texts, Peters' (2012) noticing technique is used in the second phase of the ARC teaching method. To guide the learner's attention, the teacher makes the collocations visible in the first part of the learner's text by underlining them and using bold typeface. In this way, the learner's attention is automatically drawn to the verb + noun combinations in the text:

Um gute **Entscheidungen treffen** zu können, muss man aber auch die damit verbundenen **Risiken** richtig **einschätzen** können.<sup>4</sup>

'In order to make good decisions, however, one must also be able to correctly assess the risks involved.'

Visually enhancing the collocations makes it easier for learners to notice and collect the verbs and nouns that go together. Some learners immediately grasp the concept of verb + noun collocations and start looking for them in the rest of their text. Other learners have more trouble recognizing the word combinations without the help of visual salience. The teacher can help them to find collocations in the rest of the text by asking questions like: 'Which word in this sentence could be combined with *Entscheidung* ('decision')?'

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<sup>4</sup> Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung [Brochure], p. 4



Having collected a number of verb + noun collocations in their own texts, L2 learners can make a list of (technical) collocations. It might be useful to add the equivalent L1 translation, fostering the learners' knowledge of (non-)congruent L1-L2 collocations. There are different ways of making collocation lists. One option is to create a set of collocations in the online tool Quizlet<sup>5</sup>. This learning tool provides features such as listening to pronunciation, sharing vocabulary sets and even quiz formats, making it especially useful for vocabulary and collocation learning.

## Constructing sentences

The third and final phase of the ARC teaching method comprises the construction of sentences. In this constructing phase, the learner's set of (technical) collocations is used to build sentences. It is not necessary to construct sentences with all the collocations at once. Learners may start with the more comprehensible verb + noun collocations from their own list. The teacher lets the learners write sentences and gives feedback. After that, other, perhaps more challenging word combinations can be used to build sentences. This writing exercise is to be repeated several times, making it possible for learners to discover the semantic and syntactic features of the verb + noun collocations. Constructing different sentences with the same collocation may also have a positive effect on recalling the word combination.

This constructional phase is of crucial importance for learning the collocations, because it enables learners to entrench the collocations in memory. Previous research indicates that using collocations in language production has a positive learning effect. According to Webb & Kagimoto (2009), “productive tasks may be effective for gaining knowledge of collocation and meaning” (p. 73). And in her study Peters (2012) found that “when FL learners receive a task-induced incentive to really use a word, and thus process the target items' lexical information elaborately, vocabulary learning is facilitated” (p. 77). It seems that by using a specific (technical) collocation, learners process the semantic and syntactic features of that word combination. Peters (2012) suggests that this process has “a positive effect on their recalling that particular item” (p. 77). This positive effect of using productive exercises can also be observed in the GSP courses. Building sentences with the verb + noun collocations can be difficult for L2 learners, but in my experience it is also a highly motivating and rewarding exercise. By formulating new sentences, they bridge the gap between learning single words and sentence production, enabling them to use and learn their (technical) collocations. In addition to that, participants in the GSP courses indicate that having used the combinations in the sentence production task makes it easier to recall them. During role-play exercises (oral production tasks) in which realistic professional contexts are simulated, participants do in fact use the verb + noun collocations to construct sentences. Because this enables them to produce sentences more fluently and to experience the positive effect on their speaking skills, they are motivated to collect more collocations.

To further entrench the collocations in the learner's memory, it is recommended to reuse the collocations in different communicative situations. For example, if the learner has constructed sentences with verb + noun collocations to be used in a presentation, these same collocations can be applied in other communicative contexts such as negotiations, discussions or meetings. In this way, the learner's

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<sup>5</sup> Quizlet (<https://quizlet.com>) is an online learning tool. Language learners can use it to make vocabulary sets and learn words with flashcards, spelling exercises and learning games. The tool also makes it possible to collaborate with other learners, sharing vocabulary sets or working on sets together.

verb + noun collocations can function as building blocks or “frames to which L2 learners might resort” (AlHassan & Wood, 2015, p. 51).

## The teacher's role

In the ARC teaching method, the teacher plays a crucial role. Without the guidance of a teacher, L2 learners will probably not notice verb + noun collocations, because they tend to focus on single words. The teacher's role is to make clear why it is important to learn collocations instead of single words (collocations facilitate language production), to explain the goal of the teaching method (collocations are building blocks to speak or write more fluently) and to guide the learner through the three phases of the ARC teaching method (Awareness-raising, Recognizing, and Constructing).

In order to be able to assist the L2 learner, it is paramount that the teacher has sufficient knowledge of collocations and collocation learning. Unfortunately, like L2 learners, many teachers “tend to focus on individual words [...] and often lack useful materials for raising learners' awareness of collocations” (Henriksen, 2013, p. 41). Therefore, teachers will first have to invest in their knowledge of collocations and teaching methods like the one outlined in this paper.

The teacher's role is also to encourage learners to find useful collocations in their texts. Having found a set of collocations, teachers can assist learners to formulate correct sentences. By giving positive, constructive feedback, they can help learners to discover the semantic and syntactic features of specific verb + noun collocations. During the process of awareness-raising, recognizing and constructing, teachers can ask questions such as: ‘Which word in the sentence can be combined with X?’, ‘Do you know another word for X?’, ‘Maybe you could try to use the word X?’ or ‘Does the meaning of the sentence change when you use X?’

The teacher can also point out similarities and differences between verb + noun collocations in the L1 and L2. Making L2 learners aware of congruent word combinations in their L1 could facilitate the learning process. On the other hand, raising their awareness of non-congruent collocations might help them to avoid L1-induced collocational errors.

## Autonomous learning

The teaching method described above is mostly used in short, 3-5 days intensive GSP courses. However, explaining the purpose of the teaching method, making learners aware of collocations, recognizing them in texts and producing sentences are time-consuming tasks. Therefore, the learners are specifically encouraged to not only use the method during the intensive course, but also afterwards. Since the ARC teaching method can in principle be used with any text source, it should theoretically be possible to continue using the method autonomously after the course. This teaching method can foster autonomous learning, since learners who are acquainted with the method should be able to find (technical) collocations in texts without the aid of a teacher. This idea is supported by Dorkchandra (2015), who investigated the effects of instruction of noticing collocation on Thai EFL learners. He found that “instruction of noticing collocation improves the students' [...] collocational knowledge” (p. 8). Participants had “positive opinions [...] toward the instruction of noticing collocation” (p. 8) and more importantly, they stated that they “would practice what they had learned in the subsequent English encounter” (p. 8). Of course the question remains whether learners will in fact (be able to) autonomously collect and learn collocations. According to Boers & Lindstromberg (2009) “it is rather difficult for learners to identify authentic chunks without expert help” (p. 20). In addition to that, they believe “there are reasons to doubt that students will apply outside the classroom the noticing strategies [...] which they have been trained to apply in the classroom” (p. 48). One of the problems is that when reading a

text or listening to a conversation, L2 learners tend to “pay much more attention to the meaning of a message than to its exact wording” (p. 49). The question is whether L2 learners are able to autonomously recognize verb + noun collocations in their texts without the help of a teacher or visual salience of collocations in the input. The ARC method might provide a solution to this problem, since in the recognizing phase learners are able to find verb + noun collocations in their texts without the help of a teacher. This indicates that even after a relatively short teaching period they can recognize and collect collocations autonomously.

Whether or not learners use the method after the training period also depends on learner motivation and time availability. Most participants in the GSP courses are motivated to continue to improve their language proficiency, but many of them indicate that they are extremely busy and lack time to do exercises or to learn vocabulary. This is why it is so important for learners to recognize the benefits of the ARC teaching method by going through the three phases, expanding their technical vocabulary and improving their speaking skills. Once learners have experienced the positive effect of finding collocations and using them to formulate sentences more fluently, they will probably be more motivated to invest time in this effort despite of their busy schedules.

## Discussion and conclusions

The ARC teaching method described in this article uses verb + noun collocations to facilitate language production in GSP courses. The participants' reaction to the teaching method is generally positive and they succeed in improving their collocation knowledge and language production. During the GSP courses I have observed how participants were able to recognize verb + noun collocations in their own texts and to learn them by producing sentences. I have also noticed how quickly they managed to familiarise themselves with the method. Furthermore, I could see how they used the verb + noun collocations as building blocks in realistic professional contexts (e.g. a presentation or meeting) and how this helped them to speak more fluently.

Although in my experience language learners in the GSP course benefit from the teaching method and have a positive attitude toward it, the question is whether these subjective findings are supported by scientific research. Although there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that awareness-raising exercises and productive tasks have a positive effect on collocation learning and language production, the effectiveness of this particular teaching method still has to be investigated.

There are many questions still to be answered with regard to the ARC teaching method that I have developed. In the GSP courses I have observed a short-term positive effect on collocation knowledge and language production. But what are the long-term effects of learning collocations using the method outlined in this paper? Does the productive phase indeed enable learners to entrench the collocations in (long-term) memory, as is suggested by Peters (2012) and Webb & Kagimoto (2009)? And what happens when the teacher is no longer there to guide the learners? Whether this method enables language learners to autonomously build a sizable repertoire of (technical) verb + noun collocations is still unclear. Another issue is the importance of learner motivation and teacher commitment. To what extent does the fact that GSP courses are intensive courses, with highly motivated language learners and committed teachers influence the effectiveness of the method? Could less motivated learners in group courses also benefit from this teaching method? Or do they need a different approach? How important is the role of the teacher in the learning process?

## Future research

The ARC teaching method has not been subjected to research yet. In order to assess the method's effectiveness, I intend to apply the ARC teaching method in a thirteen-week intermediate German course for (mainly Dutch) university students. This might shed light on the effectiveness of the teaching method in a general German language course. Given the ever increasing importance of computer-assisted (online) learning, I also want to explore the possibility of using the method in a CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) environment. Are there any differences in effectiveness between using the method in a face-to-face language course and in a fully online course? Finally, it might be interesting to investigate the effectiveness of the method in lower-proficiency language courses. In the case of beginner-level L2 learners, it could be more difficult to select appropriate texts and to have them formulate sentences, which might reduce the effectiveness of the teaching method.

Future studies may provide answers to these questions and indicate whether the teaching method is indeed effective, and for which course format and language level it is most effective.

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# The influence of home language and school language on the academic language proficiency of first-year students in higher education: an explorative study.

*L. De Wachter, J. Heeren, & D. Speelman*

## Introduction

In Belgium, an increasingly large and diverse group of students enrolls in higher education (Raad voor Nederlandse Taal en letteren, 2015). That diversity is reflected, not only in differences in socioeconomic background and prior education, but also in language proficiency (Peters & Van Houtven, 2010). The population of multilingual students and students with Dutch as a foreign language has increased over the past years. A stumbling block for many students, not only students with a different language background, is the academic language that is used in higher education (De Wachter & Heeren, 2013). Many universities and colleges have become more aware of the importance of academic language proficiency and develop language policies to support students in their academic careers (Bonne & Vrijders, 2016; Deygers & Kanobana, 2010). Language tests are among the instruments that are often used to develop these language policy frameworks, for example to gain insights into the language skills of students at the start of their education. Several institutions of the KU Leuven Association use the academic language proficiency (ALP) screening in the first weeks of their students first-year, since it has a proven correlation with academic achievement in the first year of study (De Wachter, Heeren, Marx, & Huyghe, 2013). In this article, we will look deeper into the ALP scores of starting students at the university and in the colleges to determine the effects of home and school language on that score.

The data for this study consists of the screening results of 9842 students in five higher education institutions in Flanders (KU Leuven, Odisee, UCLL, Thomas More Mechelen and Thomas More Kempen) between 2011-2012 and 2013-2014. This study will analyze students' ALP-score with a focus on the influence of home and school language. Central to the interpretation of the data is Cummins' distinction between 'Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills' (BICS) and 'Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency' (CALP) (Cummins, 1979). Research into language acquisition of bilingual children shows that the ALP level in a second language depends on the acquired level in the mother tongue (L1). At the base of that statement is the 'Interdependence Hypothesis' and the 'Threshold Hypothesis' (Cummins, 1979). To explain, a high level of language proficiency in the mother tongue (= acquired threshold) allows for a similar level in a second language, while a less developed L1 limits the development in the second language (L2) (Cummins, 1979). Proficiency levels in L1 and L2 have an influence on each other (=interdependence). However, we will also look deeper into the limitations of this framework, especially the notion of a common underlying proficiency, and suggest an alternative interpretation of the data, using more recent insights from Hulstijn (2015). In this article we will discuss the ALP screening first; the focus will be on the underlying construct and validity. Secondly, the theoretical framework around academic language proficiency will be described, followed by the



analysis and results. To conclude, the results of the study around students' ALP-scores will be interpreted in the light of a critical view of the theoretical framework.

## A valid ALP-screening

Academic language is defined in general as the language that is used in schools that helps students acquire and use knowledge (Van Dyk, 2015). It does not only provide access to the academic world, but is also necessary for academic achievement (Anstrom et al., 2010; Gee, 2008). Academic language or more specifically, academic Dutch as a unified concept does not exist: the academic language differs according to the specific discipline, subject matter and medium; it is one end of a continuum with informal, conversational language on the other end (Snow, 2010). There are, however, some characteristics that are considered to be aspects of ALP in general, such as: infrequent words, a formal tone, grammatically complex structures, an abstractness in content, links between textual parts that are sometimes left implicit and an impersonal style (Snow, 2010; Van den Branden, 2010).

The ALP screening developed at the KU Leuven is a low-stakes test, i.e. a test with a low impact on students' lives, which measures whether students are able to recognize and use these complex constructions and infrequent words in abstract language. Language that is too discipline specific, or technical, was avoided, since it would make the test less generally applicable. The ALP screening does not only test knowledge of academic language, but also another key component of language ability, i.e. strategic competence: “[...] a set of metacognitive components [...] which can be thought of as higher order executive processes that provide a cognitive management function in language use, as well as in other cognitive activities” (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 70). To make the test tasks representative and authentic, texts and contexts were chosen that reflect the kind of language students might encounter in their first year, such as fragments of course syllabi (Sercu, Vyncke & Peters, 2003). The screening is administered within a secured online environment, has 25 to 28 items and lasts a maximum of 30 minutes, making it easy for the administration to provide the test to large groups and process the data afterwards. The items deal with vocabulary and reading skills and test students' knowledge as well as metacognitive strategies. The word items, for example, test whether or not a student can derive the meaning of a certain word from the context(s) in which it is given or other word forms as well. The reading items contain classical reading comprehension questions but also items that ask about the underlying text structure. Additional questions require students to drag and drop sentences into the correct order. Examples of test questions are included in the appendix.

To determine the academic level of the texts, the Flesch-Douma formula was used, which is an indication of text complexity. In addition, frequency lists and corpora were combined to determine the frequency of the words occurring in the texts and the number of word items (De Wachter & Heeren, 2013). In 2009, the ALP screening underwent an extensive pilot to check test-internal aspects such as item analyses and reliability. Further studies investigated the predictive validity of the screening instrument: in 2010 and 2011 a correlation study found a significant correlation between the average exam results in the first semester and the language test scores of 2660 KU Leuven students:  $r=0.35$ ;  $p<0.0001$  (De Wachter et al., 2013). The language test cannot be considered a very strong predictor of academic achievement, but it can select an at-risk group of students: 23% of the testers scored below the ALP screenings cut-off point and of these students, 72% scored less than 50% on average on their January exams. Students that score below a certain language proficiency threshold seem to have a higher risk of poor exam performance (De Wachter et al., 2013).



## Multilingualism: a theoretical framework

To interpret the test results of monolingual and multilingual students, we will start from the theoretical framework of Cummins (1979; 1986). He uses the notion of bilingualism, but in this explorative study this will be considered as exchangeable with multilingualism, though researchers sometimes see these terms as different notions, with multilingualism specifically referring to proficiency in more than two languages (Saville-Troike, 2010). There is no single definition of multilingualism. Firstly, it is not always clear how proficient one must be in any of their languages to be considered multilingual or whether the same level of proficiency is required in every one of the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking) (Edwards, 1994; Saville-Troike, 2010). Secondly, aside from linguistic definitions of the concept, political and cultural interpretations can also be used (Saville-Troike, 2010). This study, because of its explorative character, uses multilingualism in its widest sense as the mastery of two or more national languages; dialects and other linguistic variants are not taken into account, since their use will be mainly restricted to BICS.

Multilingualism and its perception have evolved throughout the years. Where at first it was considered as a negative property, from the sixties onwards, positive aspects of multilingualism came to the foreground (Bialystok, Martin, & Viswanathan, 2005). There is a link between multilingualism and other aspects such as cognitive performance (Woumans, Ceuleers, Van der Linden, Szmalec, & Duyck, 2015) or cultural capital (Agirdag & Vanlaar, 2016). Cummins warns for two unfounded hypotheses that, though they are refuted by scientific evidence, are often present in education. Firstly, the mismatch hypothesis argues that a difference in the language spoken at home and the language of schooling will lead to academic delay. Secondly, the maximum exposure hypothesis states that a student can only dispose of that delay by being exposed to the educational language only. These misconceptions are at the base of a misguided perception that there is a direct causal link between home language and poor academic performance, while home language is often only a proxy for other causal factors. Agirdag and Vanlaar (2016) state that ethnicity or amount of exposure to the school/second language can be considered as unmeasured variables that actually cause the aforementioned effects people wrongly adhere to a multilingual background. Cummins further notices that the negative consequences frequently ascribed to multilingualism are often linked to socioeconomic status (SES). Research by Van der Slik, Driessen, and de Bot (2006) shows that in primary education, SES influences school performance more than home language. Cummins and Swain (1986) add that it is the quality of the L1 input that matters and that that quality will be lower families with a lower SES.

Cummins' framework distinguishes 'basic interpersonal communicative skills' (BICS) on the one hand and 'cognitive academic language proficiency' (CALP) on the other. Two continua that define these two notions are 'contextualized' as opposed to 'decontextualized' and 'cognitively undemanding' versus 'cognitively demanding'. BICS are part of a contextualized and cognitively undemanding context, while CALP is usually more decontextualized and cognitively more demanding. As mentioned in the introduction, two hypotheses that come forth from this distinction are the 'threshold-hypothesis' and the 'interdependence hypothesis'. The first states that, to have a high proficiency in a second language, one has to have reached a certain threshold in his or her first language first. The second hypothesis states that certain aspects of proficiency, mainly aspects of CALP, can be transferred from one language to the other because they are part of a common cognitive base: the common underlying proficiency (CUP). Two distinctions that can be added to this framework are the notions of subtractive and additive bilingualism and balanced and unbalanced bilingualism.

Additive bilingualism takes place when a person adds another language to his repertoire without negatively influencing his first language. Subtractive bilingualism means that the second language negatively influences the proficiency in the first language. The prestige of the first language is an

important factor in this process (Cummins & Swain, 1986). In an ideal situation a language user is a balanced bilingual, who has equal mastery over his different languages. This is of course a hypothetical distinction, as a balanced bilingual probably does not exist in reality. Hulstijn (2015), for example, mentions Grosjean's (1989) critique of the notion of the balanced bilingual, and even questions the possibility of providing empirical evidence that such a state of bilingualism actually exists (Hulstijn, 2015). Nevertheless, the distinction allows us to state that some bilinguals can be considered more 'balanced' than others.

The framework Cummins provides is a useful one, but in order to apply it to the data in this study, we have to take into account its limitations and critiques. Hulstijn (2015) criticizes the notion of CUP: while some L1-strategies can be transferred to L2, especially when the L1 and L2 have similar writing systems and rhetorical conventions, the term 'shared skills' or 'shared competences' does more justice to the reciprocal relationship between L1 and L2. He also notes that for example, poor L1 readers, need not necessarily be poor L2 readers too: students can have compensatory mechanisms or can experience language loss in their L1 due to living in an L2 environment. He ascribes the associations between L1 and L2 to differences in literacy skills in both languages to "scholastic aptitude and time spent on intra- and extra-curricular literacy activities" which he argues are actually a reflection of people's SES and motivation to read and write (Hulstijn, 2015, p.132).

## Analysis and results of the ALP-test scores

To investigate the effect of multilingualism on a student's ALP, this study uses the test results of 9842 first year students that participated in the ALP screening over three academic years (2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014). In 2011, 2517 students participated from KU Leuven and Odisee, in 2012 there were 4485 participants from KU Leuven, Odisee, UCLL and Thomas More Kempen, and in 2013, 2840 students participated in the screening from KU Leuven, UCLL and Thomas More Mechelen. The total sample contains 4614 male students and 5228 female students; 6268 students studied at the university (KU Leuven), 3574 were enrolled in one of the colleges (Odisee, UCLL, Thomas More Mechelen, Thomas More Kempen). Before the test started, students filled in an electronic form where they reported on their home language use. 8417 participants indicated that they spoke Dutch only, 806 students indicated that they sometimes used another language at home but mostly Dutch and 619 students indicated that they rarely or never spoke Dutch at home. 8459 students had the same home and schooling language and 1383 students had a different home language than the language of schooling. Though linguistic realities are more complex, BICS will be associated with home language in this study, while CALP will be associated with school language.

A multiple regression analysis was performed on the student data, with the language test score set as the dependent variable. The independent variables were noted as gender, test version, institution (university or college), home language and whether or not a student's home language differed from their school language. The results of the regression are represented in Table 1.

The regression model is very significant, but has a relatively small predictive value with an  $R^2$  of .16. Almost all independent variables contributed to the model. The interaction between the test version of 2012 and the institution is not significant, as is the interaction between gender and the test version of 2013. The test used in 2012 was somewhat easier to solve than the test used in 2013, which explains its significance. The ANOVA-table below shows which factors have a stronger influence on the variance in the ALP screening score: whether a student studies at the university or college is revealed as the strongest indicator, followed by the student's home language. Although home language has a significant main effect, there is a significant interaction between home language and a difference in home language and prior school language.

**TABLE 1.** Regression results

Variabele	Sum Sq	Df	F value	Pr(>F)
Institution	197821	1	1015.4814	< 2.2e-16 ***
HL	24786	2	63.6172	< 2.2e-16 ***
Gender	34781	1	178.5413	< 2.2e-16 ***
Test version	25403	2	65.2006	< 2.2e-16 ***
HL ≠ SL	1065	1	5.4685	0.01938 *
Institution - Test version	26376	2	67.6988	< 2.2e-16 ***
HL - HL ≠ SL	4745	2	12.1781	5.22e-06 ***
Gender – Test version	1402	2	3.5987	0.02739 *
Institution - HL ≠ SL	977	1	5.0162	0.02513 *
Residuals	1914346	9827		

Signif. codes: 0 ‘\*\*\*’ 0.001 ‘\*\*’ 0.01 ‘\*’ 0.05

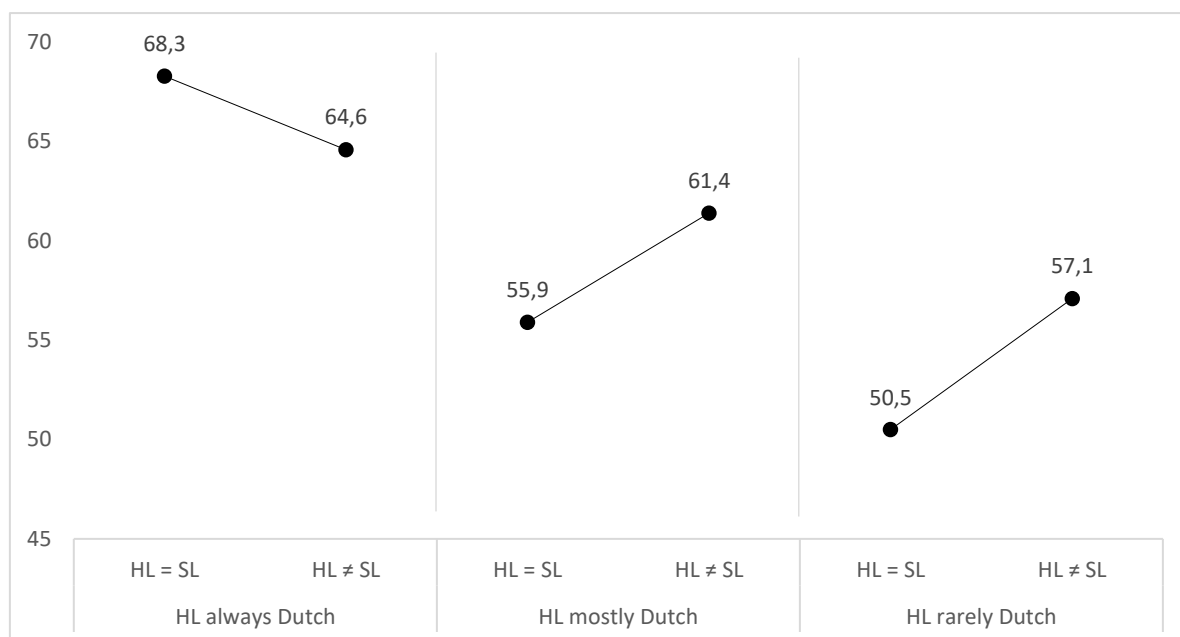
Residual standard error: 13.96 on 9827 degrees of freedom; Multiple R-squared: 0.1656, Adjusted R-squared: 0.1644 ; F-statistic: 139.3 on 14 and 9827 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

**TABLE 2.** ANOVA table

Variabele	Sum Sq	Df	F value	Pr(>F)
Institution	197821	1	1015.4814	< 2.2e-16 ***
HL	24786	2	63.6172	< 2.2e-16 ***
Gender	34781	1	178.5413	< 2.2e-16 ***
Test version	25403	2	65.2006	< 2.2e-16 ***
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Institution - HL ≠ SL	977	1	5.0162	0.02513 *
Residuals	1914346	9827		

Signif. codes: 0 ‘\*\*\*’ 0.001 ‘\*\*’ 0.01 ‘\*’ 0.05

Since this study wants to investigate the effect of home language (HL) and prior schooling language (SL) on ALP, we will focus on the interactional effect of home language and school language. When this effect is represented visually, the pattern below emerges from the data:

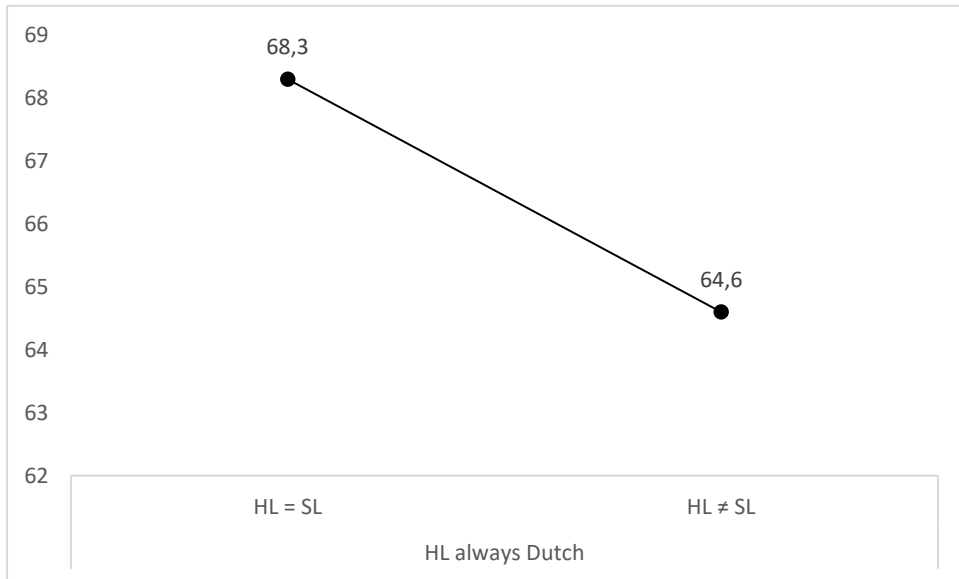


HL = Dutch HL = SL	HL = Dutch HL ≠ SL	HL = mostly Dutch HL = SL	HL = mostly Dutch HL ≠ SL	HL = rarely/ never Dutch HL = SL	HL = rarely/ never Dutch HL ≠ SL
n=8382	n=35	n=36	n=770	n=41	n=578
M=68.3%	M=64.6%	M=55.9%	M=61.4%	M=50.5%	M=57.1%

**FIGURE 1.** The effect of HL and SL on ALP.

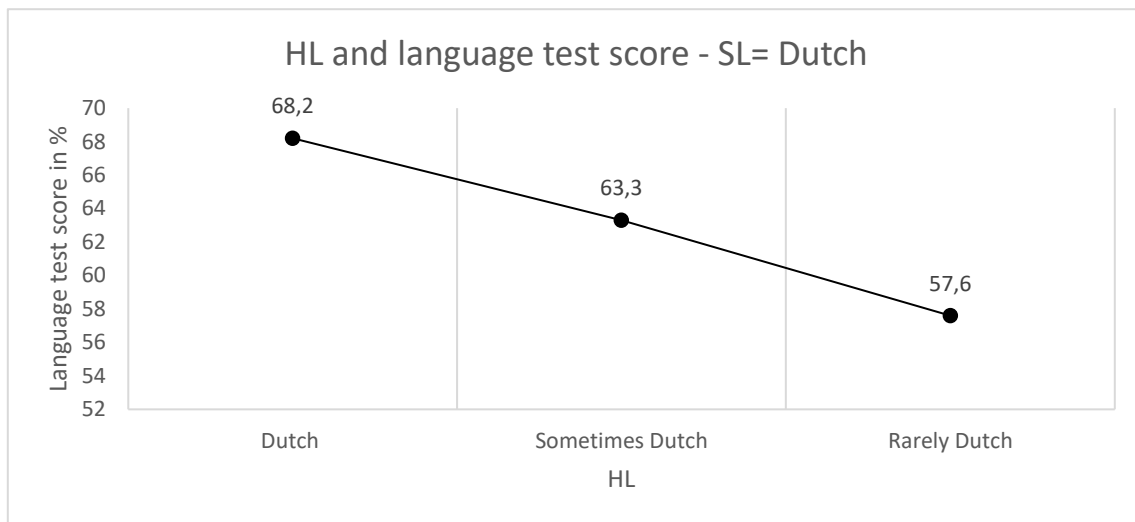
The figure distinguishes between three groups: the students with Dutch as their HL, the students who speak mostly Dutch at home and the students who rarely or never speak Dutch at home. These groups also consist of two subgroups: one in which the students HL is the same as their SL and one in which there was a difference between HL and SL. In the two multilingual groups, the L2 was considered their HL, even when they indicated that they mostly spoke Dutch at home. What is striking is that the majority of students are monolingual Dutch-speaking students; they make up 85% of the entire population. The Dutch-speaking students that had their schooling in a different language and both multilingual student groups that had their schooling in their L2 are very small groups, resulting in a much wider error margin. The last two groups, multilingual students who reported that they received their secondary education in their own language are not studied in this article. The reason behind this is that these groups are not only very small, they are also very heterogeneous. They are on average much older (mean age = 22) and contain more students that have a foreign nationality.

One group that is small, but relatively homogeneous is the group that has the L1 as their HL, but had their secondary education in another language. They are on average between 18 and 19 years of age. It is interesting to look at their scores using Cummins' framework since the average ALP score is considerably lower (mean ALP score = 64.6%) than that of their Dutch-speaking peers that have had their education in Dutch (mean ALP score = 68.3%). This difference is only marginally significant, due to the large error margins.



**FIGURE 2.** The interaction effect of HL and SL on ALP score for students with Dutch as their only HL

In addition to comparing groups that had the same HL and SL to groups that differed in HL and SL, it is also interesting to investigate the ALP scores of the students that had a HL different from Dutch but had Dutch as their SL. In the following analysis the two multilingual groups of students that had Dutch as their SL are compared to the monolingual L1 speakers that had Dutch as a SL. The average age of each of the three groups is between 18 and 19 and their nationality is mainly the Belgian nationality. Figure 3 represents the average scores of the three groups visually:



HL = Dutch SL = Dutch
Mean age = 18.7 Nationality = 98% Belgium 2% Netherlands
N=8179
M=68.2%

HL = mostly Dutch SL = Dutch
Mean age = 19.2 Nationality = 83% Belgium 7% Netherlands
N=747
M=63.3%

HL = rarely/ never Dutch SL = Dutch
Mean age = 19.4 Nationality 81% Belgium 2% Netherlands
N=572
M=57.6%

**FIGURE 3.** Average ALP scores of three groups of students with different HL situations but Dutch as their language of schooling

The graph shows, from left to right: the students who speak Dutch at home and Dutch as a SL (M 68.2%), the students that mostly use Dutch at home and had it as a SL (M 63.3%) and lastly, the students that rarely or never speak Dutch at home but had Dutch as their SL (M 57.6%).

## Discussion

This study provides universities and colleges with useful information concerning the academic language proficiency, as operationalized in this ALP screening for starting first-year students having a multilingual background. These results might prove helpful in developing academic support for multilingual students, as well as gaining an insight into the academic language proficiency first-year student population. However, any causal links between multilingualism and language proficiency cannot be derived from the results. At first sight, they seem to confirm the mismatch hypothesis Cummins warns for. It appears that the larger the discrepancy between SL and HL, the lower students score on the ALP-screening. This phenomenon is found in multilingual students with Dutch as their SL as well as in native speakers who had their education in a foreign language. It would be too easy, however, to fall into the trap of the mismatch hypothesis, as several pieces of evidence that could exclude other possible explanations are missing in this explorative study. In essence, the results of this study lead to more questions than they provide answers. The results and the limitations of interpreting this data show a few important variables and considerations that are necessary when looking into the linguistic background variables of (starting) students in future research, certainly in relation to their ALP.

A first remark in this perspective would be that a diagnostic test could reveal more detailed data on specific language aspects that certain groups perform better on than others. The ALP screening is only a practical instrument that provides students with a rather rough indication of their ALP, combining a limited number of reading and word items. The results of the study should therefore be interpreted with this limitation in mind. Also, seen from a policy perspective, further research could also operationalize the variable 'school language' differently. In this study we coded our data based on the theoretical ideas of Cummins and made a distinction between a group that had a difference in school and home language and a group that had the same home and schooling language. However, while this is justified from an explorative point of view, the interaction variable becomes very complex since there is some conceptual overlap between the variable home language and the variable schooling language, i.e. home language is present in both variables. From a language policy perspective, it would also be interesting to operationalize the variable school language as 'Dutch' and 'other than Dutch'. The language policy in Flanders constitutes, for example, that students with a diploma in Dutch secondary education can enroll in a university study without further entry requirements.

Considering the results of this study, several considerations need to be taken into account. Firstly, for the L1-students that had their education in another language than Dutch the timing-argument has to be taken into account. Cummins & Swain (1986) state that it takes much longer to develop CALP than BICS in any language. Since the screening is deployed in the very first weeks of the academic year, these native speakers might have simply had the problem of adjusting to the new academic language variant of their HL. Further and more long-term research is therefore needed to study the evolution of this particular group of students in higher education. In light of the two multilingual student groups that had their education in Dutch, it would be presumptuous to state that their degree of multilingualism has a negative effect on their ALP. First and foremost, this study has no data on SES, which in the theoretical framework above proved to be a more important variable for which multilingualism is often a proxy. Using Cummins' framework, a lower SES will lead to a lower input quality in the L2-HL, which leads to an underdeveloped CUP resulting in a lower CALP. In the more recent views of Hulstijn, who does not use the notion of a CUP, the ALP-score differences might be

seen as a result of the fact that these students participated less in intra and extracurricular activities stimulating literacy in either language. This would often be paired with a lower SES environment that does not encourage these activities. Either way, not enough variables are known in this study to attribute the lower ALP-scores to the linguistic background of the students only. Further research should therefore always include a measurement of SES, which in addition might also explain (much of) the variance in the monolingual L1-speakers (Hulstijn, 2015).

Another important side note is that recent research confirms that in Flemish education, due to historical language issues, strong monolingual beliefs exist which often lead to a strong belief in the maximum exposure hypothesis (Deygers, 2017; Pulinx, Agirdag, & Van Avermaet, 2015). In Cummins' theoretical framework, when the different HL of students in secondary education is considered as something negative and in some cases even as forbidden, the discrepancy between HL and SL grows, resulting in a negative effect on their CUP, and as a consequence on their CALP as well (Pulinx, Agirdag, & Van Avermaet, 2015). A similar conclusion can be reached if CUP is left out of the equation: a student that has negative feelings about his SL will not be inclined to broaden his literacy activities in that language, certainly not when that student comes from a lower SES-background in which students are often not encouraged to do so. Therefore, these monolingual beliefs historically grounded in Flemish education might only strengthen the seeming mismatch hypothesis which in turn strengthens the belief in the maximum exposure hypothesis. There are, however, enough reasons mentioned in this discussion section not to interpret the results from deficit or mismatch perspective. Several studies indeed show that multilingualism, on the condition that it is additive and more balanced, has cognitive advantages (Agirdag & Vanlaar, 2016).

## Conclusion

The main conclusion of this explorative study is that the results need to be interpreted with care. The ALP screening was developed to be a practical instrument giving students with a higher risk of not succeeding in their first year an early warning signal. This study wanted to further explore the effect of home language and languages of pre-higher education schooling on the ALP-score. This was done by performing a multiple regression analysis on a group of 9248 first year college and university students. The regression controlled for the following variables: gender, institution, test version, home language and difference in home and school language. This article also looked deeper into the interaction between home language and whether or not a student's HL and SL were different from each other. Students who indicated that they had only Dutch as their home language but had their education in another language scored lower on the language screening. Multilingual students who had their education in Dutch, scored lower on the ALP-screening the less they spoke Dutch at home. This information is useful for universities and colleges in the sense that these groups may need extra attention in a language policy, and in their student support systems, but at the same time it would be incorrect to perceive a single, direct causal relationship between multilingualism and ALP. It would be too easy to interpret these results as evidence for the mismatch hypothesis, since other factors, such as SES, are not taken into account in this explorative study. This study shows that further research is necessary to create a correct and adequate representation of starting, multilingual students' ALP and of the complex multilingual reality of this group of students. It is important not to fall into the trap of the mismatch hypothesis, often leading to the maximum exposure hypothesis, since the reality comprises of numerous factors.



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## Appendix: ALP test items

### Voorbeelditem 1: Lezen op tekststructuur

Lees de tekst. Teksten worden volgens bepaalde tekstpatronen opgebouwd. Volgens welke structuur is deze tekst opgebouwd?

“Met wetenschap wordt zowel bedoeld op bepaalde vormen van menselijke kennis als op het proces om hiertoe te komen als op de organisatie waarbinnen deze kennis wordt vergaard.

De wetenschappelijke wereld is dat deel van de maatschappij dat zich uitdrukkelijk ten doel heeft gesteld systematisch kennis te verwerven. De wetenschap heeft een eigen karakter wat blijkt uit haar methoden en conventies. De aldus ontwikkelde *wetenschappelijke kennis* vormt een specifieke reconstructie van een deel van de werkelijkheid en is opgebouwd met behulp van bepaalde wetenschappelijke methodes.

Wetenschap en technologie zijn bepalende elementen van de moderne geïndustrialiseerde samenleving en mede hierdoor beïnvloeden maatschappij, techniek en wetenschap elkaar sterk. Deze verweving maakt tegelijk dat het bij wetenschap in veel gevallen om meer gaat dan om kennisverwerving en reconstructie van de werkelijkheid. Veel wetenschap is er op gericht kennisverwerving te koppelen aan toepassing ervan. Niet louter reconstructie van de werkelijkheid maar ook constructie van de werkelijkheid is het doel.” (Bron: Wikipedia)

Welke structuur herken je in deze tekst?

- A een opsomming: beschrijven van een aantal elementen of kenmerken
- B chronologie: het beschrijven van een historische ontwikkeling
- C dit – tegenover – dat: elementen / systemen / structuren vergelijken
- D probleem – oplossing

### Voorbeelditem 2: Het juiste synoniem

Lees de twee zinnen. Wat is het meest correcte synoniem van het aangeduide woord?

“Het geheel van regels en technieken dat hier wordt gebruikt, is het verwijssysteem dat momenteel aan het departement geschiedenis van de KU Leuven wordt gehanteerd en waarover een brede consensus bestaat.”

“De vergadering tussen vertegenwoordigers van de aftredende meerderheid over het bankgeheim is gisteren constructief verlopen. Er tekent zich een consensus af rond de opheffing van het bankgeheim.”

- A. verantwoordelijkheid
- B. gevoeligheid
- C. overeenstemming
- D. tevredenheid

### **Voorbeelditem 3: Alineaopbouw**

Lees de zinnen van een tekst. Ze staan niet in de juiste volgorde. Sleep ze naar hun juiste plaats. Twee zinnen staan al juist.

Titel: Hersenen verwerken 100,000 woorden per dag

A Zij zijn van mening dat er nieuwe hersencellen ontstaan wanneer er steeds meer informatie binnenkomt.

B Dat is maar liefst 34 gigabytes per dag, hetgeen overeenkomt met een vijfde van de opslagcapaciteit van een computer.

C Die toevloed van informatie zorgt er volgens veel wetenschappers voor dat onze hersenen overbelast worden.

D Dat aantal vinden we in de resultaten van een nieuw onderzoek terug.

E Daardoor zou zelfs de structuur van de hersenen veranderen. Dat alles kan tot concentratieproblemen leiden.

1 Gemiddeld hoort of leest een volwassene 100.500 woorden per dag.

2 ...

3 ...

4 ...

5 ...

6 ...

7 Al zien sommigen de structuurveranderingen wel als iets positiefs.

# Third language acquisition and its consequences for foreign language didactics: the case of Italian in Flanders

*G. Izzo, I. Cenni, & J. De Smet*

## Abstract

The present study examines crosslinguistic influence (CLI) from L1 and L2s in two groups of multilingual learners of L3 Italian. The two groups share their L1, which is Dutch, and an elementary proficiency in French and German, but they differ regarding other L2s: one group has high proficiency in English and Spanish, while the other group has low intermediate proficiency in English and no knowledge of Spanish. Earlier research has shown that typological proximity and proficiency level are the most important factors explaining the source of CLI, together with the L2 status factor. The results of our study confirm that learners with the same L1 can behave in a substantially divergent way, when learning an L3, if their linguistic background is different. This is especially true when typologically close L2s in which learners have a high proficiency level, such as Spanish in the present study, are involved. In this paper we will discuss the outcomes of our experiment and highlight didactic consequences.

## Introduction

In recent years, an exponential increase in interest towards the concept of multilingualism has been witnessed. Multilingualism can be defined as “the presence of more than two languages either in individuals or in society” (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015, p. 2), and it undoubtedly represents a phenomenon which can be studied through different methodologies and in different disciplines.

In contemporary Europe multilingualism is becoming more and more desirable to promote and facilitate intercultural communication. Consequently, multilingualism is also seen as an essential tool not only to bring people from different backgrounds and cultures together, but also for individual (cultural) enrichment.

In this context, the role of foreign language teachers becomes particularly relevant, conveying knowledge and facilitating the learning process. At the same time, teachers face new enriching challenges, such as trying to integrate the multilingual competences of the individuals involved in their didactic projects, taking advantage of and exploiting to the maximum the intrinsic potentialities of multilingualism itself.

Teachers of Italian all over the world almost always encounter students that, when starting the process of learning Italian, already have some knowledge of at least another language (L2) beyond their mother tongue (L1).

This is true also in the teaching environment where the present study took place, namely Flanders. More specifically, we focused on students taking Italian courses in the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication of Ghent University. These students are inevitably multilingual, with Dutch as their mother tongue, while also having had the chance to get acquainted

with languages such as French (since the age of 6), English (since the age of 11), and German over the course of their primary and secondary education.

In some cases, in their linguistic repertoire we can also find Latin, and increasingly more often Spanish (a language studied both at school and as a heritage language). The advantages of such multilingualism are nowadays unquestionable, and it is widely accepted that multilinguals develop more specific abilities connected to language learning when compared to monolinguals and bilinguals (see Klein, 1995).

In this learning context, more and more questions arise concerning the role of the previous linguistic knowledge (and not only of the mother tongue) of an individual in his or her learning path of a foreign language. In the last 20 years, this passage has been marked, at least in the academic world, by the progressive development and autonomy reached by the (sub)field of Third Language Acquisition, henceforth TLA, with respect to the consolidate discipline of Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

Discussing in depth the terminological and theoretical questions related to the field goes beyond the scope of this contribution (for these aspects see Hammarberg, 2013), but it should be sufficient to remember that TLA is generally used to refer to a learner who has already acquired two or more languages, among which at least one foreign language (Hammarberg, 2013). The term ‘L3’ is thus used to indicate a language acquired after, at least, a second one (L2), which therefore highlights the existence of differences between L2 acquisition and L3 acquisition (Cenoz, 2013). Thus, as a matter of fact, an increasing number of authors underlines the necessity, both from a theoretical and practical point of view, to delimit the use of the SLA ‘label’, too anchored to a monolingual native speaker norm which is less and less observed in real life situations.

## Cross-linguistic Influence

One of the most studied topics in TLA is cross-linguistic influence, abbreviated to CLI. The term CLI was already in use in the 1980s, in an attempt to clarify the vast and sometimes obscure terminology of the field, and has been defined as follows: “the term ‘cross-linguistic influence’[...] is theory-neutral, allowing one to subsume under one heading such phenomena as ‘transfer’, ‘interference’, ‘avoidance’, ‘borrowing’ and L2-related aspects of language loss and thus permitting discussion of the similarities and differences between these phenomena” (Sharwood-Smith & Kellerman, 1986).

Until recently, CLI research traditionally focused on the influence exercised by the native language (L1) and on L2 learners’ linguistic behaviour (De Angelis, 2007, p. 132). In the past few decades, however, the concept of ‘multilingualism’ gained prominence, causing as such a change in perception on how the native tongue and, more importantly, other formerly acquired languages can mutually influence each other in language acquisition. An often-studied topic in this respect are the determining conditions for CLI. Combining the main factors mentioned by Williams and Hammarberg (1998), Bardel and Lindqvist (2007), De Angelis (2005; 2007), Letica and Mardešić (2007), we can summarise the following seven factors:

1. (psycho)typology (the actual or perceived distance between languages),
2. recency of use,
3. proficiency level (in both the source and recipient language),
4. L1/L2 status,
5. the duration of permanence and exposure to a setting where the FL is spoken,
6. order of acquisition,
7. the formality of the context.

On a theoretical level, there are three main models that try to capture the dynamics of crosslinguistic influence between background and recipient languages in the initial acquisition stages: the Cumulative Enhancement Model (CEM), the L2 Status Factor Model (L2SF), and the Typological Primacy Model (TPM). The CEM (see Flynn, Foley & Vinnitskaya, 2004) maintains that morpho-syntactic transfer can derive from either the L1 or L2, and that any prior language knowledge can have a positive or neutral influence on the recipient language. In other words, the CEM posits that transfer only occurs when it has a facilitative effect, whereas non-facilitative transfer is neutralised. According to the L2SF (see Bardel & Falk, 2007) the L2 status factor is stronger than the typology factor in L3 acquisition, and the L2 plays a significantly stronger role than the L1 in the initial stages of L3 morpho-syntactic acquisition due to the psychological and cognitive prominence of its structure (Bardel & Falk, 2007; Falk & Bardel, 2010). The L2SF model claims that in L3 acquisition, the L2 acts like a filter, making the L1 inaccessible for CLI. In the TPM (see Rothman 2011; Rothman, 2013; Rothman, 2015) the determining CLI factor shifts from ‘L2 status’ to ‘(psycho)typology’, and therefore Rothman claims that initial L3 development is constrained by the actual or perceived structural similarity between linguistic systems. The term ‘structural’ similarity specifically refers to linguistic properties that overlap cross-linguistically at the level of mental representation, whether at the lexical or grammatical levels.

## Research questions

As clearly emerges from the brief presentation of the theoretical background concerning the TLA research field, all three reference models assign an important role, at least in principle, to the entire linguistic repertoire of the multilingual learner when he or she is starting to learn a new foreign language.

The research questions that we want to explore are therefore the following ones:

- I. To what extent does the linguistic background of the learner determine his/her difficulties in the first phases of learning?
- II. Is the number of CLI quantitatively relevant or are we dealing with a negligible phenomenon?
- III. How does CLI evolve in time while the learning process is developing? What are the possible didactic consequences of these results?

## The study

The present study analyses a corpus of oral productions in Italian. The corpus has been examined through an error analysis approach, with the long-term aim of extracting tendencies concerning cases of CLI and using these observations to develop didactic paths and materials appropriate for this specific student’s target. Two groups of multilingual students, who are beginners of Italian with Dutch as their mother tongue, constitute the participants of this study. The first group is formed by 6 students, with a low proficiency in French and German, and a low intermediate proficiency in English (Group A). The second group (Group B) is formed by 5 students, with a low proficiency in French and German, but with a high proficiency in English and Spanish.

Table 1. Linguistic profile of the two groups of learners.

	Group A	Group B
Dutch	L1	
French	Low proficiency	
English	Low intermediate prof.	High proficiency
German	Low proficiency	
Spanish	No knowledge	High proficiency

As shown in Table 1, the main difference between the two groups is their proficiency in Spanish, which is advanced in Group B, while Group A has no knowledge of Spanish at all. At the same time, the two groups share their L1, which is Dutch, and an elementary proficiency in French and German. The order of the languages in Table 1 reflects the order in which they have been learned by the participants.

Each student was recorded during three conversations with native speakers of Italian at three different moments of their learning path: after a couple of weeks from the start of their study of Italian, therefore at an A1<sup>1</sup> level, then once they reached the A2 level, and finally when they reached level B1. Our general hypothesis is that CLI would be very frequent at the beginning of the learning process and then would progressively diminish with the students' increasing proficiency of Italian. We expect to observe CLI from Dutch L1 in both groups, because Dutch is the instruction language and is shared by the speakers. We believe that French L2 will be a source of CLI in both groups, because of the typological proximity with Italian (our target language) and because of its L2-status. We also presume that differences between the two groups will be found. For instance, in Group A we expect more interferences from French L2 than in Group B. At the same time, we assume a greater influence of Spanish in Group B, since learners belonging to this group have mastered Spanish at an advanced level and this language also shows a strong typological similarity with Italian. Moreover, we think that this stronger influence could restrict the possible interference of Dutch L1 and French L2.

## Results

Figure 1 shows the percentage of CLI on the total number of words produced by the learners of the two groups in the three different recording sessions: when the students are at their A1 level (T1), when they reach an A2 level (T2), and finally when they are at their B1 level (T3).

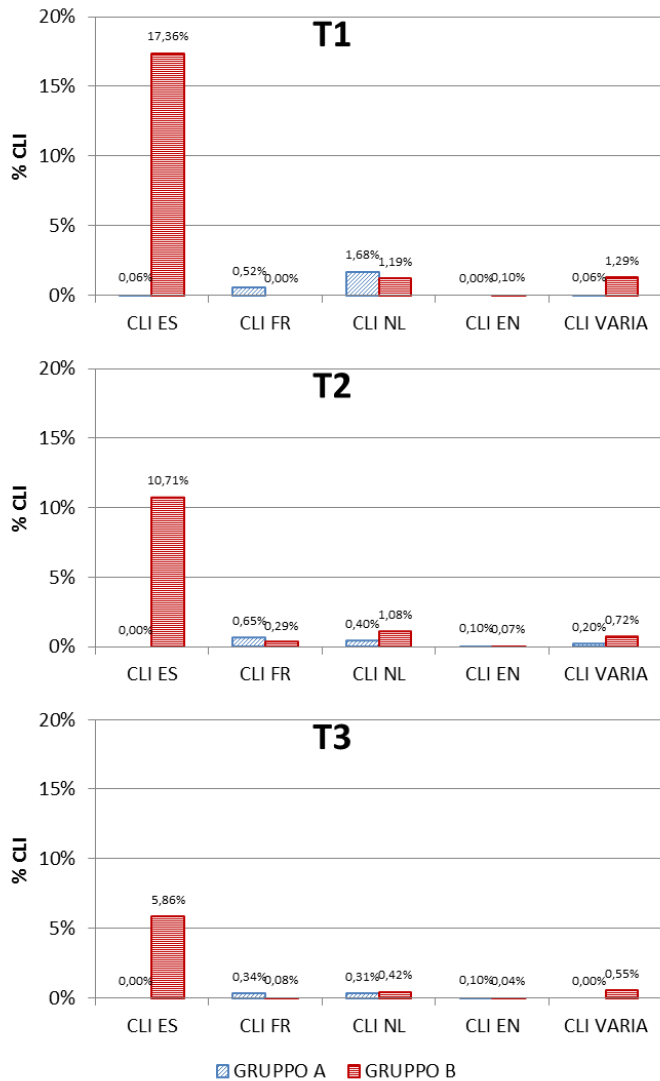
From a quantitative point of view we can observe that the knowledge of Spanish L2, even more so at an advanced level, constitutes the most determinant/distinctive element to distinguish the linguistic behaviour of the two groups. Group B, indeed, produces many more instances of CLI when compared to group A, and this is because of the interference from Spanish L2. Additionally, from the data it emerges how the interference of French L2, despite its typological proximity to Italian, appears relatively low in both groups. This seems to indicate that the learners do not have the possibility to retrieve French L2 because of their low proficiency in this language. Interestingly, CLI in English is present marginally in the collected data, independently of the learners' proficiency in English. The typological distance between Italian and English, and the presence of other Romance languages in the repertoire of the students which are nearer to Italian L3 appear to make the use of this language unnecessary. Instances of CLI in Dutch L1 are present in both groups, but in a rather limited number of occurrences.

<sup>1</sup> The proficiency levels are based on the Common European Framework of Reference



Within Group B we observed more instances of CLI from various source languages, probably because the learners belonging to this group, due to their higher expertise in different foreign languages, show a tendency to exploit their knowledge of various L2s, for instance by making use of the so-called “international words”, i.e., words that are similar in several languages, meaning that those words have been borrowed from a single source in many languages.

Since instances of CLI from German have not been retrieved in the data, this language has not been inserted in Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1.** Percentages of CLI in L3 Italian during the three recording moments (T1, T2, T3)

In the following sections we will discuss the results within a more qualitative approach, providing some examples extracted from the data.

## Group A

### CLI from French L2

In Group A, French L2 functioned in some cases as source language of interference, albeit less than what we could have expected, considering its typological similarity with Italian. In the data we observed the following cases of CLI from French L2:

- *CLI functioning as a language switch, without pragmatic purpose, of very frequent words which are known to the learner in the L3.*

1. Native speaker: È solo per questo?  
[Only because of this?]  
Learner: No *mais* non so perché  
[No but (French L2) I don't know why]
2. Native speaker: Vorresti fare qualcosa con le lingue?  
[Would you like to do something with languages?]  
Learner: *Oui... Sì*  
[Yes (French L2)]
3. Native speaker: Mi spieghi perché?  
[Can you explain me why?]  
Learner: *Il est...È partito dall'ospedale*  
[He's (French L2)... he left the hospital]

Cases (1), (2), and (3) are also representative of the types of words that are transferred: indeed, most of the times, it concerns highly frequent grammatical function words (such as conjunctions, certain adverbs, pronouns).

- *Instances of CLI functioning as attempts at formulation in L3, which are morphologically and/or phonetically adapted.*

4. Il ragazzo *tombe... tomba* nell'acqua  
[The boy falls (French L2, adapted) in the water]
5. Non penso che non sia così... *sì... agreabile*  
[I don't think that it's not so... yes... nice (French L2, adapted)]

In (4), the learner does not know, or does not remember, the verb 'cadere' (fall) in Italian and creates a form of the verb \**tombare* based on the French verb 'tomber'. In (5) the same happens with the French adjective 'agréable' (in Italian 'gradevole' or 'piacevole') modified in \**agreabile*

6. soprattutto... ehm... ehm le donne giovane che sone... *qui* sono laureate  
[especially young women who (French L2) are graduate]

The case exemplified in (6) is particularly frequent in our corpus: the word produced by the learner exists in Italian L3, where however it has other functions. Indeed, the French pronoun ‘qui’ shares various uses with the Italian homophone pronoun ‘chi’, but in this case in Italian the correct option would be ‘che’.

### **CLI from Dutch L1**

The use of Dutch, the L1 of all our participants, is relatively frequent, but when compared to French L2 its use seems to be principally a conscious one. In the data we observed the following cases of CLI from Dutch L1:

- *CLI functioning as language switches used to introduce a self-repair and interactive feedback signals.*

7. quando lavorano là devono... eh... devono anche eh... lavorare per anche... eh... *wacht hé...*  
devono anche fa- fare delle cose che non sono così buono b- buone buoni buone per per... eh...  
la loro famiglia  
[When they work there they must also work for... wait (Dutch L1)... they must also do things  
that are not so good for their family]

In (7), the learner uses one of the most frequent fillers present in the corpus, namely ‘wacht’ (‘wait’). Other fillers frequently used are ‘ja’ (‘yes’) and ‘nee’ (‘no’). Even though these fillers are quite recurrent in the early stages of learning, we would like to highlight that these elements tend to disappear soon from the students’ production during their learning process/path. As a matter of fact, already at a B1 level, students hardly ever use these fillers anymore.

- *CLI functioning as language switches which are used to elicit the Italian word from the interlocutor.*

8. Learner: gli agriturismi non... non hanno dei... *ja, vergunningen*  
[Agritourisms have no... yes (Dutch L1), permissions (Dutch L1)]  
Native speaker: Per...  
Learner: *permissioni*  
[permissions (French/English L2, adapted)]

Example (8) exemplifies the metalinguistic function of Dutch, which assumes the instrumental role of signalling a lexical gap to the interlocutor. It is interesting to note that when native speakers help the learners and pronounce the starting part of the needed word (per...), the learner answers without hesitation \**permissioni*, accessing one (or both) of its L2s (English and French *permission*) and adapting the word phonetically and grammatically to Italian. In Italian the correct word would be ‘permesso’, but the use of the L2 is immediate.

### **CLI from English and German L2**

The use of English, both regarding word construction attempts and with a metalinguistic function is very limited. No CLI from German has been detected.

We will now proceed to a discussion of the results concerning Group B.

## Group B

### CLI from French L2

Despite the typological similarity with Italian, French is highly inhibited by learners in Group B, who appear to use French very seldom. The only cases identified in the data concern high frequency words phonetically similar to Italian (such as the adversative conjunction ‘mais’, in Italian ‘ma’).

### CLI from Dutch L1

As observed in Group A, Dutch L1 is also used in a very conscious way in group B.

- *CLI functioning as language switches which are used to introduce self-repair and interactive feedback signals.*

9. No, dipende... dove... dove c'è... c'è molta... *ja*, gente

[No, it depends, from where there are many... yes (Dutch L1), people.]

We would like to underline, however, that this type of CLI has been observed in Group B much less frequently when compared to Group A, presumably because the subjects of group B are more expert language learners, having already reached a high proficiency in two L2s, and are thus able to control these types of insertions more.

- *CLI functioning as language switches which are used to elicit the Italian word from the interlocutor.*

10. Non conosco la parola ma... *Doornroosje*, la favola di *Doornroosje*

[I don't know the word but... Sleeping Beauty (Dutch L1), the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty (Dutch L1)]

Also in Group B, the learners' mother tongue is a language known by the interlocutor, and therefore it is used to ask for help during the conversation, signalling a lexical gap.

### CLI from Spanish L2

Among learners of Group B, Spanish undoubtedly assumes the role of ‘default supplier’ and intervenes in several and varied occasions. We observed the following cases of interference from Spanish L2:

- *CLI functioning as language switch, without pragmatic purpose, of words (and sometimes even forms) which are known to the learner in the L3.*

11. Sì, mi piace fare *cosas* con *mi* sorella *porque mi* fratello è... ha minori anni

[Yes, I like to do things (Spanish L2) with my (Spanish L2) sister because (Spanish L2) my (Spanish L2) brother is younger]

Example (11) highlights some of the typical cases of CLI in Group B, in which the students insert highly frequent Spanish words in an Italian sentence, such as possessive pronouns (‘mi’) or conjunctions (‘porque’). This strategy occurred especially in the first phases of learning. Furthermore, in the first

recordings we note the occurrence of transfer of inflectional forms from Spanish ('cos-as') not adapted to L3 Italian.

- *CLI functioning as attempts at formulation in L3, which are morphologically and/or phonologically adapted.*

12. puoi lavorare con *estudianti* y formare *estudianti*

[you can work with students (Spanish L2, adapted) and (Spanish L2) form students (Spanish L2, adapted)]

In example (12) we observe the presence of the word \**estudianti* twice, in which the plural of the Spanish word 'estudiante' is formed following the rules of plural formation in Italian.

- *CLI functioning as lexical transfer of function words.*

13. Ma Francesca staveva dormien-, dormendo in *tren* e Hans staveva, penso, *bebendo* in *altro* vagone

[But Francesca was sleeping in the train (Spanish L2) and Hans was, I think, drinking (Spanish L2, adapted) in another (Spanish L2, adapted) car]

In (13) we can observe similar examples to the ones presented above, namely Spanish words not adapted ('tren') or adapted, as the two gerunds, which are formed with the required suffix from Italian, through an autocorrection in the case of 'dormendo' and, despite the phonetic uncertainties, in \**bebendo* (in Italian 'bevendo' and 'bebiendo' in Spanish). In (13), however, there is an additional aspect which is worth paying attention to, namely the construction 'in altro vagone', which seems to mirror the Spanish expression ('en otro vagón'), while in Italian it would be 'in un altro vagone', and in Dutch 'op een andere wagon' one would have preferred to insert the indeterminate article.

- *CLI functioning as language switches which are used to elicit the Italian word from the interlocutor.*

14. Ho uno *broer*...*hermano*, no, y ha diciotto anno...anni

[I have a brother (Dutch L1)...brother (Spanish L2), no, and (Spanish L2) he's eighteen]

Cases as the one presented in (10), in which the learner asks the translation in Italian of a Dutch word are quite frequent in Group A, but rare in Group B, where Spanish also assumes the role of instrumental language to solicit the help of the interlocutor. In this sense, (14), in which the learner is looking for the word 'fratello' (brother), is quite illustrative. Despite its similarity with the Italian word, the French word 'frère' (brother) does not pop up in the search: the learner seems to at first manifest his gap by using the L1, then he tries with the Spanish word, but he is apparently aware of the fact that the Italian word is not etymologically related to the Spanish one. French, therefore, does not seem to be immediately available for a transfer, and Spanish is preferred.

15. *Mi*... mio fratello, sì, ha trentadue anni, *es*... è il... *mayor, ja, de oudste* y è *casato* con... no, ha due *kinderen*... bambini

[My (Spanish L2)... my brother, yes, he is thirty-two, he is (Spanish L2)... he is the... older one (Spanish L2), yes (Dutch L1), the older one (Dutch L1) and (Spanish L2) he is married (Spanish L2, adapted) with... no, he has two kids (Dutch L1)... kids]

Sometimes, as it clearly emerges in (15), in order to convey the message in an efficient way and at the same time stimulate support from their interlocutor, the learners show a continuous and parallel use of both Dutch L1 and Spanish L2. In (15) it almost feels as if we are able to witness the ‘journey’ of the linguistic information, which has to go through various ‘filters’, first the L1 and the L2 of reference, before reaching the desired ‘finish line’, namely Italian L3.

### **CLI from English and German L2**

The use of English, both regarding word construction attempts and with a metalinguistic function, is very limited. No CLI from German has been detected.

## **Conclusions**

The differences that emerged between the two groups of students, both consisting of native speakers of Dutch, confirm that their different L2 repertoire partly determines the type of mistakes and difficulties they face, but also the opportunities/advantages they encounter.

Quantitatively, the observed CLI is not negligible. In the first phase, the interference of L2 Spanish on L3 Italian of Group B in particular assumes a relevant role. Learners of group B draw from their Spanish L2 as much as possible, i.e., the typologically closest L2 in their inventory, producing some mistakes but at the same time obtaining great advantages, especially from a communicative point of view. The fact that in Group B Spanish L2 assumes a very similar role to Dutch L1 for the learners of group A seems to confirm the results presented in Lindqvist and Bardel (2013), which underlined how a high-proficiency L2 may be activated for both code-switches and word construction attempts if it is similar enough to the target language.

At the same time, the idea according to which unconscious CLI is determined by typological (structural) proximity also seems to be confirmed. As predicted by Rothman (2013; 2015), complete or holistic transfer takes place in the initial stages after the learner has determined which of the two (or more) languages is likely to be typologically (actual similarity) or psychotypologically (perceived similarity) closer to the target L3 (Rothman, 2015).

In the present case study, the predominant role of Spanish L2 seems to promote the inhibition of CLI in French. There are two possible explanations for this linguistic behaviour. Firstly, Spanish L2 seems to be perceived as more similar to Italian L3 when compared to French L2. Secondly, in Group B, Spanish enjoys various advantages: it is phonetically closer to Italian, it is better mastered by this group of learners, it is used more often by learners in their daily (academic) life (recency of use), and it is the last language learned (order of acquisition). All these factors appear to promote the use of Spanish L2 as primary source of transfer, even when French L2 could be an equally valuable source.

As concerns the development of CLI in time, our results confirm the outcomes of previous studies (Bardel, 2015; Falk & Bardel, 2010; Leung, 2006; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998): an increase in the L3 proficiency brings to a constant decrease of CLI.

In conclusion, the results of the present study contain valuable implications concerning the teaching of a foreign language to multilinguals. It is indeed evident that learners who share the same L1 can linguistically behave in a very different way if their L2s are different, if they have a different proficiency in their L2s, and even if their L2s were learned in a different chronological order. Furthermore, in various cases, the study confirms that it is not possible to examine CLI presuming that all instances of CLI stem from a single source language, but it is necessary to account for all available sources, “whether used or unused by the learner” (De Angelis, 2007, p. 136).

Another notable CLI aspect that emerged in our experiment is that not only can lexical items be transferred from an L2 to an L3, but grammatical structures can be transferred too.

A better understanding of the nature of multi-competence and on the conditions influencing CLI phenomena is necessary for foreign language teachers and language textbook writers. In our opinion, this does not mean that (foreign) language teachers should know all the languages known by their students, but we believe that it could be highly advisable to facilitate positive transfer and raise awareness of negative transfer through cross-linguistic comparison (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008).

“One of the most difficult aims of future work on language teacher education will be to make sure that all language teachers are experts on multilingualism, even if they teach only one language.” (Jessner, 2008, p. 45). Indeed, a language teacher should actively promote the development of metalinguistic awareness and metacognitive skills in her/his classes, in an effort to stimulate learning strategies that allow the learners to transfer the knowledge already acquired in other languages.

As a matter of fact there are various factors that make multilinguals better language learners than monolinguals, with regard to learning strategies, metalinguistic awareness, and communicative ability. Therefore, a foreign language teacher should be ready to make use and take advantage of all the linguistic repertoire of the learners, elaborating activities and didactic materials which keep into account their previous linguistic notions. Cross-linguistic comparisons should not be limited to the L1, but can be fruitfully extended to the L2(s) of the learners.

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# To Translate or not to Translate: The Added Value of Translation in Second Language Teaching<sup>1</sup>

*S. Lindenburg*

## Abstract

This thesis investigates the ongoing debate about the role of translation in second language teaching. In the past, scholars and teachers alike assumed that translation caused L1 interference, and therefore slows down and limits a learner's progress in learning a second or foreign language. More recent research, however, has attempted to counter common conceptions regarding translation's ineffectiveness as a language-learning and language-teaching tool. The recently developed task-based instruction, as described by Hummel (2014) and Norris (2011), aims at contextualized tasks instead of isolated exercises, which also include translation tasks. In a pilot study I investigated the value of translation tasks when Dutch secondary school students are learning the present perfect in English. Overall, the study showed that using translation tasks enhances the use and understanding of grammatical aspect (i.e. the present perfect), and although there appeared to be a discrepancy between HAVO and VWO scores, both translation groups improved in their use of the present perfect and its context as the study progressed.

**Keywords:** Task-based instruction, translation, present perfect, interference

## Introduction

Translation and translation exercises started to vanish from the secondary school curriculum around the 1900s after the emergence of methods other than the grammar-translation method. Many different methods and approaches have been devised regarding effective second language acquisition, out of which translation has only been incorporated in a few of them. Many methods and approaches label translation exercises as too unilateral and resulting in faulty acquisition, as these exercises only focus on the written form of the language while neglecting other aspects such as listening and speaking (Hummel, 2014). However, during the 1970s and 1980s, the communicative approach and task-based instruction were devised. These types of teaching claim that communication should be seen as both the goal of learning a language as well as the means (Marqués-Aguado & Solís-Becerra, 2013).

Although the idea of communication as the basis for language learning seems effective, it lacks sufficient research and a clear-cut methodology, which has resulted in an abundance of different variations used in secondary schools (Hummel, 2014). Task-based instruction is one variation of the

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. A.G. Dorst, for giving me the idea to combine the fields of Translation Studies and Second Language Acquisition, and especially for helping me finalize it right before the deadline. I wouldn't have been able to set up this project without you.

communicative approach which has, in fact, devised a methodology, and therefore provides teachers with solid guidelines for communicative tasks, as described by Skehan (1998):

1. Meaning is primary,
2. There is some communication problem to solve,
3. There is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities,
4. Task completion has some priority,
5. The assessment of the task is in terms of outcome, (p. 95)

Task-based instruction uses language ‘tasks’ which differ from ‘exercises’. Tasks are not isolated but are instead based on communication and context (Norris, 2011), which means that they “go beyond what is purely linguistic, and involve social action and pragmatic goals” (Hummel, 2014, p. 117). Recent research into task-based instruction has shown the value of these tasks. Examples of such research are Samuda and Bygate (2008), who looked at different types of tasks to see which contribute to and which detract from successfully completing a task, and Poupore (2013), who examined students’ motivation for tasks and how complex these tasks could be without producing a negative impact on students’ motivation.

Translation is a communicative task as well, and it also adheres to the five guidelines described above. The traditional arguments against translation are based on translation as used in the grammar-translation method, in which translation is the framework for language learning instead of a single exercise (Hummel, 2014). When translation is used in such a manner, it has indeed proven to be too unilateral, artificial, and decontextualized (Al-Amri & Adbul-Raof, 2014; Hummel, 2014). However, when implementing translation as a task targeted at a specific language feature, it can thus also be used to appropriately measure and improve a learner’s L2 proficiency. Recent research into translation has also shown its added value as it can be used to strengthen students’ vocabulary (Hayati & Mohammadi, 2009), as well as improve their usage of the L2 cohesion system, association patterns, and idiomatic expressions (Al-Amri & Adbul-Raof, 2014; Cordero, 1984). Translation is a cross-linguistic exercise which raises the awareness of certain similarities and differences between the first language and the second language, thereby improving their communicative competence (Marqués-Aguado & Solís-Becerra, 2013), and also helps to develop three essential language qualities: accuracy, clarity, and flexibility (Duff, 1989). Some scholars have even devised a model portraying the conceptual links between the learner’s L1 and L2, arguing that translation speeds up the process of mastering a second language (Kroll & Stewart, 1994; Potter, So, Eckardt, & Feldman, 1984). So, when used as a communicative task (by adhering to the five guidelines as described by Skehan (1998)) instead of a decontextualized exercise, translation proves to be an added value to language classes.

However, many language areas are still left untouched. One such area is the usefulness of translation when learning specific grammar rules. Although grammatical competence is often a by-product of other research projects (see Duff, 1989; Marqués-Aguado & Solís-Becerra, 2013), or looked at as a whole (see Pekkanli, 2012; Tsagari & Floros, 2013), no project has looked solely at using translation to teach a specific grammatical feature. I have implemented the findings of the abovementioned research in a pilot study in which I will address the gap by analysing the effectiveness of translation tasks when teaching the present perfect, a specific grammatical feature, to Dutch students of English in secondary school.

## Objectives of this study

This article will argue that translation tasks can be an added value to the learning of a specific grammatical feature, as they provide contextualized tasks for language learning rather than isolated exercises. The following two research questions will be addressed:

1. Is there any difference between using gap texts or translation tasks in terms of learning specific grammar rules, and more specifically the present perfect?
2. If so, which one (i.e. gap text or translation task) is more effective when learning specific grammar rules, and more specifically the present perfect?

As recent research has shown the effectiveness of translation exercises, I hypothesise that:

- I. Translation tasks are more effective than gap texts in terms of learning specific grammar rules, and more specifically the present perfect.

In doing so, this article aims to fill part of the existing research gap in this field by looking at the acquisition of grammar through translation tasks, and by providing a starting point for other studies which will look at the acquisition of grammar through translation tasks.

## Methodology

In this pilot study I incorporated existing research results and looked at a research area still left untouched: grammatical features. I decided to look at the English present perfect as this grammatical feature is notoriously difficult for Dutch students of English, and context is needed in order to use it. The example below illustrates the abstract rule for the present perfect:

A form of *to have + past participle* (e.g. “He has refused the offer.”)

As described by Voort (2009), the present perfect is used in two different situations:

1. The present perfect is used when we talk about the present effects of something that happened at an unspecified time in the past;
2. The present perfect is used to express that something began in the past and continues in the present. (pp. 58-59)

The present perfect proves to be difficult for many Dutch learners of English as the Dutch equivalent of the ‘present perfect’ can be used in a wider variety of contexts than the English version can (Voort, 2009). Sometimes the Dutch ‘present perfect’ is even used with a form of *to be* instead of *to have* (Voort, 2009). These differences make the present perfect a difficult aspect to master for Dutch learners of English.

## Participants

The participants of the pilot study were 76 Dutch secondary school students at a public school in Hellevoetsluis. They had been studying English as a second language, were around the ages of 14-15,

and all of them had studied English as a compulsory course for at least 2.5 years. They had three hours of English per week with a non-native instructor. The participants were divided over 4 classes, two of which were HAVO (= higher general secondary education) and two of which were VWO (= pre-university education), as shown below.

1. A HAVO class that made the gap texts (N = 19);
2. A HAVO class that made the translation tasks (N = 20);
3. A VWO class that made the gap texts (N = 19);
4. A VWO class that made the translation tasks (N = 18).

## Materials

The following instruments were used in this pilot study:

1. *An online survey, used to establish the learners' background knowledge of English (see Appendix A);*
2. *An error-analysis test, used as both a pre-test and a post-test to determine the learners' knowledge of the present perfect (Ellis, 2005; Voort, 2009) (see Appendix B);*
3. *BBC News articles, used as the basis for both the gap texts and for the translation tasks (see Appendix C);*
4. *Gap texts adapted from BBC news articles, used in group 1 and 3 (see Appendix D);*
5. *Translation tasks adapted from BBC news articles, used in group 2 and 4 (see Appendix E).*

## Procedures

In order to control the students' background knowledge of English, they had to fill in a survey. This survey consisted of questions with regards to the students' exposure to the English language to establish their eligibility for this study, as much exposure could result in incomparable participants. The survey results showed no large differences in exposure between participants.

Additionally, in order to determine the students' knowledge of the present perfect, an error-analysis test was used. The error-analysis test was adapted from *Core Grammar for Higher Education* by Piet van der Voort (2009) and provided a way to measure students' grammatical knowledge (R. Ellis, 2005). Students were required to analyse five sentences in total in terms of their correct usage or avoidance of the present perfect. They were required to state whether they deemed the sentence to be correct or incorrect; if they deemed it incorrect, they were also required to explain why they deemed the sentence incorrect and indicate what a corrected version of the sentence would look like. This pre-test was intended to measure the students' knowledge of the present perfect and its uses before the study.

Group 1 and group 3 both participated in three different gap texts divided over three lessons. All three texts were based on news articles from [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk), as students are expected to be familiar with both the subject matter and the language use (Cordero, 1984). These news articles were slightly adapted to contain verbs mostly in the past simple and in the present perfect. The verbs were then deleted from the text and put in brackets so that students had to decide what tense the verb in brackets had to be in.

The participants of groups 2 and 4 took part in three translation tasks divided over three lessons. The tasks were Dutch translations from the adapted news articles also used for groups 1 and 3, so that students would be familiar with the subject matter and the language use (Cordero, 1984), and to be able to accurately compare results between the two different tests. As translating a text will take longer than

completing sentences, the translation groups were given only one paragraph of the text, whereas groups 1 and 3 were provided with two or three paragraphs. The translation students were also provided with a word list containing the most difficult words. The direction into which students had to translate was from their L1 into their L2, as research has shown that translating from one's L1 into one's L2 puts emphasis on the different linguistic, contextual and cultural norms between the two languages, which means students will be forced to look at contexts specific to the present perfect (Al-Amri & Abdul-Raof, 2014; Collins, 2007; Cordero, 1984; Els, Bongaerts, Extra, Os, & Jansen-van Dieten, 1984).

After completing all three texts, all of the participants were again required to perform an error-analysis test. This post-test consisted of the same five sentences used in the pre-test, and it was supposed to measure the students' knowledge after the study, and determine whether their knowledge of the present perfect and its context had improved.

## Problems

As this pilot study was conducted over a period of two weeks, some problems were expected to occur in terms of participation and logistics. Not all participants showed up for each component of the pilot study. In total, 12 participants, roughly divided over all of the four groups, were removed from the study, because they didn't participate in one or more components. As a result, a total of 76 participants were included in the analyses, instead of the original 88.

Besides 12 participants failing to show up for the post-test, another 52 participants failed to fill in the survey. While removing 12 participants from the study due to the lack of a pre-test or post-test is credible, removing yet another 52 participants due to the lack of a survey seemed unnecessary, as the groups had specifically been selected to include Dutch students with a low proficiency of English. The participants who did fill in the survey highlighted their assumed low proficiency as well. The survey results of 24 participants are therefore used to represent all 76 participants.

## Results

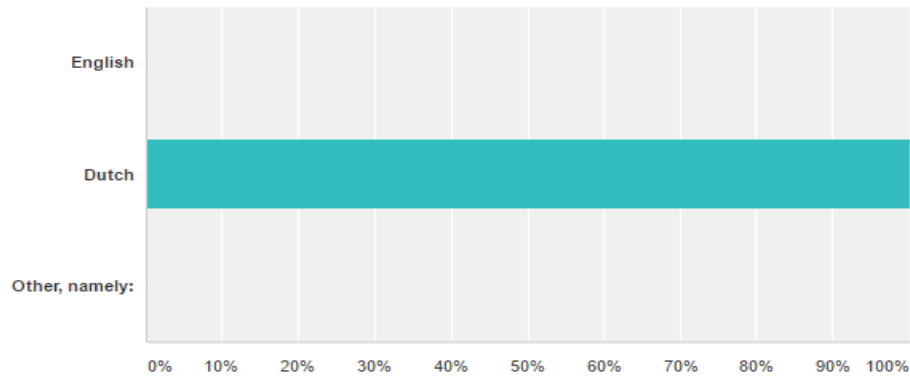
### Survey

The survey used for this pilot study consisted of ten questions in total, aimed at establishing the learners' background knowledge of English. This section will highlight two questions in particular as these illustrate that the participants' level of proficiency corresponds to the proficiency necessary for the pilot study. The results of 24 participants will be used to represent all participants as discussed previously.

Graph 1 shows that all 24 participants who filled in the survey speak only one language at home: Dutch. As these participants generally speak Dutch at home, it can be deduced that they are not exposed to native or near-native speakers of the English language in their home setting, therefore excluding the possibility of participants having a high level of proficiency due to English being the native language at home. This answer ties in well with the aim of choosing participants with a low level of proficiency for the pilot study as this would allow for the possibility of improvement, whereas participants with a high level of proficiency might not allow for this possibility.

### What language do you speak at home?

Beantwoord: 24 Overgeslagen: 0

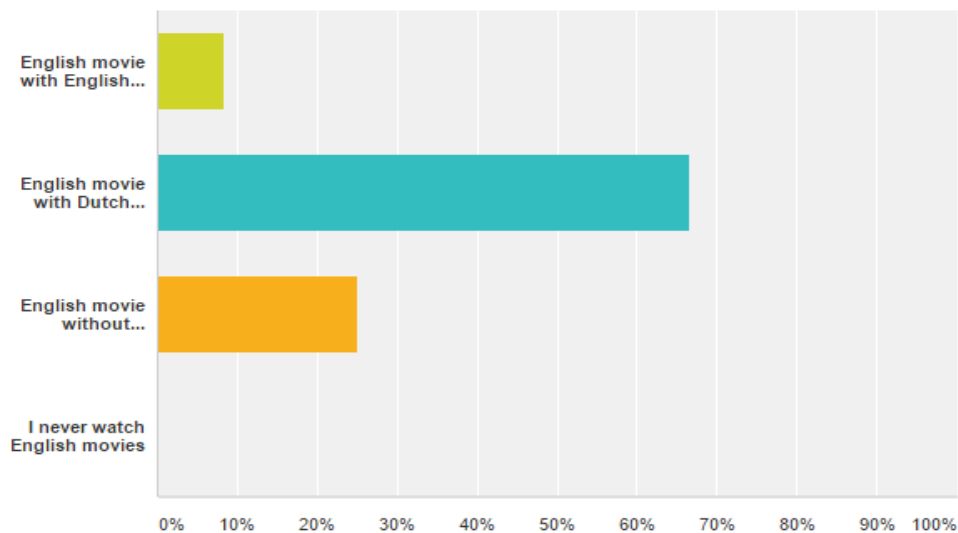


**GRAPH 1** Question 4: What language do you speak at home?

Graph 2 shows that all participants prefer to watch English-language films but that only 25% of the participants prefer English-language films without subtitles, whereas 75% of the participants prefer English-language films with subtitles. Most of the participants still need subtitles to fully understand English-speaking films, thereby again illustrating that their proficiency in English is rather low. Moreover, 66.7% of all participants used Dutch subtitles to fully understand an English-language film, and only 8.3% of all participants used English subtitles, thereby again illustrating the participants' low proficiency of English.

### When you watch English-language movies, what is your preference?

Beantwoord: 24 Overgeslagen: 0



**GRAPH 2** Question 8: When you watch English-language films, what is your preference?



## Pre-test and Post-test

In order to determine which group understood the present perfect best after the pilot study, pre-test and post-test percentages of the four groups were compared. In case of an incorrect sentence, full points were only given when a student could correctly produce a grammatically correct sentence in addition to noticing its ungrammaticality. If a student was only able to notice a sentence's ungrammaticality without producing the corrected version, they did not receive any points.

Tables 1 and 2 contain the percentages of respectively the pre-test and the post-test, categorized per school level, and sentence. A total score has also been calculated for each group to indicate their overall control of the present perfect. In addition, an average score has also been calculated for each sentence, to show its relative difficulty.

**TABLE 1** Percentages of the pre-test

	HAVO		VWO		Average score
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	
<i>Sentence one</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
<i>Sentence two</i>	59.1%	62.2%	94.7%	88.9%	<b>76.2%</b>
<i>Sentence three</i>	77.3%	82.6%	73.7%	66.7%	<b>75.1%</b>
<i>Sentence four</i>	18.1%	13.0%	47.4%	61.1%	<b>34.9%</b>
<i>Sentence five</i>	27.3%	30.4%	15.8%	38.9%	<b>28.1%</b>
<b>Average score</b>	<b>36.4%</b>	<b>37.6%</b>	<b>46.3%</b>	<b>51.1%</b>	

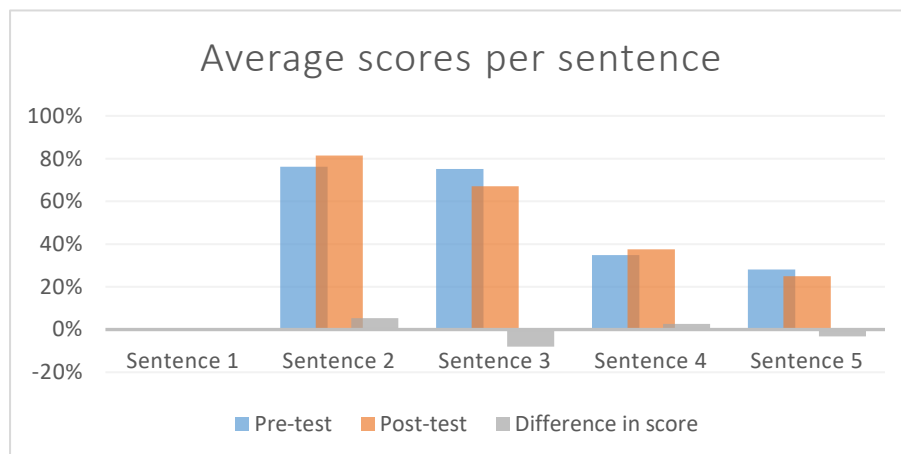
Table 1 highlights two peculiarities regarding the participants' understanding and use of the present perfect prior to the study: 1) the context in sentence one proved too difficult for all participants, and 2) the VWO groups scored higher on average than the HAVO groups. While a difference between the educational levels can already be established, all four groups still make ample mistakes when it comes to the present perfect, with only one group scoring slightly above 50%.

Table 2 illustrates the participants' understanding and use of the present perfect after the study. According to the table, the same peculiarities can be seen: 1) the context in sentence one still proved too difficult for all groups, and 2) the VWO groups again scored higher on average than the HAVO groups. Although a difference between educational levels can still be seen, the average scores differ significantly from before. Group 2 scored almost as high as the VWO groups, thereby somewhat closing the gap between educational levels. Group 1 scored significantly lower than the other groups, and group 4 seemed to score evenly with groups 2 and 3, instead of higher. None of the groups, however, were able to score above 50% in the post-test.

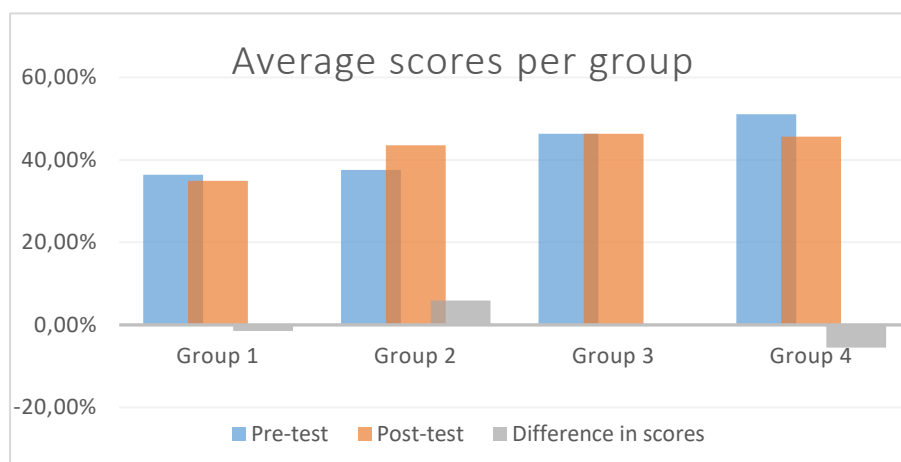
**TABLE 2** Percentages of the post-test

	HAVO		VWO		Average score
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	
<i>Sentence one</i>	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
<i>Sentence two</i>	86.4%	82.6%	73.7%	83.3%	<b>81.5%</b>
<i>Sentence three</i>	54.5%	73.9%	84.2%	55.6%	<b>67.1%</b>
<i>Sentence four</i>	18.2%	34.8%	47.4%	50.0%	<b>37.6%</b>
<i>Sentence five</i>	18.2%	26.1%	26.3%	38.9%	<b>24.9%</b>
<b>Average score</b>	<b>34.9%</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>46.3%</b>	<b>45.6%</b>	

Graphs 3 and 4 illustrate a comparison of the pre-test and post-test, indicating the difference in scores, as well as the groups progression or regression after conducting the study. Graph 3 shows one peculiarity when comparing the pre-test and post-test scores per sentence: It does not seem as if there was any real progression after the study, as the participants performed better on sentences 2 and 4, while performing worse on sentences 3 and 5. No real difference in the participants' understanding of the present perfect can therefore be deduced from only looking at sentence scores. Graph 4, on the other hand, illustrates more specifically the groups' progression and regression after conducting the pilot study. Group 2 scored significantly higher during the post-test, as hypothesized, whereas group 4 scored significantly lower, showing the direct opposite of what research has shown so far.



**GRAPH 3** Average pre-test and post-test scores per sentence



**GRAPH 4** Average pre-test and post-test scores per group.

## Gap Texts and Translation tasks

I also looked at the gap texts and translation tasks themselves, as those results might more accurately explain the pre-test and the post-test, as well as the participants' understanding and use of the present perfect. Both incorrect and correct uses of verbs can explain a student's control of the present perfect and whether they improved or not.

Tables 3 and 4 show how the participants scored per gap text or translation task. Spelling mistakes and mistakes with regards to irregular verbs are ignored, as this pilot study focusses on the

understanding and the use of the present perfect and not on how words are spelled or how well participants memorized irregular verbs.

Table 3 highlights two peculiarities regarding the participants' understanding and use of the present perfect throughout the study: 1) the VWO group scored higher on average than the HAVO group, as expected from their pre-test scores, and 2) while the VWO group started to perform slightly better throughout the study, the HAVO group did not.

**TABLE 3** Average scores per gap text

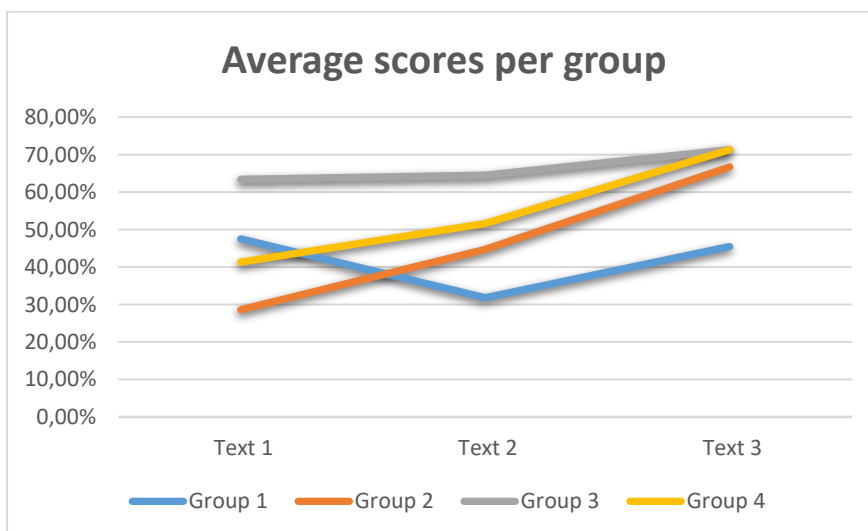
	<b>HAVO</b>	<b>VWO</b>	
	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<b>Average score</b>
<i>Gap text one</i>	47.5%	63.4%	<b>55.5%</b>
<i>Gap text two</i>	31.8%	64.5%	<b>48.2%</b>
<i>Gap text three</i>	45.5%	71.3%	<b>58.4%</b>
<b>Average score</b>	<b>41.6%</b>	<b>66.4%</b>	

Table 4 shows that both translation groups started to perform better throughout the study. The VWO group started out with a higher percentage than the HAVO group, as expected from the pre-test, but they ended up with quite similar scores towards the end of the study, indicating their improved control over the use of the present perfect and its contexts.

**TABLE 4** Average scores per translation tasks

	<b>HAVO</b>	<b>VWO</b>	
	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 4</i>	<b>Average score</b>
<i>Translation task one</i>	28.6%	41.3%	<b>35.0%</b>
<i>Translation task two</i>	44.7%	51.6%	<b>48.2%</b>
<i>Translation task three</i>	66.7%	71.3%	<b>69.0%</b>
<b>Average score</b>	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>54.7%</b>	

Graph 5 shows a visual of the groups' scores per gap text or translation task, thereby summarizing (non-)progression of each group.



**GRAPH 5** Average gap text or translation task scores per group

## Discussion

Based on the results as outlined, the pilot study showed that the translation groups were able to use the present perfect correctly more often than the non-translation groups were. While the post-test shows that group 2 outperforms group 1 significantly, thus confirming the hypothesis, the opposite appears to be true for group 3 and 4. Group 4 performed worse after the pilot study, scoring almost identical to group 3. An analysis of the post-test and tasks, however, shows why group 4 only appears to perform worse after the pilot study. This section will therefore discuss the most commonly found errors in the pre-test and post-test, as well as peculiarities found in the gap texts and translation tasks in order to explain these seemingly contradictory results.

### Pre-test and post-test

The most commonly found mistakes in the pre-test and post-test can be categorised under six labels:

1. Judging the sentence incorrect without providing a correct version;
2. Rewriting whole sentences;
3. 'Since' + present perfect is correct, no matter which verb is in the present perfect;
4. Well-trained on spotting signal words belonging to the past simple;
5. 'Have' being both the main and the auxiliary verb;
6. Focusing on an aspect other than the verb.

First of all, many participants judged a sentence to be incorrect without providing a correct version. This error mainly occurred with sentence 1, which appeared incredibly difficult according to the results. The students were able to intuitively judge that a sentence did not make much sense, but were unable to lay their finger on what the incorrectness was. Rewriting whole sentences also ties in with this explanation. Students probably 'felt' that the sentence was wrong, without precisely knowing which element was incorrect, and so they simply rewrote the entire sentence, creating a different yet grammatically correct sentence. These two types of mistakes strongly illustrate the students' lack of knowledge concerning the present perfect and its context.

A third commonly made mistake also occurs most often in sentence 1. The sentence itself consists of a signal word 'since' and two verbs, out of which only one is in the present perfect. Many participants deemed the sentence to be correct as the sentence consisted of both a marker for the present perfect and a verb in the present perfect. They were, however, unable to discern that the wrong verb was put in the present perfect.

Moreover, what can be filtered from both tests is that the participants are trained quite well in spotting signal words belonging to the past simple, and therefore also to the context belonging to the past simple. Students were able to spot time adverbials quite easily. However, they often denoted random time adverbials to also indicate a past simple, even when the sentence also contained a signal word denoting a present perfect (e.g. 'for five years now'). This overgeneralization resulted in a loss of points, especially on sentences 4 and 5, therefore showing yet again their lacking competence when it comes to the present perfect and its context.

Furthermore, sentence 4 contained the main verb 'to have,' which apparently tricked many students into believing the sentence already contained a present perfect, even though an auxiliary 'to have' is also needed to create a present perfect. This error also quite effectively shows the participants' lack of competence with regards to the present perfect and its context.

Participants also seemed to focus on the positioning of signal words instead of focussing on the grammatical features of the verb. Some moved the signal words between the auxiliary and main verb (e.g. ‘Have you already lived here long?’), creating an ungrammatical and rather Dutch-sounding sentence, and others moved it simply elsewhere (e.g. ‘Have you lived here already long?’). These participants did often notice the correct use of the present perfect, illustrating their knowledge of the present perfect and when it should be used, but then decided that something else must be wrong with the sentence. If we were to ignore all such mistakes, the average post-test scores of groups 1, 2 and 3 would improve slightly, while the average post-test scores of group 4 would improve significantly (i.e. 45.6% → 54.4%). In such a case, group 4 would have actually shown progression when comparing the pre-test and post-test, thereby removing the discrepancy between group 2 and 4, and proving my hypothesis for VWO as well.

## Gap Texts

While group 3 showed some progression over the course of the pilot study, group 1 actually performed worse on the second and third gap text. As gap texts are generally rather isolated exercises, they add little to a student’s communicative competence (N. Ellis, 2008). Moreover, this pilot study shows that gap texts barely improve a student’s knowledge of the communicative context of the present perfect, as group 1 performed worse during the post-test, while group 3 performed identically on both tests.

Some peculiarities found in gap texts made by group 1 and 3 were: 1) the complete avoidance of the present perfect, 2) using the present perfect form for all gaps, 3) producing forms unrelated to the exercise (e.g. the infinitive), and 4) producing non-existing forms. These peculiarities could be due to confusion on the students’ part, or their fear of using the present perfect, but it nonetheless illustrates their inability to produce and effectively use the present perfect in its context, greatly hindering their overall communicative competence. Context of course normally provides readers and listeners with a clear structure and can thereby clarify what is being conveyed. Even if the sentence contains an incorrect usage of the present perfect or misses a present perfect altogether, a more ambiguous context allows for more than one interpretation. Therefore, knowing how to make the present perfect is not enough to effectively use it in communication; only knowing the why and when can help learners improve their communicative competence.

## Translation tasks

Table 4 and graph 5 show that participants in group 2 and 4 showed progress in their use of the present perfect better throughout the study, progressively scoring better on each consecutive translation task. This shows that both groups improved significantly in their use of the present perfect when translating from Dutch to English, indicating a new awareness of the context in which the present perfect is used.

However, translations produced even during the third translation task lacked overall communicative competence with regards to language aspects other than grammar. While participants were able to produce the correct form of the verbs after some practice, other elements of the English language still proved quite difficult to them, such as: 1) English sentence structure, and 2) (subtle) differences in context between languages. Most produced translations included word-by-word translation, resulting in participants sticking close to Dutch sentence structures instead of creating English sentence structures. As for the second seemingly difficult element, the auxiliary verb ‘hebben’ (English: ‘to have’) can be used in a wide array of contexts in Dutch but it is quite restricted in English (Voort, 2009). However, participants were unable to notice these (subtle) differences, and translated ‘to have’ literally whenever it occurred in the source text.

Besides these two common mistakes, participants also frequently used Dutch words in their English target texts, left words blank in their translations, forgot to add punctuation and capitalization, and mistranslated words. The first three mistakes were not taken into consideration when producing the percentages, as these had barely any effect on the correct usage of the present perfect (as long as the verb was translated). However, mistranslated words did affect the results as sometimes students would mistranslate verbs, resulting in unreadable sentences. In such cases, near-translations ('has gotten' instead of 'has obtained') were deemed correct, whereas nonsense translations ('crawl' instead of 'search') were deemed incorrect. In addition, one participant even translated their text not as a whole but as separate sentences, portraying their low level of communicative competence and their decontextualized mind-set.

## Conclusion

The present study investigated the use of translation tasks on the acquisition of grammar, and more specifically the acquisition of the present perfect by Dutch students of English. Recent research into translation (Al-Amri & Abdul-Raof, 2014; Collins, 2007; Cordero, 1984; Duff, 1989; Hayati & Mohammadi, 2009; Marqués-Aguado & Solís-Becerra, 2013) and tasks (Poupore, 2013; Samuda & Bygate, 2008) suggested that translation tasks should have a greater effect on understanding the present perfect than regular gap-filling exercises would, because of the added effect of contextualization (N. Ellis, 2008; R. Ellis 2005), and the conceptual links between the learner's L1 and L2 (Kroll & Stewart, 1994; Potter et al., 1984).

The findings of this pilot study support that suggestion by providing important evidence demonstrating the added value of translation tasks when learning specific grammatical features. The non-translation groups 1 and 3 showed some understanding of the present perfect, but barely improved over the course of the pilot study, and showed no progression in their understanding of the present perfect and its context. Translation group 2 showed significant progression in their understanding and use of the present perfect and its context, both during the translation tasks and during the post-test. Translation group 4, on the other hand, did show significant progression in their understanding and use of the present perfect during the translation tasks, but appeared to score worse during the post-test. An analysis of their mistakes, however, shows that group 4 focussed mostly on elements other than the verb, often looking for some form of incorrectness, even if there was none. All in all, translation tasks seem to be an added value to second or foreign language learning when it comes to learning a specific grammatical feature such as the present perfect.

## Future Research

While most research has mainly investigated grammatical competence as a by-product, this study has shown the added value of translation tasks when learning grammatical features such as the present perfect. I believe it would be interesting to also investigate other grammatical features, as translation tasks force learners to contextualize the grammatical feature, rather than producing the abstract rule and creating an over-reliance on signal words. It would also be interesting to investigate the effects of translation tasks on skills other than a learner's writing skills. Other studies have already shown the effects of translation on cohesion, association patterns, structuring, and overall communicative competence (Al-Amri & Abdul-Raof & 2014; Cordero, 1984; Marqués-Aguado & Solís-Becerra, 2013), but this might not be limited only to writing skills.

Moreover, I noticed other elements of the English language that also proved difficult for the average learner, such as (subtle) differences in context, illustrating their low level of communicative

competence and their decontextualized mind-set. Further research into the effectiveness of translation could consider looking into ways of helping language learners master those elements as well. One possibility would be to integrate Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990; 1994; 2001) to draw extra attention to these elements, therefore leading to an improved noticing of that particular element.

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## Appendix A: Survey

Survey	Name:
1) What year are you in?	- VWO 3 - HAVO 3
2) Do you have any family members that are native speakers of English?	- Yes, namely: - No
3) What language do you speak at home?	- Dutch - English - Other, namely:
4) Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country?	- Yes, namely: - No
5) When did you start learning English at school?	- Primary school - 1HAVO/1VWO - 2HAVO/2VWO - 3HAVO/3VWO
6) How often do you watch an English-language film?	- I never watch English movies - Once a week - Two/three times a week - Four/five times a week - More than five times a week
7) When you watch English-language films, what is your preference?	- English movie with English subtitles - English movie with Dutch subtitles - English movie without any subtitles - I never watch English movies
8) How many hours a week do you play video games?	- I don't play video games - 1-2 hours a week - 3-4 hours a week - 4-6 hours a week - More than 6 hours a week
9) When you listen to music, what language do you prefer?	- Dutch - English - Other, namely

## Appendix B: Post-test & Pre-test

### Post-test & Pre-test

Error-analysis test. Are the following sentences correct? If not, correct the mistake and give the grammar rule.

1. Since they have met at school, they are friends.
2. He has died some years ago.
3. Have you lived here long already?
4. We have this dog for five years now.
5. He is dead for two years.

## Appendix C: BBC articles

### Clinton emails: FBI chief may have broken law, says top Democrat

*The Democratic leader in the US Senate says the head of the FBI may have broken the law by revealing the bureau was investigating emails possibly linked to Hillary Clinton.*

Harry Reid accused FBI director James Comey of violating an act which bars officials from influencing an election. News of the FBI inquiry comes less than two weeks before the US election. The bureau has meanwhile obtained a warrant to search a cache of emails belonging to a top Clinton aide.

Emails from Huma Abedin are believed to have been found on the laptop of her estranged husband, former congressman Anthony Weiner. There are reportedly 650,000 emails to search through on the laptop, making it unlikely investigators can give a verdict on them before election day.

Mr Reid also accused Mr Comey of withholding "explosive information about close ties between [Republican candidate] Donald Trump, his top advisers, and the Russian government".

"The public has a right to know about this information. I wrote to you months ago calling for this information to be released to the public," Mr Reid said. The FBI believes the emails might be "pertinent" to its previous inquiry into Mrs Clinton's use of a private server when she was secretary of state in the Obama administration.

The case was closed in July without any charges being brought against Mrs Clinton. Mr Weiner is subject to a separate investigation on suspicion of sending sexually explicit messages to an underage girl.

### WhatsApp warned over Facebook data share deal

*WhatsApp has been warned by European privacy watchdogs about sharing user data with parent company Facebook.*

The regulators said they had "serious concerns" about the changes made to WhatsApp's privacy policy, which made the sharing possible. In a letter to the messaging firm, they asked it to stop sharing data until it was clear that European privacy rules were not being broken. WhatsApp said it was working with data watchdogs to address their concerns.

In August this year, WhatsApp revealed that it would be sharing more information with Facebook, which bought the messaging app in early 2014 for \$19bn (£16bn). WhatsApp justified the change by saying this would mean suggestions about who people should connect with would be "more relevant". But many criticised its decision because of earlier pledges that WhatsApp had made to remain independent of Facebook.

The decision to share information prompted investigations by data protection bodies across Europe. Now, the Article 29 Working Party, the collective association of data watchdogs, said more work needed to be done to ensure regional rules governing privacy were not broken when information passed from one firm to another.

The Working Party said this work had to be done because the sharing involved processing data in ways that were not in the privacy policy operating when people signed up. The group called for data sharing to be halted while the terms of the deal were scrutinised. A WhatsApp spokeswoman said: "We've had constructive conversations, including before our update, and we remain committed to respecting applicable law."

### **Tesla shows off solar roof tiles**

*Roof tiles with built-in solar panels have been unveiled by Tesla chief executive Elon Musk.*

The tiles, made from glass, are intended to be a more attractive way to add solar panels to homes, compared with currently-used solar technology. The launch took place in Universal Studios, Los Angeles, on what used to be the set for the television show *Desperate Housewives*.

It comes with Tesla due to take over struggling energy firm Solar City. Some of the electric carmaker's investors have expressed concern over the takeover, suggesting it is a Tesla-funded bail-out of a company Mr Musk has a vested interest in as its biggest shareholder.

Bringing the solar tiles to the *Desperate Housewives* set was a way of displaying the idea's key selling point: it looks far better than solar panelling. Mr Musk jokingly described it as a "sweet roof!". No price was given for the tiles, which come in a variety of colours and styles, though Mr Musk did say it would be cheaper than fitting a traditional roof and then adding solar on top.

Also part of the launch was Powerwall 2, Tesla's home battery product. The primary function of the Powerwall is to store any surplus energy from the solar panels. It will cost \$5,500 (£4,511), Mr Musk said. Tesla posted a surprise profit in its last quarterly earnings - its first in three years. The \$2.6bn acquisition of Solar City seems set to see the company plunge back into the red, but Mr Musk insisted on Friday that the deal made sense as having separate companies would "slow things down". Tesla shareholders vote on the acquisition on 17 November.

## **Appendix D: Gap text exercises**

### **Exercise one**

#### **Brief for Gap Text**

Complete the sentence by putting the verb in brackets in the correct tense. You can choose between the Past Simple and the Present Perfect. Adverbials in brackets should be filled in correctly as well.

#### **Gap text**

*Clinton emails: FBI chief (1)... (to break / just) the law, says top Democrat*

The Democratic leader in the US Senate (2)... (to say) the head of the FBI (3)... (to break / just) the law by revealing that last night the bureau (4)... (to investigate) emails possibly linked to Hillary. Harry Reid (5)... (to accuse) FBI director James Comey of influencing the election. News of the FBI inquiry (6)... (to come) less than two weeks before the US elections. The bureau (7)... (to obtain / since) a warrant to search a cache of emails belonging to a top Clinton aide.

The FBI also (8)... (to claim) yesterday that they (9)... (to find) emails from Huma Abedin on the laptop of her estranged husband, former congressman Anthony Weiner. They also (10)... (to state) that they believe the emails "pertinent" to its previous inquiry into Mrs Clinton's use of a private server when she (11)... (to be) secretary of state in the Obama administration.

## Exercise two

### **Brief for gap text**

Complete the sentence by putting the verb in brackets in the correct tense. You can choose between the Past Simple and the Present Perfect. Adverbials in brackets should be filled in correctly as well.

### **Gap text**

*WhatsApp Warned over Facebook data share deal*

WhatsApp (1) ... (*to be*) warned by European privacy watchdogs about sharing user data with parent company Facebook. The regulators (2) ... (*to say*) they (3) ... (*to have*) "serious concerns" about the changes WhatsApp's (4) ... (*to make*) to their privacy policy, which (5) ... (*to make*) the sharing possible. In a letter to the messaging firm, they (6) ... (*to ask*) it to stop sharing data until it (7) ... (*to be*) clear that European privacy rules had not been broken.

In August this year, WhatsApp (8) ... (*to reveal*) that it would be sharing more information with Facebook, which (9) ... (*to buy*) the messaging app in early 2014 for \$19 billion. WhatsApp (10) ... (*to justify*) the change by saying this would mean suggestions about who people should connect with would be "more relevant". But many people (11) ... (*to criticise*) its decision since because of earlier pledges WhatsApp (12) ... (*to make*) to remain independent of Facebook.

## Exercise three

### **Brief for gap text**

Complete the sentence by putting the verb in brackets in the correct tense. You can choose between the Past Simple and the Present Perfect. Adverbials in brackets should be filled in correctly as well.

### **Gap text**

*Tesla (1) ... (to show off) solar tiles*

Tesla chief executive Elon Musk (2) ... (*to unveil / recently*) roof tiles with built-in solar panels. The launch (3) ... (*to take place*) in Universal Studios, Los Angeles, on what used to be the set for the television show *Desperate Housewives*. This (4) ... (*to be*) due to Tesla taking over the struggling energy firm Solar City in August. Some of the electric carmaker's investors (5) ... (*to express / just*) concern over the takeover, suggesting it (6) ... (*to be*) a Tesla-funded bail-out.

Bringing the solar tiles to the *Desperate Housewives* set (7) ... (*to be*) a way of displaying the idea's key selling point: it (8) ... (*to look*) far better than solar panelling. Mr Musk jokingly (9) ... (*to describe*) it as a "sweet roof!". No price (10) ... (*to be / yet*) given for the tiles, though Mr Musk (11) ... (*to say*) it would be cheaper than fitting a traditional roof and then adding solar on top.

## Appendix E: Translation tasks

### Exercise one

#### **Translation brief**

Nu.nl is op zoek naar vertalers Nederlands-Engels omdat ze het bereik van hun website willen vergroten. Het aantrekken van Engelse lezers is dan ook hun doel. Jij vindt dit wel een leuk idee en wil graag naar de baan solliciteren. Als test vertaal je de eerste alinea van één van hun nieuwsberichten en stuurt deze naar hen op.

### Translation text

*Clinton E-mails: Hoofd FBI heeft wet gebroken, zegt top-Democraat.*

De leider van de Democraten in de tweede kamer van de Verenigde Staten heeft in een verklaring gezegd dat het hoofd van de FBI de wet heeft gebroken door bekend te maken dat ze e-mails hebben onderzocht die mogelijk gelinkt zijn aan Hillary. Harry Reid heeft FBI directeur James Comey ervan beschuldigd de verkiezing te beïnvloeden. Nieuws van het FBI-onderzoek kwam minder dan twee weken voor de verkiezingen aan het licht. De FBI heeft sindsdien een machtiging gekregen om een berg e-mails van Clintons top-assistente te doorzoeken.

### Woordenlijst

<i>Dutch</i>	<i>English</i>
Hoofd FBI	FBI chief
Tweede kamer van de Verenigde Staten	US Senate
Verkiezingen	Elections
Machtiging	Warrant
Assistent	Aide

### Exercise two

#### Translation brief

Je werkt voor een ICT-bedrijf in Nederland dat veel met *social media* doet. Dit bericht over Whatsapp en het eventuele schenden van hun privacy beleid zou dan ook grote gevolgen kunnen hebben voor jouw bedrijf. De opdracht die jij van je baas hebt gekregen is om dit bericht naar het Engels te vertalen, om op jullie website te zetten. Hieronder staat de eerste alinea. Vertaal deze naar het Engels.

### Translation text

*WhatsApp gewaarschuwd over data-uitwisselingsdeal met Facebook*

WhatsApp is door Europese privacy-waakhonden gewaarschuwd over het uitwisselen van gebruikersgegevens met moederbedrijf Facebook. De wetgevers hebben verklaard dat ze “ernstige bedenkingen” hadden omtrent de veranderingen die WhatsApp aan hun privacy beleid had gemaakt, waardoor uitwisseling van data mogelijk werd. In een brief aan WhatsApp hebben ze de firma gevraagd te stoppen met de data-uitwisseling totdat het duidelijk was dat de Europese privacyregels niet waren geschonden.

### Woordenlijst

<i>Dutch</i>	<i>English</i>
Data-uitwisselingsdeal	Data share deal
Waakhonden	Watchdogs
Gebruikersgegevens	User data
Bedenkingen	Concerns
Omtrent	About
Privacybeleid	Privacy policy

### Exercise three

#### **Translation brief**

Je vader werkt voor een bedrijf in het oosten van het land dat zojuist de zonnepanelen van Tesla heeft opgekocht. Het bedrijf heeft een kort artikel geschreven over de lancering van dit nieuwe product en wat de voordelen en nadelen zijn. Jouw vader heeft de klus gekregen dit bericht naar het Engels te vertalen zodat ook de Engelse klanten van het bedrijf het nieuwsbericht kunnen lezen. Helaas is zijn Engels niet zo goed, dus vraagt hij of jij de tekst voor hem wil vertalen. Vertaal de eerste alinea van de tekst om te kijken of je genoeg van dit onderwerp af weet om je vader te kunnen helpen.

#### **Translation text**

*Tesla pronkt met zonnepanelen.*

Elon Musk, directievoorzitter van Tesla, heeft onlangs dakpannen met ingebouwde zonnepanelen onthuld. De lancering van dit innovatieve product vond plaats in *Universal Studios, Los Angeles*, op wat vroeger de set voor de televisieserie *Desperate Housewives* was. Dit kwam doordat Tesla het kwakkelende energiebedrijf Solar City in augustus had overgenomen. Een aantal investeerders van de producent van elektrische auto's heeft hun bedenkingen geuit over de overname, aangezien het een door Tesla gefinancierde reddingsactie suggereert.

#### **Woordenlijst**

<b><i>Dutch</i></b>	<b><i>English</i></b>
Pronken	To show off
Directievoorzitter	Chief executive
Zonnepanelen	Solar panels
Onthullen	To unveil
Kwakkelende	Struggling
Bedenkingen	Concern
Overname	Takeover
Door Tesla gefinancierde reddingsactie	Tesla-funded bail-out

# Second language identity

*B. Zhalehgooyan*

## Focus

The focus of this study is to review some existing explanations for the terms identity and second language acquisition (SLA) in the literature and then addressing the question of how identity could affect second language teaching.

## Identity

Zimmerman (as cited in Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998, p.90) identified three different kinds of identity in his talk:

**Situated identity:** explicitly used in a particular context of communication such as doctor versus patient or teacher versus student identity. When the speaker is situated in a formal context he might change his accent in such a way that he could be judged as an educated person. Thus, this kind of behaviour is conscious.

**Discourse identity:** participants position themselves to specific discourse roles in the moment by moment of the interaction such as indicator, listener, questioner and challenger.

**Transportable identity:** which is either explicit or implicit and can be used during the interaction for the particular reason. For example, during a lecture or a lesson a teacher might refer to the fact that she is also a mother of two or an avid science fiction fan.

McNamara, Hansen and Liu (as cited in Norton, 2013) defined the term identity as the attempt people make to understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is built across time and space, and how people see their possibilities for the future. Furthermore, Norton (1997) in his article agreed with West (1992) on that identity relates to tendency for recognition, the willingness to affiliation, and the desire for security and safety.

Stockton (2015) also stated in his study that the word ‘identity’ can be explained by the following terms: cultural, linguistic, ethnic, social, racial, gender, academic or literate, national, and class. However, if it was used without those qualifications it could be called ‘unspecified’.

Norton (1997) again in the case of target language demonstrates identity as a motivation either instrumental or integrative. Identity in the role of instrumental motivation illustrates the language learner’s willingness towards learning a second language for practical purposes, such as finding a job. However, identity as integrative motivation depicts their needs to learn a language in order to integrate successfully with the target language community and escape from being lonely. He also introduces the term investment to signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their desire to learn and practice it, but it is important to know the difference between the two terms; while motivation can be seen as a primarily psychological construct, investment is a sociological construct. Thus, in this way, he makes a meaningful connection between a learner’s desire and commitment to learn a language and their changing identities.

According to Giles and Coupland (as cited in Jenkins, 2000) there are two different views regarding identity: first, language learners either accommodate their speech to that of the interlocutor in order to both be liked and understood; second, language learners proclaim themselves members of



the interlocutors' communities. These views are also called nativeness principles, in which second language learners gain access to material resources, such as wealth, and symbolic ones, such as friendship, through convergence. The second view is called “Divergence phenomenon” in which the language learners try to distance their speech from that of the interlocutor in order to keep their own in-group identity intact and stay loyal to their speech communities.

## SLA (Second Language Acquisition)

According to Gass and Selinker's (2009) definition, “SLA is the study of how non-primary languages are learned. It is the acquisition of a language beyond the native language” (p. 1). An additional language is often called an L2, while an L1 represents a first language or a speaker's mother tongue. SLA researchers often try to address all the questions about how a learner makes a new language system in the L2, how well the new system is acquired, what influences L1 and L2 systems have on one another, whether all second language learners have the same patterns of acquisition, and much more. In fact, research about identity and second language acquisition began in the early 1970s, raised sharply in the 1990s, then continued to grow steadily, with a peak in 2008.

## Identity and SLA research findings

Norton (2001) created the term ‘imagined community’ and used it in SLA theory. He explained its relationship in this way: when students learn a language, they will think about their future, learners imagine who they might be and who their communities might be. Such imagined communities may even have a strong reality. Thus, this kind of view can have a great impact on their investment in learning a language. Students only invest when they see an opportunity for personal profit. Furthermore, Norton argued that if language teachers do not have a sufficient knowledge about learners' imagined communities and imagined identities they won't be able to create learning activities in which learners can invest.

Regarding imagined communities, Norton (2001) discusses two women, Katarina and Felicia, whose investment reduced only because of not participating in imagined communities. Katarina, who had been a teacher for 17 years in her home country, Poland, was offended when her English was not good enough to participate in a career-oriented computer class. She considered herself as part of a community of professionals, but when she couldn't gain that identity her investment in language learning was suppressed.

On the other hand, Felicia, a Peruvian immigrant, found her teacher humiliating her home culture so she never went back to class. Although the two women's conditions were different, they both experienced situations in which their imagined communities were not accepted, and as a result their investment suffered.

Stockton (2015) reported the story of how learning English for the female EFL learners in Japan acted as a confidence boosting experience. As one of the learners said: “When speaking Japanese, it takes a lot of courage to express my convictions or insist upon my beliefs, but in English I can do so with a sense of being equal to the person I am talking to.” (p. 27). Therefore, it can be inferred from this statement that the more successfully one can acquire a language the more confident and motivated one will be.

Any ESL classroom can be seen as a unique, complex, and dynamic social environment in which an individual brings their own unique identity to the class and shares it with other learners. Thus, through this classroom reflection and interaction, new cultural traditions, histories, and solidarities will be shaped which can increase their chances of having a better future. Here, the task of ESL teachers is

to identify that classroom relationships and interactions then, both consciously and unconsciously decide what kind of teaching activity is suitable for the new language learners. One key element in identity focused SLA is the idea that individual language learners must be considered according to the language learning context and their needs to communicate with other peers in the target language.

Norton (2006) suggested that “there are five common beliefs about identity, underlying most identity-focused SLA research” (p. 3):

1. Identity is dynamic and constantly changing across time and place,
2. Identity is “complex, contradictory and multifaceted”,
3. Language is both a product of and a tool for identity construction,
4. Identity can only be understood in the context of relationships and power,
5. Much identity-focused SLA research makes connections to classroom practice. (p. 3)

Norton and Toohey (2011) illustrate the case of Martina, an eastern European immigrant to Canada. Although, she was a highly educated person in her home country, she was only able to find a job in a restaurant and struggled with being called a ‘broom’. Instead, she shifted to having another social identity as a ‘mother’. This position enabled Martina to have a greater social access to target language (TL) relationships and communities, which is a major factor in second language learning. Furthermore, Norton and Toohey (2011) explained why women resisted speaking in certain situations. They found out that learners are characterized both by what they are and what they are not, if learners do not own an ‘image’ of themselves in a target community, they won’t invest in learning the target language. Therefore, it is necessary for language teachers to help the learners see themselves as a member of the target society.

Hence, language learning is not only acquiring a linguistic code but is also learning how to accept a role or take a position in a vast social context. According to Ogulnick (2000), language learning is “a process of fitting into one’s place in society, or rather, one’s imposed place” (p. 170). So, part of language learning must be devoted to the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. It can be defined as an ability to properly modify language according to communicative purposes, position of participants, location, discourse and other contextual factors.

In fact, people use language to “negotiate” their identities. Watkins-Goffman (2001) states that “every time we speak we are negotiating and renegotiating our identities” (p163). Language in this view, among the other options available to a speaker such as L1 or L2, dialect, register, style, intonation, or silence, becomes a tool for negotiating one’s identity.

Bourdieu (1977) also believes the value which is assigned to speech cannot be realized without the person who speaks, and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from his relationship to the social community. The ability to live and express an identity in second language relies on how much we attain the sociolinguistic competence. Having this ability motivates us to know the language and the target culture more, and facilitates the acquisition process.

Overall, from the past findings can be inferred that the best teaching method in an ESL classroom would be having a more student-centered class. Student-centered learning puts students' interests and needs first, acknowledging the student voice as central to the learning experience. In a student-centered class, students choose what they will learn, how they will learn, and how they will assess their own learning. Therefore, in this way, they will build their own sense of self and obtain more power to speak about their beliefs and represent their identity. They can contribute their ideas, feelings, and thoughts. Moreover, students can engage in critical thinking around identity issues and do not need to be limited to more surface-level language features like practicing some fixed and boring grammatical rules and repeating drills. In the end, the outcome of such a class would be having a number of more motivated students who are willing to invest in integrating into the target culture and language.

Steele and Vargas (2013) found that “in higher identity-safe classrooms, students had higher scores on standardized tests, wanted challenging work, felt a greater sense of belonging, and felt more positive about school compared to students from less identity-safe classrooms” (p. 7)

Having a student-centered class in which their diverse identities are safe could be considered as a good method to teach English. Below are some ideas about how to create trust, autonomy, belonging, and competence in a classroom:

### **1. Promoting Diversity as a Resource**

This idea uses student’s diversity as a tool to create an exciting curriculum, it also promotes a less stressful and friendly environment in classrooms. As an example, every session, the teacher can introduce parts of each student’s culture including different music, art, games, stories and movies, which inform other students and helps to build students’ diverse identities. Through follow up activities, students can learn new words and enhance their speaking skills by talking about cultural events and ceremonies in different countries.

### **2. Classroom Relationships**

One of the crucial elements for building students’ identity in classrooms is a positive relationship between students. If students treat one another kindly, fairly and respect each other’s diverse identities properly, a trust will be built among them. The availability, warmth, caring, and attentiveness of the teacher can accelerate student’s trust and relationship. It has been suggested that teachers combine humour and tendency with meaningful academic content, while checking nobody is making fun of their peers and everyone is learning from each other’s mistakes. Genuine warmth and friendliness go a long way towards creating a sense of belonging.

### **3. Caring Classroom Environments**

This idea tries to build a classroom in which students emotionally and physically feel secure and also pays attention to students’ social behaviour in the classroom. The emotional atmosphere of a classroom shows how comfortable and secure students feel. Attention to their prosocial development along with academic growth will support development in both areas. In order to have such a classroom, students need to practice some self-management skills, such as problem-solving and flexibility, because the teacher raises clear expectations and students should be able to manage themselves in a way that they don’t get confused. Some suggestions could be:

- Put every student's work on the wall, even if it's not perfect;
- Present posters which include other people who look like your students;
- Introduce exercises which incorporate social skills into academic moments;
- See the classroom from different students’ eyes. A teacher can do this by sitting in their seats to imagine how they feel in class.

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# The Use of Native-speaker Pronunciation Models

Dick Smakman

## Introduction

Native-speaker pronunciation models are part of the traditional approach in English language teaching in the Netherlands. There seems to be a widespread assumption that they are the right tool to use. At many teacher education institutions, students are taught pronunciation through these models, and in their subsequent job as teachers they pass on these skills. This system has worked for many decades and it still seems to be relatively common.

Times change, and the idea that the named models will be the right tool in the future is not as alive as it used to be. At several universities and teachers' colleges, pronunciation teaching on the basis of a model is no longer practiced. The new assumption seems to be that without such models, and without explicit pronunciation teaching, students do well anyway. There is some truth in that, because students nowadays are exposed to a plethora of intelligible and natural native and non-native English speech in their daily lives, and they are likely to be influenced by these. They naturally learn the many general principles that understandable English entails and develop their own ideas on style and accent. In a globalising and diversifying world, this new *laissez faire* approach seems to be working. The question, then, is what to do with this new reality when it comes to pronunciation teaching choices.

This article will first discuss the globalising paradigm through which pronunciation teaching may be viewed nowadays. It then lists a number of pros and cons of using native pronunciation models. It then asks the question which English pronunciation models to use and on which grounds. The situation in the Netherlands is the focus.

## Pronunciation teaching in the past and now

### The past

Some time in the 1930s, W. Rijkee wrote a booklet with tips and exercises for Dutch learners of English pronunciation (Rijkee, 1930s). The title of this booklet is *Engels in een maand*, "English in a month", and explicitly aims at self-study by lay learners. Pronunciation is one of the issues dealt with in this small-sized, 32-page booklet. Below are two sample sentences from this booklet:

- |    |              |                  |                 |                    |              |             |                 |                 |
|----|--------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 4. | <b>Thank</b> | <b>goodness,</b> | <b>there is</b> | <b>the</b>         | <b>coast</b> | <b>of</b>   | <b>England.</b> |                 |
|    | <i>senk</i>  | <i>goednes</i>   | <i>dzeer iz</i> | <i>dze</i>         | <i>koost</i> | <i>ov</i>   | <i>inglend</i>  |                 |
|    | Goddank,     |                  | daar is         | de                 | kust         | van         | Engeland        |                 |
| 5. | <b>The</b>   | <b>boat</b>      | <b>is</b>       | <b>stopping.</b>   | <b>We</b>    | <b>have</b> | <b>arrived</b>  | <b>at last.</b> |
|    | <i>dze</i>   | <i>boot</i>      | <i>iz</i>       | <i>stopping</i>    | <i>wie</i>   | <i>heev</i> | <i>erajvd'</i>  | <i>et laast</i> |
|    | De           | boot             | is              | stoppende (stopt). | We           | zijn        | aangekomen      | eindelijk       |

Several observations can be made here. First of all, the author did not use the International Phonetic Alphabet (which was available in the 1930s). Instead, the tips given take as a point of departure the way spelling represents Dutch sounds, and they build on the assumption that certain sounds in English are close enough to certain Dutch equivalents to be considered the same. If Dutch speakers followed the improvised pronunciation through spelling (the italicised sentences) and apply Dutch pronunciation rules, then in most cases relatively understandable English would come out, albeit with a very blatant Dutch accent. However, because the system of ‘translating’ English sounds into Dutch is highly irregular and intuitive, very confusing English sounds would come out every now and again in spoken sentences if this system is applied strictly. For instance, the ‘g’ in Dutch is a rasped fricative (most likely to be voiceless), not a voiced plosive (/g/). The replacement of English ‘th’ with a ‘d’ followed by a ‘z’ may also be confusing.

Despite the fact that a Dutch pronunciation of English is actively encouraged in the book, British English is taken to be the norm pronunciation (the Union Jack is on the cover of the book). The norm, therefore, is a Dutch way of pronouncing British English, not genuine-sounding native-like English. The English that would come out would probably be acceptable in the 1930s, but it would nowadays be considered less acceptable. In fact, it would probably be mocked.

## After World War II

The grown influence of the Anglophone world after the Second World War as well as the increasing international trade and communication led to a more explicit focus on British and American English. Rather than replacing English sounds with Dutch near-equivalents, efforts to actually sound like native speakers became more common and realistic after the Second World War. In the 1930s, recordings of native speakers were less easily accessible and discourse with native speakers was also less common. From the 1950s onwards, Dutch people became increasingly exposed to native English from the UK and the US. They were willing to mimic this speech, because they held these two countries, their liberators from the Nazis, in very high regard, and on top of that there were no realistic alternative pronunciation models widely available.

## Nowadays

It seems that nowadays, a new pronunciation era has arrived, which in a way resembles the one that was common in the 1930s. The appreciation of non-native accents seems to be on the rise, European and Asian ways of speaking this language are growing in number and status, and native speakers of some of these new languages now exist (Jenkins, 2009). More and more people are developing a mixture of native and non-native accents nowadays.

An issue facing us is the question what ‘native’ constitutes. There are many types of native Englishes, and imitating a native speaker means, first of all, deciding who to imitate. British and American English are the traditional native speaker models, and they are described very well. There are also other Englishes in the so-called Inner Circle (Kachru, 1985), namely Irish English and Australian English. All kinds of other Englishes exist that are also native, like South African English, Singaporean English, and Indian English. Another category of English that is of a more international kind, and which is the native language of many speakers, is the English that the offspring of expats speak as well as other people who used to live in different places during their formative years. The acceptability of less traditional ways to pronounce English seems to be growing, and it is safe to say that rejecting a native-speaker model explicitly is becoming less unmarked than before. The status of the UK and the US is nowadays also different than before, because of highly visible political and other developments, and

some say that they may have lost some of their glory. In other words, the native speaker norm may be blurring in various ways and speakers seem to be becoming more free than before to model their own pronunciation, based on the various options they hear through modern media and in day to day (often urban and/or professional) settings.

## The future

### **Arguments in favour of a native pronunciation model.**

One argument in favour of using a native-speaker model is that it facilitates teaching and learning. It enables future teachers of English to teach their students pronunciation. Also, although scholars may feel that native-speaker models are increasingly becoming obsolete, the current situation in Dutch schools is still that teachers who abide by models still have a high status. The average pupil and their parents will expect the teacher to sound like an Englishman, or perhaps an American. A teacher seems to have more authority if they have a convincing and unambiguous accent. Students, pupils, or anyone taking a course will want a pronunciation model and they don't want their teacher to tell them that anything goes just as long as they are understandable. It is generally frustrating for students who are learning English if there is no model.

There are also didactic and cognitive motivations. Delving into a specific model helps one gain a deeper insight into language variation and the concept of a language norm. Learning a model, moreover, is a highly relevant didactic exercise and experience. Future teachers need to know what it is like to learn pronunciation and become aware of cognitive restrictions and possibilities. Related to the previous point is a practical motivation. Having a native-speaker model makes it easier to teach or take a course in Phonetics. Knowing Dutch pronunciation and that of a major variety of English helps to talk about and think about the phonetics of English, as a contrastive approach can be applied (terms such as 'more open', 'semi-diphthongal', 'lengthened' and 'devoiced' are intrinsically contrastive). This is particularly true at universities

Another argument in favour of teaching a pronunciation model is the international status of speakers. Northern European academics and language teachers in particular often distinguish themselves internationally from others by sounding like native speakers. They have a high status providing they don't overdo it in their mannerisms but just sound English or American with no or a minor accent. A reason for Dutch institutions of higher education to embrace a native pronunciation model is that it is increasingly becoming a unique selling point. Not all English departments are still teaching it explicitly. Finally, a pronunciation model is teachable; there are no well-known books and other materials for international English yet when it comes to pronunciation, only descriptive books.

### **Which native model should one teach?**

If one decides to teach from a pronunciation model, then one basically has a choice between two major models; General American or Standard British English. Both models are written down in practice books and are widely taught. Huttenga (2017) found that amongst students of English there is a strong preference for British English, while Van der Haagen (1998) found a preference for British English amongst students at Dutch secondary schools, albeit much less strong. These pupils mostly preferred British English. They often also liked American English, but they were hesitant to view American English as their preferred model. This situation may have changed by now, but we are not sure. Edwards (2016) performed a survey amongst highly educated participants, including English-language experts. A majority (more than half) preferred British English as a model, while a small group preferred



American English. Strikingly, almost one in three of these experts reported that they did not aim for a specific model. Instead, they preferred a neutral accent.

British English is still the most common European standard. In Dutch schools. It is the most common norm amongst teachers, and schools hiring teachers will probably be looking for someone who sounds like a BBC newsreader. British English as a model is likely to be declining in popularity at schools, at the expense of more international-sounding English, but it is probably going to continue to be the official and unofficial norm in the coming years. American English would be an alternative, because it is probably more internationally acceptable and unmarked. In European schools, it is probably slightly marked amongst teachers but associated with a fast international lifestyle by pupils (Van der Haagen, 1998).

In practice, and covertly, the most internationally accepted way to speak is probably a native-sounding accent that is neither clearly British nor American. It sounds a little bit like the native tongue of the learner (so they have ‘an accent’). This model is also an unwritten model that no one refers to but many follow anyway. It is quite common for learners to indicate that they speak British or American English but sound neither British nor American in reality. Van der Haagen (1998), amongst others, qualified such a mixed accent as ‘Mid-Atlantic’.

### **Arguments against a native pronunciation model**

There are many reasons to object to teaching pronunciation on the basis of a native-speaker model. In general, pronunciation models are a sensitive issue. Students often struggle with them, and some are highly embarrassed imitating native speakers. Others are annoyed because they do not see the point if their English is already quite understandable. Even if one is able to imitate a native model successfully, one may personally object to doing so (Smakman, 2015). Teaching in accordance with a native-speaker norm is somewhat old-fashioned in today’s globalising world. Students may be aware of this obsolescence and struggle to do the exercises because of their hesitation. Imitating native speakers involves a type of unnatural and uncomfortable mimicking of individuals from other cultures; often it even involves a degree of idolisation. Those who take this very far will start to sound unnatural. Native speakers themselves may feel uncomfortable talking to someone who is trying to imitate them (but probably undershooting and overshooting the target regularly and generally being inconsistent).

Traditional teaching on the basis of a model goes against the principles of globalisation and superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Vertovec, 2007). There is nowadays a trend towards diversification and acceptance of mixed forms. Teaching a strict model undermines the acceptability of those mixed forms. A drawback of a native-speaker model is that it gives lower status to mixed, non-standard pronunciations of English. The word ‘native speaker’ traditionally refers to native speakers in the Inner Circle (UK, US, Australia, etc.), but, as explained above, there is a growing group of global nomads whose English is native but does not sound like a speaker from the Inner Circle. It is not realistic or reasonable to consider these accents less than perfect or ‘deviant’.

### **What to teach if one doesn’t use a native model?**

Besides the option of teaching British or American English, there is the possibility of teaching on the basis of understandability. This would mean making learners aware of certain principles that all major Englishes have in common. Knowing about and applying certain principles will help a learner’s understandability.

It is useful to teach aspects that the most important native models Englishes have in common. One could teach awareness on the variation in the production of post-vocalic ‘r’, for instance. The presence of this phoneme in this position constitutes an important difference amongst varieties of

English. Students need to choose whether they want their English to be rhotic or not; i.e. with or without ‘r’ at the end of syllables. This choice has strong cultural and identity consequences (Huttenga, 2017). Speaking with or without postvocalic ‘r’ strongly affects how speakers are viewed by their audience or interlocutor. Fortis/lenis distinctions, in addition, are shared by most internationally used Englishes, and explaining the system behind this can make learners’ English more understandable. Other possible components of a course about international English could include aspiration, vowel distinctions, vowel length, devoicing, rhythm, and intonation.

## Conclusion

So, what to teach? This may depend on the circumstances in which the learner is and what their professional goals and identity aspirations are. Learners who in their future job will not need a native-like pronunciation will benefit less from a native-speaker model than students who wish to become teachers of English. Knowing a native variety is useful for teachers, amongst others because at Dutch schools it is often still a requirement. Another option to consider is to view pronunciation teaching according to a model as an advanced type of pronunciation teaching. Students first need to learn to be understandable before they are ready to embark on polishing their pronunciation towards native standards. This means that becoming like a native speaker is referring to a high level of pronunciation.

Choosing whether to use a pronunciation model that benefits students most requires a consideration of several conditions. One needs to know what students themselves expect and want, what the teaching institution expects, what future employers expect (especially if these are schools). In addition, the teacher should have a clear and principled perspective of what they think is the right model or whether it is right to use a model, irrespective of what the ‘market’ wants and irrespective of all kinds of practical consideration.

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# Native and non-native listeners' evaluation of degrees of foreign accentedness in English: A literature review<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Communication in English increasingly involves non-native speakers. Such speakers can speak English with different degrees of non-native accentedness. In order to contribute to insights into the effects that these differences in accentedness can have on listeners, the current study systematically reviews experimental studies into the effects of degrees of foreign accentedness in English. It presents an overview of the L1s of the speakers, nationalities of the listeners, degrees of accent strength tested, dependent variables and outcomes in the studies reviewed. The trend that emerges from the studies included in the review indicates that stronger accents generally have more negative effects on understanding and attitudinal evaluations than weaker accents.

**Keywords:** foreign-accented English, accent strength, non-native speakers

## Introduction

With the growing numbers of non-native speakers of English worldwide (Crystal, 2003), interactions involving individuals whose English reflects characteristics of their own L1 backgrounds occur more frequently. Such individuals can have different degrees of accentedness in their English, depending on factors including the number of years of language teaching they have received (Moyer, 1999) and their aptitude for mimicry (Purcell & Suter, 1980); for an overview of such factors, see Gluszek, Newheiser, and Dovidio (2011). The question is what the effects are of such different degrees of non-native accentedness in English on the interlocutor and on the success of interactions involving non-native speakers of English, for instance in terms of impact on the listener's understanding and attitudes towards the speaker.

Research into the effects of degrees of non-native accentedness began as early as the 1970s, with a study of evaluations of Spanish-English bilingual speakers in the US (Ryan, Carranza, & Moffie, 1977). Since then, articles reporting experimental research have briefly summarized research in the area (e.g. Cargile & Giles, 1998, p. 341; Dragojevic, Giles, Beck, & Tatum, 2017, pp. 386-387; Hendriks, van Meurs, & Hogervorst, 2016, p. 3; Hendriks, van Meurs, & de Groot, 2017, p. 47). However, there seems to be no detailed overview of research into the effects that degrees of non-native English accentedness might have on listeners. The current paper aims to present a systematic review of experimental studies testing the effect of foreign accent strength in English. For this review, we searched Google scholar using the keywords 'accent strength' and 'degrees of accentedness', and we consulted

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the lists of references in the articles we found in our initial search. Because of the focus in this review on studies investigating foreign accent strength in English, we do not review studies about the effects of foreign accent strength in other languages (e.g. for German, Mai, Hoffmann, & Müller, 2009; for Swedish, Cunningham-Andersson, & Engstrand, 1989; for Spanish, French or German, part of Hendriks et al., 2017), or of dialectal accent strength in English (for Southern Welsh and Somerset English regional dialects, Giles, 1972). Neither do we review studies of ethnic accent strength in English (for Mexican American English, Brennan & Brennan, 1981; for Spanish-accented English, Ryan, Carranza, & Moffie, 1977; for Spanish-influenced English, Asian-influenced English and African-American vernacular English, Carlson & McHenry, 2006; for Italo-Australian and Viet-Australian English, Nesdale & Rooney, 1990, 1996). As Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015, p. 45) remark, "... ethnic dialects are not simply foreign accents of the majority language, as many of their speakers may well be monolingual speakers of the majority language. Chicano English, for example, is not English with a Spanish accent and grammatical transfer, as many of its speakers are not Spanish speakers but English monolinguals. Ethnic dialects are ingroup ways of speaking the majority language." In addition, and perhaps more importantly for listeners' evaluations, speakers of ethnic accents are speakers belonging to minority groups who live in the country where the language is spoken, and as such may evoke different reactions on the part of other inhabitants of the country (e.g. attitudinal evaluations based on stereotypes) than speakers who do not live in the country where the language is spoken, for instance because their presence in the country is more strongly felt. Since our review focuses on the effects of degrees of accentedness on listeners, we do not report the effects of independent variables other than accent strength included in the studies under review, such as instructor ethnicity (Rubin & Smith, 1990), lecture topic (Rubin & Smith, 1990), speech content (Cargile & Giles, 1998), or speaker's role (Bresnahan, Ohashi, Nebashi, Liu, & Shearman, 2002).

## Analysis of experimental studies

In reporting on the experimental studies that were selected for this review, we discuss the following aspects: the L1 of the non-native speakers of English (NNE speakers), the nationality of the listeners, the degrees of NNE accent strength tested in the study, the dependent variables, and the effects the studies report. The analysis is summarized in Table 1, which can be found at the end of this article.

The L1s of the NNE speakers studied are Chinese, Dutch, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Saudi Arabian, and unidentified L1s (the latter in Bresnahan et al., 2002). The L1s studied reflect speakers from different continents (Europe, Asia), but a limited number of languages per continent.

The listeners who evaluated the NNE speakers comprised two main groups: native speakers of British or American English and a variety of NNE listeners (Albanian, Algerian, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Dutch, Ethiopian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Jordanian, Korean, Malaysian, Nigerian, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish, Saudi Arabian, Sri Lankan, and Thai). The majority of these studies involved native English listeners, but these were only from two inner-circle countries (Kachru, 1992), i.e. Great Britain and the USA. The studies have involved a wide range of NNE listeners from various countries, but it should be noted that the majority of listeners with different L1 backgrounds were included in one study, in which they were only represented by one or two listeners (Stibbard & Lee, 2006). In two studies, the listener groups included listeners who shared the same L1 background as the speakers they evaluated (Dutch: Hendriks et al., 2016; Korean, Saudi-Arabian: Stibbard & Lee, 2006).

Degree of accentedness was operationalized in different ways in the studies in this review and was generally predetermined by expert judges and confirmed by manipulation checks among the participants in the experiments. The majority of the studies included a native variety as a baseline (except Dragojevic et al., 2017; Rubin & Smith, 1990). Most studies included two degrees of non-native

accentedness (moderate/slight, strong/slight, moderate/high or heavy/mild, unintelligible/intelligible, or low/high proficiency).

Dependent variables included to measure the effects of accentedness can be categorised in two groups: those measuring understanding and those measuring attitudinal evaluations of the speaker. Understanding was measured with functional measures and with perceptual measures. Functional measures include intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability. For intelligibility, listeners are asked to write down what they hear (Nejjari, Gerritsen, van der Haagen, & Korzilius, 2012; Rubin & Smith, 1990; Stibbard & Lee, 2006). For comprehensibility, listeners are tested on their understanding of the content of the message (Nejjari et al., 2012). For interpretability, listeners are tested on their understanding of the purpose of the message (Nejjari et al., 2012). Perceptual measures of understanding include perceived comprehensibility of recording and speaker, that is, items asking listeners how well they feel/think they comprehend the recording and the speaker (Hendriks et al., 2016; Hendriks et al., 2017).

Attitudinal evaluations measured in the studies generally included variables measuring impressions of the speaker on two broad dimensions: “personal capabilities” (cf. Stern, 2000, p. 421) and “personality traits” (cf. Ajzen, 1987, p. 21). Personal capabilities “include the knowledge and skills required for particular actions [...], the availability of time to act, and general capabilities and resources such as literacy, money, and social status and power” (Stern, 2000, p. 417). Personality traits can be defined as “relatively enduring behavioral dispositions” (Ajzen, 1987, p. 2). Evaluations of personal capabilities were measured with perceptual measures such as status of the speaker (Bresnahan et al., 2002; Cargile & Giles, 1998; Dragojevic et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2017; Nejjari et al., 2012), competence of the speaker (Hendriks et al., 2016; Hendriks et al., 2017), and teaching ability (Rubin & Smith, 1990). Evaluations of personality traits were measured with perceptual variables such as affect (Dragojevic et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2017; Nejjari et al., 2012), arousal (Bresnahan et al., 2002), attractiveness (Bresnahan et al., 2002; Cargile & Giles, 1998), dependability (Hendriks et al., 2016), dominance (Bresnahan et al., 2002,) dynamism (Bresnahan et al., 2002, Cargile & Giles, 1998), likeability (Hendriks et al., 2016), pleasantness (Bresnahan et al., 2002), and solidarity (Dragojevic et al., 2017).

## Effects of degrees of accentedness on understanding and attitudes

Findings for the effects of accent strength as reported in the studies in this review will be presented below from three different angles: a comparison of accent strength (stronger, weaker, native), the listener group (native, non-native) and the dependent variables measured (understanding, attitudes).

### Stronger accents compared to native accents

#### **Understanding**

For native listeners, stronger accents were generally found to impede understanding compared to native accents (intelligibility, comprehensibility: Nejjari et al., 2012; intelligibility: Stibbard & Lee, 2006) but not for all variables measured (interpretability: Nejjari et al., 2012). Non-native listeners were, similarly, found to understand speakers with stronger accents less well than speakers with a native accent (perceived comprehensibility: Hendriks et al., 2016; intelligibility: Stibbard & Lee, 2006), although this was not the case in all studies (Hendriks et al., 2017). There was no difference in perceived comprehensibility as evaluated by non-native listeners between speakers with a stronger accent and speakers with a native accent as studied in Hendriks et al. (2017).

## Attitudes

Native listeners evaluated speakers with stronger accents more negatively than they did speakers with native accents on personal capabilities (status: Bresnahan et al., 2002; Nejjari et al., 2012), although this was not found in all studies (Cargile and Giles, 1998, found no difference in status between speakers with a moderate Japanese English and a native English accent). Similarly, non-native listeners evaluated speakers with stronger accents more negatively than they did than speakers with native accents on personal capabilities (status, competence: Hendriks et al., 2016; Hendriks et al., 2017), but such differences were not found for all variables in all studies (Hendriks et al., 2017, found no difference in status between speakers with a strong Dutch English accent, a slight Dutch English accent and a native English accent).

For native listeners, stronger accents were found to lead to more negative evaluations than native accents in terms of speakers' personality traits in all studies (dynamism, attractiveness, pleasantness, arousal, dominance: Bresnahan et al., 2002; attractiveness, dynamism: Cargile & Giles, 1998; affect: Nejjari et al., 2012; solidarity). Non-native listeners, however, did not evaluate personality traits differently for speakers with stronger accents than for speakers with native accents (affect: Hendriks et al., 2017; likeability, dependability: Hendriks et al., 2016).

## Stronger accents compared to weaker accents

### Understanding

For native listeners, some studies showed that stronger non-native accentedness impeded understanding more than weaker non-native accentedness (Dragojevic et al., 2017; Stibbard & Lee, 2006), but this was not found in all studies (Nejjari et al., 2012; Rubin & Smith, 1990). Nejjari et al. (2012) found no difference in intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability of slightly and moderately Dutch-accented English as evaluated by British native speakers, and Rubin and Smith (1990) found no differences in scores on a cloze test of listening comprehension between moderately and highly Chinese-accented English as evaluated by American native speakers. For non-native listeners, stronger accents were in some studies found to be more difficult to understand than weaker accents (Hendriks et al., 2016; Stibbard & Lee, 2006), but this was not always found to be the case (Hendriks et al., 2017). Hendriks et al. (2017) showed that there were no differences between strongly and slightly Dutch-accented English speakers in perceived comprehensibility of the speaker and of the recording as evaluated by French, German and Spanish listeners.

### Attitudes

Speakers with stronger accents were in some studies evaluated more negatively than speakers with weaker accents by native listeners on personal capabilities (status: Bresnahan et al., 2002; Cargile & Giles, 1998; Dragojevic et al., 2017), but other studies showed that native listeners did not evaluate the personal capabilities of speakers with stronger and weaker accents differently (status: Nejjari et al., 2012; teaching ability: Rubin & Smith, 1990). Non-native listeners sometimes evaluated speakers with stronger accents more negatively on personal capabilities than speakers with weaker accents (competence: Hendriks et al., 2016; 2017), but again not on all variables in all studies. Hendriks et al. (2017) found that the status of speakers with a strong and a slight Dutch accent in English was not evaluated differently by French, German and Spanish listeners.

With regard to personality traits, native listeners in some studies also evaluated speakers with stronger accents more negatively than speakers with weaker accents (dynamism, attractiveness,



pleasantness, arousal, dominance: Bresnahan et al., 2002; attractiveness: Cargile & Giles, 1998; affect: Nejjari et al., 2012; affect: Dragojevic et al., 2017), but in other studies no such differences were found (dynamism: Cargile & Giles, 1998; solidarity: Dragojevic et al., 2017). Non-native listeners evaluated speakers with stronger accents more negatively on one personality trait than speakers with weaker accents (dependability: Hendriks et al., 2016), but on other personality traits they did not evaluate speakers with weaker and stronger accents differently (affect: Hendriks et al., 2017; likeability: Hendriks et al., 2016).

## Weaker accents compared to native accents

### Understanding

Native listeners in two studies evaluated speakers with weaker accents as equally understandable as speakers with native accents (interpretability: Nejjari et al., 2012; intelligibility: Stibbard & Lee, 2006), although in one study they evaluated speakers with weaker accents as less understandable than speakers with native accents (in terms of intelligibility and comprehensibility: Nejjari et al., 2012). Non-native listeners evaluated speakers with weaker accents as equally understandable as speakers with a native accent (perceived comprehensibility: Hendriks et al., 2016; Hendriks et al., 2017; intelligibility: Stibbard & Lee, 2006).

### Attitudes

Native listeners evaluated a personal capability of speakers with weaker accents similarly to those of speakers with a native accent in two studies (status: Bresnahan et al., 2002; Cargile & Giles, 1998), although in one study the same personal capability of speakers with weaker accents was found to be evaluated more negatively (status: Nejjari et al., 2012). Non-native listeners evaluated the personal capabilities of speakers with weaker accents similarly to those of speakers with a native accent (status: Hendriks et al., 2017; competence: Hendriks et al., 2016).

Native listeners evaluated speakers with weaker accents similarly to speakers with native accents on some personality traits (dynamism, attractiveness, pleasantness: Bresnahan et al., 2002; affect: Nejjari et al., 2012), although they did evaluate speakers with weaker accents more negatively on other personality traits (arousal, dominance: Bresnahan et al., 2002; attractiveness, dynamism: Cargile & Giles, 1998). Non-native listeners evaluated speakers with weaker accents similarly to speakers with a native accent on some personality traits (affect: Hendriks et al., 2017; dependability: Hendriks et al., 2016), and more positively on one personality trait (likeability : Hendriks et al., 2016).

## Conclusion and discussion

The aim of the current paper was to present an overview of experimental studies into the effects that different degrees of non-native accents in English can have on listeners. A literature search revealed only a small number of such studies, that is, eight over a forty-year period. These studies were conducted for speakers with a range of different L1s from different countries on different continents, but with a limited number of languages per continent. The speakers' degrees of accentedness ranged from strong to native. The listeners in the studies in this review were found to be limited to two groups of native speakers of English (British and American) and a larger representation of non-native speakers of different nationalities. The dependent variables comprised variables measuring understanding and variables measuring attitudinal evaluations (both personal capabilities and personality traits).



Overall, the findings in the various studies reviewed indicate that, although there is variation, speakers with stronger degrees of accentedness tend to be evaluated less positively than speakers with weaker degrees of accentedness and native speakers, both with regard to understanding and attitudinal evaluations. Speakers with weaker accents are generally evaluated similarly to speakers with native accents. In general, evaluations of degrees of foreign accentedness were similar for native and non-native listeners. However, there were exceptions to this general picture. Some studies showed that speakers with stronger accents were evaluated similarly to speakers with native accents and to speakers with weaker accents, and that speakers with weaker accents were evaluated more negatively and in one case more positively than speakers with native accents. Native listeners were found to evaluate personality traits of speakers with strong accents more negatively than those of native speakers, while non-native listeners did not evaluate personality traits of speakers with strong accents differently from those of native speakers. Native listeners also evaluated speakers with weaker accents more negatively than they did speakers with native accents on some personality traits, while non-native listeners were not found to evaluate personality traits of speakers with weaker accents more negatively than those of speakers with a native accent.

The general finding that stronger accents lead to more negative evaluations than weaker accents and native accents is in line with the earlier summaries of research into the effects of degrees of accentedness (e.g. Cargile & Giles, 1998, p. 341; Dragojevic et al., 2017, pp. 386-387; Hendriks et al., 2016, p. 3; Hendriks et al., 2017, p. 47). As Dragojevic et al. (2017, p. 387) put it: "In general, the stronger a speaker's foreign accent is, the more negatively he or she tends to be evaluated". The contribution of the current literature review is that it has covered more studies than these earlier summaries, that it has specified the variables for which the general effect has been found, and has nuanced the generalisability of this effect by pointing out in what cases it was not found.

In light of the overall finding that stronger non-native accents tend to have more negative effects than slight non-native accents, for both native and non-native listeners, it can be concluded that pronunciation training should aim at helping learners of English to reduce features of strong non-native accentedness.

The review has revealed two shortcomings of the research into the effects of degrees of non-native accentedness in English. Firstly, although the research has included a range of different L1 speakers from different continents, speakers from the African continent appear to have been neglected to date. Secondly, the native listeners included in the studies in this field have to date been limited to British and American native speakers. These shortcomings should be addressed in future studies by widening the speaker and listener groups to include L1 speakers from various countries in Africa and native listeners from inner-circle countries other than Great Britain and the USA.

When conducting the review, we encountered an issue that might pose problems relating to the consistency of our analysis: the operationalization of accent strength in the different studies. Some studies explicitly use different criteria (e.g. intelligible/unintelligible in Bresnahan et al., 2002, versus strong/moderate/slight in other studies). However, even when studies use the same terminology, the accent strength was determined by different judges and consequently may have been labelled differently. What is termed 'strong' in one study might have been termed 'moderate' in another study. Future studies should aim at developing objective criteria for distinguishing different degrees of accentedness, if this is at all possible.

A limitation of the current review is that we only included understanding and two types of attitudes (personal capabilities and personality traits) as dependent variables in our narrative review. Some studies also included other types of measures, such as perceived physical attractiveness, homophily (similarity to the listener), perceived ethnicity (Rubin & Smith, 1990), and prototypicality ("the degree to which the person is perceived to 'fit' the defining features associated with a given

group”; Dragojevic et al., 2017, p. 388). These other measures could also usefully be included in a consideration of the effects of degrees of accentedness.

Another limitation of the current review relates to the selection of studies included. We decided to exclude studies that did not investigate foreign but ethnic accent strength. However, the distinction between foreign and ethnic accents is difficult to make, since ultimately an ethnic group originates from a different country than the one in which it currently resides. While we, for instance, considered Spanish accents in the USA to be ethnic accents, since they could be construed to be the accents of Hispanics living in the USA, Dragojevic et al. (2017, p. 387) label Spanish accents in the US as foreign accents. Further experimental studies should examine whether listeners evaluate degrees of accentedness differently depending on whether they see the speakers as belonging to an ethnic group living in their country or as living in a different country. A future literature review should analyse all studies of the effects of accent strength, ethnic, foreign as well as regional (16 to date), to determine to what extent there are common patterns and differences between different types of accent strength. Such a literature review could include a meta-analysis to investigate statistical differences in effects between types of speaker, types of listener and types of dependent variable in the various studies.

A final suggestion for further research relates to the underlying reasons for the findings in the studies reviewed that stronger foreign accents are usually, but not always, evaluated more negatively than weaker foreign accents. Dragojevic et al. (2017) showed that the negative effects of accent strength were not explained (that is, mediated) by the prototypicality of a degree of accentedness, but by the processing fluency associated with the degree of accentedness (measured as perceived comprehensibility). However, this explanatory role of processing fluency would not appear to account for cases in which stronger accents led to more negative attitudinal evaluations but not to less perceived comprehensibility when compared to weaker accents (Hendriks et al., 2017). Future research should attempt to further explore possible underlying reasons for differences and similarities in evaluations of stronger versus weaker accents, for instance by including open-ended questions about why listeners respond to a certain accent in a particular way, or by asking them to write down their associations with a particular accent.

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**TABLE 1.** Summary of analysis of experimental studies on effects of foreign accent strength in English on listeners

<b>Authors</b>	<b>L1</b>	<b>listeners</b>	<b>Accent strength</b>	<b>Dependent variables</b>	<b>Effects</b>
Bresnahan et al. (2002)	NNE	NS American English	unintelligible, intelligible, native	Status, dynamism, attractiveness, pleasantness, arousal and dominance	Status, dynamism, attractiveness, pleasantness, arousal: unintelligible < native, unintelligible < intelligible dominance: intelligible < native, unintelligible < native unintelligible < intelligible
Cargile & Giles (1998)	Japanese	NS American English	Moderate, strong, strong & disfluent, native	Attractiveness, status, dynamism	Attractiveness: Strong = strong/disfluent < moderate < native Status: Strong = strong/disfluent < moderate Dynamism: Strong = strong/disfluent; moderate < native;
Dragojevic, Giles, Beck & Tatum (2017)	Mandarin, Punjabi	NS American English	Mild, heavy	Negative affect, positive affect, status, solidarity, processing fluency, prototypicality	Affect: heavy < mild Status: heavy < mild Solidarity: heavy = mild Processing fluency: heavy < mild Prototypicality: heavy more than mild
Hendriks, van Meurs, & de Groot (2017)	Dutch	NS French, NS German, NS Spanish	Strong, slight, native	perceived comprehensibility speaker/recording, status, competence affect	perceived comprehensibility: strong = slight = native Status: strong < native (NS German) Competence: strong < slight/native
Hendriks, van Meurs, & Hogervorst (2016)	Dutch	NS Dutch	Moderate, slight, native	perceived comprehensibility, competence, likeability, dependability	perceived comprehensibility: moderate < slight/native competence: moderate < slight/native likeability: slight > native dependability: slight > native
Nejjari, Gerritsen, van der Haagen, & Korzilius (2012)	Dutch	NS English	Moderate, slight, native	Intelligibility, comprehensibility, interpretability, status, affect	Intelligibility: moderate = slight < native Comprehensibility: moderate = slight < native Interpretability: moderate = slight = native Status: moderate = slight < native Affect: moderate < slight = native
Rubin, & Smith (1990)	Chinese	NS American English	Moderate, high	Listening comprehension, homophily, perceived physical attractiveness, perceived ethnicity, perceived overall teaching ability	Listening comprehension: moderate = high Homophily: moderate = high Perceived physical attractiveness: moderate = high Perceived ethnicity: high more oriental than moderate Perceived accent: moderate = high

Stibbard & Lee (2006)	Korean, Saudi Arabian	NS Korean, NS Saudi Arabian, NS English, NNS mixed L1s (Albanian, Algerian, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Ethiopian, Finnish, Greek, Jordanian, Malaysian, Nigerian, Norwegian, Polish, Sri Lankan, Thai)	Low proficiency, high proficiency, native	Intelligibility	Low proficiency < high proficiency, native for NS English and mixed NNE listeners and mismatched listeners High proficiency = native
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Note: L1 = native language; NS = native speaker; NNS = non-native speaker; < = worse than; > = better than; = = equal to