Taalkeuze van dove kinderen.
Fortgens, C.

Citation for published version (APA):
In 1994 the *Rotterdamse Tweetaligheidsproject* (Rotterdam Bilingual Project) started at the Rudolf Mees Intituut in Rotterdam - currently the Dr. M. Polanoschool. One aim of this project was to develop and implement a bilingual curriculum for deaf pupils, the second aim was to evaluate this type of deaf education. There was a great need for research since bilingual deaf education was at the time non-existent in the Netherlands. And there were scarcely any research results from other countries.

Chapter 1 one gives an introduction to the basic notions used in this research. To define bilingualism the functional definition of Weinreich (1953) is used, that is that someone is bilingual when he uses two languages regularly. The way bilinguals use their languages is characteristic: language A (with or without elements of language B) is used more in one situation and language B (with or without elements of language A) more in the other. The use of a particular language is called language choice (Grosjean, 1982). The occurrence of elements of language B in a conversation in language A is called code switching.

Bilinguals live in very different types of societies: where everybody is bilingual, where a considerable group is or where even hardly anybody is (Appel & Muysken, 1987). The way in which education handles bilingualism may reflect the type of society. In a society in which everybody is bilingual a bilingual education might be more common than in a society in which everybody is monolingual.

For a very long time deaf people in most countries have received a monolingual education, that is the (spoken) language of the country, despite the fact that most deaf people grow up to be bilingual is both a sign and a spoken language. Bilingual deaf education concurs with this fact. The languages that were used in the *Rotterdamse Tweetaligheidsproject* were Sign Language of the Netherlands (SLN) and Dutch. Dutch was used in the form of simultaneous communication. That means that spoken Dutch was supported with signs.
The second chapter is dedicated to bilingualism and language choice in hearing children. There are many children who grow up bilingually in the world. Research has shown that such children are capable of making adequate language choices from an early age. This means that they use language A more than language B in situation A and language B more in situation B. High language proficiency is no a prerequisite for the ability to make a adequate language choice, although it does influence the form of the language choice. A low language proficiency may seem to be related to high instances of code switching (but a high occurrence of code switching also occurs with highly proficient bilinguals). Other factors which seem to influence the ability to make a adequate language choice are the conversation partner, the environment and the topic. Research suggests that often the conversation partner is the most important of these factors.

Levett's (1989) language production model forms a basic for explaining how bilinguals use their languages both separately and with code switching. The most important adjustments this model needs in order to explain the language production of bilinguals concern the moment on which a language choice is made and the storage of the lexicon (De Bot, 2001). As yet no language production model has been constructed to explains the behaviour of young bilingual children in development.

Deaf children are the focus of chapter 3. The languages involved in the bilingualism of these children are a sign language and a spoken language. A sign language uses the manual-visual modality, a spoken language the oral-auditive modality, hence the term multimodal bilingualism in this context. Apart from a sign and a spoken language multimodal bilingualism includes (several forms of ) simultaneous communication. Simultaneous communication combines both modalities by supporting the spoken language with signs or the sign language by spoken words.

Hearing children can detect the differences between languages auditivey and they do this from early on. When the language input consists of both a sign and a spoken language in the form of simultaneous communication, the differences in the manual-visual part of the input are relatively small. The question therefore arises whether deaf children who receive an input of both SLN and Dutch in the form of simultaneous communication can detect two languages: a prerequisite for making a language choice. The situation is even more complex since the language input of deaf children, at home and at school, is characterised by a large amount of variation. Relatively little research has been done on the language choice of deaf children with a bilingual input. In some cases there seems to be hardly any relation between conversation partner and language choice (Erting, 1985). Other research shows that a sign language is chosen when the interlocutor is deaf, but that when the
conversation partner is hearing spoken language is not always chosen (Fortgens & Knoors, 1995; Gee & Mounty, 1991).

Chapter 4 contains information about the research design. The central question is:

Do young deaf children use more SLN than Dutch when the interlocutor is deaf and do they use more Dutch than SLN when the interlocutor is hearing.

To operationalize this question ten variables were considered. Five variables were related to SLN, that is whether these were used more often when the interlocutor is deaf. The variables were: voiceless clauses, voiceless signs, negative clauses in which negation is expressed by non-manual negation only, verb agreement and the verb in the last position of the clause. The other five variables were related to Dutch: clauses and lexical elements with voice, lexical elements with voice and without a supporting sign, word or word like lexical elements, lexical realisation of arguments and the verb in the second position in the clause. Eleven children participated in the research. They were between 6;6 and 5;2 years of age when the research started. The research was longitudinal. All children were pupils of the Rudolf Mees Instituuut (now the Dr. M. Polanoschool). All were deaf and in the same class which was receiving a bilingual education programme. There were considerable differences between the children with relation to intelligence, amount and age of onset of hearing loss, home language and language proficiency in Dutch (there were no tests to assess their proficiency in SLN). There were four data collection points in two years at intervals of six months. At each data collection point the children were recorded in spontaneous conversation: once with a deaf adult and once with a hearing adult. The two conversation partners were known to the children. The deaf one was their classroom assistant. She used SLN with the children. The other adult was their hearing speech therapist. She spoke Dutch in the form of simultaneous communication. The two conversations were compared with one other for each individual child at each data point on the ten variables and for significance. The group was also compared at each data point.

The results are reported in chapter 5. For the variables clauses without and clauses with voice the group as a whole shows significant differences between the two situations. There are no significant group differences for the other variables. The same applies for the individual children as far as the syntactic variables are concerned. This is often related to the very few occurrences of the syntactic constructions in the samples. There are, however, seven
children who use more lexical elements from SLN (mainly clauses and signs without voice) with the deaf conversation partner and more elements from the Dutch language (mainly clauses and lexical elements with voice) with the hearing conversation partner. This is an interesting result. Deaf children can not use the differences in sounds to distinguish languages. Further more the overlap between SLN and Dutch in the form of simultaneous communication in the visual-manual modality is considerable. Thus there was every reason to expect that the children would not realise that their language input was bilingual at all. However, most of them do make a person-related language choice, just like hearing children: with person A language A is used more than language B and with person B language B is used more than language A.

Chapter 6 discusses the variation in the research results. The variation is related to the role of the conversation partner, the variables and the individual children.

The fourth data point shows a bit more differentiation in language choice than the earlier points. The reason for this is not clear. Previous research has indicated that for hearing children a high language proficiency does not seem to be necessary in order to make adequate language choices. However we show that there does seem to be a relation between language proficiency and some of the variables used.

Contrary to several earlier results the children who make a person related language choice not only favour SLN when the conversation partner is deaf, but also favour Dutch when the conversation partner is hearing. Possibly the monolingual language attitude stimulated this choice. There is however one child who favours Dutch with the hearing conversation partner but no SLN with the deaf one. Just like many hearing bilinguals she does not choose the language the - bilingual - conversation partner uses, but the dominant language of the society.

The variation in the results concerning the different variables shows how language choice can affect different aspects of a language. Apparently deaf children focus mainly on without voice (SLN) and with voice (Dutch) when they make a person related language choice. On the syntactical variables there were hardly any differences in language choice found. On the one hand this might be caused by the low language proficiency of the children, which leads to a low occurrence of some variables. On the other hand it is possible that the language input is of influence here. It is possible that some syntactic constructions are not yet part of their input and that in this area some differences between SLN and Dutch in the form of simultaneous communication were not noticeable. Finally the individual children showed considerable variation in results. It looks as if deaf children who have no useful residual hearing and do not have a home situation in which Dutch is used (and an
extreme low Dutch language proficiency) choose the same language with both conversation partners. Whether they are incapable of making adequate language choices in any situation and whether this will change can not be answered by this research. Those children who have residual hearing and who have a relatively high proficiency in Dutch all made person related language choices. There were, however, also children without residual hearing and with a very low Dutch language proficiency who did make adequate language choices. Apparently deaf children with quite varying potentials are able to make adequate language choices. The fear that a bilingual language input to deaf children will lead to the usage of a sign language only seems to be unfounded.