



The challenge of balancing content and language: Perceptions of Dutch bilingual education history teachers

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Bilingual education history teaching perceived as both challenging and rewarding.
- Translanguaging used spontaneously by Bilingual Education History Teachers despite English-only policy.
- The importance of interpersonal language in bilingual education seems underestimated.
- Reappraisal of the learning goals set for bilingual subject learning is advisable.

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ABSTRACT

The role of subject teachers in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has received little attention, since most research focuses on language learning results of students. This exploratory study aims to gain insight into the perceptions of Dutch bilingual education history teachers by comparing teaching CLIL with regular history teaching. We used questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Results show that bilingual education history teachers perceived their dual task as language and subject teachers to be challenging. Teaching in English also enriched their teaching skills and eventually had a positive influence on their level of job satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades, bilingual education in the Netherlands has become a popular option for a select group of students who are looking for an extra challenge to enrich their secondary education. Currently one out of every five mainstream secondary schools offers bilingual education. In Dutch bilingual education half of the curriculum is taught in English and the other half in Dutch in grades 7 through 9, and there is an emphasis on European and international orientation (EIO). This implies that there is a strong

internationalisation component in the curriculum to enhance the global outlook of the students.

The bilingual subjects are almost exclusively taught by non-native English speaking subject teachers who aim to develop both subject knowledge and English language proficiency in Dutch students using the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology (Verspoor, De Bot, & Xu, 2015). Only the target language (L2) is used in CLIL lessons in the Netherlands and in that sense, it differs from the variety of bilingual CLIL approaches in other European countries that sometimes allow for the use of the mother tongue (L1) in CLIL or where the subject teacher is assisted by the L2-language teacher during CLIL lessons (Eurydice, 2006, 2012). There is much common ground between CLIL and other forms of bilingual education like content based instruction (CBI) and immersion education which are both popular in North America

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(Cenoz, 2015). An important difference is that North American teachers can teach in their mother tongue while almost all Dutch CLIL teachers teach content and language in and through a second language.

Research on secondary education level CLIL shows that bilingual education has a positive impact on students' L2 language proficiency and does not have a negative effect neither on the students' development of the mother tongue nor on learning subject knowledge (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Verspoor et al., 2015). Thus far however CLIL research mainly focuses on the second language development of the students (Dallinger, Jonkman, Holmm, & Fiege, 2016; Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013; De Graaff, 2013). The role of the teacher in CLIL has received little attention and research into the perceptions of CLIL subject teachers is scarce when compared to research into CBI and immersion education (Cammarata, 2009; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Tedick & Wesely, 2015). This is quite remarkable as CLIL subject teachers are key players in the bilingual education of students, and the importance of teacher perceptions or teacher beliefs on the decision-making process of (language) teaching has been emphasised in multiple studies. (Borg, 2003; Den Hartog King & Peralta Nash, 2011; Fang, 1996; Flores, 2001).

For this study into the perceptions of Dutch CLIL teachers we selected history because the subject is known for its linguistic demands. Learning history requires students to have both a passive and active command of academic language, including subject-specific language. Extensive research has highlighted the struggle of students to find the right lexis for assignments on causal relations, change, chronology etc. in their mother tongue (Schleppegrell & De Oliveira, 2006; Van Drie, Braaksma, & Van Boxtel, 2015; Wilschut, 2013). Teaching history in a second language (L2) then becomes even more challenging, because students need to be able to understand and use academic language in the L2 as well. The Dutch Bilingual Education History Teachers (or BHT's) dual teaching task seems to be complex and arduous, because they continuously need to anticipate and respond to the delicate and changing balance between teaching subject content knowledge and second language skills (Schall-Leckrone & McQuillan, 2012).

This exploratory study aims to gain insight into how BHTs perceive aspects related to teaching history in English in grades 7 and 9 using the CLIL methodology. Most bilingual stream subject teachers also teach mainstream classes and are therefore able to compare teaching history in English and Dutch as well as the performance of mainstream and bilingual stream students. We questioned BHTs with teaching experience in grades 7 and 9 of both streams on three main topics: CLIL practice, comparing CLIL to history teaching in Dutch and the effect that CLIL teaching has on their level of job satisfaction.

1.1. Content and language integrated learning

Content and language integrated learning is the most common foreign language learning methodology used in European bilingual education, but CLIL comes in many shapes and sizes (Eurydice, 2006, 2012; Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008). The concept of CLIL is still being discussed, developed and refined by practitioners and researchers (Cenoz, Genesee, & Gorter, 2013; Perez-Canado, 2016) and therefore a universal definition of CLIL is lacking. In this study, we will use the definition by Coyle et al. (2010) which focuses on CLIL practice in general terms:

Content and Language Integrated Learning is a dual focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. That

is, in the teaching and learning process there is a focus not only on content and not only on language (p.1).

Cummins' (1981) classic second language learning theory proposed a distinction between the language used in informal, social settings, and the formal academic language used for learning in schools. CLIL focuses on the latter because insufficient knowledge of academic language, i.e. subject-specific and/or technical language, can impede a full understanding of content knowledge and affect student achievement. Other research, however, points out that learning and teaching the less formal, conversational language in the CLIL classroom should not be undervalued because it is important as a means to support teaching and learning of academic language (Dale, Van Der Es, & Tanner, 2010; Llinares, Morton, & Whittaker, 2012).

Based on Coyle's holistic 4Cs framework (1999), the language triptych (Coyle et al., 2010) and Cummins' matrix (1984) every CLIL lesson should be based on how content relates to cognition, communication and culture. Teaching CLIL implies that subject teachers carefully plan, prepare and execute lessons in order to simultaneously develop students' subject content knowledge and language skills. This is achieved by learning and using academic and subject-specific words, concepts and skills in the L2 through scaffolding, using authentic (i.e. original English or American) teaching materials and cognitive challenging assignments.

At first glance the basic four phased structure of a CLIL lesson plan looks similar to any standard foreign language lesson plan: activation of prior knowledge, use of appropriate teacher (L2-) input, assignments that stimulate comprehension and students' (L2-) output, and finally teacher assessment of student performance by means of corrective feedback on the (L2-) output. However, there is a major distinction in focus between the two. Whereas foreign language teaching has a predominant focus on developing grammar, vocabulary and social language, CLIL has a dual focus on developing both linguistic skills and subject content in every stage of the lesson (Bertaux, Coonan, Frigols-Martin, & Mehisto, 2009; Coyle et al., 2010; Dale & Tanner, 2012; De Graaff, Koopman, Anikina, & Westhoff, 2007; Mehisto et al., 2008; Vázquez & Ellison, 2013).

It is therefore essential to find out how BHTs perceive their dual role in teaching CLIL. In this research, we have questioned them on planning, preparing and performing both content and language learning activities. We have also asked them to compare teaching CLIL at different levels in grades 7 and 9 to find out if and how they appreciate the similarities and differences between these age groups.

1.2. Dutch mainstream and bilingual education

In order to be admitted to the pre-university bilingual education stream Dutch students first need a positive pre-university recommendation (based on performance tests) from their primary schools. They are generally also required to demonstrate their motivation and ambition through an interview or application letter. The bilingual programme, therefore, can be considered selective (Perez-Canado, 2016; Verspoor et al., 2015) and attracts high achievers (Mearns, 2015).

Dutch secondary education ends with national exams in Dutch. Therefore, bilingual education stops in grade 9 and all exam subjects are taught in Dutch in grades 10, 11 and 12. Bilingual education schools can choose to offer non-exam subjects in the L2 in years 10 through 12 and thus continue a form of CLIL education in upper secondary classes.

The Dutch network of bilingual schools safeguards the quality of

the bilingual schools on behalf of the Ministry of Education, while the schools guarantee that all teachers involved in bilingual education are trained in CLIL and have language fluency (CEFR, C1 or C2). The Dutch network of bilingual schools adheres to the Bilingual Standard (Europees Platform, 2012) which is based on the traditional language immersion principle.

This means that in the Dutch CLIL classroom the target language (L2) is the sole medium of instruction and interaction for both teachers and students (Europees Platform, 2012) in order to create maximum L2-input and L2-output. Use of the mother tongue (L1) by either teachers or students during CLIL classes is unwanted and often forbidden. The Dutch bilingual education programme therefore is bilingual only in the sense that half of the subjects are taught in Dutch and the other half in English. It actually has a monolingual, English, CLIL approach as Dutch CLIL teachers teach Dutch students only in and through English, a non-native foreign language, without utilising their native (L1) linguistic potential.

This policy is the result of an assumption in Dutch foreign language learning, that L1 and L2 are two different language worlds that need to develop separately to avoid language confusion in students (Cummins, 2007; Lasagabaster, 2013). The mother tongue should only be used as a last resort.

Until now this English-only policy ignores the substantial evidence showing that the use of L1 can be very beneficial when learning an L2, or as Butzkamm (1998) states 'the mother tongue can also become an ally to the foreign language' (p.81). There is support for the idea that second language learning can be achieved through different strategies, like codeswitching or translanguaging, where shuttling between L1 and L2 the mother tongue is deliberately and structurally used to enhance both L2 proficiency and subject knowledge. The use of L1 in CLIL and foreign language learning can be seen as a natural process because one can't ignore the presence of the L1. Being able to translate into the mother tongue can support communicative and cognitive learning tasks. It may also strengthen the self-confidence of the students if they are allowed to switch between languages (cf. Butzkamm, 1998; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Cummins, 2007; Gierlinger, 2015; Lasagabaster, 2013; Lin, 2015). How the well-founded use of L1 in CLIL should be best organised and implemented, is an area that needs to be explored urgently to prevent individual teachers to intuitively decide when, how and how much L1 they will allow in their CLIL classroom as now is often the case (Lasagabaster, 2013).

In spite of the evidence of the power of translanguaging in L2 learning we found that the English-only language policy is clearly present in CLIL training courses and in the Dutch Bilingual Standard (Europees Platform, 2012; De Graaff, & van Wilgenburg, 2015). We have questioned the BHTs to find out how strict they are maintaining the official language policy and how they perceive the use of the mother tongue during CLIL lessons.

1.3. Teaching CLIL and job satisfaction

Only a few case studies in different European countries have shed some light on the personal experiences and perceptions of subject teachers who start teaching CLIL in a foreign language (Coonan, 2007; Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2012; Moate, 2011; Papaja, 2013), but it is obvious that a mainstream history teacher who decides to become a bilingual education history teacher will go through a fundamental learning process that could probably have an impact on her/his personal and professional well-being. If we want to understand how this new role affects the teacher's established professional integrity and level of job satisfaction we need to know how BHTs perceive the changes connected to teaching history through CLIL.

The level of job satisfaction is related to the professional

integrity a teacher experiences. Moate (2011) argues that a subject teacher's sense of professional integrity, which comprises the self-confident teacher and his/her established professional practice, is challenged when s/he starts to teach in a foreign language.

Teaching CLIL is not an easy task even for experienced subject teachers as the switch to teaching in and through the L2 is a personal and professional challenge. Language is a teacher's most important teaching tool and starting to teach CLIL in a non-native language feels like losing a substantial part of that main teaching tool. The students' developing language skills can further restrict teaching possibilities. The lack of language proficiency of the teacher and/or the students, which complicates teaching academic subject content and impedes fluent and spontaneous communication, can cause feelings of stress, insecurity and detachment (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Moate, 2011; Vázquez & Ellison, 2013).

The CLIL subject teacher also becomes responsible for language development of students but s/he has no professional background in language pedagogy. For most of them their training in CLIL methodology is about the only support they can fall back on. The responsibility to ensure L2-language development in students can be a burden (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Coonan, 2007; Gierlinger, 2015; Mehisto et al., 2008; Moate, 2011; Papaja, 2013; Vázquez & Ellison, 2013).

It takes time and effort to master the CLIL methodology and feel comfortable teaching in the second language as compared to the mother tongue. However, within a few years most CLIL-teachers manage to overcome the difficulties with teaching in English. The linguistic pressure is released as they increase their language proficiency and realise that they don't have to be perfect L2 speakers. To understand and accept that they are not solely responsible for the students' language development is another reassuring detail (Vázquez & Ellison, 2013). Moate (2011) also noticed that being better able to align CLIL lessons to their established L1 lessons was experienced as reassuring. The fact that subject teachers emphasise focus on meaning (content) and much less on form (language) in their lessons also lessens the pressure (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; De Graaff et al., 2007).

After the return to normalcy the professional integrity was restored, and even strengthened due to the development and growth in both linguistic and pedagogical practice and competence, i.e. the ability of teachers to create effective teaching and learning environments for all students. They then experience teaching CLIL in the L2 as "demanding, yet rewarding" (Moate, 2011, p. 342). This result strongly influences the level of job satisfaction a teacher experiences (Liu & Ramsey, 2008).

To find out if the transformation of Dutch subject teachers into CLIL teachers fits in with the growth process of their European CLIL colleagues we have questioned them on their personal experiences and perceptions.

1.4. Research questions

In order to explore the perceptions of Dutch history teachers in their new role as bilingual education history teachers this study will focus on three key questions.

The first main research question is how Dutch BHTs perceive the relation between CLIL principles and their CLIL classroom practice (Bertaux et al., 2009; Dale & Tanner, 2012; Mehisto et al., 2008). This question is divided into two sub-questions: 1a) how do BHTs respond to the frequently changing balance between language and content within the bilingual classroom?; and 1b) how do teachers perceive the role of L1 as a tool to enhance both L2 language skills and subject content development?

The second main research question is how Dutch BHTs perceive differences and similarities between history teaching to

mainstream and bilingual education students (Moate, 2011; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Verspoor et al., 2015). Sub-questions are: 2a) do teachers perceive differences between teaching history (in Dutch) to mainstream students and teaching history (in English) to bilingual education students? and 2b) do teachers perceive differences in ambition, motivation and performance between mainstream and bilingual education students?

A third main research question addresses how Dutch BHTs perceive the impact of teaching CLIL on their level of job satisfaction (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Moate, 2011). Sub-questions are: 3a) how does teaching history in both the mainstream and the bilingual stream affect the teachers' pedagogical competence?; 3b) to what extent does teaching in English affect the sense of teachers' professional integrity?; and 3c) how do BHTs appreciate teaching CLIL?

2. Method

2.1. Design

This is an exploratory study using mixed methods. Quantitative data were generated by means of a self-report questionnaire administered to a group of BHTs ($N = 86$), and complemented by qualitative data from semi-structured follow-up interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) with a small sample of history teachers ($N = 8$) to get more in-depth and personal teacher views on the questionnaire topics.

2.2. Study sample

The Dutch mainstream secondary education system consists of three streams: a) pre-vocational (four years), b) secondary general (five years), and c) pre-university (six years). During the last 25 years, bilingual education (in Dutch: 'Tweetalig Onderwijs' or 'TTO') has become popular in Dutch secondary education. Currently 20% of the schools have chosen to start an English bilingual stream. Most of these are attached to the pre-university stream. In 2014, there were 117 Dutch schools for pre-university education with a bilingual stream.

Analysis of the distribution of BHTs across the different streams shows that on average schools with a small, medium or large bilingual stream employ 1.5, 2.5 and 3.5 history teachers respectively. Extrapolating these numbers to all 117 schools results in an estimated population of approximately 250 BHTs.

All bilingual school coordinators (117) were invited by email to provide information about the number of BHTs at their school. Based on the information of 90 responding coordinators, 192 history teachers with teaching experience in both streams were approached.

Finally, a total of 86 BHTs from 82 different schools with history teaching experience in both English and Dutch in grade 7 and/or grade 9 returned the questionnaire (approximately 45% response rate), but not all questionnaires were fully completed. Further contact with coordinators and teachers did not indicate a particular non-response bias. 'Lack of time' or 'no interest' were the main reasons given.

Table 1 describes background information on the participating Dutch BHTs and includes data on sex, age, (bilingual education) teaching experience, and a self-assessed English proficiency mark.

Most of the responding BHTs (see Table 1) fall within the age category of 31 and older (77%) and a very large majority have more than 6 years of experience as a mainstream history teacher (89%). Based on their experience as BHTs more than half of them can be classified as experienced or very experienced (42% had 6–10 years' experience and 15% more than 10 years). Still, with only 1–5 years

of experience, a considerable proportion of the history teachers must be considered beginners in bilingual education (44%). Most teachers (61%) rate their English language skills as (very) good (scores 8–9) or even excellent (scores 9–10), but a small group (6.4%) rate themselves as less competent with weak scores between 5.5 and 6.9 and a considerable group (32%) as moderate with scores between 7.0 and 7.9.

In addition to the questionnaire survey we randomly selected eight teachers (five females, three males; from eight different bilingual schools across the Netherlands) from a group of 15 BHTs who were willing to take part in further research activities and agreed to an in-depth interview as a follow-up to the questionnaire they completed. All but one of the participants had substantial experience teaching history (15–37 versus 3 years) and teaching history in bilingual education (3–12 years). Three of them were also bilingual stream coordinators; one of these three was a native speaker of English.

2.3. Instruments

2.3.1. Questionnaire for the BHT

The questionnaire consisted of questions about teacher background (See Table 1 above), followed by four sections with mainly statements and a few multiple-choice questions related to using the CLIL methodology (Bertaux et al., 2009; Dale & Tanner, 2012; Mehisto et al., 2008).

The first section of the questionnaire contained four statements regarding the use of L1 (Dutch) in bilingual education (e.g. *Only English is spoken in the history classroom*) to find out if BHTs live up to the Dutch Bilingual Standard (Europees Platform, 2012). Do they allow students to use L1 in their CLIL classroom as is not uncommon in other European countries? Students usually have very mixed backgrounds with regard to English language skills when they enter bilingual education (Oostdam, 2010). Due to the students' limited English language skills it is difficult to comply with the required English-only policy, and each history teacher makes the individual choice if, how and for how long s/he will use L1 to support CLIL teaching.

The second section of the questionnaire focused on two topics: a) teaching CLIL in grades 7 and 9 (e.g. *I spend a lot of time preparing lessons*), and b) the teacher's appreciation of teaching CLIL (e.g. *I prefer teaching history in English*). Sections one and two provided data for answering research questions one (RQ1) and three (RQ3). Questions about teaching CLIL in grades 7 and 9 should indicate whether there is a shift in balance between language and content as the students progress. And, does this shift in balance affect the BHT's appreciation of teaching CLIL?

The third section contained statements on teacher's perceptions of teaching history to both mainstream and bilingual education students in grades 7 and 9 (RQ2). It consisted of questions to enable comparison of students' learning capacities in both streams (e.g. *How do you rate students' cognitive strength?*). Are bilingual education students high capacity learners that outperform their mainstream counterparts? It also addressed research question three (RQ3): the effect that teaching bilingual history education has on the BHT's pedagogical competence (e.g. *In the bilingual stream I use assignments that stimulate oral language use more frequently*). Does teaching CLIL have an impact on BHTs pedagogical practice and competence?

Most BHTs started their career as mainstream history teachers. Therefore, the fourth section contained statements about if and how teaching history in English affects their professional integrity (e.g. *I feel more like an English teacher than a history teacher*) as Coonan (2007), Moate (2011), Papaja (2013) and others suggested. Do Dutch BHTs go through the same stages in their quest to become

Table 1

Background data on BHTs teaching in mainstream and bilingual education, year 7 and/or year 9; Number of respondents (N = 86) expressed as percentages or means (in italics with standard deviations in brackets).

Variables	Percentages or means
Sex:	–
Female	42.0
Male	58.0
Age:	39.53 (10.83)
20–30	22.6
31–40	37.1
41–50	22.6
>50	17.7
Years experience as mainstream teacher:	13.82 (9.12)
1–5	10.6
6–10	28.8
11–15	27.3
>15	33.3
Years experience as bilingual education teacher:	6.61 (3.50)
1–5	43.6
6–10	41.9
11–15	14.5
Self-assessment of L2 proficiency on 10-point scale (1=very poor, 10=outstanding):	8.28 (0.99)
<5.0	–
5.0–5.9	1.6
6.0–6.9	4.8
7.0–7.9	32.0
8.0–8.9	37.1
9.0–10	24.2

Note: In the Netherlands, a 10-point scale is used for grading, where 1 is lowest and 10 is the highest possible grade. Grades 1 up to and including 5 are considered unsatisfactory, grades 6 up to and including 10 are considered satisfactory results, ranging from 'satisfactory' (6) to 'outstanding' (10).

a CLIL teacher? This provided data to answer research question three (RQ3).

BHTs were asked to rate questionnaire statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire design was analysed and tested on consistency and required time by three CLIL experts and three BHTs. Small adaptations (rephrasing, replacing statements) were made before the questionnaire was distributed.

2.3.2. In-depth interview guide

The main aim of the interviews was to gain extra information from the eight selected BHTs (labelled Teacher A to Teacher H) on the outcomes of the questionnaire. The semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) followed the four sections of the questionnaire: the use of L1 in bilingual education, lesson preparation and execution in bilingual education grade 7 and grade 9, comparing teaching (students) in mainstream and bilingual history education and personal experiences with teaching CLIL in grades 7 and 9.

All interviews started with questions about the professional background of the teachers (age, experience as a BHT) and their motive(s) for joining bilingual education, and ended with the option for the interviewee to return to an earlier discussed topic or to start a new topic they felt would contribute to the interview. One pilot interview was conducted in order to test the interview questions, the interview protocol and the estimated required time.

2.4. Procedure

In January 2015, all 117 bilingual school coordinators were asked to invite their history teachers to fill in the BHT questionnaire. A

digital reminder was sent to individual coordinators after two weeks and the appeal was repeated during a national seminar for bilingual education coordinators. The BHTs had access to the online questionnaire in March and April 2015. After two and four weeks, the appeal for teacher participation was repeated.

In May, June and September 2015 eight BHTs were interviewed. The teachers were informed in advance that the interview would be based on the questionnaire topics. All interviews were held individually, face to face, at the interviewee's school and took approximately sixty minutes. An interview protocol stating the aims of the interview, the professional use of the data and the fixed order of topics to be discussed was used to ensure the interviews were conducted in a uniform way. None of the interviewees used the options to read through the verbatim transcript or to receive a copy of the recorded interview.

Participation in the questionnaire and the interviews was voluntary and anonymity of the participants was guaranteed.

2.5. Data analysis

The quantitative data from the web-based questionnaire were collected using NetQ software (2015) and were then exported and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The qualitative data from the eight in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim. We analysed the interview data, using MAXQDA version 12, Qualitative Data Analysis Software, by first labelling interview segments based on open coding, for example: use of L1, preference for teaching in English, and comparing students' performance. We then related labels across the distinctive interviews using axial coding and illustrative quotes were marked (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

3. Results

The results are presented in the order of the main research questions. For each sub-question, we will first explain the results of the questionnaire followed by the outcomes of the interviews.

3.1. Perceived relation between CLIL principles and classroom practice

Table 2 focuses on the teachers' perceptions of their bilingual education teaching practices in grades 7 and 9. Apparently, the balance between time spent on language learning and time spent on subject content learning is perceived to shift with the development of students' language skills. BHTs report setting significantly fewer separate goals for language and subject content (item 1) in grade 9 than in grade 7, and they also perceive less need to simplify subject content (2). This suggests that the emphasis in CLIL in grade 9 has shifted from content and language learning to content learning, but teachers nevertheless also indicate that they spend equal amounts of time on language and on subject content (3) in grade 9. Teachers indicate that significantly more time is spent on language teaching and start-up activities to activate prior knowledge in grade 7 (5), while teachers in grade 9 report to use significantly more visuals during instruction (7). No major differences in BHTs perceptions were found between teaching grades 7 and 9 as regards the need to adjust the teacher language level to that of the students (4), the use of group-work assignments to stimulate language activity (6), and finding authentic teaching materials (8).

All interviewees confirmed the unequal balance between language teaching and content teaching, during the first two to four months in grade 7 when language teaching dominates. During that period many history teachers feel more like language teachers and some experienced feelings of frustration as expressed by Teacher D: "During that first period, when the blackboard is filled with language notes, it sometimes makes me wonder: why am I doing this? This is not what I want" (May 29, 2015).

According to the interviewed teachers the English language skills of the students improves after three to six months allowing them to spend an increasing proportion of the lessons on history content. All confirmed that the language learning process in grade 7 curbs the quantity and depth of subject content, but they also believed that by the end of grade 7 the bilingual education students reach the same subject knowledge level as the mainstream students and that the use of L2 no longer slows down teaching subject content in grades 8 and 9.

Table 3 reflects how BHTs view the use of L1 when teaching history in English.

The BHTs' reluctance to speak L1 (Dutch) in the classroom (item 1), or to permit students to use L1 during assessments (2) or group work (3) was strong in both grades, but was significantly stronger in grade 9 as compared to grade 7. The idea of a beneficial effect of

incidental teacher use of L1 to facilitate the language learning process (4) was rejected significantly more strongly in grade 9 than in grade 7. Whereas 37% of the teachers indicated disagreeing (strongly) with statement 4 as regards grade 7 students, this percentage increased to 64% for grade 9 students.

All interviewees first stated that they supported the English-only principle, but, except for the native speaker, they also incidentally or structurally - but always deliberately - used L1 in all grades. Obviously L1 support is mostly offered in the first months of grade 7 as the students have to find their way in the English learning environment. "How can I explain an unknown English word with another unknown English word? That would mean going round in circles. So, I give them an English synonym and the Dutch translation and the problem is solved" (Teacher H, September 18, 2015). Four interviewees stated that they more or less automatically and unsolicited added the Dutch translation when they were teaching. "It's no extra effort and it's handy if they know the Dutch words" (Teacher A, July 2, 2015). All but two admitted to sometimes adding a few Dutch words while teaching in order to keep up the pace of the lesson.

To them using L1 felt as if they were "breaking the rules", but they justified their decision with a number of reasons: to enlarge students' English and Dutch vocabulary, to give meaning to English and Dutch words and historical or academic concepts and to prepare bilingual education students for a smooth transition to the return to mainstream history lessons in Dutch in grade 10. Teacher H (September 18, 2015) was very outspoken: "it is so very obvious that it should be a mix of languages, that you need Dutch to support English language learning".

Because most bilingual education schools start history teaching in year 10 in Dutch, several interviewees explained that they want to prepare their students for this transition. One teacher spends the last month in year 9 teaching students basic historical knowledge and the Dutch vocabulary they will need, while another teacher presents his students with Dutch summaries of the textbook and Dutch history tests at the end of year 7, 8 and 9. "It's useful for them to know the Dutch wording now and later on when they start with Dutch spoken history lessons" (Teacher F, July 6, 2015).

3.2. Comparing bilingual and mainstream history teaching practices

BHTs perceive both similarities and differences in the preparation and execution of history lessons in mainstream and bilingual stream grades 7 and 9. Table 4 shows significant differences and similarities between and within grades.

There are perceived differences as well as similarities in preparing and teaching mainstream and bilingual stream grades 7. Teachers stated it was easier to draw up a good test (item 3) and to reach set goals (6) in mainstream grade 7. Teaching in bilingual stream grade 7 requires significantly more: time preparing lessons (3), writing aids (7), checks during lessons (10), assignments that

Table 2
BHTs' perceptions of preparation and execution of CLIL lessons in grades 7 and 9; means and standard deviations; * = significant differences between grades ($p < 0.05$).

Items (scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)	Grade 7 N = 76	Grade 9 N = 67
1. I set separate goals for language and subject content	3.28 (1.37)	1.76 (0.85)*
2. Due to students' limited language skills my subject content needs simplifying	2.84 (0.91)	2.27 (0.77)*
3. I make sure an equal amount of time is spent on language and subject content	3.93 (0.79)	3.40 (0.13)*
4. I need to adjust my language level to that of the students to teach subject content	3.22 (0.87)	3.15 (0.88)
5. Every lesson has a start-up activity to activate prior language and subject knowledge	3.69 (1.01)	3.52 (1.08)*
6. I often use group work assignments to stimulate language activity	4.27 (0.62)	4.28 (0.69)
7. I use extra visuals during instruction	3.28 (1.08)	3.49 (0.99)*
8. It is easy to find authentic teaching materials	3.42 (1.12)	3.31 (1.06)

Table 3The use of L1 in bilingual education history lessons in grades 7 and 9; means and standard deviations; * = significant differences between grades ($p < 0.05$).

Items (scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)	Grade 7 N = 76	Grade 9 N = 67
1. Only English is spoken in the history classroom	3.93 (1.08)	4.52 (0.73)*
2. Students are allowed to use L1 during assessments	2.06 (1.10)	1.27 (0.62)*
3. Students are allowed to use L1 in group work	1.72 (0.79)	1.36 (0.75)*
4. I notice that incidental teacher use of L1 helps students' language learning	2.85 (1.18)	2.24 (1.16)*

Table 4

Differences and similarities when preparing and executing lessons in mainstream and bilingual grades 7 and 9. means and standard deviations.

Items (scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)	Mainstream grade 7 N = 51	Bilingual grade 7 N = 61	Mainstream grade 9 N = 43	Bilingual grade 9 N = 54
1. I start each lesson activating prior knowledge	3.56 (0.97)	3.56 (0.97)	3.63 (0.93)	3.63 (0.93)
2. I use extra visuals during instruction	3.90 (0.86)	3.96 (0.88)	3.77 (0.81)	3.79 (0.83)
3. I have no problem drawing up a good test	3.24 (1.15)	3.04 (1.21)*	3.30 (1.10)	3.14 (1.18)
4. I spend a lot of time preparing lessons	3.14 (0.88)	3.88 (0.92)*	3.23 (0.75)	3.98 (0.86)*
5. I set high teaching goals	3.68 (0.74)	3.68 (0.77)	3.84 (0.69)	3.93 (0.70)*
6. I succeed in reaching the set goals every year	3.74 (0.85)	3.44 (0.93)*	3.79 (0.80)	3.60 (0.88)*
7. I offer writing aids with written assignments	2.56 (1.20)	2.74 (1.32)*	2.56 (1.16)	2.74 (1.30)*
8. My lessons are teacher driven	3.56 (0.79)	3.50 (0.86)	3.47 (0.91)	3.40 (0.90)
9. Lesson content is divided into smaller parts	3.50 (0.84)	3.64 (0.88)	3.28 (0.91)	3.35 (0.95)
10. I build in many checks	3.32 (0.68)	3.54 (0.73)*	3.09 (0.72)	3.16 (0.79)
11. I use assignments that stimulate oral language use	3.40 (0.78)	4.04 (0.73)*	3.44 (0.80)	4.00 (0.69)*
12. I tailor the written assignments to students' language proficiency	3.74 (0.90)	3.98 (0.89)*	3.60 (0.93)	3.77 (0.90)*

Note: statistically significant differences within grades 7 and 9 between main and bilingual stream are marked with an asterisk in the column of the bilingual stream, differences between grades 7 and 9 within main and bilingual stream are marked in bold italics.

stimulate oral language (11) and specially tailored written assignments to meet students' language proficiency (12).

When comparing lesson preparation and teaching in mainstream and bilingual stream it was perceived to be easier to successfully reach set goals (6) in mainstream grade 9 than in bilingual stream grade 9. Compared to mainstream grade 9 bilingual stream grade 9 is found to be more demanding when it comes to preparing lessons (4), setting high teaching goals (5), and writing aids (7). The stimulation of oral language use (11) and the need to tailor written assignments to the students' language proficiency (12) were also perceived as significantly more demanding in both bilingual streams. "In the beginning preparing for CLIL lessons took up a lot of my time and teaching CLIL slowed down my history teaching for sure" (Teacher B, May 26, 2015).

Teachers perceived no significant differences in activating prior knowledge (1), using extra visuals during instruction (2), drawing up a good test (3), dividing lesson content into smaller parts (9), building in many checks (10) or the teacher driven nature of the lessons (8).

The final comparison, between bilingual grades 7 and 9, showed significant differences only on three scored items: the teaching goals (5) are set higher in grade 9 than in grade 7. Not unexpectedly, bilingual grade 7 is more teacher driven (8) and more checks are built in (10) as compared to grade 9. No relevant differences were perceived on the remaining 9 items of lesson planning and execution (See Table 4).

Item 1, activating prior knowledge, draws attention because it had an identical score in mainstream and bilingual stream grades 7 (3.56) and in mainstream and bilingual stream grades 9 (3.63). And finally, reaching set goals for bilingual education is perceived to be more difficult than for mainstream education.

The perceptions of the interviewed history teachers on this topic seem to be at least partly inconsistent with the results described in Table 4. While Table 4 showed a significant difference in reaching set goals in mainstream and bilingual grade 9, all interviewees agreed that the bilingual education students in grade 9 reached at least the same level of history knowledge and skills as their

mainstream counterparts. All interviewed teachers stated very clearly that the bilingual students performed much better than mainstream students on writing assignments. This is not surprising as language output is supposed to be an integral element of each CLIL lesson as it develops the language and processes the subject content (Bertaux et al., 2009; Dale & Tanner, 2012; Mehisto et al., 2008). Through oral and/or written assignments students recycle and acquire the subject content and the corresponding genre-based academic language. Mainstream students are expected to be proficient L1 users and thus are less frequently challenged with written output assignments.

Table 5 shows BHTs' perceptions of differences between the learning capacities of mainstream and bilingual stream students. They rated the bilingual education students significantly higher on intrinsic motivation, ambition and cognitive strength.

All interviewed teachers agreed that the vast majority of the bilingual education students were already high capacity learners upon arriving in grade 7, but this did not automatically lead to high quality learning results. There was no agreement on the idea that bilingual education students outperform the mainstream students in historical knowledge and skills. A majority of the interviewees pointed to motivation for school in general diminishing in grade 8 as typical adolescent behaviour and an important explanation for underachievement (Reis & McCoach, 2000). "After a great start in grade 7, when they are very eager to learn and actively participate with their hands waving in the air, something happens during the summer holiday. When they return in grade 8 much of their enthusiasm seems gone" (Teacher D, May 29, 2015). Another possible explanation expressed by several teachers was their assumption that bilingual education students with a predisposition for exact science subjects tend to have less affinity with subjects that require the use of well-developed language skills.

3.3. Perceived impact and personal appreciation of teaching CLIL on teachers' pedagogical competence and professional integrity

Teaching history in English through CLIL requires that BHTs

Table 5

BHTs' rating of mainstream and bilingual education students. means and standard deviations; * = significant differences between mainstream and bilingual stream ($p < 0.05$).

Items (scale: 1 = very weak, 5 = very strong)	Mainstream Students	Bilingual Students
	BHTs N = 57	BHTs N = 61
Intrinsic motivation	3.59 (0.73)	4.11 (0.62)*
Ambition	3.73 (0.73)	4.16 (0.65)*
Cognitive strength	3.80 (0.64)	4.14 (0.59)*

possess language and CLIL skills. As many BHTs also teach mainstream history classes it is relevant to determine if and how a history teacher's pedagogical practice and competence is affected by this dual-language teaching environment.

Table 6 shows the BHTs' perceptions of the effect of teaching history in English on their personal and professional appreciation of CLIL. Overall, teachers showed no clear preference for teaching history in English (item 1) but when comparing teaching history in English in grade 7 or in grade 9, the latter was clearly preferred. BHTs feel confident L2 users when it comes to addressing the students at the right language level (5) in both grades.

Although much more time was spent on language in grade 7, BHTs surprisingly did not feel they were any more language teacher than subject teacher (6) in either grade.

Furthermore, students' limited English language skills has more impact on the assessment options of the history teacher (9) in grade 7 than in grade 9. Overall, history teachers stated being convinced that bilingual education students perform just as well in history as mainstream students (4), but this applies more strongly to grade 9 students.

The interviewed teachers confirmed that the broad range of CLIL activities appealed to the students. It also made them more aware of the importance of language in history teaching. As a result, most interviewees also used CLIL activities in their mainstream classes in order to create language output and activate students through group work, whole class discussion and presentation assignments. "CLIL forces you to be more creative and to offer the students more variation when teaching. When things work well in CLIL it is just as easy to translate and use them also in the regular classes" (Teacher B, May 26, 2015). Occasionally a mainstream activity was translated and restructured to fit a bilingual history lesson. Becoming a history teacher with CLIL skills thus seems to enlarge the overall pedagogical practice and the pedagogical competence of the subject teacher.

They also experienced that teaching CLIL is more demanding in terms of lesson preparation, execution and assessment. Insecurity about fluency in English can put extra pressure on the teacher and limited language proficiency of the students is felt by some to lead to a regrettable loss of spontaneity and humour in the classroom. As Teacher E said: "It's difficult to be the teacher you are if students don't understand the jokes you make or the expressions that you

use" (May 15, 2015). The first years of teaching history in English are experienced as very demanding and putting a lot of pressure on the teacher trying to master teaching CLIL. After three to five years they feel far more comfortable and relaxed when teaching their subject in English. Still, Teacher G admitted that "after teaching four consecutive CLIL lessons I long for a mainstream class and to speak Dutch again" (June 30, 2015), while five of the eight interviewees preferred teaching history in English. Teacher H (September 18, 2015) also said:

Although I prefer teaching history in English I sometimes have an off-day when I just can't find the right words. That makes you feel clumsy. But on the other hand, I can also be proud of myself when I am able to spontaneously and fluently use alternative descriptions and synonyms.

Finally, five teachers agreed that teaching history in English has ultimately enriched their teaching career and increased their personal appreciation for CLIL teaching. Their level of job satisfaction also rose, because they experienced their CLIL teaching to be more challenging, inspiring and leading to more creative thinking.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The goal of this study was to gain insight into the BHTs' perceptions of bilingual history education in the Netherlands. The first main research question focused on how BHTs perceive the relation between CLIL principles and CLIL classroom practice. It was their impression that when students' L2 skills increase, the balance between teaching language and content shifts and more time is spent on teaching and learning historical knowledge and skills. In order to use CLIL effectively, BHTs – especially, but not exclusively, in grade 7 – make use of L1 to support both L2-learning and subject content understanding despite the official English-only policy. Although all of the interviewed teachers endorsed the Dutch network of bilingual schools' language policy, nearly all of them also stated that they consciously used L1 to support language and subject content learning, not just in grade 7 but in all grades. Teachers' 'illegal' use of L1 in their CLIL lessons is actually underpinned by research claiming that shuttling between languages can be very beneficial for the development of the L2 and the subject content (Butzkamm,

Table 6

BHTs' perceptions of the effect of teaching history in English in grades 7 and 9. means and standard deviations; * = significant differences between grades ($p < 0.05$).

Items (scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)	Grade 7 N = 70	Grade 9 N = 62
1. I prefer teaching history in English	2.97 (1.18)	3.18 (1.26)*
2. Except for the language, teaching history to mainstream or bilingual stream students is the same to me	2.77 (1.18)	3.13 (1.19)*
3. Teaching in English has made me more aware of the importance of language in history teaching	3.62 (1.07)	3.57 (1.07)
4. Bilingual stream students perform just as well in history as mainstream students	3.67 (1.01)	4.00 (0.97)*
5. I am capable of addressing the students at the right language level	4.07 (0.87)	4.13 (0.81)
6. I feel more like an English teacher than a history teacher	2.31 (1.07)	1.93 (0.79)*
7. It's not easy to address the students at the right language level	2.44 (1.22)	2.11 (1.14)*
8. The limited language command of students has a negative impact on learning history	2.87 (1.25)	2.18 (1.15)*
9. Assessment needs to be simplified as a result of students' limited language skills	3.46 (0.96)	2.25 (1.01)*

1998; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Cummins, 2007; Gierlinger, 2015; Lasagabaster, 2013; Lin, 2015). Seen in this light it should be time for the Dutch network of bilingual schools to recognise and accept divergent CLIL practices in the Netherlands and abroad and re-examine their English-only policy. Perhaps it is advisable to accept and include translanguaging in Dutch CLIL teaching which then becomes a truly integrated bilingual teaching method.

The second main research question investigated teachers' perceptions of differences and similarities between history teaching to mainstream students and bilingual education students. Teachers perceived differences and similarities in teaching history in both streams and both grades. Not surprisingly teaching bilingual grade 7 differs substantially from teaching mainstream grade 7. In bilingual grade 7 more time is spent on lesson preparation because teachers need to carefully adjust the language level. Teachers need to choose and use effective CLIL components that will help students master both L2 and subject content. The distinction between teaching grades 9 in both streams seems to be less obvious, although the BHT needs to prepare both subject content and language skills activities that stimulate L2 development. No unexpected differences emerge when comparing lesson preparation and execution in bilingual education grades 7 and 9.

Research shows that Dutch bilingual students outperform mainstream students on all aspects of L2 proficiency and perform at least as good as mainstream students on subject content knowledge (Verspoor et al., 2015) This outcome is generally seen as proof of successful CLIL education and high-level student performance.

One can argue that the cognitive achievements of the Dutch bilingual students should be appreciated because of the aggravating language circumstances. On the other hand, the BHTs stated that bilingual students outperform mainstream students on intrinsic motivation, ambition and cognitive strength. If these students have a better learning capacity, then it might be expected that they would outperform mainstream students, not only in English language proficiency but also in subject-related learning results. However, the interviewed teachers do not confirm this expectation when it comes to students' historical knowledge and skills, neither in grade 7 nor in grade 9.

Dutch bilingual education students receive (at least) one extra English lesson per week and at least half the curriculum (approx. 15 lessons) is taught in English, giving them a great L2 language advantage over their mainstream counterparts. If the English language is not the barrier to outperform the mainstream students on subject learning results than what can account for them falling short of expectations? Perhaps raising the bar of the goals set for bilingual education subject learning should be considered by the responsible Dutch network of bilingual schools in order to challenge bilingual education students to achieve even better subject learning results.

The third main research question addressed how history teachers perceive the impact of teaching CLIL on the level of job satisfaction. Using the CLIL methodology in bilingual education is perceived to enlarge teachers' pedagogical practice and competence, as it increases their awareness of the general impact of language on history teaching. They also feel that CLIL activities aimed at language output, group work and using whole class discussion to fully understand historical concepts, have given them new pedagogical tools that they now also use when teaching mainstream classes. With some effort, one could imagine the less likely option that some BHTs, who are usually experienced and creative mainstream subject teachers, perhaps brought their rich mainstream pedagogical tools into CLIL teaching.

While teachers are not outspoken about whether they can teach history in English just as easily as in Dutch, they report that they are capable of teaching at the required language level. An interesting

discrepancy since nearly forty percent of the BHTs rate their level of proficiency in English lower than 8 on the 10-point scale, thereby indicating that their language proficiency is 'satisfactory', but not 'good' or 'outstanding' (see Table 1). They also preferred to teach grade 9 over grade 7 because there they feel less like a language teacher and students' language limitations have less impact on their subject teaching. It could be that the BHTs are underestimating their English language skills or overestimating their ability to address students at the desired language level.

The interviewed teachers provided more insight into what it means to become or to be a BHT and their experiences are in line with earlier research (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Coonan, 2007; Moate, 2011; Papaja, 2013). The first years in this new role were described as demanding and challenging and regularly leading to uncertainty and insecurity, as teaching CLIL requires more than being able to use the appropriate English words when teaching history (Vázquez & Ellison, 2013).

As reported in the interviews, teachers also have unique personalities with individual styles of communication, using more or less humour or word play to attract students' attention or just to have fun. If a lack of language proficiency on the part of either the teacher or the students means that these personal elements that are part of their professional integrity cannot be fully used when teaching, teachers may feel incomplete or uncomfortable, which in turn may influence their level of job satisfaction. To date CLIL focuses strongly on the use of academic language and seems to underestimate and undervalue the importance of interpersonal language, which is of crucial importance not only in the social communication between teachers and students but also as a means to support the use of academic language.

A general reappraisal of the position of informal, social language in CLIL education could perhaps lead to a more fluent, natural and spontaneous way of communication in both social and academic settings. Instead of 'moving on' from social, less formal language to formal, academic language a substantial part of the language activities in CLIL should be focused on enhancing the less formal, social register. This may help teachers and students to overcome a sterile classroom atmosphere and strengthen academic content teaching and learning. It is not unlikely that being able to freely and effectively use social and academic language could have a positive impact on the teachers' sense of completeness. This in turn could increase their personal appreciation of teaching CLIL, their sense of professional integrity and level of job satisfaction.

It must be emphasised that the results of this study are based upon self-report questionnaires for BHTs and a series of semi-structured interviews. Self-reporting can evoke socially desirable answers and over- or underestimation can lead to imprecise answers (Tracey, 2016). The recurring discrepancies between the outcome of the questionnaire topics and the interviews seem to indicate a certain ambivalence in the respondents' points of view. This may have been caused by the selected research method and the instruments used. In this case the one on one, semi-structured interviews offered more possibilities to ask the interviewees to clarify or illustrate their initial answers. This personal approach resulted in more detailed and in-depth information than the rating of statements in the questionnaire did.

Approximately 45% of the BHTs participated voluntarily in the questionnaire and we believe this to be a representative sample. The interviewed BHTs, who were all committed to CLIL education, spoke openly and critically about their perceptions of bilingual history teaching and provided valuable additional and sometimes contrasting information, e.g. on the use of L1 in their CLIL lessons.

Further study in the shape of classroom observations is necessary in order to find out how bilingual education perceptions of the BHTs compare to the actual bilingual education practices.

Measuring and comparing the yields in terms of subject matter knowledge after three years of bilingual or mainstream history education is unprecedented. It should indicate whether bilingual education students underachieve, perform just as well or even better than their mainstream counterparts. Expanding on earlier research on student learning across CLIL contexts in England and Scotland (Coyle, 2013), it would also be useful to investigate Dutch students' perceptions of the BHT's impact on their learning. Combining the results of this current study and data from the above suggested research topics could help us to better understand how history teachers perceive and deal with the challenge to balance content and language in their teaching.

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