

Re-Bel Initiative – Brussels – 22nd December 2012

CHALLENGING LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN BELGIUM

DUTCH, FRENCH, ENGLISH AND OTHER FOREIGN LANGUAGES
IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: EXPERIMENTS AND POLICIES IN
FLANDERS, WALLONIA AND BRUSSELS

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Overview

- **Historical and current context**
 - ▣ Symbolic status of languages
 - ▣ General principle for language(s) of instruction and FL instruction
 - ▣ Forms of bilingual education
 - ▣ Education for pupils of migrant origin
 - ▣ Outcomes
 - ▣ The Belgian language paradox
- **Challenging Language Education in Belgium**
 - ▣ Challenges
 - ▣ General principles
 - ▣ Why?
 - ▣ How?
 - ▣ Advantages
 - ▣ Conditions
- **Conclusions**
- **! not about international, European or private schools**

Symbolic status of languages

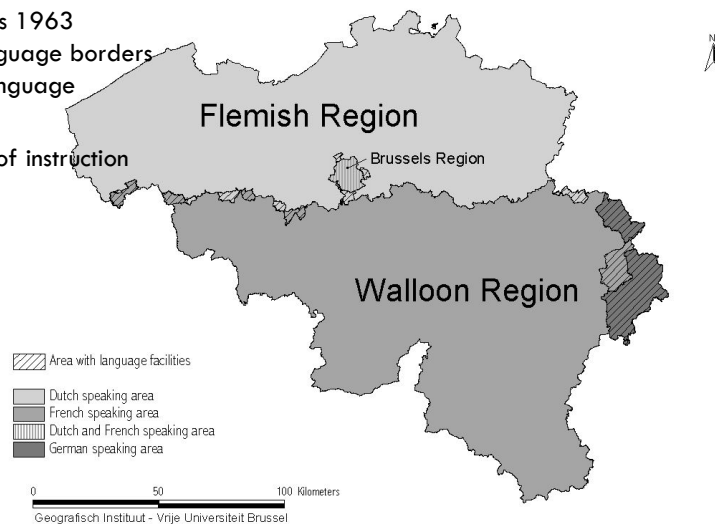
- Languages in Belgium = high symbolic value
 - ▣ result of social, economic, cultural and political history of these territories from the Middle Ages onwards
 - French = language of social upward mobility (>< Romance and Dutch dialects)
 - = perceived as language of socially & economic oppressing elite (both northern & southern part of country)
 - Dutch = recent history of standardisation in Belgium (>19th c.) and recognition (1898 Equality Law, beginning 20th c. Dutch-medium secondary education 1930, 1st Dutch-medium university in Ghent, ...)
- Language = thorny issue in education
 - ▣ Language(s) of instruction & (Foreign) Language instruction strictly regulated by law (marked by historical & political context)

Historical and current context

Education = responsibility of Language Communities

Language laws 1963
determine language borders
→ limits of Language
Communities

→ Languages of instruction



General principles

3 communities	Dutch-speaking	French-speaking	German-speaking
http://www.belgium.be/fr/			
Language of instruction	Dutch	French	German (+ Fr or Du)
1 st 'foreign' language only in language courses	French	Dutch* / English / German / none * compulsory in Brussels and municipalities with 'facilities'	French
other foreign language(s)	English German/Spanish	Dutch / English / German / Spanish / Italian	English Dutch/Spanish

Brussels:

- 2 parallel and independent educational systems: French or Dutch
 - law: no 'bilingual/bicultural' education in officially bilingual region
- ⇒ parents can choose the educational system (→ many 'cross-overs')

% choice 1st Foreign Language in French-medium schools



2009-2010	Dutch 1 st FL	English 1 st FL	German 1 st FL	no 1 st FL
Brussels + Wallonia	49,01	31,9	1,29	17,78
Wallonia only	38,5	40,28	1,64	19,48
1 st sec educ Wallonia only	46,6	51,3	2,02	

source: Service de statistique ETNIC-CFWB

However ... forms of bilingual education ('CLIL')

3 communities	Dutch-speaking	French-speaking	German-speaking
Language(s) of instruction	Dutch + English (5/9) French (4/9)	French + English (20-22%) Dutch (78-63%) German (1.5-2%) comb. (1-10%)	German + French
Start	1 st , 3 rd or 5 th year of secondary education	3 rd kindergarten 1 st or 3 rd primary 1 st or 3 rd secondary education	kindergarten primary & secondary education
% in target language(s)	±2 to 5h/week 10 to 20%	±8 to 21h/week 30 to 75% ±5 to 12h/week 20% to 45%	1 to 4h/week several courses ±6 to 18h/week 50 to 65%
Number of schools 2010-11	9 projects + 6 in Brussels*	132 primary 93 secondary	3 secondary (n=8)

* STIMOB: primary schools, extra courses in French & English

Immersion (> 'CLIL') primary education



Données disponibles en 2011-2012, probablement 2010-2011
www.enseignement.be (au 26-09-2011)

www.wallonie.be

Immersion (> CLIL) secondary education



Données 2011-2012
www.enseignement.be (au 26-09-2011)

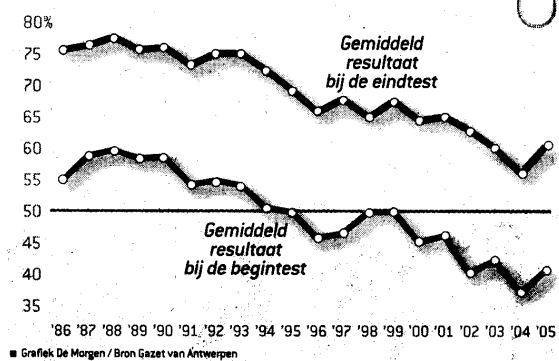
www.wallonie.be

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Outcomes

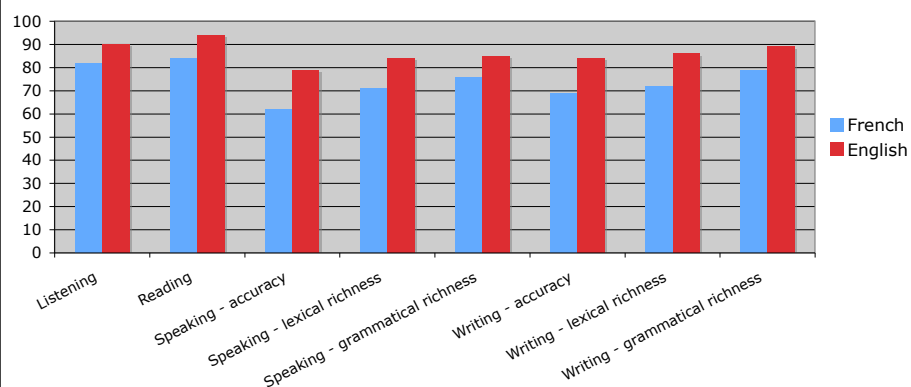
Ook eerstejaars
scoren bedroevend
voor Frans
De Morgen, 19 januari
2006

■ INSTAPKENNIS FRANS
bij eerstejaars taalkunde



Outcomes

Proficiency in French & English of Flemish pupils
(Modern Languages; End of General Secondary School; N=183; %)



Housen, A., Janssens, S. & Pierrard, M. (2001) *Frans en Engels als Vreemde Talen in Vlaamse Scholen*, Brussel: VUB Press.

Belgian language paradox

- Languages and multilingual proficiency seen as an absolute necessity for:
 - ▣ economic reasons
 - ▣ social reasons
 - ▣ cultural & symbolic reasons
- Country with different languages and communities = essence of organisation and identity of Belgian State
- But language learning problematic:
 - ▣ Insufficient ultimate language attainment (proficiency levels too low)
 - ▣ negative attitudes (or neutral at best)



Challenging language education in Belgium

Challenges

Aim: develop within course of regular education

(3-18 years old)

- **receptive & productive MULTILINGUAL** proficiency skills (oral + biliteracy)
- in **minimally 1 + 1 + 1 language** (cf. EU Whitepaper)
 - ▣ L of region or official language community
 - ▣ L of neighbouring region or according to local relevance
 - ▣ English
 - ▣ language of local community or culturally/economically interesting
 - minority language: migrant L, regional L, dialect, ...
 - Spanish, Chinese, ...

General principles

- **More & better multilingual education**
 - ▣ **Timing** of (F)L education: early start (min. primary)
 - ▣ **Quantity** of (F)L contact at school: more (now 2-4 hrs/week)
 - ▣ **Quality** of (F)L contact at school: not confined to (F)L classroom
 - ▣ **Range** of (F)L education: target those (F)Ls that need institutional support for their learning
- **Contingency approach**
 - ▣ maximally exploit local (linguistic) resources to meet global & specific needs

General principles

→ flexibility

- ▣ social, educational, financial and esp. political

→ multilingual education

- ▣ CLIL/immersion + language-subject teaching

Why more & better CLIL?

CONCEPTNOTA
Samen taalgrenzen verleggen
versie 22 juli 2011

French-medium education

- ▣ CLIL structure exists at primary & secondary level, but
 - ▣ only 5-10% tot n of schools
 - ▣ too much 'flexibility' difficult
 - coaching & institutional support
 - quality sustain & control
 - curriculum guidelines
 - no validated, appropriate materials
 - ▣ insufficient focus on (L) form
 - ▣ insufficient & inadequate teacher training, ...

Dutch-medium education

- ▣ *Talennota* proposes extension CLIL but
 - ▣ only at secondary level
 - ▣ not before 2014
 - ▣ restricted: max. \pm 20% teaching hours
 - ▣ *Taalinitiatie*: extended range of languages (French +...) but more language awareness than language proficiency
 - ▣ teacher training?
 - ▣ provisions, materials, infrastructure?

HOW? more & better multilingual education

- **FL education** start from kindergarten
 - ▣ 1st FL = L other community (not English!)
 - ▣ in addition to 'Language awareness' classes
 - = Eveil aux langues / Taalsensibilisering
 - ▣ skilled and trained language teachers
 - not necessarily native speakers but language training in target language environment for teachers
 - teachers' training, coaching, in-service training for *multilingual education*
 - training & teaching supported and stimulated by authorities (at school and ministerial level)
 - coordination between CLIL staff and regular staff supported and stimulated by authorities
 - ▣ not only for 'general' studies, also for technical & vocational education
 - ▣ combined use of FL teaching + CLIL

More & better multilingual education

- **CLIL (+ FL)**
 - ▣ should be stimulated and extended (but not compulsory!)
 - ▣ lower threshold for schools: no obligatory CLIL curriculum + parallel regular curriculum in L1
 - ▣ different models possible according to local contingency
 - ▣ **One way multilingual education in monolingual region**
 - relatively homogeneous groups of pupils (majority L1 background)
 - compulsory start with dominant school L + 1st FL (L of other community)
 - add English as 2nd CLIL language at later stage
 - minimum 6 years of 1st FL to allow biliteracy development
 - continuity throughout kindergarten > primary > secondary
 - e.g. Dutch CLIL for French-speaking children in Chimay

CLIL (+ FL) continued

▣ **Two way multilingual education in language contact situations**

= at linguistic or state border

- Flanders/Wallonia or Flanders/France
- Brussels and surroundings
- German speaking region or Germany/Wallonia or The Netherlands
- Wallonia/Luxemburg
- relatively balanced but heterogeneous groups of pupils (≠ majority or majority/minority L1 backgrounds)
- compulsory start with both L1's,
- add English as 2nd CLIL language at later stage
- e.g. French-speaking + Dutch-speaking pupils in French/Dutch CLIL class in Ronse/Renaix (linguistic border West-Flanders/Hainaut)

CLIL (+ FL) continued

▣ **Two way multilingual education in language contact situations**

= in cities/neighbourhoods with large minority communities

- CLIL languages: English (incentive) + minority language (e.g. migrant) for all pupils (= **trilingual** model from start)
- e.g. Dutch-speaking + Turkish-speaking pupils in Dutch/English/Turkish CLIL class in Zele (East-Flanders)

Advantages (1)

- no negative impact on 1st school language development
- reinforces FL classes → new dynamics, new function + increase contact hours with target L + immediate pertinence (cf. European Schools)
- stimulates L2 & L1
 - whether L1 = school L or only home L → not only for majority groups but also for minority communities = integrative function
- feasible in contact situations
 - because both pupils and staff are available for Dutch/French/German + English
 - possibility of cooperation with consulates for language teachers and CLIL-content teachers (already available, yet hardly used)

Advantages (2)

- reinforces contact possibilities / exchanges / cooperation in contact or border regions
- L1 of minority communities taught outside religious spheres → neutral and valorized
- sustain minority L1 development + support for school L development
- foster contact of majority pupils with lower prestige languages (minority L), together with English as an 'incentive' language
- reduces ethnolinguistic stereotyping and tensions, develops positive attitudes, promotes pluricultural awareness & identity

Conditions (general)

- **For Two-way multilingual education**
 - balanced % of each L group to avoid language dominances that would counteract cooperative dynamics (sociolinguistic engineering)
 - challenging registration procedure
- **For all CLIL programs**
 1. feasibility & adequacy for local contingencies
 2. quality
 3. sustainability

Conditions (1)

1. Feasibility & adequacy for local contingencies

- maintain flexibility of programs, but reduce number of models
 - to ensure quality maintenance on curricula, coaching, teaching materials, certification/evaluation of pupils, ... but attuned to local socio-cultural context
- work with local contingencies
 - to ensure local anchoring, meet local socio-cultural expectations, create stable pools of qualified staff
- cooperation between ministries of education, embassies/consulates, regional or national language institutes (e.g. Taalunie)
 - provide staff, develop curricula & materials and solve financial problems (e.g. inequality in salaries)

Conditions (2)

1. **Feasibility & adequacy for local contingencies**
2. **Quality** through
 - ▣ teacher training (initial & continued) + in-school coaching
 - ▣ time for planning and coordination
 - ▣ simultaneous focus on content and on language form
 - ▣ coordination CLIL-staff and L1/FL-staff
3. **Sustainability** depends on
 - ▣ long term planning and practices
 - ▣ stability of pedagogical staff
 - ▣ transparency of aims and means → communication
 - ▣ support and control by (inter-community) authorities

Conclusion

1. compulsory 1st FL = Dutch/German or French/German according to region + 2nd FL = English
2. 1st FL from kindergarten on in parallel with L awareness
3. at least 1st FL also for technical & vocational education
4. combined use of FL & CLIL
5. **Monolingual situations:** 1-way CLIL
 - ▣ L1 + 1st FL as CLIL language (+ later English as 2nd CLIL L)
6. **Contact situations:** 2-way CLIL & cooperative education
 - ▣ L of instruction: both L1s of pupils from 2 main L communities (+ later English as 2nd CLIL L)
 - ▣ L of instruction: majority L + English + minority L for pupils from both majority & minority communities

Thank you - Dank u – Merci – Vielen dank

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