



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

On language teachers and CLIL

Shifting the perspectives

Dale, E.M.

Publication date

2020

Document Version

Other version

License

Other

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

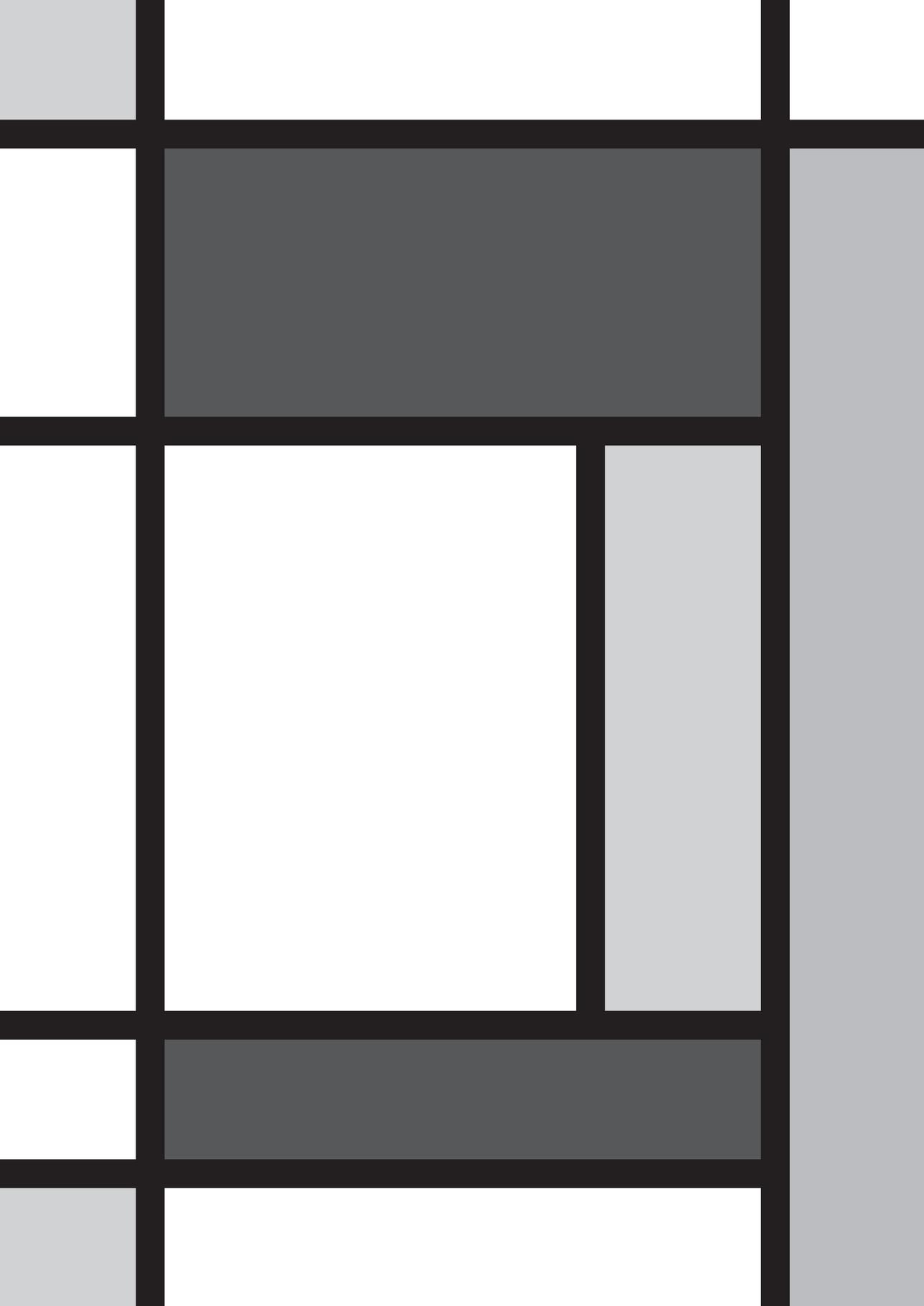
Dale, E. M. (2020). *On language teachers and CLIL: Shifting the perspectives*. Kenniscentrum Onderwijs en Opvoeding.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.



Chapter **1**

General introduction

CHAPTER 1

General introduction

In this dissertation I shed light on the nature and range of language teachers' pedagogical and collaborative practices in a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) context, and provide building blocks for a knowledge base for these practices. I draw on formal and informal theories of practice to investigate the pedagogical and collaborative practices and beliefs of English teachers in Dutch bilingual secondary schools. The insights gained will inform practitioners, teacher educators, policy makers and further research. In this chapter, the background and context of the research are discussed, the research aims are presented and an overview of the four studies carried out is given.

Background

The term 'CLIL' originated as a means to 'describe and further design good practice [in school environments] where teaching and learning take place in an additional language' (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010, p.3). This research makes a contribution to CLIL as a movement for describing and developing innovative practices. For the purpose of this dissertation, CLIL is defined broadly as a 'dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language' (Coyle et al., p.1). Using a broad definition allows space to explore what it means to be a language teacher in CLIL contexts. In the dissertation it is acknowledged that CLIL presents both subject teachers and language teachers with a challenge to develop pedagogical and collaborative practices for teaching language as well as content. The studies set the practices of the language teacher in the spotlight. The term 'practices' denotes two type of practices: 'pedagogical practices' - the ways language teachers teach the language and content they choose to teach, and 'collaborative practices' - the ways language teachers cooperate with subject teachers.

Teachers' practices (what they do) are both influenced by and influence their beliefs (what they think) about these practices. What teachers do and what they think both interact dynamically with an individual teacher's personal learning experiences, their teacher education, and the context in which they operate (Borg, 2006). The term 'beliefs' denotes one of a range of mental constructs (cf. knowledge, theories,

attitudes, assumptions, conceptions, principles, thinking, and decision-making) held by teachers, often collectively referred to as teacher cognition. In this dissertation, language teachers' practice is seen as 'a process which is defined by dynamic interactions among cognitions, context and experience' (ibid, p.275). I examine language teachers' pedagogical and collaborative practices and beliefs in interaction with their background and the CLIL context. In so doing, I distinguish between formal knowledge 'generated by those who specialise in research on teaching' (Fenstermacher, 1994, p.3) and informal or practical knowledge which 'teachers generate as a result of their experience as teachers' (ibid).

The emphasis in most CLIL handbooks setting out pedagogical practices has been on supporting the subject teacher in achieving a dual focus on their secondary school subject (e.g. history, biology) and the additional language (predominantly English, [Pérez Cañado, 2016]), e.g. Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2015; Dale, van Es, & Tanner, 2010; Dale & Tanner, 2012; Deller & Price, 2007. Little emphasis has been put thus far on supporting the language teacher in achieving a dual focus on content and language or collaborating with subject teacher colleagues. In an encouraging recent development, Mehisto (2017) pays explicit attention to both content and language teachers.

Although research into CLIL-specific pedagogies has been highlighted as an area in need of further investigation (Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013; Pérez Cañado, 2012), the language teacher is under-represented in conceptualisations of CLIL practice. In response to criticism of 'terminological and pedagogical vagueness' (Pérez Cañado, 2016), Dalton-Puffer, Llinares, Lorenzo, and Nikula (2014) suggested three prototypical characteristics of CLIL. Firstly, the CLIL language is usually an international lingua franca. Secondly, CLIL does not occur instead of foreign language teaching, but alongside it. Thirdly, CLIL is timetabled as subject lessons. Such a definition excludes foreign language teaching and language teachers from CLIL practices. It suggests CLIL only takes place in subject lessons alongside foreign language teaching and omits the language teacher's pedagogical and collaborative practices.

A tendency to overlook the language teacher can be found in other developments. For example, following attempts to move beyond terminological issues in conceptualising CLIL (cf. Cenoz, Genesee, & Gorter, 103; Coyle, 2007; Dalton-Puffer et al., 2014; Garcia, 2009; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010), Llinares (2015) argued a need to shift the research focus to pedagogical practices for *integrating* content and language. One promising development for subject teachers is the introduction of a construct for cognitive discourse functions showing how thoughts are expressed in language in school subjects (Dalton-Puffer, 2013). Another is the presentation of a pluriliteracies model for mapping learning progressions in school subjects (Meyer, Coyle, Halbach, Schuck, & Ting, 2015). However, these both focus on subject-specific discourses, ignoring the issue of how *language* teachers integrate content and language. Meyer, Coyle, et al. (2015) go so far as to hold foreign language teachers advocating CLIL responsible for a lack of ‘proper attention in classrooms’ to academic, subject-specific language skills (Meyer, Coyle, et al., 2015, p.45).

Emphasising the role of the subject teacher as language teacher is important in CLIL, but excluding the language teacher from CLIL practices renders the language teacher invisible and underplays the changing position of the language teacher in bilingual education. There is a resulting gap in our understanding of what teaching in CLIL contexts means for language teachers’ pedagogical and collaborative practices. This dissertation addresses that gap by focusing on the specific position and educational practices of the language teacher.

Context

Gaining insight into CLIL practices is ‘complicated for researchers and practitioners alike by the myriad of contextual variables that come with the different implementations and make comparison and generalization a tricky business’ (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2014, p.213). To support the reader in taking ‘a context-sensitive stance’ (Hüttner & Smit, 2014, p.164) in interpreting these studies, a detailed description follows of the Dutch context in which three of the four studies are situated.

A distinction has been made between CLIL as an organisational principle (a type of programme) and CLIL as a pedagogical principle (educational approach) (Mearns & de Graaff, 2018; Morton & Llinares, 2017). In the Netherlands, the term bilingual education (TTO- *tweetalig onderwijs*) has been used to refer to the organisational principle, and 'CLIL' to refer to the pedagogical principle (cf. Mearns & de Graaff, 2018). Whilst some secondary schools offer bilingual education to their entire learner population, most have a bilingual stream, parallel to the mainstream.

Throughout this dissertation, the term 'bilingual education' is used to refer to the organisational principle in Dutch secondary schools, and bilingual stream and mainstream to distinguish between the programmes learners follow. Since its emergence in 1989 as part of a grassroots movement initiated by parents and teachers (Maljers, 2007), bilingual secondary education has become well-established in the Netherlands numbering 36,000 pupils in 2017 (Rijksoverheid, 2019). The languages of instruction are Dutch and English. Secondary education in the Netherlands is divided into three main tracks: VWO (pre-university), HAVO (general) and VMBO (pre-vocational) with children generally starting secondary school aged rising thirteen. Bilingual streams are most common in pre-university tracks (Messelink, 2018). The studies in the Netherlands reported in this dissertation are all situated in the first three years of pre-university bilingual streams. In this setting, upwards of 50% of the standard Dutch curriculum is taught in English, by subject teachers who are usually non-native speakers of English.

In this dissertation, three types of teachers in bilingual streams are distinguished. The term 'subject teachers' is used to refer to teachers of non-language subjects in bilingual streams, and 'Modern Foreign Language teachers' to refer to teachers of languages other than English (most commonly French or German). As the language of instruction in bilingual education settings outside the Netherlands may vary, both the terms 'language teacher' and 'Teacher of English in a Bilingual Stream' (TEB) are used interchangeably to refer to teachers of the language of instruction in the Dutch CLIL context. Teachers of English in Dutch bilingual education, who may be native or non-native speakers of English, teach separate English lessons, and are free to

determine the content of the English curriculum, within the constraints of nationally set language attainment targets based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

A national Network of Bilingual Schools (supported by Nuffic¹, an organisation for internationalisation in education), develops policy and oversees quality control in bilingual education using a Standard for Bilingual Education (European Platform, 2012). The Standard was developed in cooperation with bilingual education schools and specifies a minimum of 50% contact time in English in the first three years of academic bilingual streams (pre-university and general educational tracks). In the higher years, the Standard requires schools to offer the International Baccalaureate *English Language and Literature* course, and at this point most other subjects revert to being taught in Dutch in preparation for final exams, legally required to be in Dutch. The Standard includes criteria for the language proficiency of teachers and learners, academic results, curriculum content, school organisation and teacher competencies. These teacher competencies are outlined in an appendix to the Standard, entitled '*The competency profile for [bilingual secondary education] teachers*'. Formal accreditation of schools is carried out by audit panels compiled by Nuffic. Each audit panel consists of a CLIL expert (audit chair), an internationalisation specialist, and an employee of Nuffic (audit secretary). The Standard and accreditation procedures have recently been revised and a redesigned quality control system is being piloted.

In the Netherlands, '*The competency profile for [bilingual secondary education] teachers*' (European Platform, 2012) describes competencies for all teachers working in bilingual streams. It is more detailed with regard to subject teachers than language teachers. The profile lists 28 competencies. Eleven refer specifically to subject teachers, and of these, only two make reference to language teachers. The first describes language teachers co-operating with other modern foreign language

¹ Nuffic was originally an organisation for internationalisation in higher education. It merged with the European Platform, an organisation for internationalisation in primary and secondary education, in 2015. These organisations are now jointly known as Nuffic.

teachers and subject teachers on projects and initiating cross-curricular projects. The second describes language teachers receiving information from subject teachers on pupils' language problems and addressing these in English lessons. These competencies entail specific challenges for both language teachers' pedagogical *and* collaborative practices, but further guidelines for language teachers in bilingual streams are not provided.

Teacher education for CLIL contexts in the Netherlands also tends to focus on subject teachers. A number of under- and postgraduate, pre- and in-service courses are available in and outside the Netherlands for teachers who teach or plan to teach in bilingual streams. Nuffic (2019) lists several institutes inside the Netherlands which offer courses and two in the UK. These vary in length. They include, for example, workshops of a couple of hours, semester-long specialisations in a major-minor undergraduate structure, and full time one-year postgraduate courses. The courses are primarily aimed at subject teachers, and whilst some allow access to language teachers (of the language of instruction), others explicitly exclude them. Nuffic does not make any mention of dedicated courses for language teachers in CLIL contexts.

Similarly, teaching qualifications, where they exist, focus on subject teachers rather than language teachers. Teacher education in the Netherlands leads to recognised teaching qualifications within the existing Dutch teacher qualifications system, but there is not a separate, recognised bilingual education teaching qualification for either aspiring bilingual stream subject teachers or bilingual stream language teachers. There are two internationally recognised qualifications for teachers working in bilingual education. It is possible to take a written examination – a Teaching Knowledge Test in CLIL- which focuses on content teaching in a second or other language and is aimed at subject teachers rather than language teachers. There is also a Cambridge International Certificate for Teachers in Bilingual Education, which is aimed only at subject teachers, excluding language teachers explicitly. In short, there are no bilingual education qualifications for language teachers.

To summarise this description of the Dutch context, bilingual streams are most common in pre-university tracks. In this context, English teachers teach English in lessons parallel to subject lessons taught through English. These subject lessons are taught by subject specialists who are mainly non-native speakers of English. Policy statements in the form of the competency profile included in the Dutch quality standard expect language teachers to collaborate with and support subject teacher colleagues. However, there are no dedicated teacher education programmes or teaching qualifications for language teachers in CLIL contexts.

To conclude this introduction, developments in the way that CLIL is conceptualised have led to a focus on subject-specific discourse which risks ignoring language teachers. The Dutch CLIL context creates challenges for language teachers' as well as subject teachers' pedagogical and collaborative practices. However, language teachers are hardly mentioned in teaching handbooks, in the research literature, in the Dutch bilingual teaching competency profiles, in teacher education and in teaching qualifications for CLIL contexts. This dissertation redresses the balance by exploring what it means to be a language teacher in CLIL contexts.

Research aims

The aim of this dissertation is to gain insight into the pedagogical and collaborative beliefs and practices of language teachers in bilingual streams. Using the context of Dutch bilingual secondary education as an example, it aims to provide building blocks for a knowledge base for English teachers' pedagogical and collaborative practices informed by formal and practical theories of teaching. By doing this, it addresses a lack of research into what language teachers think, say and do in CLIL contexts, and seeks to minimise the gap between theory and practice in research and teacher education.

The research process was emergent (Creswell, 2013). Although an overall four study structure was planned in advance, each study built on the findings of the previous study. This allowed questions, data collection methods, participants and sites visited to be adapted in response to different perspectives on language teachers' practices,

and qualitative or quantitative analyses to be used as best suited the individual study and specific research questions. The choice for this approach is based on the assumption that the reality of language teachers in bilingual streams is multiple and can be seen from many viewpoints. It assumes that language teachers themselves are an important source of knowledge about their pedagogical and collaborative practices and seeks to minimise the distance between the researcher and language teachers. The researcher's roles as a teacher educator and auditor for bilingual schools are central to the choice of topic, to how the research questions are formed and how the data is interpreted.

To obtain a rich picture of language teachers' pedagogical and collaborative practices and beliefs, situated in the lived experiences of practitioners themselves, the following four studies were carried out:

1. A review of the pedagogical and collaborative practices of language teachers based on foreign, second and first language teaching literature. This led to a theoretical framework for language teaching in CLIL contexts.
2. A focus group study using the framework developed from the literature review. This explored, compared and contrasted the ideals of stakeholders for Teachers of English in Bilingual streams (TEBs) in the Netherlands.
3. A survey based on a set of practices developed from the findings of the literature review and the focus group study. This investigated the stated pedagogical and collaborative beliefs and practices of TEBs in the Netherlands.
4. A multiple-case study exemplifying and explaining pedagogical and collaborative practices of TEBs in the Netherlands.

Overview of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters; this introduction, followed by the four sequential studies in the form of research articles, and finally, a general discussion. The studies reported in chapters 2, 3 and 4 have been published in peer-reviewed international journals, the study presented in chapter 5 has been submitted for publication. Dissertation by publication, as this is sometimes referred to, has both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that each chapter can be read and understood independently of the others. However, some overlap in the introductory, background and theoretical frameworks of these chapters is inevitable.

Chapter 2 explores and explains the position of language teachers and their language curriculum in bilingual education contexts. On the basis of articles selected from three research lineages (Foreign Language, Second Language and First Language teaching), four inquiry areas are investigated; the language focus and content focus of language teachers in bilingual secondary schools, theories informing language teachers' pedagogical practices, and issues identified with regard to language and subject teachers' collaborative practices. Using thematic analysis, topics within each inquiry area were inductively operationalised and underlying themes per topic were identified. Based on the findings, a framework for language teaching in bilingual education is presented.

Chapter 3 examines the ideals of stakeholders in bilingual schools in the Netherlands with respect to the pedagogical and collaborative practices of TEBs. This focus group study explores the extent to which stakeholder ideals in the Netherlands reflect the literature on this topic and the extent to which the ideals of different groups of stakeholders are complementary or conflicting, using the framework for language teaching in bilingual education developed on the basis of the literature review (chapter 2). Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse transcripts of the focus group interviews alongside descriptive statistics and a chi square goodness-of-fit analysis. The potential of the framework as a tool to identify differences and develop a shared language for locating and developing language teachers' pedagogical and collaboratives is also discussed.

Chapter 4 presents a set of pedagogical and collaborative practices for language teachers in bilingual streams, based on the literature review and stakeholder ideals. It reports on a survey which uses this set of practices to investigate the beliefs and practices of TEBs in the Netherlands. Descriptive statistics and an independent-samples t-test were used to analyse the survey data. Patterns in language teachers' stated preferences and practices are identified.

Chapter 5, a descriptive, explanatory multiple-case study, explores how and why TEBs in the Netherlands shape four types of practices: teaching literature and language arts, language and communication, subject-specific language, and supporting non-native speaker subject teacher colleagues. Two cases were selected to exemplify each type of practice. Data was collected from documents (background information and teaching materials), observations, and semi-structured stimulated-recall interviews. On the basis of these, detailed case descriptions were developed to enable cross-case analysis. Inductive thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews was carried out to identify language teaching principles. These principles were analysed deductively to compare and contrast different TEB's views of language learning. A model of teacher cognition in CLIL contexts shows how language teachers' practices and views of language and learning interact dynamically.

Finally, **chapter 6** discusses the findings across all four studies, along with implications for teacher education, and suggestions for further research.