

ENGLISH-MEDIUM TEACHING AT THE UTRECHT SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS



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Policy Recommendations and Best
Practices

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

“One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.”

–Frank Smith

1. INTRODUCTION

This report deals with English-medium Teaching at the Utrecht School of Economics (USE). USE is the economics department of the faculty of Law, Economics and Governance of Utrecht University and, like other academic economics departments, is heavily oriented towards an international learning environment.

Internationalisation in higher education is often accompanied by student and staff recruitment outside national borders and since prospective students and lecturers are not expected to learn Dutch, English is chosen as the medium of instruction. Policy concerning internationalisation is primarily centred on recruitment and cooperation with other (international) universities and institutions, but language does not appear to be a policy priority.

This report sets out to discover the role of language in (internationalisation) policy by taking USE as a case study of language policy in practice. It will describe what the policy looks like and what its goals are. From the analysis of the existing policy, several recommendations will be made that aim to improve the effectiveness of the language policy and contribute to a better structure.

In section 2, a brief overview will be given on the current state of affairs of English-medium teaching in Dutch higher education, including recent recommendations of the Education Council of the Netherlands, followed by a set of criteria by which English-medium teaching can be judged.

Section 3 of the report outlines the English-taught programmes at USE, the characteristics of its language policy and related matters, before an analysis is made in section 4.

Section 5 of the report contains five recommendations that aim to present suggestions for a more structural, quality-driven and evaluation-based approach to language policy at USE. A brief conclusion is given in section 6.

2. BACKGROUND

In this section, a short overview will be given of the current state of affairs with regard to English-medium teaching in Dutch higher education as well as a set of criteria that can be distilled from the literature on the topic.

2.1 English in Dutch higher education

Since the Bologna Agreements and the structural and organisational convergence of European higher education, internationalisation in Dutch higher education has become increasingly widespread. The ECTS credit system and the bachelor-master structure allow for greater mobility of students and Dutch institutions have gladly opened their doors for foreign students and researchers. With English as the 'de facto' lingua franca of the academic world, it makes sense to offer English-taught programmes. Foreign students do not have to learn Dutch in order to study in the Netherlands and Dutch students prepare for an international career in an international learning environment with English as the common language.

Dutch institutions of higher education have quickly developed English-medium programmes and currently, well over half of the academic master's programmes in the Netherlands are taught in English¹. This development is not without its critics. Critics in the political and academic arena have more than once voiced their concern for the position of Dutch as a language of culture and science. With English seemingly taking over the prestigious domain of science and higher education, it is feared that Dutch will lose status and become a 'common' or 'inferior' language. Although higher education is commonly considered to carry the responsibility of promoting the position of the Dutch language as a language of science and culture, the law provides a framework for universities and institutions of higher vocational education to teach in a different language. The rapidly growing number of English-medium programmes show that they are eager to make use of this opportunity.

Another concern around the 'anglification' of higher education is one for the quality of education. Seminal studies by Vinke et al. (1998) and Klaassen (2001) have indicated that teachers are less able to express themselves clearly and accurately, have less interaction with students and feel less secure about their flexibility and ability to improvise, when teaching in a language other than their mother tongue. Furthermore, teaching in English does not only require language skills, but also other didactic skills that come with an international classroom setting.

The debate on English in higher education in Flanders is similar and even more focused on the role of Dutch as the language of science and culture. The Dutch language is closely linked to the Flemish identity and the right to have higher education in Dutch is a great point of pride after a long history of dominion by the French language. In the debate in Flanders the wish to protect the status of the Dutch language is starkly opposed by the need to fully join the international knowledge-based society. Although Flemish legislation contains the same provisions for allowing English-language content in academic programmes, there are strict quotas limiting the amount of courses in English. Only 10 percent of bachelor's programmes may be given in English and for every English-taught programme there must be a Dutch equivalent in the province. On July 5th 2012, Flemish parliament approved an amendment on

¹ Onderwijsraad, 2011.

the legislation, allowing for more English-taught programmes (18,33% bachelor's, 50% master's) and more flexibility with regard to Dutch equivalents of English-taught programmes, widening the range to the entire region of Flanders. These amendments were proposed and approved for the promotion of internationalisation in Flemish higher education and they contain stipulations on qualifications for foreign teachers and Flemish teachers in the English-taught programmes.

In October of 2011 the Education Council of the Netherlands (Onderwijsraad) published a report on English-medium teaching in Dutch higher education. The council states that English as a medium of instruction is an inescapable reality in the increasingly internationalising institutions and programmes of Dutch higher education. Although higher education is formally tasked with being the keeper of Dutch language and culture, it also has an important role to play in the international knowledge-based society. The central question of the report is how all the actors involved can on the one hand stimulate the development of high quality English-medium programmes, while on the other hand protect the position of Dutch as a language of science and culture. The report contains four recommendations for the government and the institutions of higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE EDUCATION COUNCIL OF THE NETHERLANDS

1. The first recommendation is for all institutions of higher education to write a clear and motivated vision on internationalisation and the use of languages in the programmes. This vision serves as a means of communicating the motives behind offering programmes in a language other than Dutch and can provide clarity for prospective students and society.
2. The second recommendation focuses on the quality of English-medium education. The council states that teaching staff in English-medium programmes need additional skills for teaching in an international setting. Language skills and intercultural didactic skills of the teaching staff should be evaluated and be part of the process of acquiring a Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO). Furthermore, the council advises quality criteria for internationalisation (teacher skills, training facilities) be taken into account in the accreditation process for the programmes by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO).
3. The third recommendation states that the requirements for the language skill level of both Dutch and foreign students should be equal and comparable. Foreign students have to obtain a certain score in a representative language test like IELTS and TOEFL and the same level should be expected of Dutch students. The council considers the end terms of Dutch secondary education to be sufficient for entry into an English-medium programme, once linked to the adequate referential descriptions of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, but it is the responsibility of the institutions to make sure the students maintain their language skill level by providing facilities for training. Furthermore, the council encourages further stimulation of English as a medium of instruction in primary and secondary education to solidify the English language skills of Dutch students in the long run.
4. The fourth recommendation deals with the role of the Dutch language for foreign staff and students who stay in the Netherlands for longer than a year. The council states that

institutions of higher education should provide facilities for foreign staff and students to receive a substantial introduction to the Dutch language and culture, in order for them to be able to participate in and contribute to Dutch society. According to the council, these facilities should also be evaluated in the accreditation process.

2.2 Criteria for English-medium Teaching

With its recommendations, the Education Council of the Netherlands does not question the role of English in Dutch higher education, but rather aims for the highest possible quality of English-medium programmes. This is evidenced by the call for a clearly motivated vision on internationalisation, quality standards for teachers and facilities and the evaluation thereof in the accreditation process of the programmes. These considerations provide a solid basis for the evaluation of policy regarding English-medium teaching.

In order to be able to teach in English in an academic setting, teachers and students need to have adequate English language skills. Not only do students need to be able to read and understand English to follow the lectures and study the materials, they also must be able to speak and write at a certain level for papers and presentations. A certain language level can be expected of the student and there is less focus on language learning itself when compared to a secondary education context. Nevertheless, one of the goals of academic education in general is the development of the language and communication skills of the students. Therefore, it can be expected that students in an English programme will improve their language skills in the target language.

To ensure that the language skills of the students are adequate, standards are needed. In the Netherlands, the exit terms of English in secondary education are considered to be sufficient for entry into an English academic programme. For foreign students, Cambridge language certificates or test scores from an internationally accepted test like IELTS or TOEFL serve as a check at the gate.

For students to develop their (academic) language skills, an environment is needed in which this is possible. Krashen's input hypothesis (Krashen, 1981) states that language learning is best served in an environment where the linguistic input is just a level above the level of the language learner (interlanguage +1). Besides language skills, students need to develop their academic skills and both go hand in hand. Even more than in Dutch language programmes, students need guidance in the development of their academic skills, as many of them are non-native speakers of the language that is used. Studies by Rijlaarsdam et al. (2005) and Lee (2011) have shown that (peer) feedback is a very important factor in developing writing skills. In an English-medium teaching setting, academic skills should not be separated from language skills and an environment with stimulating input and adequate (language) skill training structures would be ideal.

Teachers and lecturers in an English programme have to be able to hold lectures, communicate with students and convey knowledge in the target language. Furthermore they assist the students in the development of their language skills and must therefore be able to guide and correct them. It may therefore be expected that the language skills of the teaching staff are at a higher level than what is expected of the students. Furthermore, teachers need to be able to teach to an intercultural group of students, considering the cultural sensibilities of students and their ability to learn in English.

CRITERIA FOR ENGLISH-MEDIUM TEACHING

- Students need to be able to improve their language skills in an environment with high quality input, provided by the study materials, group discussions and teachers.
- Attention to the students' productive skills through feedback mechanisms and (language) skills training.
- Teachers need to have high-level language skills and adequate intercultural didactic competence to teach in English to a diverse group of students.
- For the optimal realisation of such a learning environment, support structures need to be in place for the evaluation of the students' language skills, academic and language skill training for students and the training of teachers in the various skills that are needed in this setting.

3. ENGLISH-MEDIUM TEACHING AT USE AND LANGUAGE POLICY

The Utrecht School of Economics does not have a central language policy. Even though internationalisation is and has been an important focus point for Utrecht University, the only language policy that has been formulated is found in the legally prerequisite documents. The Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research (WHW) requires the Dutch institutions of higher education to have a Code of Conduct on the language of instruction, but in this document, the practicalities of English-medium teaching are delegated to the faculty organization, under responsibility of the dean. Although there is no central policy on language at USE, there are several measures and projects related to language².

The Utrecht School of Economics offers a bachelor's programme in Economics and Business Economics as well as three specialized master's programmes. Like many other master's programmes (especially in the field of economics), the graduate programmes at USE are fully taught in English. The bachelor's programme exists in two variants, one taught in English, the other taught in Dutch. Economics and Business Economics is a special case, as it is one of only four English bachelor's programmes at Utrecht University and the parallel Dutch programme makes it one of a kind. Both variants share lectures and study materials, making part of Dutch programme English-taught as well. The main difference is the language of communication during the work groups. In the Dutch programme, teachers and students discuss the material in Dutch. Students in the English programme are required to follow a certain number of courses taught in English, as there are elective courses in the minor that are taught in Dutch.

The English programme, started in 2004-2005, is becoming increasingly popular as the majority of undergraduate students is enrolled in the English variant, as opposed to a nearly even division in 2008³. The English-taught undergraduate program was established with internationalisation objectives in mind. The highly international nature of the field of economics makes it an obvious candidate for programmes that attract international staff and students. The teaching materials are primarily written in English and for many Dutch students it is a small step to the English programme, since the main difference with the Dutch programme is the contact language in the weekly tutorials.

The English contingent of Economics and Business Economics achieves better results compared to the Dutch contingent and this is mainly attributed to the foreign students. They are considered to be more driven to excel as they have chosen to go to another country to pursue their studies. Studying in the Netherlands is relatively expensive for foreign students, so they are perhaps more focused on getting good results from their endeavour.

There have been problems with the English language skill level of first-year students in the English programme affecting study results. The entry requirements in the form of IELTS/TOEFL tests and the exit terms of Dutch secondary education apparently do not guarantee that every student has an adequate grasp on the English language for the English-taught economics programme. After successful pilots, USE will introduce a mandatory diagnostic language test for first-year students in the upcoming academic year. During the first

² All information that was not gathered from available documentation was acquired from an interview and further correspondence with Caro Blikendaal, head of the Education and Student Department of USE and Paula Meijers, Educational Policy Advisor at USE.

³ Utrecht School of Economics Annual Report 2008.

course of the year, first-years might get a strong recommendation to improve their English language skills through extra courses if their test score indicates that their English is at a too low level. The test is primarily focused on raising the awareness of the students regarding their own skill level. Students who struggle with English are warned early on in their studies, preventing failure and lowering the chances of students dropping out or receiving a binding study advice. Dutch students even have the option to switch to the Dutch programme and continue their studies.

Academic skills are part of the curriculum and students must receive a passing grade for the papers they write and the presentations they give, among other things. Language and language use are part of the evaluation, but they are just a subcategory of the overall evaluation. It is very well possible that a student gets by with poor language skills, because the content of the work is of a high standard. A short-lived project existed, where language experts proofread students' English papers and provided feedback. Students reportedly were found to do very little with the feedback they received and the project was discontinued.

In order to prepare the students of the Dutch economics programme for their prospective international working environments, they have to write a paper in English and give a presentation in English at least once during their studies.

All lecturers at USE teach in English and they have all undergone an English language test at the James Boswell Institute, a language centre affiliated with Utrecht University. This test was purely one of language skills. Didactic skills for teaching in an international classroom were not tested. Not all teaching staff passed the language test and some have had follow-up courses.

There are also measures with regard to the Dutch language. International staff at USE is expected to learn Dutch within two years if they start a long term commitment at USE. There is no prescribed way to do this. Foreign students who wish to learn Dutch can take a course at the James Boswell Institute. This course is paid for by the Utrecht School of Economics if the student passes the course.

4. ANALYSIS

Given the international character of the field of economics and the prospective working environments of USE's graduates, English-medium teaching at USE can be clearly motivated and justified under the university's code of conduct. English is the main language at USE and the English-medium bachelor's programme is relatively unique within the university. Nevertheless, there is very little to be found on language use in the policy documents.

As there is very little explicit policy with regard to language, there seems to be a lack of concrete structure. Several projects exist or have existed, but there are no clear policy lines set for language. The diagnostic test for first-year students shows there is a concern for the language skill level of the first-year students, but there are no strict consequences to the test and it is unclear whether the test will become a permanent measure. There is currently no follow-up to the writing feedback project and it appears that measures such as the aforementioned are initiated without a broader context in mind.

USE (and Utrecht University in general) does not only aim to prepare students for an international working environment, it also aims to deliver excellent students. An important aspect of navigating an international working environment is language skill. In this perspective, the English language should not just be a means to an end, but a goal itself. When students begin their studies at USE, their language skills are expected to be adequate for their direct academic context, but there is no explicit focus on improvement or fine-tuning of these skills. Academic skills like writing and presenting are part of the overall learning process throughout the programme, but language skills only play a minor role in the evaluation, depending on the teacher's focus.

Although all teachers have undergone language tests and new staff are evaluated on their language skills as well, there is no explicit mention of requirements. The BKO/SKO-regulations state that teachers need to have 'adequate' language skills in the instruction language in question, but this is evaluated on an individual basis. No mention is made of other skills specific to teaching in an English-medium environment or intercultural context. The BKO/SKO-regulations are written at a faculty level, but there should be no problem with specific extra requirements for teachers in an English-taught undergraduate programme.

Although this report is focused on English-medium teaching, it is interesting to see that the Dutch language is promoted at USE. For practical purposes, international staff members are expected to learn Dutch and Dutch courses for foreign students are financed by USE if the student is successful. Taking away the financial obstacle seems to be an effective way of providing the foreign students with an incentive to learn Dutch as around 30 to 40 students successfully pass the course each year.

Language does not seem to be a priority from a policy perspective at USE, although the department strongly differs from other departments at Utrecht University because of its English-taught bachelor's programme. There are issues related to language, but there does not seem to be a policy structure to help shape measures in the context of a coherent vision on language use.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, five recommendations will be presented that together cover the criteria and focus points addressed above. All recommendations are focused on creating stable frameworks within which policy measures can be developed to improve and solidify the role of language policy in internationalisation policy. Furthermore, these frameworks allow for a better overview of the situation and in the evaluation and improvement of the measures.

Recommendation 1:

Put language on the policy agenda.

A comprehensive language policy is needed to ensure quality management and evaluability. The first step towards improvement of the language policy at USE is one of formalisation and agenda-setting. Like Utrecht University, USE does not have an overarching central language policy. There are language elements in many parts of the department's organisation, but there is no comprehensive approach. Language is not a priority and measures are initiated when problems appear to arise. This approach is very reactive and may prove to be problematic when a problem arises that is not easily remedied. Making language a policy priority helps monitoring ongoing processes and stimulates evaluation.

A comprehensive language policy could be an integral part of a larger internationalisation policy, or a separate initiative. A separate central language policy would give it more prominence, but the strong association with internationalisation might provide it with a more direct context in an integrated role. In either case, clear goals should be formulated in order to give direction to the policy process. The issues that have been mentioned in the preceding chapters are examples of problems that can be categorised under certain 'pillars' of language policy. Many of these pillars are already points of attention, but they are dealt with on a seemingly *ad hoc* basis and from an isolated perspective. Formulating goals, focus points and measures in one coherent vision puts all aspects of language policy in a common perspective and facilitates problem-solving and other interventions towards a clear objective.

Another advantage of formulating a language policy is evaluability. When plans and measures go through a policy cycle of initiative, implementation and evaluation, it is easier to analyse results, evaluate the policy and further develop it. Formalisation of language related policy provides a better overview and allows for focused intervention, if needed. The current situation, with separate projects that are initiated when a problem arises, lacks coherence and fosters a situation in which several language projects exist without a shared context. A more coordinated approach to these measures can provide a solid basis and angle from which to tackle issues with overall goals kept in mind.

Finally, a formalised language policy improves clarity and transparency towards society, staff and (prospective) students. In line with the recommendation of The Education Council of the Netherlands, a formalised language policy, perhaps combined with a vision on internationalisation can aid in conveying the goals and objectives of English-medium teaching

at USE. Considering the fact that the public debate now and then veers into questioning English-medium teaching as a whole, a clearly motivated vision on the how and why of English-medium teaching can be very desirable.

Recommendation 2:

Formalise quality requirements and measures for the teaching staff.

One of the most important aspects of any language policy in an educational setting should be quality control. Language policy at USE should be centred on maintaining a high quality of education and improving the language skills and intercultural didactic competence of the teaching staff.

Quality requirements for the teaching staff need to be formalised. First of all, teachers need to have high-level English language skills, not only to be able to teach to and communicate with an international group of students, but also to serve as a reliable source of linguistic input. Students should be able to learn from their teachers, both on the level of academic content and language use. These high standards for teachers can be determined along descriptions from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and can be evaluated along the same lines.

Right now, the language requirements for teachers are described in the BKO/SKO-regulations as ‘adequate for the language in question’, but the explicit requirements are difficult to narrow down. When the English bachelor’s programme was introduced at USE, the entire teaching staff was ‘screened’ and tested on their language skills and in the individual BKO-processes of the teachers, language skills are part of the evaluation. For the sake of maintenance of a high standard and clarity in the evaluation process, formalisation of the language requirements for the teaching staff would be advisable.

An important factor in an international learning environment is the cultural diversity of the student population. A common language is crucial for the communication between teachers and students, but language skills do not automatically equate teaching skills. Research has shown that teachers have more difficulty in expressing themselves, conveying information and remaining flexible in communication when teaching in another language than their mother tongue. Furthermore, teachers may need other sensibilities when teaching to a group of students from different cultural backgrounds. In other words, a broad skill set is needed to be able to teach in an international setting. The teaching staff should not just be evaluated on their language skills, but also on their ability to teach “in an international classroom”. Didactic skills and intercultural communication are just as important as language skills in such a setting and USE should facilitate evaluation of and support for teachers in these domains in order to maintain a high quality of education.

It should be clear what is expected of the teaching staff needs in terms of language skills and other skills related to teaching in English, how these are evaluated and what facilities there are for training. As the BKO-process is an individual track, it may contain differing elements for

each individual teacher, but specific criteria for English-medium teaching can be added to the evaluation framework. In order to monitor the skill levels of the teaching staff and maintain a high quality of education, the quality standards for teachers could also be incorporated into the HR-cycle for periodical evaluation.

Recommendation 3:

Formalise quality requirements and measures for the students

Although there is not as explicit a language learning context as in English-medium teaching in secondary education, it is not enough to check language skills ‘at the gate’ and assume that this skill level will be maintained. As mentioned before, an interactive learning environment with linguistic input of a high enough level will have a positive effect on the language learning ability of the students. Many prerequisites are already met at USE, such as English language learning materials, interactive work groups and input from lecturers and fellow students.

In order to be able to assess the level (and progress) of the students throughout their studies, standards are needed to evaluate them by. Despite the fact that there are entry requirements for students regarding their English language skills, problems are signalled and next year all first year students will have to do a language test. The results of this test will motivate a possible advice to students who perform below the expected level to take action and work on their English. This measure illustrates two things. Firstly, entry requirements apparently do not guarantee that the language skills of students are sufficient for the programme. Secondly, it shows that it is necessary to monitor the language skills of the students and to provide feedback, especially if it is possible to determine what they should be able to do.

A description of the desired language skills, based on the CEFR guidelines, could also in this case be an effective way of formalising the language standards for students. These criteria can be checked through testing or other assessments and provide a guide for the students’ development throughout their studies.

The development of academic skills is already integrated in the education plan of the undergraduate Economics programme and the bachelor’s phase seems to be the ideal timeframe for the development of language skills as well. Since skills such as academic writing and presenting are already evaluated separately and need to be completed with a sufficient grade for the student to complete his or her studies, a similar construction could be devised for language skills. It stands to reason that these language criteria can be incorporated into the existing structure of evaluating academic skills. Language use is already partly a factor in the evaluation, but it is defined in general terms. Explicit can-do statements, like those of the CEFR, are useful for evaluation of a student’s skills, although one has to keep in mind that not all teachers are language teachers. In the process of monitoring and evaluating language skills of students, the aid of language experts might be necessary, especially in the assessment of written work.

All of these requirements, evaluation methods and support structures need to be formalised and incorporated into the language policy. Specifics on the requirements and evaluation methods for students can be added to the Education and Examination Regulation. It should be clear what is expected of the students in terms of language skills (expressed by test scores, CEFR-guidelines or both) and how this is evaluated. Furthermore, any available facilities for students to improve their language skills (electives, extracurricular courses or otherwise) should be clearly laid out.

Recommendation 4:

Invest in language training in the curriculum.

In order to develop their language skills, students need instruction. Course organisation at Utrecht University obeys strict rules that make it very difficult to incorporate language training in the curriculum. Bachelor's courses have a preset weight of 7,5 ECTS and there is no room for separate smaller skills courses. In the tradition of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), however, separate courses should not be necessary if the language skills are part of the course.

One way to incorporate language training in the course is to include language skills in the examination. Examinations through papers and presentations test the productive skills of the students and can be graded on content and on language use. Language use is already part of the evaluation of written work and presentations, but a stronger focus may be given to the language aspects of such examinations. Since it cannot be expected from teachers to be language teachers at the same time, help from outside the department may be necessary. Services from a language centre like the James Boswell Institute⁴ may prove useful, not only in the assessment of written work, but also in the form of workshops or seminars on academic writing, within the context of the course content. If the examination consists of writing a business plan, for instance, one or two lecture slots could be filled by a workshop on the topic of academic or professional writing. Such language skills training can be fit into the course content without sacrificing too much time spent on the actual content, since it is in service of the examination.

A stronger focus on written and spoken examinations, combined with support from language experts can foster a more focused development of relevant language skills within the course curriculum, without sacrificing course content. Furthermore, language skills should be evaluated along the same lines as academic skills throughout the academic programme and should be evaluated separately.

The above requires extra facilities to support the teaching staff in the assessment of the students' language skill level and cooperation with an affiliated language centre seems a logical step. There already has been a course in the bachelor's programme in which feedback on written work was provided by language experts, but students reportedly did very little with the feedback they received. With a stronger focus on language use in the evaluation of written

⁴ The James Boswell Institute closes its doors in January 2013. Language related services will be continued by language institute Babel.

work and other forms of examination, however, students might find this feedback to be very helpful in the pursuit of sufficient grades. Feedback mechanisms are very important in language learning and the integration of language skills in the curriculum is very well served by feedback from experts in some way, shape or form.

The most important hurdle to integrating language in the curriculum appears to be a financial one. Language services are expensive and considerably more difficult to realise in times of budget cuts. Nevertheless, it is advisable to make these investments, as they contribute to the structural monitoring and evaluation of the language skills of the students.

Recommendation 5:

Aim to receive a *distinctive quality feature internationalisation* accreditation from the NVAO for the English language programmes.

Any language policy USE has and might have is unquestionably linked to internationalisation. Internationalisation is not just a goal in itself but part of a strategy towards a higher quality of education and a better market position for the programme and the institution. Depending on the characteristics and nature of academic programmes, internationalisation might mean different things in different contexts. This makes it difficult to create a benchmark for internationalisation in higher education and distinguish programmes based on the quality of internationalisation. The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO), responsible for the accreditation of higher educational programmes in the Netherlands and Flanders has developed a special certification for internationalisation of programmes and of institutions. For the purposes of solidifying USE's internationalisation policy and providing language policy with a stable framework, USE should aim to receive the *distinctive quality feature internationalisation* certificate for its English-taught undergraduate programme and the graduate programmes.

In order to receive this special certification, several criteria must be met that help shape and formalise internationalisation policy and therefore aid language policy in the same process. In the assessment framework of the NVAO, five standards are defined along which the quality of internationalisation is measured.

First of all, a clear vision on internationalisation is needed that is shared by all stakeholders, and that contains verifiable objectives and improvement-oriented evaluations. The role of English-medium teaching at USE and its objectives can be incorporated into this vision, making it an integral part of the internationalisation policy, as well as providing it with objectives, goals and evaluations in the context of international education.

Secondly, intended international and intercultural learning outcomes must be formulated, and measures to assess these and the way they are demonstrated by graduates of the programme

must be defined. This category can fit the goals set for the students' language skills and corresponding measures and evaluation methods.

The third standard that is evaluated by the NVAO is that of teaching and learning. The curriculum, teaching methods and learning environment must enable the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.

The fourth standard focuses on the teaching staff and states that the composition of the teaching staff, both in quantity and quality, must facilitate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Furthermore, the teaching staff must have adequate international experience, language skills and intercultural competence and there must be services in place for the staff to develop these characteristics.

The fifth and final standard centres on students and is similar to that of the teaching staff. The student population must be representative of the international orientation of the programme, adequate international experience should be gained by the students and services should be in place to inform and guide the students in their international learning environment.

This assessment framework as developed by the NVAO provides an excellent basis for the (further) formalisation of USE's internationalisation policy, as well as offering a framework for language policy to be incorporated. Furthermore, aiming to receive the *distinctive quality feature internationalisation* provides an excellent incentive to improve and structure existing policy and measures. Accreditation by the NVAO does not only ensure that the quality of international education at USE is up to par, it also comes with a certificate that will raise the profile of the academic programmes at USE in the national and international market.

6. CONCLUSION

The recommendations that have been made in this report are geared towards a more structural approach to language policy at the Utrecht School of Economics. The English-medium programmes at USE, especially the bachelor's programme, are characterized by intensive use of the English language by many non-native speakers. Students in the undergraduate programme enter with varying levels of English language skills and although language learning is not an explicit goal of English-medium programmes, attention should be paid to the development of students' language skills. The diagnostic test for first-year students at the beginning of the upcoming academic year shows that there is a need to monitor the students' language skills to prevent negative effects on their study results. Quality should also be assured on the side of the teaching staff and this is not just covered by monitoring language skills. Intercultural competence is an important facet of a teacher's skill set in an international environment and should be part of the evaluation and training cycle.

Language is not a priority and it also should not become a goal in itself. It is, however, a crucial aspect in the development of high quality international education and it is in this respect that the above recommendations are made.

Language should be an integral part of internationalisation policy and all aspects of English-medium teaching should be taken into account in the overall goals, objectives and quality standards. Formalising requirements, measures and services, provides clarity and guidance to the actors in the international classroom: faculty management, students and teachers.

With its vision on internationalisation, USE should not just aim to produce students that can find their way in an international environment. Graduates of USE should *thrive* in an international environment and be an example of the quality international education they have enjoyed. High-level (English) language skills are part of the tools that can and should be acquired at USE to this end. Incorporating language training in the curriculum without sacrificing course content is possible with more written and spoken examinations, a stronger focus on language use in the evaluation of said examinations and proper investment in support facilities for the teaching staff, or help from the outside, like language experts from Babel, or a similar language institute.

To put all this in the perspective of USE's main internationalisation goals, high quality international education and international profiling of the programmes, it is recommended to aim for an internationalisation accreditation from the NVAO. The *distinctive quality feature internationalisation* certification provides an incentive and a suitable framework to help structure USE's internationalisation policy, with the incorporation of language policy.

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English-medium Teaching at the

Utrecht School of Economics

Policy Recommendations and Best Practices

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Preface

This thesis is part of a MA thesis for the linguistics programme Language, Mind and Society at Utrecht University. The programme offers a broad scope on the practical application of (socio)linguistic theory and this graduation project, part policy report, part traditional thesis, is an example of the practical orientation of the programme.

Combining inspiration and insights from courses such as Language Policy and Language Education, this report is an attempt to convert theoretical notions into recommendations and best practices that are applicable to a real world situation.

The current debate on English in Dutch higher education provides an excellent domain for such an undertaking and this graduation projects is focused on English-medium Teaching at the Utrecht School of Economics (USE).

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1. Introduction

In an ever globalising world, internationalisation has organically become one of the most important developments in Dutch higher education. Universities and institutions of higher vocational education hope to attract students and researchers from all over the world to enhance the quality of their education, while at the same time preparing Dutch students for an international professional environment. Intercultural communication requires a common language and English has become the most commonly used language of international communication in academia and the Western world in general.

To accommodate foreign students and foreign researchers, who often teach as well, academic programmes are offered in English. Developing English-medium programmes entails more than changing the language of instruction from Dutch to English. Students need to be able to follow courses in English and teachers need to be able to teach in English. Furthermore, facilities are needed to support translation, information services, teacher training and other practicalities that come with English-taught courses. Language is an integral part of internationalisation, but it is deceptively difficult to narrow down all of the linguistic implications of internationalisation.

At the national level, law- and policymakers debate the pros and cons of English as a medium of instruction in Dutch higher education, but this thesis has a narrower scope. It investigates the form and function of language policy at an economics department of a Dutch university by taking language policy at the Utrecht School of Economics as a case study.

This graduation project consists of two parts. Firstly a policy report is written which contains five recommendations that may help shape and structure language policy at the Utrecht School of Economics. Secondly, this paper serves as a support piece to provide further elaboration and explanation.

2. Relevance

English is becoming more and more prevalent as the language of instruction in Dutch higher education. Well over half of the academic master's programmes in the Netherlands are taught entirely in English and the number of English language bachelor's programmes, although significantly lower, is also growing steadily (Leest & Wierda-Boer, 2011). The quick rise of English as the medium of instruction in Dutch higher education is primarily fuelled by the wish of Dutch institutions of higher education and the Dutch government for the Netherlands to play an important role in the European knowledge-based society. International profiling is an important strategic focus of nearly every Dutch university and offering academic programmes in English is the best way to attract students and staff from all over the globe and create an 'international learning environment at home'.

The fact that the English language has been chosen to be the mode of communication in this international environment is hardly surprising. Since the 1940s, Western Europe has been heavily influenced by American and Anglo-Saxon culture and the English language has been an important and very 'visible' part of that cultural baggage. English is the most widely spoken language in the European Union and it has begun serving as a 'lingua franca' in many high-prestige domains in Europe, such as politics, business and academia. Scientific publications are also increasingly written in English, making it the most obvious choice for universities as a language of instruction in an international context. Many European universities develop English-taught programmes, not only to attract foreigners, but also to best prepare their students for the international academic or working environment they will be navigating after completing their studies.

In the Netherlands there are very few barriers to English-medium instruction in higher education, but nonetheless there is an ongoing debate on the matter. The debate centres on several topics, but a few important issues can be singled out. In politics, the concern that the Dutch language is losing ground in important domains is often expressed. Others fear the quality of education suffers due to the fact that non-native speaking teachers and lecturers are less able to express themselves properly and lose their flexibility and ability to improvise when speaking in a language that is not their mother tongue.

The internationalisation agenda of Dutch higher education has brought implications for the instruction language with it. More and more teaching materials are presented in English and the rising number of English-taught programmes shows that universities have fully embraced international education with English as the medium of instruction. Given the fact that English is considered the ‘de facto’ lingua franca of Europe, it is the obvious choice and it appears that the debate has moved beyond questioning this choice as far as the institutions of higher education are concerned.

Even if the dominant position of the English language is taken as a given, the implications of English-medium teaching merit careful consideration from the institutions of higher education. In a recently published report, the Education Council of the Netherlands (Onderwijsraad) has called upon the Dutch institutions of higher education to formalise their policies in this area for the sake of clarity and transparency. Although English-medium teaching seems to go hand in hand with internationalisation, it does deserve its own policy considerations.

Dutch legislation leaves much freedom for universities to establish academic programmes that are taught in a language other than Dutch and it is up to the university to arrange all practicalities. This thesis aims to take a closer look at language policy in practice. Internationalisation in education is a dynamic landscape that is yet to be fully charted and much can be learned from the pioneers. Economics departments of Dutch universities generally have a high degree of internationalisation and are often at the front line of new developments in internationalisation. The Utrecht School of Economics houses one of four English-taught undergraduate programmes at Utrecht University and has a strong international focus. The study of its language policy can provide valuable insights into the implications of internationalisation on language use and language policy as well as provide new perspectives for streamlining and improvement.

The purpose of this thesis and policy report is to join theory and practice in a domain that is still developing and in which practical experience is an important guide for shaping theory and policy. After examination and evaluation of the language policy of the Utrecht School of Economics, recommendations are formulated from a (socio)linguistic basis that help shape and improve English-medium teaching in an international learning environment.

3. Procedure

To answer the questions raised and to formulate the recommendations, available policy documents, university brochures and websites, annual reports and other documentation of Utrecht University and the Utrecht School of Economics were studied. Furthermore, an interview was held with Caro Blienkendaal, head of the Education and Student Department of USE and Paula Meijers, Educational Policy Advisor at USE, for further insight and answers to questions that could not be answered by the available documentation.

During the process of gathering background information and studying the available documents, it became clear that there was very little publicly available information on the organisation of language policy at USE, making a meeting with USE officials not only a valuable addition to the research, but also a necessary component. This realisation arrived relatively late in the process, but the contact persons at USE proved very helpful and willing to cooperate.

A more in-depth analysis of the policy process at USE would require access to internal policy documents and decisions, as well as an intimate knowledge of the broader organisational context. For the purposes of this study and report, the followed procedure provided enough context and data to perform an analysis and formulate recommendations.

To help shape a graduation project with a practical orientation, such as this one, several support meetings were held to assist students in structuring practice-oriented products and the underlying theses. The meetings have been helpful in guiding the process of writing a policy report and deciding on style, tone and content.

4. Background

In the following section, background information will be provided to illustrate the context in which the report was written. First an overview will be given of the state of internationalisation at Utrecht University. Secondly, Dutch legislation concerning language use in higher education is elaborated on and thirdly, a brief overview of the situation at the Utrecht School of Economics is given.

4.1 Internationalisation at Utrecht University

The Strategic Plan 2009-2013 of Utrecht University is very clear about the university's international perspective: "Quality does not have a nationality". Internationalisation objectives include attracting more talented foreign students for master's and PhD programmes, increasing the number of foreign researchers and teachers and developing joint programmes, courses and degrees with international partners (Universiteit Utrecht, 2009, p. 43).

The recently published Strategic Plan 2012-2016 displays a shift in focus. Internationalisation is less explicitly mentioned as a goal and the overall focus has shifted towards the performance agreements that have been made with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science¹. Nevertheless, international ambitions are clearly visible throughout the strategic plan and exemplified by the wish to optimise international cooperation and establish an international research talent plan for the newly formulated strategic themes, Life Sciences, Sustainability, Institutions and Youth & Identity. In a section dubbed "Proud to have achieved 2000-2010" in the Education section of the plan, the large number of English-medium programmes is mentioned. Currently, Utrecht University has 4 English-taught bachelor's programmes, 81 English-taught master's programmes, 200 English-taught courses for exchange students and Europe's largest summer school (Universiteit Utrecht, 2012b, p. 15).

The university's annual reports for 2010 and 2011 make no explicit mention of the attainment of the recruitment goals, but they do mention the distribution of scholarships to foreign students, the development of student recruitment plans outside the Netherlands, especially in Germany, and the implementation of the first activities of the foreign staff recruitment plan (Universiteit Utrecht, 2012a, p. 23).

¹ "The Strategic Plan contains performance agreements on education, research, valorisation and the relation between direct/indirect costs. Each university has made such agreements. Part of the education budget will be granted based on whether or not the performance goals are met. A university that fails to meet performance goals will receive fewer funds." (from: <http://www.uu.nl/NL/Informatie/studenten/actueel/Pages/UniversitairStrategischPlan2012-2016.aspx>)

From these documents, it can be concluded that Utrecht University has a strong international focus and is continuing the development of international projects and plans, including English-taught degree programmes.

4.2 Dutch legislation on the instruction language

Language use in Dutch higher education is covered by the law. The Dutch Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW) states in article 1.3.5 that institutions of higher education are tasked with the advancement of Dutch students' ability to express themselves in the Dutch language. Article 7.2 establishes Dutch as the language of instruction and examination, but allows for exceptions in three cases:

- a). Another language can be used if the programme is a study of the language in question.
- b). Another language can be used within the framework of a guest lecture given by a lecturer who does not speak Dutch.
- c.) Another language can be used if the specific nature, design or quality of the programme, or the origin of the students so necessitates, in accordance with a code of conduct, laid down by the institution's board.

In 2004, Utrecht University established a Code of Conduct for Languages, based on WHW article 7.2 sub c. The preamble of this code of conduct, noting among other things international recruitment of staff and students and the university's promotion of international experiences for their staff and students, establishes the international character of Utrecht University. It also serves as the context by which education in a language other than Dutch can be justified if article 7.2 sub a or b do not apply.

The rest of the code of conduct consists of articles that organise the practicalities of teaching in a language other than Dutch. Decision-making on which programmes are taught in a different language, as well as responsibility for adequate language skill levels of teaching personnel are dealt with on the faculty level and are relegated to the dean. Education and Examination Regulations for programmes in a language other than Dutch must specify the language(s) of instruction and entry requirements, including the way they are measured and they must be available in the language in question. Finally, entry requirements for bachelor's programmes in another language

cannot exceed those of the regular programme in terms of weight and the conversion of an academic programme to another language of instruction may not increase the number of study credits or be harmful to the interests of the students in any way (Universiteit, Utrecht, 2004).

The law and the Code of Conduct for Languages allow for a broad interpretation of the necessity to teach in a language other than Dutch. This makes the large number of English-taught programmes possible and further considerations are left at the faculty level.

4.3 English-medium teaching at USE

Moving on to the case at hand, a short overview of the situation is needed. The Utrecht School of Economics is the economics department of the faculty of Law, Governance and Economics and currently has four English-taught programmes. Three economic master's programmes are offered as well as an undergraduate economics and business economics programme that exists in two variants, a Dutch-taught one and an English-taught one.

Economics programmes of Dutch universities are generally highly internationally oriented and rank third after agricultural and technical programmes with regard to their degree of internationalisation. USE forms no exception to this rule and English can be considered the main language at USE. The undergraduate programme is especially interesting as it has a Dutch and an English track that are completely similar content-wise. Both tracks share English teaching materials and English-taught lectures, the difference is in the contact language during the weekly tutorials. The English-language track is becoming increasingly popular and according to USE officials, Dutch students increasingly opt for the English track as the Dutch track already has a lot of English language elements in it and they perceive English-medium instruction as an added value.

For entry into the programme, a VWO-diploma, the highest level of Dutch secondary education is needed, as it is assumed that its end terms for English are sufficient to enter in an English-medium programme. The Education and Examination Regulations for the undergraduate programme stipulate that foreign students provide proof of their proficiency in English by acquiring a Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English of Proficiency in English, getting a overall band score of 6.0 in

the academic module of the IELTS language test, or scoring at least 83 on the internet-based TOEFL test. Native speakers of English or students with a degree from an English-speaking country are exempt from taking a language test. These regulations apply for all English-language programmes at Utrecht University.

Despite these entry requirements problems have been signalled at USE with regards to the language skills that are echoed by Grift et al. who state in a recently performed study on English-medium education at USE that “...in practice it is common to hear serious complaints about their *academic* language skills.” (Grift, Meijer & Salm, 2012, p. 12). Some students appear to struggle with the language of instruction, causing a detrimental effect on their study results. In order to be able to intervene early and prevent students from dropping out or receiving a negative Binding Study Advice, forcing them to leave the programme, all first-year students of the undergraduate economics programme will take a mandatory diagnostic language test in the first block of the upcoming academic year. Based on the results of the test, students may be strongly advised to work on their English language skills before it becomes a problem with regards to their study results. There are no strict consequences to the test for the students, but it serves as an early monitor to optimise study results.

The teaching staff needs additional language skills as well and since all staff teaches in English, their language skills have been tested at the James Boswell Institute, a language centre affiliated with Utrecht University. Teachers who needed further training with regards to their English language skills have had follow-up courses and new personnel also has to take a language test. Language skills are also part of the evaluation framework of the Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO) process. The BKO track is designed on an individual basis and there are no additional requirements for staff teaching in English. The BKO framework of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance only states that teachers should have “adequate language skills in the commonly used language” (2011). There is no mention of additional skills relevant to teaching in an international setting.

There are no measures for language training in the curriculum. Academic skills are evaluated and language use is considered in the evaluation, but there are no specific evaluations of the students’ English language skills. There has been a project in a first-year course that involved the proofreading of student papers by language

experts, but the students reportedly did very little with the feedback and the project was discontinued.

Overall, it can be stated that there is little explicit language policy at USE and that it is mostly centred on the minimum language skill requirements for students and staff.

5. Report and recommendations

An overview of the situation at USE and the existing language policy and measures is not enough to base recommendations on, as a theoretical basis is needed. To this end research documents and other documentation on English-medium teaching and internationalisation in Dutch higher education were studied. It is important to note that the report is a case study on a micro-level. It deals with the situation at an already heavily internationalised university department and therefore, considerations that play important roles at the macro-level are less relevant.

The role of Dutch as a language of science and culture is a crucial element in the debate on internationalisation and the ‘anglification’ of Dutch higher education, but the report is concerned with the practicalities and policy implications of English-medium teaching in action and has moved past this point in the debate. The focus points in the examination and analysis of the language policy at USE are policy structure, evaluability, quality control, facilitation and student and teacher skill requirements. In the following sections, the recommendations that have been made in the policy report will be discussed and elaborated on.

5.1 Putting language on the policy agenda

The recommendations to put language on the policy agenda and to aim to receive *distinctive quality feature internationalisation* accreditation from the NVAO serve to ensure a more coherently structured language policy at USE. The focus on policy structure and evaluability can also be found in other documents on the matter. The Education Council of the Netherlands recommends that institutions of higher education write a clearly motivated vision on internationalisation and that they formalise skill requirements (Onderwijsraad, 2011). Any policy process benefits from a cycle of agenda-setting, policy shaping, decision making, implementation and

evaluation and a coherent approach promotes optimal monitoring and evaluation. Language is difficult to pin down as a singular element as it entails many facets in practice. A comprehensive approach to language policy can ensure that “nothing is forgotten” and that decisions on language measures are made from a broad context.

The evaluation and accreditation process of the NVAO demands a structural approach to policy plans and thorough self-evaluation. Receiving a quality accreditation for internationalisation is a reward in itself, but the process towards receiving it provides an excellent context to shape and develop internationalisation policy, and with it language policy. A central internationalisation policy with clearly specified language goals and intended learning outcomes facilitate decision-making on evaluation measures, content and language in the curriculum and the allotment of resources.

5.2 Formalising skill requirements for teachers

Skill requirements for teachers in an English-medium environment, is one of the most prominent focus points in the internationalisation debate. The quality of education in “the international classroom” is one of the chief concerns of critics of the rapid increase of English-taught programmes and research supports the notion that the quality of education is affected by the linguistic and intercultural competence of the teachers.

Studies by Vinke et al. (1998) and Klaassen (2001) are often cited for their findings on teacher performance in an English-medium setting. Teachers who teach in a language that is not their mother tongue, feel they are less flexible in communication with students and less able to express themselves accurately and therefore not able to teach optimally. Annemieke Meijer, researcher at the Utrecht University for Education and Learning, teaches courses for teaching staff in an English-medium setting. From her research and teaching experience, these problems are also present at Utrecht University. According to Meijer, improving the fluency of the teachers is a good way of building the teachers’ confidence and improving the quality of their education, but language skills are not the only important factor.

A recent study on the impact of the language instruction on the student evaluations of their academic programme, performed at USE by Grift et al. concluded that students in both the Dutch-medium and the English-medium programme,

primarily judge their teachers on their didactic skills and less so on their language skills (Grift et al., 2012). Intercultural didactic competence is another important facet of English-medium teaching and the cultural diversity of the students in an international setting demands that teachers are sensitive to the learning expectations and habits of the students. These skills should also be defined and formalised in order for USE to monitor the skills of their teachers and guarantee the quality of education.

A 2005 concept memo of a Utrecht University internal internationalisation workgroup shows that teacher skills are considered crucial to a high quality of education. Aside from recommending language skills and intercultural didactic skills become part of the evaluation framework of the BKO, the workgroup also suggest a 'Binding Teaching Advice'. In the case that a teacher turns to be insufficiently skilled to teach in an English-medium environment, he or she may be exempt from teaching in English-medium programmes until relevant training courses have been completed. The suggestion of a 'Binding Teaching Advice' is a strong expression of the need to monitor teachers' skills in an international setting. Supplementary evaluation criteria, besides language skills, in the BKO-track for teachers in an international setting are advisable to ensure teacher quality is not only monitored through language skills.

5.3 Student skill requirements and language training

The entry requirements for English-medium programmes at Utrecht University clearly defined, but next year's diagnostic test for first-year students shows that the language level of students in the English track of the undergraduate programme is a concern. With its English-medium programmes, USE aims to produce students that are well prepared for an international professional environment. In the current structure, language is a medium for international education but it could also be a very worthwhile goal. In a feasibility study of large-scale university language training, Van Leeuwen (2003) notes that English-medium teaching is a viable way to provide language training. With the use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), students can improve their language skills while studying in the regular content courses of their academic programme.

High-level language skills are a valuable asset in an international professional and academic environment and a stronger focus on the development of language skills in the undergraduate programme could raise the quality of education at USE. Defining

intended language skill levels for students could be done along the lines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and they could be incorporated into the education plan for academic skills. Academic skills are already monitored and part of the examination of content courses and a similar strategy could be implemented for language skills.

There are many theories focused on effective second language acquisition and in the academic context a stimulating learning environment is important. An important component of such an environment is linguistic input. Krashen's input hypothesis (Krashen, 1981) states that the optimal input for a language learner is that of one level above the learner's level. Since students in an English-medium academic programme already need an advanced degree of language proficiency, the linguistic input in the academic setting must be of a very high standard for the students to benefit and learn from it. This means input from teaching materials and teachers must be of a high level and adds to the importance of highly qualified teachers.

Lectures and tutorials in English provide an interactive learning environment and a high volume of linguistic input, but other skills need to be acquired as well. Language and language use play an important role in academic skills and are closely linked to productive skills like presenting and writing. If USE chooses to develop the students' language skills through CLIL, special attention must also be given these productive skills. As academic skills are already evaluated, the form of examination and evaluation may be reconsidered. Research by Lee (2011) and Rijlaarsdam et. Al (2005) on the acquisition of writing skills have shown that students benefit greatly from (peer) feedback in the writing process. Separate evaluation of language skills in examinations through productive skills (writing, presenting) and feedback mechanisms can greatly improve the language skills of the students during their regular curriculum.

The way this is to be incorporated into the curriculum is a matter for further consideration and perhaps further research, but it is highly likely that investments will have to be made in support and training facilities for students. Feedback on language use in academic writing may have to be given by language experts as it cannot be expected of the teaching staff to be language teachers as well. The design of the curriculum could be adapted to include single lectures devoted to language skills and a greater emphasis on examination through writing and presenting with as little as possible compromise to the academic content in the course.

Improving the academic language skills of students is a general goal of higher education, but in an international setting like the programmes at USE, delivering students with excellent English language skills to the international professional and academic arena should be a priority and a benchmark for the quality of its education. Incorporating language training in the curriculum may be a very difficult objective to realise from an organisational and financial perspective, but it may be well worth the investment in terms of learning outcomes and the quality of education.

To investigate this further, the Dutch system of bilingual Dutch-English secondary education that is rapidly developing could be an interesting reference for CLIL in practice.

6. Conclusion

The main question that is answered in this thesis is: What does the language policy of the Utrecht School of Economics look like and what, if any, recommendations for improvement can be made. To this end, a policy report was written, containing five recommendations. Written as unsolicited advice, the report is to be considered a perspective on the organisation of international education from the domain of linguistics and language policy. The recommendations advocate a more structural approach to language policy in an internationalisation context and a stronger focus on student language training for a higher quality of education.

Perhaps the most important recommendation is the first one to “put language on the policy agenda”. A more coherent approach to language policy might prove to provide the frameworks for effective quality control and the continuing improvement of the quality of education, instead of dealing with language when necessary. The recommendation to aim to receive the *distinctive quality feature internationalisation* provides a way to add an internationalisation context to the further formalisation of language policy. The certification process provides an incentive to tackle and optimise the policy frameworks as well as an opportunity to distinguish the programmes at

USE on the basis of their quality of internationalisation.

As the Utrecht School of Economics is at the front lines of internationalisation, the approach to internationalisation and language policy might provide a blueprint for other departments and faculties at Utrecht University.

Follow-up research could be performed at other Dutch universities, as there are academic programmes, Bsc and Msc International Business in Maastricht for instance, that have already been awarded the *distinctive quality feature internationalisation*. Comparative research of language and internationalisation policy at departments that are a step further in the internationalisation process, might provide valuable insights for the policy-shaping process at USE and Utrecht University.

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