

# 14 The Netherlands

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## 14.1 Introducing CLIL

The Netherlands is a country traditionally known for its good command of foreign languages. Some argue this follows from being a small country, others point to the direction of the Dutch as an international trade force, cruising the seas in search of economic gain. Probably, there is an element of truth in both; the practical attitude of the Dutch towards using languages in order to communicate with people who do not speak Dutch does by no means imply that the Dutch do not value their own languages. I say languages, for the Netherlands has two official languages: Dutch and Frisian. The latter is spoken in Frisia, one of the northern provinces. In Frisia, where this minority language is spoken, there is a tradition of bilingual education focussing on Frisian and Dutch. In this article, I will focus on a more recent development, the use of English as a medium of instruction in general secondary schools.

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL), known in Dutch as '*tweetalig onderwijs*' ('tto'), is an educational approach in which non-language subjects such as history or biology are taught using a language other than the mother tongue<sup>47</sup>. In some European countries the term 'bilingual education', which is the literal translation of '*tweetalig onderwijs*', is associated with the use of a second official language and/or a minority language. In the Netherlands, this is not necessarily the case. Where national circumstances are described, therefore, the term '*tweetalig onderwijs*' is used, whereas in the European context, the more generic term CLIL is used.

CLIL in the Netherlands originates from international education. In the Netherlands, international education is only available to a specific target group, consisting of expats, children of diplomats, etcetera. International schools are not allowed to accept pupils who do not have an international background. In 1989, one of the international schools decided, on parents demand, to open a bilingual department for Dutch students, who would follow the regular Dutch curriculum partly through Dutch and partly through English. The initiative of this school (Alberdingk Thijm, Hilversum) in 1989 has led to successful introduction of CLIL into Dutch secondary schools and it has grown rapidly from one CLIL school in 1989 to a network of 75 secondary schools in the 2005/2006 school year.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Definition based on definition of CLIL by Marsh, Maljers and Wolff (2006).

<sup>48</sup> There are some 670 secondary schools in the Netherlands. Over 10% offers CLIL. It is expected that this number will rise to 25% in 2010.

These 75 schools have some 9,000 CLIL students. This bottom-up approach is by some considered to be one of the most successful innovations in Dutch education of the past 20 years. One of the consequences of this bottom-up development is that CLIL in secondary education is not included in educational laws, or in the financing system of the Ministry of Education.

CLIL has in the past ten years developed into a specialist school type in secondary education. In general, all CLIL schools offer *vwo* (*voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, i.e. pre-university education) through CLIL, while some 20 of them have recently extended the CLIL stream to the *havo* (*hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*) department. A limited number of initiatives for CLIL at the lower pre-vocational level (*vmbo; voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*) is starting to develop.

English is the main target language. There is, to date, only one school that offers Dutch/German CLIL, not surprisingly located near the German border.

## 14.2 Development of a CLIL Standard

In the Netherlands, CLIL has developed within schools. This means that provision is somewhat heterogeneous. The Dutch model for CLIL as a prescribed invariable model does not exist, at least not in terms of specific Ministry of Education guidelines regarding the content of CLIL, its subjects or timeframe, etc. The official position of the Inspectorate for Education and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is that up to half of the total number of lessons may be taught in English, that the Dutch curriculum must be followed, and that CLIL cannot be financially elitist. Naturally, the students' competencies in Dutch cannot be negatively affected by CLIL.

In principle, any school can start a CLIL stream, but if it wants to join the official network of CLIL schools or use the name 'tto school' or 'tto junior school' it has to adopt the Dutch standard for CLIL. This 'standard' was developed by the schools themselves, supervised and coordinated by the *Europees Platform voor het Nederlandse Onderwijs* (European Platform for Dutch education). The aim of the standard is twofold: to assure the quality of CLIL and to facilitate the development of a school type, which also allows for student mobility between CLIL schools. This standard is now considered to be the guideline for new schools.

The standard consists of four components, namely 'results', 'educational process', 'quality' and 'preconditions'.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> The standard and the quality instruments described here will be published in 2007 by the European Platform for Dutch Education in the Hague.

The first component, 'results', describes the final aims of the CLIL streams for students: their English should be at level B2 of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by the end of year 3 (students' age 15), and at the level of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) Language A2 certificate by the end of year 6 (students' age 18). The students' results for both Dutch and subjects taught in the CLIL stream should not deviate negatively from the results of comparable non-CLIL students. Last but not least, the results of European and international orientation (Eio) are also defined. CLIL aims at opening up students' horizons and developing an international attitude. Therefore, CLIL students have (school-based) contacts with other students, not only for language purposes, but also with a view to preparing themselves for an international future. Knowledge and understanding of for instance the European Union and the ability to live and work in an international environment are considered to be important aspects of CLIL.

The second component, 'educational process', defines quantitative and qualitative requirements. Quantitative requirements include the number of hours taught (50% for years 1–3 and some 1,150 of the 4,800 study hours for years 4–6). The CLIL subjects need to include at least one subject out of three clusters of subjects each (science, social science, creative subjects/PE). The reason behind this clustering of subjects lies in the different types of register and style used in the clusters. Dutch is specifically mentioned as having a similar status to that of English.

In cooperation with university experts and teacher training institutions, a didactical profile of teachers was developed to supplement the standard. The 'quality' component includes both language skills required (language proficiency to at least B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference) as well as didactical CLIL approaches, etc.). CLIL makes demands on teachers that differ considerably from those experienced in mainstream education. The basis lies in an interactive, student-centred approach through which students are encouraged and supported to use the CLIL language. CLIL subject teachers need to use strategies that are not always used in the non-CLIL classrooms. Also, knowledge of specialist jargon in each subject is acquired. Corrective feedback is used to support the language learning process. In order to accomplish this, a lot of attention is paid to communication skills.

'Educational process', the second component, also includes internationalisation, which needs to play a central role in the school's policy and curriculum. The third and fourth components include measures to ensure that the school pays attention to the quality of its CLIL stream and the preconditions for setting it up. Finally, the CLIL standard states in which way the bilingual English curriculum differs from the mainstream curriculum, for example, through extra attention paid to French or German, offering an extra foreign language, greater attention paid to information and communication technology and a varied programme of extra-curricular (international) activities.

### 14.3 Subjects

CLIL starts at the moment that students enter the secondary school, in year one. In years 1–3, 50% of the total number of lessons is taught through English. In order to ensure that students learn a variety of registers and styles, the types of subject offered need to vary. Subjects should include at least one social science, one natural science and one creative subject (including PE). Often, extra English lessons are given; in some schools, CLIL is combined with the mainstream *gymnasium* (pre-university school offering Latin and Greek). In the *Tweede Fase* (upper secondary education, years 4 to 5 of *havo* and years 4 to 6 of *vwo*) all pupils choose a subject combination. The number of CLIL pupils is not generally sufficient for all four subject combinations to be offered. Schools have therefore chosen mainly to offer subjects from the compulsory part in English, such as general science, culture and arts (*algemene natuurwetenschappen*, or *anw*, and *culturele en kunstzinnige vorming*, or *ckv*), history and mathematics. In addition, a specialised subject project paper can be written in English, internationalisation activities can be undertaken during unspecified teaching time, and extra hours of English are often offered. The total study load for the second stage of *vwo* is 4,800 hours (spread over three years), 1,150 hours of which are in English. Not all CLIL secondary schools offer CLIL in upper secondary education.

### 14.4 Aims

CLIL has two main overall aims:

- 1 Better command of the CLIL language.  
By studying some subjects in another language, the number of hours during which pupils are in contact with it is greatly increased. Research has shown that the student's command of the CLIL target language improves considerably.<sup>50</sup>
- 2 Preparation for and orientation towards a more international society.  
CLIL offers a broad introduction to internationalisation. Pupils often take part in an extensive (inter)cultural and internationally oriented (extra-curricular) programme to support this grounding. Learning to look at things from a different angle through another language stimulates a broader view of society and the world. Using another language and materials from another country and culture may change our perspective on certain subjects. If pupils decide to study abroad or undertake an English language course after completing *havo* or *vwo*, it is helpful if they already have experience of using a language of communication other than their mother tongue. They also gain from practical familiarity with study or work materials prepared in another language and from the ability to work with fellow pupils in that language. However, this does not only apply solely to education undertaken abroad. Many books used in Dutch universities and other higher education institutions are in English, simply because the Dutch market is too small for the translation of professional literature into Dutch.

<sup>50</sup> Huijbregtse, 2001

#### 14.5 Entry Requirements

Because CLIL is relatively demanding for pupils, nearly all CLIL schools have a selection procedure. While this may differ from school to school, selection is generally linked to the following:

- The pupil concerned has achieved a high (*vwo*) score for the *Cito* examination taken in the final year of primary education.
  - He or she has a positive *vwo* report from the primary school head.
  - The majority of schools invite pupils who are applying for CLIL to a meeting with the selection committee at which the motivation of the pupil is considered.
  - Sometimes, general language skills are tested.
- These requirements are modified in the case of CLIL at *havo* level.

#### 14.6 Certification

Pupils who have undertaken CLIL take the Dutch final examination and receive a regular *vwo* or *havo* diploma at the end of their school career. In that examination, CLIL pupils nevertheless take their regular examinations in the Dutch language. Thus, even if students are taught Mathematics (for example) in English they still have to take their final examinations in Dutch. Due to practical and political reasons, the Ministry of Education so far is reluctant to start discussions about translating these exams into English, let alone developing an exam especially for CLIL students.

There are several opportunities for pupils to obtain a further certificate and demonstrate their interest, involvement and achievements in CLIL-type provision, especially in the case of English:

- Certificate of basic secondary education (*basisvorming*)  
The CLIL schools network, in cooperation with the European Platform, has developed a certificate that pupils obtain at the end of basic secondary education (years 1–3). Only schools that are members of the network and meet the network's CLIL quality criteria can award this certificate.
- IBO Language A2 certificate of English (upper secondary level)  
The European Platform has set up a project with the International Baccalaureate Organisation in Geneva through which CLIL students from mainstream education can obtain a *Certificate* for English (Language A2 certificate intended for bilingual pupils). This is not equivalent to the IBO *Diploma* awarded to pupils from international schools, but only part of it. Schools can participate in the project via the European Platform and have to prepare their students for the examination (students pay examination fees). Finally, some schools allow their pupils to take additional examinations at the end of the third and fourth year – for example, Cambridge First Certificate or Advanced, an IGCSE (International General Certificate for Secondary Education). A small number of schools offer the IBO Middle Years Programme (MYP) to students aged 11–16, but the MYP does not lead to a formal certificate.

#### 14.7 Funding

CLIL schools pay their CLIL stream costs from mainstream resources. Schools still in the introductory phase of CLIL can apply for a (restricted) grant from the European Platform. CLIL costs are higher than those of mainstream education because English study materials have to be purchased, including reference books, atlases, dictionaries and cd-roms as well as basic textbooks. Extra costs are also incurred in the extra-curricular programme with, for example, visits to English language plays, school events with guest speakers, conferences, European youth parliament meetings, model united nations sessions or the public speaking contest. Participation in internationalisation projects such as exchanges or language study weeks entails yet further expenditure. In addition, CLIL pupils often have more lesson time a week than in the prescribed mainstream timetable. The ministry does not cover the costs of engaging extra staff. As a result, parents pay more to contribute to the costs of CLIL. The amount for each school varies (from between € 250 and € 750 per pupil per year; most schools fall within the 350–450 range). How it is invested also varies greatly from one school to the next. Nearly all CLIL schools have a special fund to support students who cannot afford this extra fee.

#### 14.8 Evaluation of Schools/Classes offering CLIL

The education inspectorate, for whom the Minister of Education, Culture and Science is responsible, supervises the quality of education. While ensuring that CLIL does not undermine the regular school timetable, the inspectorate does in its school visits not specifically focus on CLIL stream activities.

The network of CLIL schools coordinated by the European Platform has, based on the standard for CLIL, set up its own CLIL quality scheme, which may include self-evaluation by schools and regular visits by either colleagues (advisory visits) or independent experts (accreditation visits). The latter are intended to examine the CLIL stream in relation to the CLIL standard adopted by all schools. If schools satisfy the criteria for years 1–3, they receive an official certificate and are allowed to use the name 'tto junior school'. This also occurs when they meet the criteria for years 1–6, in which case they are awarded the 'tto school' certificate. At present, there are 9 recognised 'tto schools' and 13 'tto junior schools'.

#### 14.9 Research

In the Netherlands, an important contribution to researching secondary school CLIL was made through a five-year study. From 1995 until the beginning of 2001, Ineke Huibregtse from Ivlós (University of Utrecht) undertook a research project into the effects of CLIL. Its findings are that the English language proficiency of CLIL pupils is better than in the case of 'mainstream' pupils. Furthermore, CLIL does not adversely affect the proficiency of pupils in Dutch or their achievements in other school subjects, such as geography and history, offered in English.

A second PhD thesis entitled *'Upper middle-class resources of power in the education arena. Dutch elite schools in an age of globalisation'*<sup>51</sup> dealing with CLIL in secondary education was finalised in 2005. Don Weenink from the University of Amsterdam completed his study of the factors underlying the choice of a particular type of secondary school (whether a CLIL school or classical *gymnasium*, etc.) His research shows that the background of pupils is an important factor in the choice of a school. Pupils who have more cosmopolitan upper middle class parents (who have worked abroad) tend to go to CLIL schools. Moreover, pupils who are convinced that a good command of English will give them a head start in their future careers, and ambitious and talented non-upper middle class pupils that want to realize their ambitions through CLIL education, also attend CLIL schools rather than the *gymnasium*.

In addition, the European Platform regularly monitors CLIL student examination results. For primary schools, the difference between language learning and CLIL is not as clear as in the case of secondary education, and language and subject are more closely linked than in the latter. This applies in particular to those situations in which language learning involves play. For example, should one define someone throwing dice to teach numbers to young children as a language teacher or maths teacher?

#### 14.10 Primary School CLIL

The Netherlands has relatively little experience with early language learning or CLIL in primary schools, as officially, according to the Law on Primary Education, the language of instruction in primary schools has to be Dutch. In 2006, some 80 schools offer languages to young learners (from the ages of 5 or 6), but normally this is language learning and not connected to a subject. Most primary schools first offer English in years 7 and 8, but those offering CLIL do so immediately from year 1 of primary education for a maximum of 2 hours a week. Subjects are difficult to define and vary enormously from one school to the next. In general, schools rely on games, music, drama, thus touching also on mathematics and physical education, etc.

A number of primary schools in Rotterdam have started to offer CLIL Dutch/English. This pilot project<sup>52</sup> is strongly supported by the municipality of Rotterdam. In contrast to the situation in CLIL secondary schools, mainly native speakers are used for a limited number of hours a week.

51 For the complete thesis see [dare.uva.nl/document/10981](http://dare.uva.nl/document/10981)

52 For further information see [www.earlybirdie.nl](http://www.earlybirdie.nl)

#### 14.11 Vocational CLIL

A growing number of senior vocational secondary institutions have started to offer provision using English. By means of cooperation, the international business studies (IBS) Alliance<sup>53</sup> aims at boosting the international character of two qualifications within the international trade and wholesale trade training courses (wholesaler and assistant export manager qualification). Throughout all courses English is the language of instruction.

#### 14.12 Future Developments

It is expected that the number of secondary CLIL schools will stabilise at a certain point in time. This does however not imply that the growth of the number of CLIL students will stop. Experienced schools are now looking at possibilities to use their expertise for expansion of CLIL within their school. Thus also students from the havo or vmbo will be offered access to the benefits of CLIL. Also, whereas now English is the main target language for CLIL, the good results of CLIL methodology is likely to impact other modern languages. Teacher competence remains a central issue.

New challenges are thus mainly found in introducing other languages into CLIL and offering CLIL to other students. The vocational sector potentially is a growth sector, as it is argued that these students could perhaps benefit from CLIL methodology the most.

In the secondary schools' remit, CLIL has found a firm place and is here to stay!

53 For further information see [www.ibs-alliance.nl](http://www.ibs-alliance.nl)

## References

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