

A LIFE DECISION: TO CONTINUE IN ENGLISH OR NOT?!

A CASE STUDY ON REASONS TO SWITCH FROM BILINGUAL TO REGULAR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

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ABSTRACT

This case study, performed at a bilingual school in the Netherlands, researches the main reasons for pupils to decide to switch from the bilingual to the regular programme. Carrying out qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were conducted, focusing on *pupils' background*, the *educational environment*, *study experiences* and *study achievements*. The twelve interviewed pupils mentioned ten different reasons to switch and these were listed according to their frequency. By means of two different data analysis methods, three pupil profiles were extracted, representing indications of the types of pupils that can possibly decide to switch to the regular programme in the future. Switching was associated with study experience and study achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Since the implementation of bilingual education in the first half of the nineties, the number of Dutch secondary schools with a bilingual stream has increased tremendously. Currently there are 133 schools with a bilingual department. Most of these schools offer a bilingual programme at VWO level, but the number of schools implementing a similar programme at HAVO and VMBOt level grows steadily. In bilingual schools, English is used as the language of communication and instruction in some (non-language) subjects. During bilingual lessons and extracurricular activities, both teachers and pupils use English exclusively. The two main goals of bilingual education are increasing pupils' proficiency and offering them an international orientation (European Platform, n.d.).

The research school offers bilingual VWO since 2002. Every year pupils enrolled in the programme decide to switch from the bilingual to the regular, non-bilingual stream. Pupils with unsatisfactory grades are forced to switch by the bilingual team leaders. However, there are also pupils with passing grades who still decide to stop with the bilingual programme. The school management has asked this research group to find out why these pupils decide to switch to the regular programme. A qualitative research method has been used to create a clear overview of these reasons.

RELEVANCE

Little is known about bilingual education in the Netherlands. Most research focuses on pupils' language proficiency (e.g. Admiraal *et al.* 2006; De With *et al.*, 2009). However, motivation related issues have rarely been researched. There is abundant literature about pupils dropping out of regular education, which focuses on aspects such as failing achievement, an undesirable family background or educational milieu and a the lack of motivation or ability (Dohn, 1991; Eckstein & Wolpin, 1999; Manzo, 2005; Stearns & Glennie, 2006).

However, the concept of *switching* from bilingual to regular, non-bilingual education has only been investigated once. In a case study, performed by Delver *et al.* (2010), pupils enrolled in a HAVO bilingual programme were forced to switch due to unsatisfactory grades. In contrast, our research investigates the reasons why Atheneum/Gymnasium pupils decide to stop voluntarily. Thus, report grades are less relevant. Given the fact that our research encompasses participants with passing grades who voluntarily decide to stop with their bilingual education, we expect that different variables will play an important role in this decision.

The bilingual department of the bilingual school does not have a clear overview of why pupils voluntarily stop with their bilingual education. This research aims to establish a starting point from which the school can begin looking for ways to prevent future switching, which benefits both the school and its pupils. The concept of switching probably arises at other bilingual secondary schools in the Netherlands as well. This research aims to reveal information on switching that could be utilized by other Dutch secondary schools in order to improve their own bilingual programme.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on bilingual education in the Netherlands mostly focuses on *study achievement* and pupils' language proficiency. A longitudinal research conducted by Huibregtse (2001) shows no significant differences in final exam results for the subjects Dutch, Geography and History between pupils in bilingual and regular education. However, pupils in bilingual education did achieve a higher level of proficiency in English. A similar research conducted by Admiraal *et al.* (2006) confirms this benefit. Results indicate that pupils in bilingual education obtained higher scores for oral proficiency and reading comprehension in English. However, the use of English as the language of instruction does not affect receptive word knowledge. No negative effects on the final exam results of Dutch, history and geography examined in Dutch have been found either (Admiraal *et al.*, 2006).

If research proves that bilingual education in the Netherlands benefits pupils' proficiency in English, then why do they still decide to switch to the non-bilingual stream? In the only research that investigates the concept of *switching*, conducted by Delver *et al.* (2010), many pupils mentioned not to feel very motivated by their teachers. Compared to the control group, the switchers felt the teacher showed less personal interest in them and rarely explained the objectives of class content or activities. The switchers studied less seriously at home and at school and volunteered less to give answers in class as their peers in the bilingual stream (Delver *et al.*, 2010). The main reasons for stopping with bilingual education were thus associated with a lack of motivation and study achievement.

Given that research on switching is still very limited, we consulted literature on *dropout*. Research on dropping out of non-bilingual secondary education shows that the main reasons for stopping with secondary education are also related to achievement, ability and motivation. The effect of family background factors and (social) factors in the educational milieu are rarely indicated as reasons for dropping out. Wu (1992) states that the concentration of dropouts is not caused by, but often associated with deficient school conditions, such as unstructured classroom activities and teachers not encouraging pupils to achieve academically. Results of a research conducted by Eckstein & Wolpin (1999) indicate that dropouts have lower school ability and motivation, they have lower expectations about the rewards from graduating and they place a higher value on leisure. They also found that working while in school reduces the academic performance and that the influence of family background characteristics on dropout is relatively small. A study by Manzo (2005) found that low attendance rates, poor behaviour and unsatisfactory grades in reading and math increase the probability of dropping out of high school. Dohn (1991:1) examined the phenomenon in a Danish high school and concluded that "*Neither the effect of family background nor exposure to factors in the educational milieu were significant in the decision to finish school. [...] Drop out was associated with lack of motivation and achievement of the students*".

According to Stearns (2006), the reasons why pupils leave school can differ by grade level, age and gender. For this research, it should be kept in mind that this could also be the case for the pupils who decide to switch from bilingual to regular education.

STUDY EXPERIENCES

Based on the results described above it is necessary to explore the concepts of *motivation* and *achievement* in depth. Motivation is usually defined as "an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behaviour" (Woolfolk, 2008: 438). As there has not been provided a definition in the literature for the concept of *study achievement*, we identify 'subject grades' as the most concrete definition for study achievements. The key to study achievement is motivation (De With *et al.* 2009). In turn, a pupil's motivation is influenced by positive and negative *study experiences*. The foundation of these experiences is the content of the lesson, which is influenced by pupils' prior knowledge, the learning environment (teacher, class and extracurricular activities) and the lesson material (books). The pupils' prior knowledge could be considered to correspond with Krashen's *input theory*. This implies that the pupil has to receive English input that is one step beyond his current stage of linguistic competence (*i+1*) (Krashen, 1985 in:

Westhoff, 2004). Also, the learning environment has to connect with the pupils' learning styles and abilities. Furthermore, *cooperative learning* is essential for creating a positive study experience (De With *et al.*, 2009).

Cognitive theorists stress the importance of *intrinsic* motivation, which is "the natural tendency to seek out and conquer challenges as we pursue personal interests and exercise capabilities" (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2002; Reeve, 1996 in: Woolfolk, 2008: 438). Cognitive theorists believe that "behaviour is determined by our thinking, not simply whether we have been rewarded or punished for the behaviour in the past (Stipek, 2002). Behaviour is initiated and regulated by plans, goals, schemas, expectations and attributions" (Woolfolk 2008: 442). This theory could explain the pupils' choice to step out of the bilingual programme. Even though pupils' work is rewarded with satisfactory or high grades, pupils also consider relevant factors such as future plans, expectations or goals as important determinants for stopping or continuing with the bilingual programme.

Related to this cognitive approach are *Expectancy D7 value theories* (Woolfolk, 2008). These theories posit that motivation is determined by the individual's expectation of reaching a goal and the value of that goal to him or her. The pupil has no motivation to work towards the goal if either of these two factors is zero (Woolfolk, 2008). For example, 'I believe I am able to complete the IB programme successfully, however the certificate is not important to me'. In that case a pupil's motivation will be zero and as a consequence the decision to switch to the regular programme is very likely. The element of *cost* could be added to this theory (Woolfolk, 2008). It implies that efforts have to be considered in relation to the cost of pursuing them. 'Is the effort and time I put into the (pre-) IB programme worth it? What could I be doing instead?' A pupil might put a high value on leisure or prefer to enrol in another optional subject, for example.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This research focuses on pupils who have passing grades and are allowed to continue with the bilingual programme, yet they decide to switch. Our research aims to list the main reasons why pupils indicate to switch. Also, this research intends to create pupil profiles of the switchers on the basis of their characteristics (e.g. age, background, motivation). Therefore, this research addresses the following central question:

What are the main reasons for pupils to decide to switch from the bilingual to the regular programme and what types of pupils make this decision?

To be able to answer this question, the following sub-questions have been formulated:

1. What are the different reasons pupils mention to switch from the bilingual to the regular, non-bilingual stream?
2. What pupil profiles of switchers can be distinguished?

VARIABLES

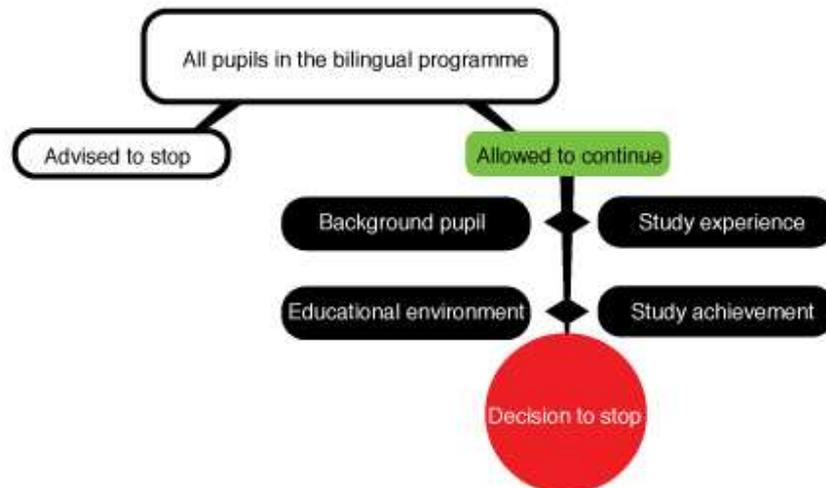
Based on Dohn (1991) and De With *et al.* (2009), we determined four main factors influencing the pupils' decision to switch to the regular programme. According to Dohn (1991), there exists a connection between dropout and the following three categories:

1. family background factors such as the socio-economic level;
2. social factors in the educational milieu, like the relationship to school staff and fellow pupils; and
3. motivation, achievement and ability, including grades and the lack of determination.

As mentioned before, especially this last factor was associated with dropout (Dohn, 1991).

The third factor is elaborated by using the concepts *study experience* and *study achievement* (De With *et al.*, 2009). Both concepts are linked to motivation; however, each one corresponds to a different type of motivation. *Study experience* seems to be closely linked in with *intrinsic* motivation, because whether an experience is perceived as positive or negative depends on the learner's personal preferences and abilities. *Study achievement* could be linked to *extrinsic* motivation, since pupils do something in order to earn a grade or for some other reason that has little to do with the task itself.

How the four factors are interrelated is shown in the model below and subsequently these factors are described in more detail.



Model 1 Factors influencing a pupil's choice to switch

Background factors

Background factors include both personal data (such as sex, age and grade) and family background information. Family background factors comprise ethnicity, family structure and socio-economic status. Other family background factors are parents' values and philosophies, involvement and expectations (Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). These factors include parents' cultural awareness, whether they talk with their child about school, their opinion about bilingual education and whether they encourage him or her to continue with the bilingual programme (Riches & Curdt-Christiansen, 2010).

Educational environment

A pupil's decision to stop with the bilingual programme is expected to be influenced by the teachers' enthusiasm for teaching in English and to what extent teachers are able to motivate pupils to improve their grades and to continue studying in the bilingual stream (Delver *et al.*, 2010). A teacher's proficiency in English and subject content knowledge is important (Delver *et al.*, 2010). Other factors are the class atmosphere, lesson material and extracurricular activities (De With *et al.* 2009).

The feeling of belonging to a group within the bilingual stream and the relationship to peers and teachers could also influence the choice to stop with an educational programme (Dohn, 1991).

Study experience

As mentioned before, this factor is linked to *intrinsic motivation*. Depending on personal preferences and abilities, pupils perceive an experience negatively or positively (De With *et al.*, 2009). Based on these experiences pupils make choices and plans, such as future study choices or career plans. Part of these choices could be the decision to switch to regular education. For example, if a pupil wants to become an archaeologist in the Netherlands, he might prefer to learn history terminology in Dutch.

Study achievement

All participants of our research have passing grades. Yet, we expect that study achievements can still play a role in the choice to switch; for reasons of admission to a higher Education Programme (e.g. Medical Science).

CONTEXT

The research school is a large secondary school in the Netherlands. The bilingual department admits *Atheneum* and *Gymnasium* pupils only. These pupils scored at least 545 out of 550 on their CITO test at the end of their primary education. Currently close to 400 pupils are enrolled in the bilingual stream of the research school. At the end of the third school year, the school advises pupils whether or not to continue with bilingual education, based on: the *Anglia Proficiency* test results, a pupil's *Bilingual Attitude*, grades

for English and the average result for other subjects. *Anglia* exams assess English language competence and measure all four language skills from beginner to native speaker level. For their bilingual attitude pupils receive either an A, B or C, based on their willingness to speak English with the teacher and their peers, their confidence in speaking English and capability to get their meaning across. If pupils complete all these assessments successfully, they will receive a certificate for bilingual education and can decide to continue with a pre-IB senior year. If they then, after six years of bilingual education, complete the senior IB programme successfully, they will obtain the IB Certificate English A2.

METHODS

This research is a *case study*, “a detailed examination of one setting, [...] or one particular event” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003: 59). One specific group of pupils who decide (or decided) to switch from bilingual to regular education is investigated *in-depth* (Wengraf, 2001). A qualitative research method is preferred over a quantitative method, because it gives pupils the freedom to provide answers that would not be considered in quantitative research. Therefore, interviews are conducted, using topics and focus questions steered by knowledge coming from literature. In order to answer the first sub question, the data analysis focuses on categorising the collected reasons in frequency lists. Based on these frequency lists, relevant *pupil profiles* are described and discussed, answering the second sub question.

RESPONDENTS

Pupils who switched voluntarily

The respondents in this research group are pupils who initially chose the bilingual stream at a bilingual school, but in or after their third year of their school career made a personal decision to stop with bilingual education. They completed the third year assessments satisfactory, so were not advised by the school to stop with their bilingual education. Still, these pupils decided to stop with the bilingual programme because of personal reasons unknown by the school. This research therefore aims at listing the main reasons for these pupils to stop with their bilingual education and switch to the regular stream. The research group includes pupils who stopped with the bilingual programme in the past three academic years, which means pupils decided to switch in the third, fourth or fifth form. These pupils are currently in their third, fourth, fifth or sixth form. They are 14 to 18 years old, 10 male and 2 female, one in Gymnasium (pre-university education with Latin and Greek) and the others in VWO (pre-university education). Four of them are seniors (*bovenbouw*); eight are juniors (*onderbouw*).

Response

All pupils who enrolled in bilingual education but switched to the regular stream were invited by the team leader of the bilingual department to participate in this research. Initially, seventeen out of 55 pupils agreed on participating and were contacted through e-mail by us, after the team leader had introduced us. In the end, twelve of these seventeen pupils were interviewed. This is a response rate of 70.6% (Bryman, 2001). The non-response was mainly due to the limited time the pupils had. The data collection was delayed because of the May holidays, which was a problem for the sixth formers who had to study for their final school exams. Therefore only one sixth-former was willing to cooperate in our research. Ultimately, data for twelve pupils could be collected. Despite the non-response of the six formers, these twelve pupils are still a representative sample of all switchers, as most pupils decide to switch in the third form, and the research group consisted of eight third formers.

INSTRUMENTS

Qualitative method

Rich and detailed data are needed in order to answer the sub questions. Therefore, a decision for using a qualitative approach was made. More methodological information was gathered (personal conversation with Ms. Bronkhorst, 2-5-2011) and used to make a well-considered decision for conducting in-depth interviews, using a *bottom up approach* (Wengraf, 2001).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the final group of pupils. “Semi-structured interviews are designed to have a number of interviewer questions prepared in advance but such prepared questions are designed to be sufficiently open that the subsequent questions of the interviewer cannot be planned in advance but must be improvised in a careful and theorised way” (Wengraf, 2001: 5). The semi-structured interviews provided us with insights in pupils’ perspectives on bilingual education, the interesting and valuable aspects of bilingual education according to the pupils, but also the difficulties and challenges these pupils face in bilingual education.

Topic list

The instrument being used to investigate pupils’ opinions was a topic list; a list with questions that was formed on the basis of literature. Literature research indicated which factors could influence pupils’ decisions to switch. During the meetings with the head of the junior bilingual department, more background information about the school and their bilingual programme was gathered and this was used to formulate the questions of the topic list more clearly. Approximately 70 open questions were put together, based on the four variables identified in the model. Also, three focus questions were prepared to guide the interviewer:

1. Why did you choose to enter the bilingual stream at the start of your school career?
2. Why do/did you decide to switch from the bilingual to the regular stream?
3. Under what conditions would you have proceeded with your bilingual education?

The first focus question was asked to put pupils at ease and was used as an introduction question. The second focus question was used to answer the first sub question of this research. The third focus question was used as a check to see if the second focus question indeed revealed all reasons to switch. The second sub question of this research was answered by looking at the results on the first sub question, together with the pupil’s personal and family background. By elaborating on discovered trends or patterns, we eventually ended up with the most representative pupil profiles of switchers.

The topic list guided the interviewers while conducting the interviews, in that it ensured comparability for the topics and questions being discussed. Still, the pupils responded from their own frame of reference and could express their feelings and opinions freely. Such an interview that “focuses on the elicitation and provocation of story-telling, of narration,” is called a *narrative interview* (Wengraf, 2001: 111). This stimulated pupils to give a complete explanation of their choice, from which we distilled and analysed all reasons to switch. At the end of the interview, a few pupils drew a top three, balance or diagram, visualising the main reasons that influenced their decision. This was used as a check and summary of everything that had been said, increasing the credibility of the pupil’s story (Baarda *et al.*, 1996).

Pilot

To ensure all questions of the topic list were applicable and relevant, we conducted a pilot interview with one male pupil, who recently decided to switch to the regular programme. The interviewers first introduced themselves and the (goal of the) research. Permission to use the voice recorder was asked, after ensuring anonymity. The pupil was instructed to ask clarification questions if needed, and was told there were no wrong or right answers. Snacks were available for the pupil. In this semi-structured interview, all topics and questions were addressed by one interviewer; the other interviewer took notes. Afterwards, the interviewers asked the pupil for feedback. The pupil had no negative feedback on the interview and said all questions were clear, which is why we decided to also use these data for the research, with permission of the pupil. Conducting a pilot study is a commonly used tool to identify possible pitfalls (Dörnyei, 2007), but in our case it confirmed the validity of the topic list.

Standardisation

In order to get comparable data from the interviews, it is important to standardise as much as possible. On the basis of Wengraf (2001) and Bogdan & Biklen (2003), the following decisions were made:

- the time frame of the interview - 45-60 minutes;
- the location of the interview - in a closed neutral room without distractions;
- the number of interviewers present during the interview - two or three, one taking notes and one asking questions, to be able to have double attention spans;

- the position of the interviewers - directed at the pupil with an open posture, no table in between the pupil and the interviewer; and
- remaining neutral as interviewer, which includes not asking any directive questions.

Also, it was considered important to put the interviewee at ease and to create a comfortable open atmosphere. This was done by introducing the interviewers and the research, reacting to the input of the pupil in his or her language and trying to build a relationship with the pupil (Whyte, 1984). This encourages the pupil to respond honestly to the question. Paraphrasing and summarizing a pupil's response during and after an interview, and asking the pupil for feedback, increases the validity of the study. After each interview, we also sent an extensive summary of the interview to the pupil, to check its accuracy. This will be explained thoroughly in the *Data preparation* section.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Data preparation

To end up with a list of main reasons for switching to answer the first sub question, one interviewer started off making a summary of the interview. This summary was double-checked by the other interviewer present at the interview. Subsequently, all reasons to switch mentioned by the pupil were selected, together with pupil characteristics that distinguished one pupil from another. The interviewers also added remarks about their observations; for example, if pupils expressed feelings of doubt and fear about passing to the next school year, a note was made about feeling insecure regarding their grades. To increase the validity and credibility of the data, the information was triple-checked by the pupils; the summary was sent back to the pupils by e-mail. Thanking them for their participation, we asked them to check the summary. Following the responses on these *member checks* (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006), most pupils confirmed the accuracy of the data. This check served to decrease the incidence of incorrect data and incorrect interpretation and as such increases the validity and credibility of the study.

Data analysis

In order to make the data workable, categories of reasons were made and listed according to their importance. By means of coloured papers we differentiated reasons, pupils' personal and family background and other relevant information related to the reasons. Ten categorisations of reasons followed, which were structured in table 1 (*Results* section). This table answers the first sub question. By looking into how many reasons one pupil has in common with another pupil, table 2 was developed (*Results* section). This table was used to, together with a pupil's personal and family background, create a pupil profile. This led to the differentiation of three different pupil profiles, answering the second sub question. These pupil profiles give indications for the types of pupils who can possibly decide to switch from the bilingual to the regular programme in the future. All these results can be found in the *Results* section.

Because two girls and ten boys are included in the research group, it might be possible to find out which girl said what during the interviews. Therefore, the *Results* section always refers to the pupil as 'he'. In this way, all data are treated confidentially (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Validity

This research provides detailed information on the reasons of VWO pupils at a bilingual school to switch from the bilingual to the regular stream. This specific group of pupils is too small to be externally valid. However, internal validity was guaranteed by taking into account as many validity checks as possible. The results of this research are therefore valid and can be utilised by other Dutch bilingual schools as an indication of the factors that are important for pupils to switch from bilingual to regular education. However, this is just an indication and results or conclusions can not be generalised.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This research attempts to answer the central question: *What are the main reasons for pupils to decide to switch from the bilingual to the regular programme?* In order to answer this question, this *Results* section is structured in two parts. Firstly, there is a brief description for each of the ten reasons that have been

mentioned by pupils who want to switch or have switched. Secondly, on the basis of the ten reasons and personal and family background factors we identify three pupil profiles of switchers.

DESCRIPTION FOR EACH REASON

The analysis of the data led to the categorisation of twelve reasons why pupils want to switch. It is decided to not discuss two of these reasons because they are very personal accounts and thus of minimal importance for this study; none of the other pupils named these reasons. Moreover, by excluding these two, we are able to guarantee the privacy of these two learners.

Table 1 lists the ten reasons and shows which pupil mentioned which reasons for switching.

	Pupils	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Reasons														
Top three														
Too much work		x		x		x	x	x	x		x	x		8
Feeling insecure about English and grades		x			x	x	x	x	x			x		7
The IB is not a precondition for future studies/job		x	x	x	x					x	x			6
Middle three														
Expecting higher grades for English		x	x				x	x						4
Criticism about the IB curriculum			x	x			x			x				4
Anglia Certificate obtained				x		x		x					x	4
Bottom four														
Being lazy and slacking at school			x		x	x								3
No feeling of gratification		x	x							x				3
Bond with the Dutch language		x			x									2
Choosing between bilingual education or passing			x						x					2
	Total	6	6	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	43

Table 1 Reasons why pupils decide to switch from the bilingual to the regular programme

The twelve pupils indicated their reasons to switch and on the basis of how often these reasons were mentioned, three 'groups' of reasons are distinguished: a 'Top three', the 'Middle three', and the 'Bottom four'.

The horizontal *Total* shows how many reasons each pupil has mentioned; this varies between one and six times. The pupils are clustered as much as possible; the pupils with most reasons mentioned are on the left hand side. The vertical *Total* shows how often the pupils have mentioned a reason. The more frequent reasons are placed in the upper part of the table, the less mentioned reasons are placed lower.

For the purpose of generating a clear overview of pupils' reasons to switch, the ten categorised reasons are divided in three groups based on their frequency. The first group consists of the top three most frequently mentioned reasons for switching. The middle group consists of three reasons that were each mentioned four times. The third group consists of reasons that are least frequently mentioned; varying between one and three times.

Top three reasons

The following three reasons were mentioned most frequently.

Too much work

Eight pupils indicated that they are not willing to do the pre-IB and IB programme because they are not interested in the work that it entails. They have been informed about the content of the work -reading literature and writing essays- and that it is a lot of work. Many pupils said that they "dislike" the work and that they have heard that "it is an absurd amount of work" which they are "not willing to do".

Feeling insecure about English and grades

Despite the fact that all pupils have passing grades to continue with the bilingual programme, a few seem to lack confidence in continuing their studies in English. They expect the level of English to be too high and decide to switch. As a pupil phrased, he fears to "needing to redo the school year" and "redoing a

year is really not an option". From their point of view, continuing with the bilingual programme could impact their grades negatively so that they will not be able to pass to a next year.

The International Baccalaureate is not a precondition for future studies or job

The third most frequently mentioned reason is that pupils do not envision the IB curriculum necessary for their future studies or career. The junior pupils, who are *domestically oriented*¹, state that a certain level of English is not a future study requirement. The senior pupils, who are *internationally orientation*², state they do not need the IB programme, as it is not a precondition for admission to Colleges abroad.

Middle three

The following three reasons were all mentioned four times and thus these reasons cannot be listed in order of frequency.

Expecting higher grades for English

The four junior pupils who expect to receive higher grades for English if they switch are all ambitious³ pupils. Pupils in senior years state that it is "more important to finish secondary school with high grades" than "to complete the IB programme", because this is what Higher Education programmes might look at. Pupils in VWO3 expect the transition to VWO4 to be difficult. Switching to the regular programme will make "studying easier and this will help me in improving my grades". Both of them have experienced this when they dropped *Gymnasium*.

Criticism about the IB curriculum

The four senior pupils that criticise the IB curriculum are internationally oriented. They base their criticism on their pre-IB and IB experiences in senior years. The IB curriculum should teach us "how to apply our language knowledge instead of writing essays". As the programme focuses mostly on reading books and writing essays, they state that it is "not important or useful, because I am not learning anything". Pupils were asked in which case they would like to continue with the bilingual programme and most pupils indicated that they would if all subjects continued being taught in English.

Anglia Certificate obtained

The *Anglia Certificate*, the changes in the bilingual programme after year three, and the choice for a study profile distinguish the bilingual junior years from the IB programme in the senior years. Pupils feel they wrap up their junior years and do not see it as a midway assessment. Two of these four pupils stopped with *Gymnasium* and two are ambitious learners.

Bottom four

The following four reasons were only mentioned two or three times.

Being lazy and slacking school

One pupil states that due to his laziness his results dropped and he decided it was better to switch. However, there have been two other occasions where the interviewers observed that slacking schoolwork could be considered a factor for switching. Several pupils named one specific pupil and another pupil

¹ In our point of view, pupils who are considered *domestically oriented* value living relatively close to their families, staying in the Netherlands and intend to study and work in the Netherlands. They do not show any interest in going abroad.

² Pupils who are considered internationally oriented are interested in going abroad for studies or work. Some pupils also have family abroad and/or have stayed abroad for a period of time.

³ According to us, *ambitious* pupils are those who intend to make the most out of school and this is visible in their study profile choices, e.g. choosing for two profiles, continuing with *Gymnasium* and working with a great willingness towards their goals.

answered "yes [I am able to complete the bilingual programme], but then I would need to work harder". After a pause he said, "Mhmm this sounds very bad".

No feeling of gratification

The three pupils state that the bilingual programme takes a lot of effort and the work is not rewarded with good grades. Two pupils noticed that classmates with a poorer level of English received higher grades, "whereas my English is good!" One of the teachers is said to assign higher grades to girls, whereas they do not participate very well. All these issues have had an effect on the switchers' feeling of gratification.

Bond with the Dutch language

Two pupils, who can be described as domestically oriented, indicated they do not enjoy speaking English and that they automatically speak Dutch. The bond with the Dutch language seems to be a matter of identity and also related to a longer-term school focus; the final exams will be in Dutch and thus it is important to study in Dutch.

Choosing between bilingual education or passing

Two pupils indicated they were not performing well and this led to the choice of switching. They consider it better to pass to the next school year than to continue with the bilingual programme. Moreover, one pupil mentioned he could continue having class with his friends in this way.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SWITCHERS

On the basis of Table 1, Table 2 was developed. This table shows that pupil 1 has three reasons in common⁴ with four other pupils (pupils 2, 4, 6 and 7), and pupil 7 has three reasons in common with pupils 1, 5 and 6. Therefore, we consider pupils 1 and 7 to be the *hubs* of this study. Below, we describe the characteristics of these two pupils, which can be considered a first step in determining a profile of switchers.

Pupils	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	xx											
2	3	xx										
3	2	2	xx									
4	3	2	1	xx								
5	2	1	2	2	xx							
6	3	2	1	1	2	xx						
7	3	1	2	1	3	3	xx					
8	2	0	1	1	2	2	2	xx				
9	2	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	xx			
10	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	xx		
11	2	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	0	1	xx	
12	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	xx

Table 2 Reasons shared by pupils⁵

Each pupil who shares one, two or three reasons with another pupil is given a 1, 2 or 3 respectively in the appropriate cell. As the first pupil shares three reasons with four pupils, and the seventh pupil shares three reasons with three pupils, these two pupils are considered most relevant for the characterisation of pupil profiles of switchers.

Pupil 1 represents the domestically oriented pupil who dropped *Gymnasium*, as it was too demanding and it negatively influenced grades for other subjects; and he does not have any future plans. The pupil is convinced that he is able to do the IB programme, yet is not enjoying it and finds it useless. His reasons

⁴ For example, these three reasons are: The IB is not a precondition for future studies or job; expecting higher grades for English; and no feeling of gratification.

⁵ Only the pupils who have 3 'connections' with other pupils are highlighted, because this creates an immediate clarity of which pupils can be considered important for the formulation of a *pupil profile*.

for switching are related to the workload and receiving low grades and probably also to his lazy study attitude, as he is aiming for passing grades (*zesjesmentaliteit*). His parents support his decision and do not try to convince him to continue with the bilingual programme.

Pupil 7 represents the internationally oriented pupil who has concrete, ambitious future study and career plans; this involves living and working in the Netherlands and abroad. It is a pupil who dropped *Gymnasium* as it was too demanding and negatively influenced grades for other subjects. Furthermore, the pupil values having completed the requirements of the *Anglia* Certificate, and rather works for high grades than for fulfilling the IB curriculum. It is a pupil who criticises the IB method for not contributing to his English language skills. His parents support his decision and do not try to convince him.

A second step in determining the pupil profiles includes looking deeper into their personal and family background. This leads to the identification of the second and third pupil profile that both can fall within the description of pupil 7. The final three pupil profiles are summarised in Table 3.

Thus, the second profile of a switcher describes a pupil who is fairly interested in continuing with the bilingual programme, but his motivation seems to be mostly extrinsic (e.g. recognising the importance of the IB Certificate). The pupil is not truly interested in the work that the IB programme entails. It is a pupil who is -to some extent- internationally oriented. The reason for switching is also explained by an insecure feeling about his grades.

The third type is an internationally oriented pupil who chooses a very ambitious study profile and continues doing *Gymnasium*. This particular pupil is interested in fulfilling academic interests rather than aiming for high grades. His choice to switch to the regular programme is explained by his ambitions in other study areas, which the pupil values highly.

	Pupil profile 1	Pupil profile 2	Pupil profile 3
Gymnasium	Dropped	Dropped	Continued
Orientation	Domestic	Domestic/international	International
Parents	Support their children's decision to switch		
Characterisation	Only aiming at passing grades	Fairly interested to continue	Ambitious
Reasons to switch	- Workload is too high - Receiving low grades	- Only extrinsic motivation - No enthusiasm for reading literature and writing essays - Insecure feeling about English and grades	- Ambitious in other areas (e.g. study profile, Gymnasium)

Table 3 Profiles of switchers

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

CONCLUSIONS

Answering the central question of this research, *What are the main reasons for pupils to decide to switch from the bilingual to the regular programme?*, is not as straightforward as it may seem. The *Results* section shows the complexity of such decisions. The twelve interviewed pupils mentioned ten different reasons to switch.

Arguably, the ten main reasons all fall within three of the four variables determined in the Theoretical Framework. Five of the reasons correspond to *study experience*⁶ and five reasons to *study achievement*⁷.

⁶ These are: *too much work, IB is not a precondition for future studies or job, being lazy and slacking at school, bond with the Dutch language, and feeling insecure about English.*

Only two reasons⁸ are associated with the *educational environment* and none correspond to *background factors*⁹. These outcomes correspond to results of studies on both *dropout* and *switching* (Dohn, 1991; Delver *et al.* 2010). The main reasons for switching are associated with *study experience* and *study achievement*.

DISCUSSION

Due to the fact that research conducted on bilingual education in the Netherlands is still limited, we believe that this practice-based research builds on and adds to Delver *et al.* (2010), by undertaking a more qualitative and in-depth approach.

Looking into the results, it can be noticed that parents (family background factors) are never mentioned as a reason to switch. This is in line with Dohn (1991) and Eckstein & Wolpin (1999), who stated that the effect of family background does not significantly influence pupils' decision to drop out of a regular high school.

Although none of the respondents of this research stated that they want to switch because of their teachers, some pupils clearly formulated the motivational boost a teacher can give them and this could potentially lead to continuing with the bilingual programme. Future research could look deeper into the teacher as an influential factor in a pupil's decision to switch.

In contrast to what one would expect, and what became apparent during the development of pupil profiles, is that some ambitious pupils make the well-balanced choice to switch from the bilingual to the regular programme. This could also be explained by cognitive theories (Woolfolk 2008), because despite of having been rewarded by passing grades, these ambitious pupils have clear future plans, expectations or goals, which in their view can better be achieved by switching to the regular programme.

Another unexpected finding is related to the design of the bilingual programme in the senior years. Most pupils mentioned they would continue with their bilingual education if the bilingual programme stayed the same as in their junior years. Therefore, for further studies, it seems important to explore the possibilities of changing the design of the bilingual programme to better meet the pupils' wishes.

Moreover, the reason *criticism about the IB programme* has been exclusively mentioned by seniors. In addition, seven out of eight pupils who mentioned that continuing would be *too much work* were juniors. This is in line with Stearns (2006), who noticed that reasons for dropping out can differ by pupils' grade and age.

Recommendations for future research

A limitation of qualitative research is its subjective character. We have tried to increase the validity of the research by doing extensive literature research, a pilot study, a standardisation of the interviews and several checks during and after the interviews.

Further research is needed to better deal with this limitation. Similar future research should be conducted at a greater number of bilingual schools and with a greater population. Also, it is considered essential to include pupils who are enrolled in the IB programme (as a *control group*), in order to compare the switchers with their peers in bilingual education.

The *Results* section provides a frequency list of reasons. However, reasons that are mentioned more frequently are not necessarily more important. Further research could give a more nuanced insight into whether a reason such as *being lazy and slacking at school* is maybe more important than this research

⁷ These are: *feeling insecure about grades, expecting higher grades for English, Anglia Certificate obtained, choice between bilingual education or passing and no feeling of gratification.*

⁸ *Criticism about the IB curriculum, no feeling of gratification.*

⁹ Note that the reason *feeling insecure about English and grades* is split into *feeling insecure about English* and *feeling insecure about grades*. Moreover, *no feeling of gratification* is associated with two variables.

shows. Thus, when it is of interest to measure the importance of those reasons, it could be considered to compare pupils' intention to switch and the actual switching.

Suggestions for the research school

Although the results cannot be generalised and a control group was lacking, practical suggestions for the school can be formulated. At first, taking into account the most frequently mentioned reason to switch, the school management could explore the possibility of reducing the workload of IB English. Secondly, the information about their bilingual programme presented to the pupils could be revised. How to make bilingual education, especially IB English, more fun? How do you convince them of the relevance of bilingual education? Thirdly, as pupils indicated that teachers play such an important role in their motivation, the team leaders and teachers of the bilingual department are suggested to motivate their pupils more to complete the IB programme.

Personal reflections

Carrying out this practice-based research has been tremendously interesting for us. By means of conducting interviews, we have gained new insights in pupils' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, which will be very useful in our future teaching. Also, we have learned from pupils that they greatly value personal contact with their teachers and that this motivates them to continue, for example, their bilingual education. Our research and writing process was characterised by good cooperation within an enthusiastic team, which has made this practice-based research project a success!

(The text of this article is: 7077 words)

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(The text of the references is: 508 words)

ANNEX – TOPIC LIST FOR THE INTERVIEW (IN DUTCH)

INTERVIEW: WAAROM STOPPEN LEERLINGEN MET TTO?

Ons onderzoek richt zich op de redenen waarom jij hebt besloten te stoppen met TTO. We horen heel graag wat jij van school vond toen je nog TTO deed. Het doel van ons onderzoek is om uiteindelijk een profiel te schetsen voor de school; zodat de school beter kan begrijpen waarom leerlingen stoppen. De school zal er niet achter komen wat jij hebt gezegd want wij zullen je gegevens en je antwoorden op ons interview in vertrouwen behandelen en anoniem houden. Dat betekent dat jouw naam niet gebruikt zal worden en niemand er achter kan komen wat jij hebt gezegd.

Tijdens dit onderzoek zullen we je vragen stellen waardoor jij kunt denken dat er een 'goed' of juist een 'fout' antwoord zal zijn, maar dit is niet het geval. We willen begrijpen hoe jij hebt nagedacht, je hebt gevoeld, welke afwegingen je hebt gemaakt in de periode dat je nadacht om te stoppen met TTO.

PERSOONLIJKE INFORMATIE

Naam:
Leeftijd:
Geslacht:
Ben je een keer blijven zitten?: Ja / Nee
Leerjaar:
Niveau:
Wat was je middelbare school advies in groep 8?
Ben je geboren in NL? Zo niet, waar?
Sinds wanneer woon je in Nederland?
Welke taal/talen spreek je met je familie (thuis)?

SOCIAALECONOMISCHE STATUS

Met wie woon je? Vader/moeder?
Heb je broers en/of zussen?
Hoeveel?
Werken je ouders? Wat voor werk doen ze?
Welke opleiding hebben je ouders gedaan? Op welk niveau?
Doen je ouders veel met cultuur? Gaan ze bijv. naar film/theatervoorstellingen, lezen ze boeken, kijken ze documentaires...? (Wat is je moeders lievelingsprogramma?)

Wat vinden je ouders van TTO? Wat vinden ze er goed/minder goed aan?
Praat je regelmatig over school met je ouders? Waar hebben jullie het dan precies over?
Hebben je ouders je gemotiveerd om toch door te gaan met/beter je best te doen voor TTO?

TTO

Waarom ben je gestopt met TTO?
Ben je blij dat je bent gestopt met TTO? Waarom?

MOTIVATIE

Hoe ben je tot de keuze gekomen om TTO te gaan doen? (Was het jouw eigen keuze om TTO te volgen of heeft iemand uit jouw omgeving jou gestimuleerd?)
Wie is met het idee gekomen te stoppen met TTO? Vanuit jezelf, je ouders, ...?
En wie heeft de uiteindelijke beslissing genomen om met TTO te stoppen?
Wat vond jij/vonden je ouders van de keuze om te stoppen?
Vond je TTO te veeleisend? (Vond je dat ze teveel van je vroegen?)
Miste je weleens lessen? Zo ja: hoe vaak en waarom? (spijbelen, ziekte, familie, etc.)
Vind je school belangrijker dan dingen buiten school zoals familie, sport of bijbaantje?
Wil je na school graag in het buitenland studeren / werken / reizen?

Denk je dat je TTO nodig hebt voor je vervolgopleiding? (Is het een eis / voorwaarde of kun je ook zonder?)

Toen je nog TTO deed, dacht je dat je een betere opleiding / baan zou kunnen gaan doen als je TTO zou afronden?

Nu je gestopt bent met TTO, denk je dat je minder kans maakt op een goede opleiding / baan? Toen je TTO deed was je toen tevreden over je cijfers? (Voor welke vakken was je tevreden / ontevreden?)

Verwachtte je betere cijfers te behalen als je zou stoppen met TTO? Waarom wel / niet?

Verwachtte je minder (huis)werk (en dus meer vrije tijd) te hebben als je zou stoppen met TTO?

Waarom wel / niet?

ENGELS

Vond je dat meer huiswerk voor Engels ten koste ging van andere vakken? (Of andersom?)

Waren de vakken in het Engels moeilijker dan de vakken in het Nederlands? (Zag je dat terug in je cijfers?)

Heb je IB Engels gedaan?

Wat vond je van IB Engels?

Vond je IB Engels leuk?

Vond je IB Engels moeilijk?

Had je meer (huis)werk voor IB Engels dan andere vakken?

HOUDING VAN DE LEERLING

Had je het gevoel dat je hoorde bij een groep, de groep met tweetalige leerlingen?

Wat vond je van de sfeer binnen de TTO groep? (pesten, samenwerken?)

Hoe was de band met jouw leraren?

Had je vaak onenigheid met docenten? Werd je er vaak uit gestuurd?

Vind je het leuk om Engels te spreken?

Gebruik je Engels ook wel eens buiten schooltijd? (tv/boeken/tijdschriften/games/vakanties/email met vrienden?)

Wat was je laatste *bilingual attitude* score? A/B/C?

Zijn er buitenschoolse activiteiten specifiek voor TTO? Doe je daar aan mee?

Spreek je dan Engels?

Was er denk je een verschil in hoe de jongens en meisjes tegen het Engels aankeken?

Hoorde je veel leerlingen praten over stoppen met TTO?

Doe je altijd je huiswerk? Nee, hoe vaak (per week) doe je het niet?

Deed je altijd actief mee in de TTO klas?

Voelde je je soms onzeker toen je nog op het TTO zat? Zo ja: hoe kwam dat?

Was je vaak zenuwachtig/gestrest voor een toets? Meer voor een toets in het Engels dan in het Nederlands?

Denk je, ondanks dat je bent gestopt met TTO, dat je TTO wel aankon?

LERAREN

Waren jouw TTO leraren enthousiast om in het Engels les te geven?

Wat vond je van hun Engels?

Besteedden ze tijd aan het uitleggen van het Engels bij andere vakken dan Engels, zodat jij de stof beter begreep? (bijv. door middel van een woordenlijst op bord of door gebruik van plaatjes).

Vond je dat je leraren veel kennis hadden van hun vak?

Moedigden docenten je aan om mee te doen aan debat/wiskundewedstrijden, etc.?

Hebben je leraren je gemotiveerd om toch door te gaan met/betere cijfers te halen op het TTO?

Werd er in de TTO lessen veel gebruik gemaakt van ICT (Internet, Youtube, PowerPoint, etc.)?

Wat vond je van je boeken en lesmateriaal in het Engels?

AFSLUITENDE VRAGEN

Toen je nadacht om te stoppen met TTO, welke redenen kon je toen opnoemen om wel door te gaan?

In welk geval zou je hebben besloten door te gaan met TTO?

(The text of this annex is: 978 words)