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

Re-Bel Initiative – Brussels – 22nd December 2012
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 & economically 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, 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)
Education = responsibility of Language Communities

Language laws 1963
determine language borders
→ limits of Language Communities
→ Languages of instruction

3 communities
- Dutch-speaking
- French-speaking
- German-speaking

Language of instruction
- Dutch
- French
- German (+ Fr or Du)

1st 'foreign' language only in language courses
- French
- Dutch / English / German / none
  * compulsory in Brussels and municipalities with 'facilities'

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

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

source: Service de statistique ETNIC-CFWB

However … forms of bilingual education ('CLIL')

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

* STIMOB: primary schools, extra courses in French & English
Immersion (> 'CLIL') primary education

Immersion (> CLIL) secondary education
## Education for pupils of migrant origin?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>French-speaking</th>
<th>German-speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td><em>Bicultural project Foyer</em> (1981-2011) in regular schools</td>
<td><em>Cours de langue d’origine</em>: 2h/week, parallel to regular curriculum, by demand, funded by country of origin</td>
<td><em>Cours de langue et culture d’origine</em>: during classes, regular teacher + resource person, according to needs and opportunities (voluntary basis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language(s) of instruction</td>
<td>Dutch + Spanish, Italian, Turkish</td>
<td>French + Chinese, Italian, Spanish, Turkish, Moroccan-Arabic, Rumanian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>primary + secondary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools</td>
<td>Brussels (&gt;10)</td>
<td>???</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to ‘inburgering’ classes or ‘classes passerelles pour primo-arrivants’

## Outcomes

situation perceived as problematic

Kennis Frans bachelorstudenten lager onderwijs is ondermaats

Mauvais bulletin pour l’enseignement des langues

Vlamming niet langer talenkampioen

Waalse leerlingen verkiezen Engels boven Nederlands als tweede taal

Sommes nous plus stupides que les Flamands

Van Vlaams regeringspronk niet geraakt

Waalse jeugd kiest Engels als tweede taal
Outcomes

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

Outcomes

Outcomes

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

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?

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. ± 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 1\textsuperscript{st} FL = Dutch/German or French/German according to region + 2\textsuperscript{nd} FL = English
2. 1\textsuperscript{st} FL from kindergarten on in parallel with L awareness
3. at least 1\textsuperscript{st} FL also for technical & vocational education
4. combined use of FL & CLIL
5. Monolingual situations: 1-way CLIL
   - L1 + 1\textsuperscript{st} FL as CLIL language (+ later English as 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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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