

Diversity in the English Language Classroom

The effect of different approaches to English language teaching during primary education on the English language proficiency and language attitude of first year secondary school students

Rianka van de Vuurst

4017765

Engelse taal en cultuur: Educatie en Communicatie

Master Thesis

First reader: Rick de Graaff

Second reader: Elena Tribushinina

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	3
ABSTRACT.....	4
1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	6
2. INTRODUCTION.....	7
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	8
4. METHOD	14
5. RESULTS	20
6. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION.....	42
7. WORKS CITED.....	50
8. APPENDICES	52

Glossary of Abbreviations

- bk – basic/practical junior secondary education
- CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
- EELT – early English language teaching
- h-v – higher general secondary/pre-university education
- L2 – second language
- ns – native speaker
- SLA – Second language acquisition
- tl – theoretical junior secondary education
- tl-h – theoretical junior secondary vocational/higher general secondary education
- vwo – pre-university education

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between different approaches to the English education Dutch students receive at primary school and their English language proficiency as tested in the first year of secondary education. The study was carried out amongst 224 first year students at Guido de Brès, a secondary school in Amersfoort. The study aspires to contribute to the discussion whether differences in intensity of the English classes as received during primary education relate to significant differences in language proficiency and attitude towards the language.

Firstly, research was done to the English education students received during primary education. Both EELT (early English language teaching) primary schools and regular primary schools were asked to explain their vision on English language teaching and the way this was done at their school.

A second goal of this study was to find out if students who received a higher intensity program of English education scored better than their fellow classmates who received a lower intensity program on English language tests administered during the first year of secondary education. Also other (individual) differences, such as perceived quality of the lessons, teacher, attitude and estimated comprehension of the language were examined. Reading and listening proficiency, knowledge of English vocabulary, average school results as obtained on English language tests, estimated comprehension and attitude towards the language were related to the factors mentioned above. Also a selected group of students was tested on their speaking proficiency by means of an Anglia speaking test.

The amount of time spent on English per week during primary education correlated with almost all measured factors: knowledge of English vocabulary, listening and reading proficiency, as well as attitude towards the English language and estimated comprehension of the language. It did not correlate with the average school result on English. Year of onset did not show a correlation with the results obtained from language proficiency tests, yet correlated with questions related to attitude and estimated language comprehension.

When examining the results it also became clear that, rather than different approaches to English language teaching as received during primary education, the educational level first-year secondary students are involved in appears to relate to students' ability to reach a higher proficiency level with regards to all English language skills.

Finally, an attempt was made to find out how different proficiency levels can best be accommodated in a first year's program, so students who encountered different approaches to English language teaching during primary education are challenged alike. English teachers at Guido de Brès mentioned they found it difficult to differentiate between students due to limited time and financial means. They believed a placement test at the start of the school year might help them to become more easily acquainted with their students' needs in order to be able to help them efficiently.

1. Acknowledgements

I want to use this section to thank all the people who supported me throughout the process of writing my thesis. I want to thank my colleagues at Guido de Brès, especially those of the English department for their quick answers to my questions. I also want to thank Arjan Veurink, team leader of the junior secondary vocational education (VMBO) department at Guido de Brès, who was always there to support and help me. Furthermore, I want to give special thanks to all the guiding and supporting feedback of Rick de Graaff, who kindly supervised my writing process and brought me into contact with Denise Lang of Anglia. I want to thank Denise Lang for enabling me to access Anglia's speaking tests and helping me to be able to use their tests appropriately on such a short notice. Finally, I want to thank my family and husband.

Rianka van de Vuurst

June 2015

2. Introduction

Though awaiting a fresh new start newly arrived first year students enter secondary school with various educational backgrounds which have to be taken into consideration by the secondary school teacher. After students and teachers have been introduced to each other a new process begins, a process of teachers becoming acquainted with their students' educational needs. These needs are different for each student, as not every student has the same primary school background, amongst other (individual) factors, which might also influence students' level of English language proficiency. This implies that all students enter the English classroom with a different language proficiency. An English teacher will find out about these differences throughout the year by administering tests and communicating with students. However, finding out which students need extra support or challenge and subsequently being able to cater to those needs can be a slow and difficult process.

This study towards the consequences of different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education has been carried out amongst all first year students of Guido de Brès, a secondary school in Amersfoort. Guido de Brès has over 1500 students divided over three locations. Currently the school is involved in a process of digitalizing the education. This means all students have their own digital device through which they receive access to online/digital learning content. This enables the teachers and the students to access a large amount of learning content and should eventually make it easier for teachers to differentiate between students.

The study attempts to find out how to facilitate differentiation between students, in order to provide all students with the proper education they need. It also researches the differences in intensity of the English education students received at primary school in order to find out whether these differences relate to differences in English language proficiency as measured in the first year of secondary education. The study aspires to contribute to the discussion whether differences in intensity of the English classes as received during primary education relate to differences in language proficiency and attitude towards the language.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 A brief summary of English education in the Netherlands

Since 1986 English is an obligatory subject that is taught at all primary schools in the Netherlands (Thijs 7). While schools are obliged to teach English from group seven (age 10-11) and onwards, the government has allowed schools to start earlier. Schools are permitted to make their own decisions on how to teach English as long as the learning goals, set by the government are attained:

The learning goals (translated from Dutch) (Greven, Letschert 25):

- 13 Students learn to acquire information from simple spoken or written English texts.
- 14 Students learn to ask for or give information in English about easy topics and develop an attitude which enables them to express themselves in the language.
- 15 Students learn how to write some easy words about everyday topics.
- 16 Students learn to find definitions of English words and how to write these words by means of a dictionary.

This chapter gives an overview of studies to the effect of EELT (early English language teaching), high intensity programs and other indicators of higher ultimate attainment, such as the amount of English in the classroom as well as out of school exposure.

3.2 EELT

EELT is still a somewhat controversial approach on teaching English from the first years of primary education, since no unambiguous evidence has been found earlier language teaching leads to higher ultimate attainment (de Graaff, Vroeg of Laat Engels 3). However, EELT gains popularity in the Netherlands. Since 2001 the number of schools offering EELT increased from less than ten to over a thousand in 2014 (Groeï aantal vvto-scholen graph). This number might be even higher as the graph is based on schools that are enrolled in official EELT programs, such as VVTO or Early Bird, while there may be other schools who offer EELT on their own account.

Unsworth, Persson, Prins and de Bot thoroughly researched EELT in the Netherlands through the Early Bird research project. In this project Unsworth et al. attempted to find out how the English language skills of children, aged four to six, develop over time (de Bot 413).

They found out that the EELT children improved significantly in both English vocabulary and grammar. This result strongly depended on the number of English lessons per week and the language proficiency of the teacher: Children with a native-speaker teacher only or a native-speaker teacher and a non-native teacher at C level, according to the CEFR standards (Council of Europe n.p.), scored significantly better on vocabulary and grammar tests (de Bot 414). The results from the Early Bird study by Unsworth et al. showed as well that children in EELT programs scored significantly higher than children who were not enrolled in such programs and that those with “more than 60 minutes of weekly classroom exposure scored significantly higher on average than those with 60 minutes or less, which can be said as well about children with a native-speaker teacher or a non-native teacher at C level” (Unsworth et al. 14). The results of this study are in favor of EELT, yet only focused on young learners.

Muñoz also studied the effects of EELT, however, she tested younger and older learners (age 8, 11, 14, 18+). She concluded from her study to age related differences in foreign language learning that older learners in an instructed setting show a faster rate of learning, but when “younger learners have a greater amount of exposure than older learners (and similar ages at testing) the younger starters retain some gains in communicative skills, particularly in listening comprehension” (Muñoz, *Age-Related Differences* 207). She also mentioned the common finding that “children who start learning the foreign language later eventually catch up to those who begin earlier” (Muñoz, *Symmetries* 579), due to their larger cognitive maturity (Muñoz, *Age and the Rate of Foreign Language Learning* 8). Older learners are faster and more efficient learners than younger learners, at least in the first stages of second language acquisition. However, in both formal learning settings and natural learning settings “those who have had an earlier exposure to the second language reach a higher ultimate attainment than those with a later exposure.” (Muñoz, *Age and the Rate of Foreign Language Learning* 8).

Despite these results on the effects of EELT Krashen points out in an earlier study “that age is not in itself a predictor of second language rate or attainment, and that here too everything reduces down to the quantity of comprehensible input and the level of the affective filter” (Krashen, *Principles and Practice* 43). Krashen, Long, and Scarcella reviewed the available empirical research on the effect of age and second language acquisition and concluded that all published studies were consistent with these three generalizations:

“1. Adults proceed through the early stages of second language development faster than children do (where time and exposure are held constant).

2. Older children acquire language faster than younger children, time and exposure held constant.
 3. Language learners who begin natural exposure to second languages during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults.”
- (Krashen, Principles and Practice 43).

This is in agreement with Muñoz, who also stated that children are superior to adults in the long run.

DeKeyser warns that “whatever studies find out about age effects, they may not have simple educational implications.” He believes that teaching a foreign language at as early an age as possible during primary education might not be the right approach (DeKeyser 55). This is because many EELT studies focused on immigrants, “while the learning contexts for the immigrant are totally different from those of the foreign language learner” (DeKeyser 55).

3.3 High intensity

The intensity of English language programs refers to the methods used to teach English and the time spent on English per week. Intensity is difficult to operationalize. Research focusing on English education during primary school in the Netherlands by Cito showed that primary school students attending regular primary schools received about 60 hours of English education, students who received English from group five or six received about 100 hours of English education, while students who attended a primary school that offers EELT received in average 360 hours of English education (Geurts, de Graaff, Hemker 122). The most effective intensity is still unclear and depends on many factors, such as amount of exposure, optimal input and use of target language in the classroom.

Muñoz mentions that “in foreign language learning studies, amount of exposure is operationalized either as the number of hours of instruction or as courses of instruction. She states that “to equate hours of instruction with hours of exposure does not lead to the answer to which is the optimal amount of exposure, as it is uncertain whether the two variables have the same value”. (Muñoz, Symmetries 582-83).

Krashen is of the opinion that intake informal environments are sufficient for learning a language. The class can provide only additional intake, and it appears to be the case that children who have access to rich intake environments do not need extra classes in second languages (Krashen, Second Language Acquisition 49). Some adult studies report fairly large

positive correlations between the amount of classroom exposure to the second language and language proficiency (Krashen, Principles and Practice 33). Despite these results and predictions Krashen believes there is “not enough data to state, with confidence, how much input is necessary to reach a given stage” (Krashen, Principles and Practice 33).

Despite the fact that there are too many variables to calculate the hours required to learn a language, such as age, cross-linguistic influences, the linguistic environment, cognition, development of learner language, foreign language aptitude, social dimensions of second language acquisition, motivation affect and other individual differences (Ortega 1) some estimations have been made regarding this subject. E.g. Cambridge ESOL assumed each level could be reached with the following guided learning hours: A2, 180–200; B1, 350–400; B2, 500–600; C1, 700–800, and C2, 1,000–1,200 (Desveaux 1). However, there was no reference which supported these numbers.

Collins and White concluded from their study to intensity and language learning that “there is clear evidence that limited exposure to an L2, even if continued over several school years, does not afford students the opportunity to advance very far in their learning” (Collins and White 128). The amount of contact with the target language in the classroom is often minimal. Muñoz explains this is because “in a foreign language learning setting, learners do not usually receive native-speaker input and, when they do, it is not substantial. Moreover, learners are not exposed to the target language during all hours of instruction, and the exact proportion of lesson time varies according to the different educational systems, schools, and teachers.” (Muñoz, Symmetries 584).

However, to teach a class completely in the target language is also not recommendable, according to Macaro. He found out there is a difference in perceptions and attitudes between the two age groups he researched (adults and 12-year-olds), but that “none of the groups were in favor of banning the L1 from the classroom”. However, it became clear that “its presence is welcomed much more by children” (Macaro 738). Krashen agrees that “teacher talk”, the comprehensible input, is very important for effective second language classes when used efficiently. Only then the formal language classroom “can be an efficient place to achieve at least the intermediate levels rapidly, as long as the focus of the class is on providing input for acquisition” (Krashen, Principles and Practice 54).

3.4 Practical and theoretical relevance of the research

The described studies express various opinions on SLA, yet most agree on the fact that more exposure to the target language leads to higher ultimate attainment. They are not certain

whether a higher level of intensity of the language classes have this effect as well, as a higher intensity does not necessarily imply a more frequent use of the target language or a proper use of optimal input. This study attempts to find out whether differences in characteristics of the English lessons as received during primary school relate to differences in language proficiency and attitude towards the language amongst first year secondary school students. Because primary schools in the Netherlands are allowed to make their own decisions with regards to the way English education is offered first year secondary education students all have different backgrounds in English education.

The English teachers at Guido de Brès, the secondary school which participated in the study, noticed that some first year students enter the first English class with a high level of English language proficiency, while other students are barely able to introduce themselves in English. There are also many individual differences between students, as mentioned by Ortega, e.g. students express different attitudes towards the language. Some children are very anxious about speaking English, while others chatter away, regardless of their level. Since primary schools are not obliged to work towards a certain level or test students on their English level at the end of primary education, secondary school teachers will have to find out about the English language differences between students along the way. This is one of the reasons English teachers at Guido de Brès find it difficult to differentiate between students. Although differentiating is encouraged at Guido de Brès, the actual practice proves to be minimal.

This study attempts to find out whether any conclusions can be drawn about students' English level based on their primary school experiences with the language, so teachers have a less difficult job finding out which students should be challenged more, and which students should be offered extra attention. The study also aspires to contribute to the discussion whether different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education lead to significant differences in language proficiency and attitude towards the language.

3.4 Research question

What is the relationship between the different approaches to English language teaching Dutch students encountered at primary school, different attitudes towards to language and students' English language proficiency as tested in the first year of secondary education?

Sub-question 1: Which different approaches to English language teaching did students encounter during primary education?

Sub-question 2: Do different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education relate to different results on English language proficiency tests as administered during the first year of secondary education?

Sub-question 3: Do different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education relate to different attitudes towards the language?

Sub-question 4: How can differences in English language proficiency levels best be accommodated in a first year's program, in order to challenge students alike?

4. Method

The research project was carried out amongst students of Guido de Brès, a secondary school in Amersfoort at which all levels of secondary education are taught. It focuses on three levels, namely: pre-university education, higher general secondary education, and junior secondary vocational education (known in the Netherlands as vwo, havo and vmbo).

4.1 Sub-question 1 - Which different approaches to English language teaching did students encounter during primary education?

4.1.1 Respondents

All first year students of Guido de Brès participated. In total 224 students completed the questionnaire: 19 basic/practical junior secondary students (b-k), 24 theoretical junior secondary students (tl), 74 theoretical junior secondary vocational/ higher general secondary students (tl-h), 54 higher general secondary/pre-university students (h-v) and 44 pre-university students (vwo). In order to acquire a more detailed picture of the English education students received, the six most attended primary schools, before students attended Guido de Brès, which offer regular English were contacted and asked about the English education they offer and have offered. Also nine primary schools stated by students in the preliminary questionnaire to be involved in EELT programs were contacted to learn more about their views on English education. All schools were located within a 20 km range of Amersfoort. Subsequently, 20 students were selected to participate in a speaking test, provided by Anglia. This speaking test will be discussed in the section which describes sub-question two. The parents of the selected students were asked about their experiences with the English education offered at the primary school their child attended. This did not necessarily have to be one of the contacted schools.

4.1.2 Instruments

By means of a preliminary questionnaire, administered in Socrative (appendix 1) amongst all first year students, students were asked to specify what sort of English education they received during primary education and their attitude towards the language. The questionnaire was completed under supervision in order to be able to answer any arising questions about the questionnaire. Question six, seven and eight are, somewhat adjusted to the target group,

copied from de Graaff (Eindrapportage 34-35). These questions were originally developed for PPON 2012 (Geurts & Hemker n.p.). The questions that were used in this research addressed students' attitude towards the English language (question 7) and their estimated comprehension of the language (question 6 and 8). The other questions of the student questionnaire were related to the English students received at primary school (question 1-5 and 9 and 10). Some factual information was acquired about students' primary educational background with regards to English, as well as information about individual differences with regards to motivation, attitude and aptitude (Ortega 1).

The contacted schools were asked several questions by means of an online questionnaire or, when not responding to this questionnaire, an interview by phone to explain their vision on English education and the way they tried to achieve their learning goals, with regards to English. The interviews allowed the respondent to elaborate. Question one, four, five and seven asked for general information about the English education offered at the primary school. Question two and three required the respondent to describe more specifically how English was and is offered. Question six focused on how English language proficiency is tested, while the aim of question eight was to find out whether teachers had to participate in any English language proficiency tests themselves. Ultimately, respondents were asked to share their views on teaching EELT (question 9). The same questions were asked to each school and can be found in appendix 2. The selected parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire containing three questions. The aim of this questionnaire was to learn more about parents' opinions on the English education their child received at primary education (appendix 3). Question one informed about the school year at which the primary school first offered English education to their child. Question two focused on whether parents were aware of this before signing their child up for that primary school, while question three asked for the respondents' opinion of the English education their child received during primary education.

4.1.3 Procedure

From the student questionnaire only question nine ("Do you feel you benefit from having had English education during primary school? Explain your answer briefly.") will be discussed, because this question focuses on students' opinions of the English education they received at primary school. The other questions will be discussed and related to language proficiency in a different section. The interviews with teachers and parents were summarized and categorized. Based on these findings an objective conclusion was formed.

4.2 Sub-question 2 - Do different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education relate to different results on English language proficiency tests as administered during the first year of secondary education?

4.2.1 Respondents

All first year students of Guido de Brès, present at the moment of administering, responded to the questionnaire, 224 students in total. Out of these 224, 20 students were selected to participate in an Anglia speaking test. Four students from each level. These students' parents were informed on the method used to test their children, as well as on the fact the results would be used carefully and anonymously. The speaking test was provided by Anglia, a qualified English language institute. All of the selected students received regular English education during primary education. From each educational level four students (two boys and two girls) were selected. These four students all received a different amount of time of English per week during primary education (< 30 minutes, 30 to 60 minutes, one to two hours, more than two hours), so all intensities were represented equally. This was accomplished in all cases, except for the theoretical junior secondary education (tl), in which none of the students received more than two hours of English per week during primary education. In that case a second student was selected who received one to two hours of English per week.

4.2.2 Instruments

The results of the student questionnaire were used to learn more about the differences in English education students received during primary education. The results were mainly used to establish the number of students that received a certain intensity program of English education and were linked to their Cito 0 test results on English reading and vocabulary as tested at the start of the school year 2014-2015 (Cito toets 0). The Cito 0 test is a test administered at the start of the school year (September or October) which measures students' proficiency with regards to Dutch, English and mathematics. Tests by Cito have been assessed by COTAN, an independent test assessing commission in the Netherlands. The test system by Cito has been the only test system in the Netherlands that has been assessed with a satisfactory outcome on all assessing points. This implies the system is valid and reliable (Cito COTAN). The results were also linked to students' average school results on English near the end of the school year and their results on English listening assignments as tested

through Holmwood's near the end of the school year. *Holmwood's* is an adaptive online program offering listening and reading assignments to improve these skills. Holmwood's relates to a student's results to establish the CEFR level of that student, this level can improve or degrade accordingly to the student's achievements and therefore gives a clear image of the level of that student as measured at a certain time. Ultimately, an Anglia speaking test was administered amongst 20 selected students. Depending on the student's proficiency level on listening and reading a speaking test was selected: primary (pre-A1), preliminary (A1) or elementary (A2).

4.2.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was completed by all students present at that time and administered during school hours under both teacher and researcher supervision. Students' results on reading, listening and vocabulary tests were implemented in Excel and SPSS and related to the results of question one (year of onset), two (time per week) and four (quality of lessons, according to the student). Question three, about who taught the English classes, was left out, because 95.5% of the students reported they received English classes from their form teacher. Students' average English school result, as obtained from tests administered at Guido de Brès was taken into consideration as well and related to question one, two and four. All the correlations between the test results and the answers to the questions of the student questionnaire were calculated by means of Spearman's rho value, except for the question related to the year of onset and the average school result on English. The correlations between these interval data were calculated with Pearson's r value. The total results of all respondents, as well as level specific results were calculated, taking into consideration the five educational levels as mentioned previously: basic/practical junior secondary students (b-k), theoretical junior secondary students (tl), theoretical junior secondary vocational/ higher general secondary students, higher general secondary/pre-university students (h-v) and pre-university students (vwo).

The 20 students who were selected for the Anglia speaking test participated in a speaking test corresponding to the level obtained at Holmwood's listening and the Cito reading test, specifically pre-A1 or A2 level. An A1 test was not used, since this level did not properly correlate with the proficiency level of the students as established for other skills. 12 out of the 20 students participated in a primary (<A1) speaking test, while eight students completed an elementary (A2) speaking test. The speaking test was administered in pairs of two students of the same educational level and assessed by me. In order to be able to assess

these tests Anglia offered a training. After administering the tests the audio files were sent to Anglia to be assessed once more by an expert assessor to guarantee a proper assessment.

4.3 Sub-question 3 - Do different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education relate to different attitudes towards the language?

4.3.1 Respondents

All first year students of Guido de Brès, in total 224, completed the questionnaire.

4.3.2 Instruments

The results of questions five to eight of the student questionnaire were used to measure estimated language comprehension and language attitude and were related to the results of question one (year of onset), two (time per week) and four (quality of lessons, as reported by the student).

4.3.3 Procedure

The results were implemented in Excel and SPSS and correlations were calculated by making use of Spearman's rho value. The analysis of the occurring correlations can be found in the results section.

4.4 Sub-question 4 - How can differences in English language proficiency levels best be accommodated in a first year's program, in order to challenge students alike?

4.4.1 Respondents

In total three English teachers who teach English to first year students were interviewed. Also ThiemeMeulenhoff, the publisher of the *New Interface 2nd edition* was contacted and interviewed. Ultimately, the course book *New Interface 2nd edition* and the online program Holmwood's, which are used to teach English at the Guido de Brès were analyzed in order to find out whether these methods are suitable for the level of the students and offer adequate challenging and supporting materials. In order to do this the English teachers' opinion of the methods was asked, as well as their opinion on how English is taught during the first year of secondary education at Guido de Brès in general.

4.4.2 Instruments

By means of an interview (appendix 4) about teachers' satisfaction with the currently used course book and the way English is taught at Guido de Brès in general, teachers were asked to express their opinion. The publisher of *New Interface 2nd edition* was interviewed about the implementation of the CEFR levels in the course book, the steps taken to decide which content is suitable and how they attempt to differentiate between students. The questions can be found in appendix 5.

4.4.3 Procedure

The answers to the questions were summarized and based on the findings a conclusion was drawn.

5. Results

5.1 Sub-question 1 - Which different approaches to English language teaching did students encounter during primary education?

5.1.1 English education at primary schools

The following results are based on information offered on the website of the selected primary schools, complemented with information gathered from teacher interviews or online questionnaires completed by teachers. Nine primary schools, listed by students to be involved in EELT were researched as well as six primary schools offering a regular English program. These six schools were the most attended by first year students of Guido de Brès. The specific questions can be found in appendix 2.

❖ Primary schools involved in EELT

All of the primary schools involved in EELT start teaching English from group one. Most schools became involved in EELT during the last four to seven years, while other schools mentioned they were only just involved in an EELT program.

Most primary schools offer English in a playful manner, e.g. by singing songs, reading picture books and playing games during group one to three. From group four and onwards English is offered through classical instruction focusing on communication rather than grammar. One teacher stated they only teach English in the target language, yet they allow students to answer or ask questions in Dutch if they feel more comfortable doing so and are also allowed to help classmates in Dutch. Teachers working at this school show their students a clear symbol, e.g. by wearing a certain scarf, which means the English class has started and from that moment on the teacher will only speak English to the students.

Most schools teach English half an hour to an hour. One school mentioned they also attempt to teach other classes, such as arts and crafts or history in English, however, this was not quite developed yet. All researched primary schools stated that the form teacher, with Dutch as the mother tongue, taught English. None of the schools mentioned they disallowed teachers from teaching English. However, they do expect a certain language proficiency. One school tested all teachers on their English language proficiency before initializing an EELT program. All teachers had the required language skills. Primary schools encouraged teachers to improve their language skills by taking extra language classes, going on study trips to

England or organizing language workshops. Some teachers mentioned that the course books they used (*Take it Easy, Our Discovery Island*) minimized the amount of English the teacher had to use, because the course books offer digital native-speaker co-teachers, who in a way teach the English lesson.

From group one to three the most used course books are *I-pockets* and *My Name is Tom*. Both course books are specifically designed for early English education and offer offline as well as online materials. From group four to eight several course books were mentioned, namely *Backpack, Hello World, Take it Easy, Teaching materials for early English designed by teachers in training, Our Discovery Island* and *My Name is Tom*. *Backpack* is specifically designed for the interactive whiteboard, yet also offers text- and workbooks. *Hello World* is stated by the publisher to be the most used English course book for primary education, yet makes less use of an interactive whiteboard. The publisher of *Take it Easy* states this course book is the most recommended by teachers and offers online native-speaker co-teachers who help the form teacher teaching English. The course book is especially designed for the interactive whiteboard. Teachers who use this teaching method mentioned their own level of English mattered less, as the digital co-teacher explains all the material and reads out loud new words or stories. The course book *Our Discovery Island* offers the content in a similar way as *Take it Easy*, yet is written by a team of native English speakers and is therefore completely written in English.

One teacher stated they did not test students' English language proficiency, while many other schools mentioned they use the tests the course book offers. Another teacher mentioned they were considering testing students by means of Anglia language tests, however, this decision is still under discussion.

All researched schools listed advantages of early English on their website or were able to elaborate on this during interviews. The following advantages were mentioned: it prepares students for secondary education, it takes away certain fears to speak English, it helps students to become familiar with this world language, scientific evidence shows that young learners are more sensitive to language learning and early exposure to a second language results in better performance at a later age.

❖ Primary schools involved in regular English teaching programs

All schools involved in regular English teaching programs offer English from group seven to eight. Although the rising popularity of EELT becomes apparent, as some schools who are listed by students to teach English from group seven to eight are now also involved in

EELT, to be specific three out of the six selected primary schools. Many teachers mentioned that English was first offered only in group eight, later this was expanded to group seven or group five and six.

Most of the schools state that becoming familiar with the English language has a central role in their English education. They attempt to familiarize students with the language by focusing on (simple) communication, rather than grammar and try to motivate students to speak English. However, one school mentioned they attempted to emphasize the practice of grammar and new vocabulary during group eight as it helped their students' transition to secondary education. Students' English language proficiency is in many cases not tested, yet some teachers design (small) vocabulary and/or grammar tests for their students. Teachers used the following course books to help their student achieve the learning goals: *Real English*, *Just Do It*, *Stepping Up* and *Take it Easy* from which they teach English about half an hour to an hour per week. *Real English* is offered digitally and also allows some Dutch to help students feel comfortable. *Just Do It* does not offer digital content, but makes use of one compact workbook. *Stepping Up* is not offered digitally, yet contains a lot of grammar instruction as well assignments to practice the four other language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. *Take it Easy* is discussed in the section on primary schools offering EELT.

All interviewed teachers taught the English classes themselves. By making use of course books which are supported by an interactive whiteboard or other digital device they minimize the amount of English they have to use, as can be seen at schools who teach early English as well. Teachers stated this helps them teach English, as a digital co-teacher provides the students with the English they need, so teachers are less involved in speaking English and worry less about their level of English.

When asked about the advantages of offering English during primary education teachers mentioned the idea that children are able to learn a language faster at an early age and it helps them to prepare for secondary education. English during primary education serves as an introduction to the language. It helps students feel comfortable when speaking English and encourages their natural curiosity about learning new things.

5.1.2 Parents' opinion on the English education their child received at primary school

The parents of the 20 selected students were approached to complete an online questionnaire containing four questions about the English education their child received during primary education (appendix 3). Out of these 20, 13 completed the questionnaire. None of the respondents reported to have a child involved in EELT.

In answer to question one respondents listed group five, six, seven and eight. Table 1 shows the specific number of parents who reported their child received English education since a certain group.

Question two showed that about half of the respondents were aware of the group at which their child would receive English education, while a little more than 50% of the respondents were not aware of this before signing their child up for the primary school of their choice.

The results of question three report that three respondents were satisfied with the English education offered to their child during primary education. They mentioned that it created a base for language development, helped their child expand their knowledge of English vocabulary, and motivated their child to learn the language: "The children were excited and thought learning a new language was fun and cool. However, the writing and speaking of the language proved to be difficult and requires more years of study." Eight respondents were not satisfied with the English their child received during primary education. Some were of the opinion too little time was spent on English, or there was too much focus on playful activities instead of learning grammar rules and new vocabulary. Other respondents mentioned the transition between primary school English classes and secondary school English classes is too big. Two respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. One of these respondents mentioned that having English classes at primary school serves as a good introduction to the language, yet does not accomplish more than that.

Table 1: Results parent questionnaire

Question 1	From which school year did your child receive English education?							
	Gr.1	Gr.2	Gr.3	Gr.4	Gr.5	Gr.6	Gr.7	Gr.8
	0	0	0	0	3	3	6	1
Question 2	Were you aware of this before you signed your child up for this school?							
	Yes	No						
	6	7						
Question 3	Are you satisfied with the English education your child received during primary education?							
	Yes	No	Neither					
	3	8	2					

5.1.3 Students' opinion on the English education they received at primary school

All first year students of Guido de Brès present at the time of administering responded to the questionnaire about the English education they received during primary education. The results of this questionnaire can be viewed in table 2 and 3. Table 2 shows the results to question one to three and question nine, while table 3 shows the results to the Likert-scale questions four to eight. Table 3 also reports the means and standard deviation. The answer possibilities have been somewhat abbreviated, but the specific questions and answer possibilities can be found in appendix 1. Question one to eight are all related to students' language proficiency and will be discussed in the next section. Question nine was an open question and required students to explain whether they still benefitted from having had English education during primary education. The answers are divided into three categories: 1. Yes, 2. A little bit, 3. No. Out of the 224 students who responded 127 students reported they encountered advantages from having had English lessons during primary education. They explained they feel comfortable when speaking the language or already know some vocabulary and grammar. A minority of 38 students stated they benefit a little bit from it. They sometimes encounter familiar words, but it benefitted them only for a short time, as they learned many new things which they did not learn at primary school. The remaining 55 students claimed they believe they do not benefit from the English lessons they received at primary school. Some stated the English education they received was either very basic, of poor quality or mentioned not much time was spent on English education. In general, it seemed many students interpreted the question as whether they encountered repetition of previous learned material. If this was the case many students answered they benefitted from the English lessons they received at primary school.

Table 2: Results student questionnaire - question 1-3, 9

Question 1	From which group did you receive English education during primary school?							
	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5	Gr. 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8
#	8	3	5	5	15	53	108	14
%	3.79	1.42	2.37	2.37	7.11	25.12	51.18	6.64
Question 2	How much time was spent on English per week?							
	0-30 min.	30-60 min.	1-2 hours	>2 hours				
#	33	118	54	10				
%	15.35	54.88	25.12	4.65				
Question 3	Who taught the English classes?							
	form teacher	someone else (Dutch)	native-speaker	combination (Dutch)	combination (Dutch-ns)			
#	206	0	4	2	4			
%	95.37	0	1.85	0.93	1.85			
Question 9	Do you feel you benefit from having had English education during primary school?							
	Yes	A little bit	No					
#	127	38	55	24				
%	57.73	17.27	25					

Table 3: Results student questionnaire - question 4-8

Question 4 “I received good English classes at primary school”							
	No, not at all.	No, not improved	Yes, OK	Yes, good	Yes, really good	M	Sd
#	35	54	75	42	9	2.69	1.515
%	16.28	25.12	34.88	19.53	4.19		
Question 5 “I like having English classes”							
	No, not at all.	No, not really	Neither like, nor dislike it	Yes, like	Yes, love	M	Sd
#	16	47	104	44	7	2.90	1,089
%	7.34	21.56	47.71	20.18	3.21		
Question 6 Do you understand English songs you hear e.g. on the radio?							
	No	Yes, after frequent listening	Yes, very easily	M	Sd		
#	39	106	76	2.16	.708		
%	17.65	47.96	34.39				
Question 7 “I dare to speak English. I'm not afraid to make mistakes” Do you agree?							
	No	Yes, but hesitantly	Yes	M	Sd		
#	24	96	101	1.98	.946		
%	10.86	43.44	45.7				
Question 8 Imagine: You're on a vacation abroad. Children of your age ask you in English to join them. What do you do?							
	No	Yes, but hesitantly	Yes	M	Sd		
#	15	77	127	2.50	.624		
%	6.85	35.16	57.99				

5.2 Sub-question 2 - Do different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education relate to different results on English language proficiency tests as administered during the first year of secondary education?

5.2.1 Intensity

The preliminary questionnaire showed that 16 students out of 224 claimed to have received EELT, namely three basic/practical junior secondary students (b-k), five theoretical junior secondary students (tl), five theoretical junior secondary vocational/ higher general secondary students (tl-h) and three pre-university students (vwo). It also became clear that out of all students 10.6% received 0 to 30 minutes, 52.7% received 30 minutes to an hour, 26% received about one to two hours and 3% received more than two hours of English education per week. Table 4 shows that higher intensity does not necessarily lead to higher results on school tests, which are generally tests offered by the publisher of the course book which are

used to test knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. Neither amount of time spent on English per week, nor year of onset prove to have a significant effect. However, quality of the English lessons as received during primary education (as reported by the students in the preliminary questionnaire) shows a significant correlation with the average school result. This can be seen in the total results ($p = .018$), the theoretical junior (tl) level ($p = .005$) and the higher general secondary/pre-university (h-v) level ($p = .036$). The theoretical junior level shows a moderate rho value of .551. The other two correlations are weak. Because each educational level tests accordingly to its own level of difficulty, all levels are listed in order to find out whether there might be any differences between the levels. However, with exception of the results for quality, this was not the case.

Table 4: Correlations between year of onset, time intensity, quality reported and average school results for English

	total		b-k		tl		tl-h		h-v		vwo	
	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p
Year	.098	.153	-0,221	.378	-0,048	.824	.111	.348	.114	.406	.072	.647
	rho	p	rho	p	rho	p	rho	p	rho	p	rho	p
Time	.096	.158	.442	.058	-0,173	.419	.048	.687	.215	.112	-0,088	.571
Quality	.160	.018	.422	.081	.551	.005	.080	.494	.283	.036	.048	.758

5.2.3 Reading proficiency

In order to find out whether there is a relation between the amount of time per week students received English education during primary school and the reading test results obtained at the Cito test on English reading, administered at the start of the first year of secondary education, the results are related to question two of the student questionnaire: ‘How much time per week did you receive English education?’ These results established that the majority of the students (54.88%) received 30 to 60 minutes of English per week. This corresponds with the results obtained from research to primary schools, who in most cases state they offer English education 30 to 60 minutes per week.

Table 5 shows that the majority of the basic/practical junior secondary students (b-k) students score <A1. About three quarters of the theoretical junior secondary students (tl) students score <A1 as well, while a little less than 30% score A2. A little more than 50% of the higher general secondary/pre-university students (h-v) and 75% of the pre-university students (vwo) students score A2, while less than 10% of the students of these levels score <A1. Out of the three basic/practical junior secondary (b-k) students who received less than 30 minutes of English per week two students scored <A1. Out of the three students of that

same educational level who received more than two hours of English per week two scored A2. The same sort of results can be seen as well amongst higher general secondary/pre-university students (h-v), where nine out of the twelve students who received one to two hours per week of English obtained an A2 level of reading proficiency (75%). Also the one student who received more than two hours per week obtained A2. The table for pre-university students (vwo) shows approximately the same percentages. Nine students out of the eleven who received one to two hours per week of English obtained an A2 level of reading proficiency, this is more than 80%. All of the four students who received more than two hours of English education scored A2. When looking at the data presented in table 5 it might also be implied time is of less influence than the educational level first-year secondary students are involved in, as the higher the level of education the higher the level students obtained during the Cito reading test.

However, figure 1 shows a gradual improvement in students reading proficiency when having spent more time on English during primary education, which implies a correlation between time spent on English and reading proficiency.

Table 6 shows the assumed correlation is present ($p=.002$), but has a weak rho value. There is no significant correlation between year of onset or quality of the English lessons received during primary education according to the student and reading proficiency, as can be seen as well in table 6.

Table 5: Number of students who received a certain amount of time per week of English education and scored a <A1, A1 or A2 level on the English reading proficiency Cito test.

b-k (19)	<A1	A1	A2
0-30 min	2	1	
30-60 min	7	1	
1 to 2 hours	3	1	1
> 2 hours	1		2
Total percentage per CEFR level	68	15	15.5
tl (24)	<A1	A1	A2
0-30 min	3	1	
30-60 min	10	7	
1 to 2 hours	3		
> 2 hours			
Total percentage per CEFR level	66.6	33	
tl-h (74)	<A1	A1	A2
0-30 min	2	3	1
30-60 min	5	31	7
1 to 2 hours	5	13	7
> 2 hours		2	
Total percentage per CEFR level	16.2	66	20
h-v (54)	<A1	A1	A2
0-30 min	2	1	2
30-60 min	2	13	16
1 to 2 hours	2	1	9
> 2 hours			1
Total percentage per CEFR level	11.1	27.7	61.7
vwo (44)	<A1	A1	A2
0-30 min	1	4	4
30-60 min	1	3	16
1 to 2 hours		2	9
> 2 hours			4
Total percentage per CEFR level	4.4	20.3	74.7
Total (215)	<A1	A1	A2
0-30 min	10	10	7
30-60 min	25	55	39
1 to 2 hours	13	17	26
> 2 hours	1	2	7
Total percentage per CEFR level	22.6	38.9	48.5

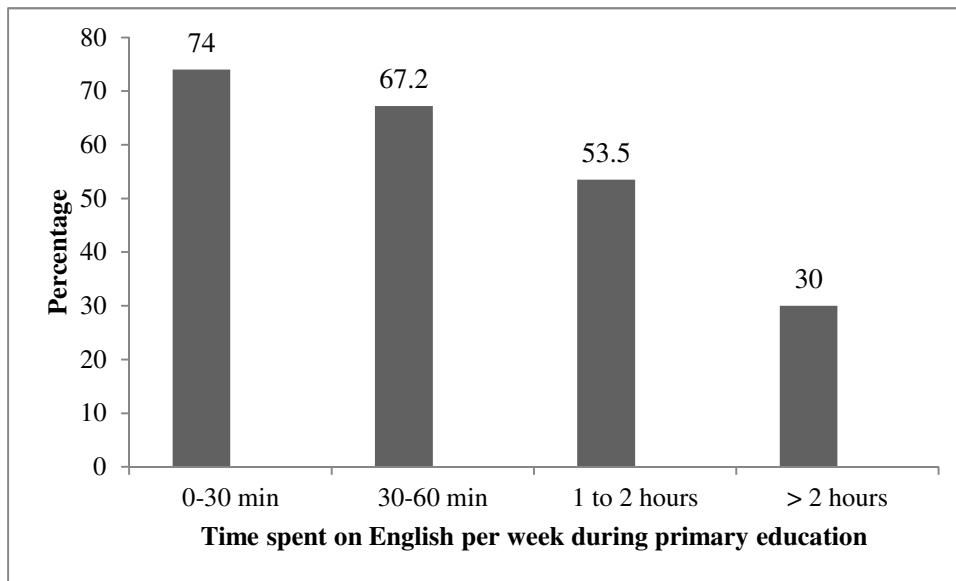


Figure 1: Percentage of students who received a certain amount of time per week of English education during primary education and scored A1 or less on reading proficiency.

Table 6: Relationship between English reading proficiency and time, year and quality

Effect	rho	p
Time	.211	.002
Year	.095	.168
Quality	.112	.100

5.2.4 Listening proficiency

The listening results are based on students' scores as obtained in Holmwood's. Holmwood's is an online listening and reading program, used by students throughout the first and second year of secondary education to practice and improve both skills. For this research only listening is taken into account. The program is adaptive in such a way that it can either upgrade students to a higher CEFR level, based on the amount of passes on assignments, or degrade students to a lower CEFR level, when repeatedly failing assignments. Holmwood's has ordered the levels as follows: Discoverers (<<<A1), Explorers (<A1), Pioneers (<A1), Breakthrough (A1), Elementary (A2), Intermediate (B1), Upper Intermediate (B2), Advanced (C1) and Proficiency (C2). Since no student obtained a higher level than Upper Intermediate, the last two levels are left out of the table. When looking at the results it must be taken into account that not all students completed the same number of assignments, which implies that some students could have practiced more or less than average. On average first year students completed 12.3 assignments.

As with the results obtained from the reading test it seems to be the case cognitive ability, as presumed from the educational level first-year secondary students are involved in has a greater effect on a student's CEFR level on listening proficiency than time spent on English during primary education. As can be seen in table 7 the majority of all first year students (87.3%) have mastered the Explorer level (<<A1). The assumption that the educational level first-year secondary students are involved in, and consequently their presumed cognitive ability could have an effect on a student's CEFR level becomes apparent when calculating the percentages of students that obtained a certain CEFR level. The higher the educational level, the higher the CEFR level that is obtained by the majority of students of that specific educational level. Also, the higher the educational level, the more students are able to obtain an A2, B1 or B2 level.

70% of the students who have been offered 30 to 60 minutes of English education per week score less than A1, opposed to 60% of the students who received one to two hours of English per week. Out of the twelve students who received more than two hours of English per week nine score an A1 level or higher, this is 75%. Out of the thirty students who received less than thirty minutes of English per week 23 (76.6%) score less than A1, while only six (20%) score A1 and one student is able to obtain an A2 level. Out of these seven, five students are involved in a higher general secondary/pre-university (h-v) or pre-university (vwo) program, which again could imply their high results are mainly due to their presumed higher cognitive ability (as assumed from the educational level they are involved in) and have less to do with the low amount of English they received.

Figure 2 seems to suggest that the more time spent on English per week during primary education the less students score less than A1 on listening proficiency tests. This is supported by Table 8, which shows that there is a significant correlation between time spent on English per week and listening proficiency ($p=.020$). However, the reported rho value is weak. There is no significant correlation between the year of onset ($p=.211$) or the quality of the English lessons received during primary education according to the student ($p=.219$) and listening proficiency.

Table 7: Number of students who received a certain amount of time per week of English education and scored a <<<A1, <<A1, <A1, A1, A2, B1 or B2 level in Holmwood's listening.

b-k (19)	<<<A1	<<A1	<A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
0-30 min	2		1				
30-60 min	3	1	4				
1 to 2 hours	1	2	1	1			
> 2 hours			1	1	1		
Total percentage per CEFR level	31.4	15.7	36.6	10.4	5.2		
tl (24)	<<<A1	<<A1	<A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
0-30 min		3	1				
30-60 min	4	9	3	1			
1 to 2 hours	1	2					
> 2 hours							
Total percentage per CEFR level	20.6	58.3	16.5	4			
tl-h (74)	<<<A1	<<A1	<A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
0-30 min		2	2	1	1		
30-60 min	7	13	13	2	3		
1 to 2 hours	3	11	6	3	1		
> 2 hours	1	1			1		
Total percentage per CEFR level	14.7	36.3	28.3	8	7.9		
h-v (54)	<<<A1	<<A1	<A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
0-30 min		4	2	1			
30-60 min		12	5	2	8	4	
1 to 2 hours	2	1	1		2	2	
> 2 hours					1		
Total percentage per CEFR level	3.7	31.4	14.7	5.5	19.9	11.1	
vwo (44)	<<<A1	<<A1	<A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
0-30 min	1	2	2	4			
30-60 min	1	3	3	5	4	3	1
1 to 2 hours		1		3	4	2	1
> 2 hours				1	1	1	1
Total percentage per CEFR level	4.4	13.5	11.3	29.3	20.2	13.5	6.6
Total (215)	<<<A1	<<A1	<A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
0-30 min	3	12	8	6	1		
30-60 min	12	38	28	10	15	7	1
1 to 2 hours	7	17	11	13	7	2	1
> 2 hours	1	1	1	3	4	1	1
Total percentage per CEFR level	10.6	31.5	22.2	14.8	12.4	5.2	1.2

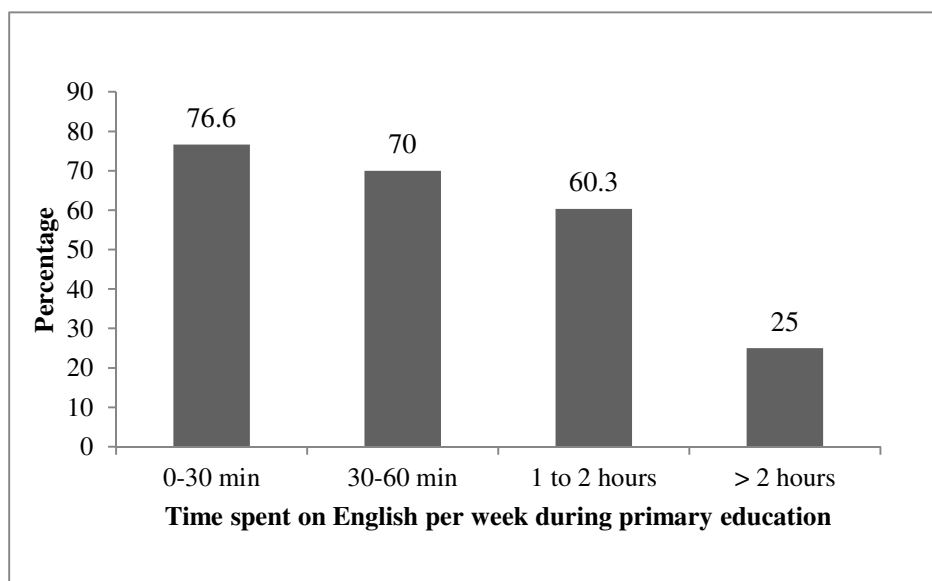


Figure 2: Percentage of students who received a certain amount of time per week of English education during primary education and scored less than A1 on listening proficiency.

Table 8: Relationship between English listening proficiency and time, year and quality

Effect	rho	p
Time	.159	.020
Year	-.087	.211
Quality	.084	.219

5.2.5 Knowledge of English vocabulary

The vocabulary results are based on results obtained by first year students on their Cito test on English vocabulary. Their result is matched to a secondary educational level, instead of a CEFR level by Cito. This is because it is very difficult to state whether a certain word is qualified as an A1 or B2 word. The following educational levels can be acquired: basic+ junior secondary vocational education (bb+), basic junior secondary vocational education (bb), practical junior secondary vocational education (kb) mixed/theoretical junior secondary vocational education (gtl), higher general secondary education (h) and pre-university education (v). These levels are ordered from lower to higher required cognitive ability to be able to obtain the level. The Dutch abbreviations of the levels are used in table 9. The table shows the educational level and time spent on English per week at primary education. The same implied outcome which occurred when analyzing reading and listening proficiency becomes apparent when analyzing knowledge of English vocabulary as well, namely the higher the educational level the student is involved, the higher the acquired level. The

majority of basic/practical junior secondary students (b-k) (63.2%) have acquired a bb+ level, while only two students are able to acquire an h or v level. The majority of the pre-university students (vwo) are able to obtain an h (29.5%) or v level (40.9%). This means that 70.4% of all pre-university students (vwo) are able to achieve a higher educational level. Table 9 shows that many students of a certain educational level are able to achieve the level of vocabulary knowledge suitable to that level, as the educational level they have acquired matches the educational level they are involved in at secondary education. In short, many pre-university students (vwo) are able to achieve a v level when doing an English vocabulary test, while many basic/practical junior secondary students (b-k) are able to acquire a bb+ level (or higher) when doing the same. This relationship is visualized in table 10 and can be applied to all educational levels, except for theoretical junior secondary students (tl) where almost all students (82%) have obtained a lower level than their actual educational level.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of students who received a certain amount of time per week of English education and scored a bb level or less on knowledge of English vocabulary and visualizes the gradual decrease in the amount of students who received more minutes of English during primary education and their inability to reach a higher level than bb.

As becomes clear in table 11 time spent on English per week has a significant relation to knowledge of English vocabulary ($p=.000$). The quality of the English lessons received at primary school according to the student proves to have a significant correlation to knowledge of English vocabulary as well ($p=.006$). Year of onset does not show this correlation. None of the reported correlations for vocabulary report a strong rho value.

Table 9: Number of students who received a certain amount of time per week of English education and scored a *bb+*, *bb*, *kb*, *gtl*, *h* or *v* level on the Cito vocabulary test.

b-k (19)	bb+	bb	kb	gtl	h	v
0-30 min	3					
30-60 min	6		1	1		
1 to 2 hours	3			1	1	
> 2 hours			1	1		1
Total percentage per level	63.2		10.4	15.6	5.2	5.2
tl (24)	bb+	bb	kb	gtl	h	v
0-30 min	3				1	
30-60 min	10	3		1	2	1
1 to 2 hours	2		1			
> 2 hours						
Total percentage per level	65.4	12.5	4.1	4.1	12.4	4.1
tl-h (74)	bb+	bb	kb	gtl	h	v
0-30 min	3	1		1		1
30-60 min	9	6	4	8	7	5
1 to 2 hours	7	3	3	3	6	5
> 2 hours		1		1		
Total percentage per level	25.6	14.7	9.4	17.4	17.5	14.7
h-v (54)	bb+	bb	kb	gtl	h	v
0-30 min		2	1	1	1	1
30-60 min	3	6	4	5	5	10
1 to 2 hours		1	1	1	2	9
> 2 hours						1
Total percentage per level	5.5	16.6	11	12.8	14.7	38.7
vwo (44)	bb+	bb	kb	gtl	h	v
0-30 min	1	2	2	2	1	
30-60 min		1		2	8	9
1 to 2 hours		2			2	7
> 2 hours					2	2
Total percentage per level	2.3	11.3	4.5	9	29.5	40.9
Total (215)	bb+	bb	kb	gtl	h	v
0-30 min	10	5	3	4	3	2
30-60 min	28	16	9	17	22	25
1 to 2 hours	12	6	5	5	11	21
> 2 hours		1	1	2	2	4
Total percentage per level	23.1	13	8.4	9.1	17.6	24.2

Table 10: Percentage of students who were able to acquire the same educational level at an English vocabulary test as the educational level they are involved in at secondary education.

Level	%
b-k	73.6
tl	4.1
tl-h	34.9
h-v	53.4
vwo	40.9

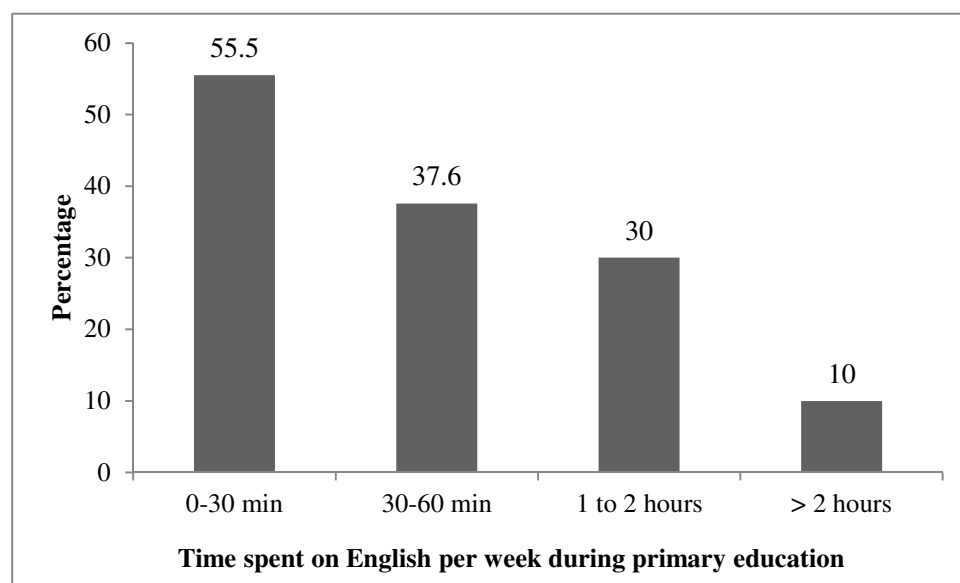


Figure 3: Percentage of students who received a certain amount of time per week of English education and scored a bb level or less on knowledge of English vocabulary.

Table 11: Relationship between knowledge of English vocabulary and time, year and quality

Effect	rho	p
Time	.290	.000
Year	.019	.784
Quality	.186	.006

5.2.6 Speaking Proficiency

A selected group of 20 students participated in an Anglia speaking test. Out of these 20, 12 students participated in a primary (<A1) speaking test and eight students completed an elementary (A2) speaking test. Out of the 12 students who participated in a primary speaking

test five failed. One basic/practical junior secondary (b-k) student, who received 0 to 30 minutes of English per week, three theoretical junior secondary (tl) students, who received 0 to 30 minutes, 30 to 60 minutes and one to two hours of English per week and one theoretical junior secondary vocational/ higher general secondary (tl-h) student who received 30 to 60 minutes of English per week. Out of the eight students who participated in the elementary speaking test two students failed. Both were higher general secondary/pre-university (h-v) students. One of them received 0 to 30 minutes of English per week, the other 30 to 60 minutes.

Table 12 visualizes the assumption that the level of the speaking test is related to the educational level of the student. The higher this level, the higher the level of the offered speaking test. Although two students who received thirty minutes or less failed the speaking test and none of the students who received two hours or more failed the test there is no relationship between time spent on English per week and speaking proficiency as tested, as there is too much variation in the results.

Table 12: Selected students' performance on language proficiency tests

Student	Educational level in Dutch	Amount of time per week	reading	listening	speaking	speaking test pass/fail
1	BK	0-30 min	<A1	<A1	Primary	F
2	TL	0-30 min	<A1	<A1	Primary	P
3	TL-H	0-30 min	A1	<A1	Primary	P
4	H-V	0-30 min	A2	A1	Elementary	F
5	V	0-30 min	A2	A1	Elementary	P
6	BK	30-60 min	A1	<A1	Primary	P
7	TL	30-60 min	A1	<A1	Primary	P
8	TL-H	30-60 min	A2	<A1	Primary	P
9	H-V	30-60 min	A2	A2	Elementary	F
10	V	30-60 min	A2	A2	Elementary	P
11	BK	1-2 hours	A2	<A1	Primary	P
12	TL	1-2 hours	<A1	<A1	Primary	F
13	TL	1-2 hours	<A1	<A1	Primary	P
13	TL-H	1-2 hours	A2	<A1	Primary	P
14	H-V	1-2 hours	A2	B1	Elementary	P
15	V	1-2 hours	A2	B2	Elementary	P
16	BK	>2 hours	<A1	<A1	Primary	P
18	TL-H	>2 hours	A1	A1	Primary	P
19	H-V	>2 hours	A2	A2	Elementary	P
20	V	>2 hours	A2	B2	Elementary	P

5.3 Sub-question 3 - Do different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education relate to different attitudes towards the language?

5.3.1 Attitude and estimated language comprehension

Question five to eight of the student questionnaire addressed students' attitudes towards the language (question 5, 7, 8) and their estimated comprehension of English (question 6).

The correlations between the questions and the time spent on English during primary education, the year of onset and the quality of the English lessons as reported by the students can be seen in table 13. Question five: "I like having English classes" significantly correlates with the amount of time primary schools spent on English per week during primary education, as the chance of this relationship being a coincidence is less than 5% ($p=.004$). However, the rho value must be reported as very weak. Question five correlates as well with year of onset ($p=.023$) and the quality of the English classes as stated by the students in the preliminary questionnaire ($p=.000$). Time is related to comprehension (question six) and attitude (question eight) as well, since the correlation between question six: "Do you understand English songs you hear e.g. on the radio?" And time spent on English per week is $p .000$ and the correlation between time and question eight: "Imagine: You're on a vacation abroad. Children of your age ask you in English to join them. What do you do?" is $p .001$. The year of onset correlates significantly with question five, as mentioned earlier, and question six ($p=.003$). The Quality of the English lessons according to the student is not only related to a student stating he/she likes having English classes (question five), but also to the comprehension of an English song (question six). This correlation is significant as the p value is $.010$. None of the reported correlations had a strong rho value.

Table 13: The correlation between attitude and comprehension and year of onset, time intensity and quality reported

Correlation (Spearman rho)	time spent	year of onset	reported quality
Q. 5: Attitude (I like English)	.198 ($p=.004$)	-0.157 ($p=.023$)	.291 ($p=.000$)
Q. 6: Comprehension	.266 ($p=.000$)	-0.202 ($p=.003$)	.176 ($p=.010$)
Q. 7: Attitude (making mistakes)	.011 ($p=.873$)	-0.051 ($p=.456$)	.072 ($p=.291$)
Q. 8: Attitude (vacation)	.234 ($p=.001$)	-0.079 ($p=.256$)	.088 ($p=.197$)

5.4 Sub-question 4 - How can differences in English language proficiency levels best be accommodated in a first year's program, in order to challenge students alike?

Guido de Brès currently works with ThiemeMeulenhoff's *New Interface 2nd edition*, a course book implemented in a digital learning platform. The course book is divided into two levels: junior secondary vocational education (vmbo) and higher general secondary/pre-university students (h-v). Guido de Brès has recently switched to using digitalized course books and all first year students have their own digital device to use in the classroom. The publisher, ThiemeMeulenhoff clarified some questions (appendix 4) related to this course book and shared their view on implementing the CEFR learning goals. The English teachers, teaching first year students, were interviewed about the current state of English education at Guido de Brès. The specific questions can be found in appendix 5.

5.3.1 Course book analysis – Publisher

ThiemeMeulenhoff stated that *New Interface 2nd edition* “naturally complies with the CERF learning goals” (New Interface 1). All learning goals are formulated corresponding to the CERF learning goals and cover all of the learning goals for the first years of secondary education as established by the government. The publisher decided to describe these goals and to divide them into more specific learning goals. Some examples of these learning goals are: students know the difference between some and any and know how to apply this, students are able to tell something is going on, students are able to ask questions, students are able to tell something about themselves and others and students are able to write a personal email. These learning goals are placed next to each assignment, and therefore the student becomes aware of these goals as well. However, no external expert assessor has verified whether these learning goals, as formulated by ThiemeMeulenhoff, properly correspond to the CEFR learning goals.

ThiemeMeulenhoff is aware of the differences in English language proficiency between students at the start of the first year of secondary education. Therefore the course book starts with offering some introductory materials which require a fairly basic English language proficiency. This way all students, regardless of their English language proficiency are able to do the assignments. Students who have a more advanced language proficiency are offered some extra materials which accommodate to their level and working pace.

ThiemeMeulenhoff also attempts to differentiate between students by offering a lot of assignments and other materials in *New Interface 2nd edition*. This way weak students can do some extra assignments, while strong students can continue practicing another language skill.

This is possible because Pulseon, the digital learning environment in which this course book is implemented, allows students to work at their own pace and continue the program when they are ready for it. This means that not all students have to work with the same materials during the English class. Teachers are also capable of adjusting the level at which a student works. This way a theoretical junior secondary student (tl) can e.g. work at a higher general secondary educational (h) level.

5.3.2 Course book analysis and English education as offered at Guido de Brès – Teachers

The interviewed teachers were quite satisfied with the way in which English is offered during the first year of primary education at Guido de Brès. They state there is a good transition between primary education and secondary education, especially for weaker students. This is because all students have to start at the base again and students repeat some prior knowledge about the language learned at primary education. However, the writers of *New Interface 2nd edition* expect a certain level of language proficiency from its users as they e.g. already use a lot of English in the explanation of the assignments. Since primary schools offer such different programs with regards to English education, this is also a chance for secondary school teachers to fill in the gaps and find out how much students already know about the language.

Teachers believe the English education offered at Guido de Brès has potential, especially since the school paid more attention to facilitation differentiation. However, it has not reached its full potential yet, because e.g. at the moment all students still work at the same level and pace.

When asked about their opinion of the course book *New Interface 2nd edition*, as implemented in Pulseon, the digital learning environment, teachers mentioned the course book could offer more variation in its assignments, as many assignments have the same format. The course book is not very interactive. Also grammar is offered too concisely, which has the effect that both weaker and more skilled students have trouble understanding it without further explanation. This appeared to be in contrast with the teacher-independent course book ThiemeMeulenhoff claimed *New Interface 2nd edition* to be. Moreover, too much of the offered content addresses a low English language proficiency level, which becomes especially clear when teaching higher levels, such as pre-university education (vwo). This has the effect that many of the assignments are not challenging enough for these students. There are not many in-depth assignments or extra challenging activities offered to these students.

New Interface 2nd edition is therefore perhaps better suitable for weaker students, as students are able to re-sit assignments. This is possible because of the digital learning environment in which this course book is implemented. However, students do not gain as much from doing the same assignments over and over again as they would from doing different sorts of assignments which would e.g. be more suitable to their learning style. The course book does not automatically offer extra supporting materials to the student, so also weak students do not benefit greatly from the material offered in *New Interface 2nd edition*.

Teachers are rather satisfied with the digital program Holmwood's, which offers listening and reading assignments. After successfully completing five assignments in a row with a score of eighty percent or higher students are upgraded to a higher CEFR level. However, some teachers mentioned the differences between the levels as offered by Holmwood's, which are stated by the publisher to be based on the CEFR levels, are too big. Students have trouble to successfully complete A2 reading or listening assignments when just having mastered A1. Holmwood's is also difficult to implement in the curriculum as it has such a different way of offering content to the students. Students also very quickly become bored, as it does not offer that much variation in its assignments.

Teachers think that the majority of all first year students are sufficiently challenged, with regards to English, especially the average students. Yet, at each educational level the more skilled students are less challenged as they have to work at the same pace as other students. Students can be properly challenged when the teacher offers extra material. However, the current learning culture at Guido de Brès, as well as perhaps at other secondary schools, supports students to study to receive a good grade on a test, rather than to become more proficient in the language. At the moment almost no differentiation between students takes place. It proves to be very difficult to differentiate on working pace, level or learning style. Furthermore, all students have to do English language tests at the same time. This means students are forced to work at the same pace and study the same content. Students can choose which assignments to do during the English lessons, yet after a certain period of time all students should have finished the same assignments. Teachers have the wish to design more materials to be able to make it easier to differentiate between students, but at the moment they only develop their own materials to offer something extra to all students, and do not intend for it to differentiate between students. In order to be able to create materials with this purpose teachers need more time to find inspiration and appropriate content to develop either extra or supporting materials. None of the interviewed teachers were willing to spend more free time on developing such materials. When asked about how Guido de Brès could

accommodate them to differentiate between the strong and weak first year students within the existing secondary educational levels teachers mentioned the school should offer extra developing time to teachers and perhaps extra financial means, so it becomes possible to choose from a wide selection of different materials. One teacher mentioned that it should become a goal of the primary school as well to enable all group eight students to reach a certain level of English language proficiency. This level should be established nationally. This might have the effect differentiating between students is less necessary in the first year of secondary education. Also a placement test at the start of secondary education would be useful to establish students' level at the start of the school year. This test could help teachers to find out from the beginning which students are more skilled, weaker or average with regards to English language proficiency.

6. Discussion & Conclusion

This study was conducted at Guido de Brès, a secondary school in Amersfoort, amongst 224 first year students, divided over five educational levels: basic/practical junior secondary (b-k), theoretical junior secondary (tl), theoretical junior secondary vocational/ higher general secondary (tl-h), higher general secondary/pre-university (h-v) and pre-university education (vwo). The study examined the relationship between the different approaches to English education Dutch students receive at primary school, their English language proficiency as tested in the first year of secondary education and their attitude towards the language. The study also focused on how to accommodate to students at different language proficiency levels through differentiation in the English language classroom and how this is done at Guido de Brès.

6.1 Which different approaches to English language teaching did students encounter during primary education?

Most of the interviewed primary schools state one of their main goals is to prepare the students for secondary education. Many primary schools focused on motivation and communication in their English classes and used course books which emphasize this goal as well. Many interviewed parents expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with the English their child received at primary education. They would rather have them focus on grammar and vocabulary instead. Both EELT primary schools and regular primary schools mention they focus on communication because it helps students to feel comfortable when learning to speak the language and enables them to become acquainted with the language. All teachers taught the English classes themselves, yet only a few of the researched primary schools required a certain English proficiency of their teachers. Most teachers use course books which offer a digital co-teacher or other digital materials and mentioned this digital material helps them to teach the class and minimizes the amount of English they have to use. Therefore students hear appropriate English, regardless the level of their teacher.

The discrepancy between primary and secondary education and parents' wishes might be explained. Although, theory states a focus on communication is very important in the language classroom, Guido de Brès pays more attention to grammar and vocabulary and tests this frequently as well. This might possibly be the reason for parents' desire for more grammar and vocabulary during the English classes at primary schools.

Most of the students who participated in this research received English from their form teacher from group six and onwards for about thirty to sixty minutes per week. Over half of the students believed they received good English during primary education and state they benefit from having had English lessons, because they already knew the definition of some words or felt less anxious when speaking the language. The respondents who stated they did not benefit or benefitted only a little bit from the English education they received at primary education mostly did so because they did not encounter (many) words they had already learned during primary education. This suggests the students interpreted the question as to whether they repeated some prior learned material during the first year of secondary education. Generally, students express a low level of anxiety with regards to attitude towards the language or comprehension of the language. Almost all students estimate their own level fairly high and claim they feel confident to speak the language.

6.2 Do different approaches to English language teaching as encountered during primary education relate to

A: different results on English language proficiency tests as administered during the first year of secondary education?

B: different attitudes towards the language?

Students' estimated language comprehension, attitude towards the language, average school results, reading proficiency, knowledge of English vocabulary as tested by Cito, listening proficiency as tested by Holmwood's and speaking proficiency as tested by Anglia on a selected group of students were studied and related to the amount of time spent on English per week, the year of onset and the quality of the lessons as reported by the student in the preliminary questionnaire.

The results show that students who received English earlier or reported a higher quality of the lessons do not score higher on school tests than their fellow classmates. Neither year of onset, nor quality of the lessons significantly correlated with reading or listening proficiency. However, the quality of the lessons as reported by the student correlated with knowledge of English vocabulary, comprehension and attitude towards the language. The amount of time spent on English per week correlated significantly with almost all measured variables: it correlated with students' attitudes towards the language, which could imply that the more time spent on English per week, the more likely it is a student will have a positive attitude towards the language. Comprehension of the language, attitude towards the English language, knowledge of English vocabulary and the level of reading and listening proficiency

also correlated significantly with time spent on English per week. These results could imply that teaching English for at least one to two hours per week might increase the chances of students to obtain a higher level of English proficiency. However, none of the significant correlations reported a strong rho value. Since the obtained (CEFR) level per language skill increased at each higher educational level the results also imply that the higher the educational level a student is involved in the more skilled this student proves to be with regards to English language proficiency.

6.4 How can differences in English language proficiency levels best be accommodated in a first year's program, in order to challenge students alike?

Firstly, it should be emphasized that as long as primary schools are not mandated to work towards a certain CEFR level and test a student's English language proficiency students will continue to enter secondary education with great differences in language proficiency and attitude towards the language. Although the results of this study show educational levels relate to language proficiency levels there is still a need for differentiating between weak and strong students.

The course book analysis clarified that ThiemeMeulenhoff attempts to differentiate between strong and weak students and to accommodate to students' individual needs. However, in reality students mostly work towards the same learning goals, at the same level and pace and have to take the same language tests. The learning goals, which are addressed in the course book are claimed by the publisher to correspond to the CEFR levels, yet whether these learning goals really meet the standards of the CEFR is not validated by an external assessor. The interviewed teachers noticed that the course book shows potential, yet does not fully accommodate to the students' and the teachers' needs.

Teachers mention there is a need for a placement test at the start of the school year amongst all students. This way teachers know from the start which language level a student has and do not have to find out about this throughout the year, when it is sometimes too late to effectively help a student. If a teacher knows the language proficiency of a student he can decide whether this student might need extra support or must be extra challenged. Teachers also express the need for more time and possibilities to develop or purchase extra supporting or challenging materials to encourage both strong and weak learners to increase their language proficiency. The presence of these materials should be an important factor when deciding which course book to use. A course book must offer these materials, as it saves the teacher time. A goal of the publisher of the course book should be to make it easier for teachers to

facilitate differentiation. However, it must be accepted these changes cannot be made from one day to another. Teachers must learn about how to teach differently from what they are used to and this development takes time. Nevertheless, the continuation of this process, regardless how long it might take, must be supported and encouraged by the management of the school in order to work, as differentiation and personalized learning will likely become the focus of the education of the (near) future.

6.4 General conclusion

In conclusion, to answer the research question:

What is the relationship between the different approaches to English language teaching Dutch students encountered at primary school, different attitudes towards to language and students' English language proficiency as tested in the first year of secondary education?

Based on the results, the assumption can be made that a higher intensity of the English classes, especially with regards to time spent on English per week, has a positive effect on students' English language proficiency and attitude towards the language. Yet, the educational level first-year secondary students are involved in and, consequently, their presumed cognitive ability might eventually affect a student's ability to reach a higher proficiency level as well. However, there is still a need for differentiation between students with regards to working pace, level and other educational needs.

6.5 Theoretical reflection

This study aspired to contribute to the discussion whether different approaches to teaching English during primary education relate to significant differences in attitude towards the language and differences in language proficiency. The results of this research, specifically with regards to the effect time spent on English per week has on language proficiency, are in agreement with the Krashen's assumption that more instruction means more proficiency (Krashen, Second Language Acquisition 44). Collins and White also presume that less exposure to the language might lead to a lower level of language proficiency, "as there is clear evidence that limited exposure to an L2, even if continued over several school years, does not afford students the opportunity to advance very far in their learning" (Collins and White 128). The need for differentiation, which was expressed by teachers is also made clear by Tomlinson. She encourages differentiating in the classroom because:

you can challenge all learners by providing materials and tasks on the standard at varied levels of difficulty, with varying degrees of scaffolding, through multiple instructional groups, and with time variations. Further, differentiation suggests that teachers can craft lessons in ways that tap into multiple student interests to promote heightened learner interest in the standard. Teachers can encourage student success by varying ways in which students work: alone or collaboratively, in auditory or visual modes, or through practical or creative means (Tomlinson 4).

6.6 Limitations

Due to time pressure and limited financial means this study was carried out at one school and might therefore serve as an introduction and encouragement for further research on a larger scale. Because of the same reasons students' test results as obtained at previous administered tests were used to find out their English language proficiency. Therefore the reading, listening and speaking levels were obtained from different tests, created by different publishers. This brings the risk of each publisher having a different interpretation of a certain CEFR level. Furthermore, only a small group was selected to participate in the Anglia speaking test, with the effect these results were not representative for all students. Perhaps an adaptive speaking test might have given more insights in the language proficiency of the students.

The results with regards to attitude and comprehension were based on the student questionnaire. Limitations of this questionnaire were that the answers provided by the students are subjective and only a limited amount of information became available, because most questions did not encourage or allow students to elaborate their answer.

The year of onset was one of the variables to measure intensity. Because more than 80% of the students received their first English lessons from group six and onwards less solid conclusions can be drawn about any occurring correlations. The results for other questions about intensity, e.g. time spent on English per week, were more evenly divided.

Based on the results with regards to language proficiency the assumption is made that the educational level first-year secondary students are involved in and, consequently, students' presumed cognitive ability, affects students ability to reach a higher level of language proficiency. This must remain a careful assumption as cognitive ability has not been tested.

A final limitation to this research is that, since only correlations have been calculated, causal relationships cannot be established.

A researcher with more possibilities might want to attempt to test the language skills by using tests of one qualified publisher and test a large group of respondents for all language skills. Nevertheless, this study raised awareness of an educational situation which will become more and more apparent during the first years of secondary education, as primary schools will continue offering various methods of English education and more and more schools start offering EELT. It will be interesting and important to continue researching the effects of this on the long term and on a larger scale.

6.7 An introduction to further research

The need for differentiation, yet the lack of time and/or inspiration to develop materials which encourage differentiation became clear while doing this study. Guido de Brès aspires to differentiate divergently. This means that students work at their own pace and level and do not necessarily need to reach the same learning goals. However, at the moment Guido de Brès still expects all students of the same educational level to reach the same learning goals. This requires convergent differentiation, which means all students have to reach the same learning goals (Vernooij n.p).

Possible work forms which stimulate this type of differentiation and challenge and support strong and/or weak students are listed below.

6.7.1 Multiple Intelligence

Each student has a preference for a different learning style. Gardner refers to these learning styles as multiple intelligences. He states there are at least eight different intelligences: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner 3). A student might benefit from using various intelligences, some perhaps more suitable to the learning style of the student, to practice a language skill. An example of this could be to offer grammar instruction in various ways, e.g. by watching an instruction video (visual-spatial intelligence), reading the instruction (linguistic intelligence) or learning how to apply the grammar by working together with a classmate (intrapersonal intelligence).

6.7.2 Vocabulary

Learning new vocabulary through word lists is something weak students often struggle with. A teacher might help these students by elaborately explaining and describing each word in

order for the word to remain in the long-term memory. De Coole and Valk give an example of how to do this for words that have been previously learned: Students should have access to the word list, while the teacher describes five words from this list. Weak students benefit from a short description of the word, a synonym or an antonym. Strong students might be challenged by using descriptions from the dictionary. Students should underline the words from the list that they think are described and explain why they underlined these words afterwards. Subsequently, the teacher should give further information about the word in order for students need to remember it, such as the plural, morphology, antonyms and a sentence containing the word (de Coole and Valk 139).

6.7.3 Reading

Strong students can be extra challenged by reading an English novel when they are done with their regular school work. The library at Guido de Brès offers some novels which are suitable for their age. The teacher should check whether these novels are also suitable for their proficiency level, as reading a novel which is too difficult discourages. According to Krashen reading in the target language is beneficial for both strong and weak students as they will learn new vocabulary and become familiar with sentence structures and grammar (Krashen, Power of Reading 20:00).

6.7.4 Speaking

Feeling nervous about giving a presentation in the target language is something both weak and strong students might encounter. While strong students might rely on their language proficiency, weak students often do not have this certainty. A preparatory work form, described by de Coole and Valk, enables strong students to help weak students with improving speaking proficiency. This assignment requires students to give a short presentation of about two minutes in the target language. The teacher decides on a topic the students must talk about and should make sure the topic is suitable for this type of assignment. Firstly, all students write down ten words they associate with the topic and are divided into pairs. The teacher must attempt to match a strong student to a weak student. This way the strong student can help and give feedback to the weak student and the weak student could obtain some tips about speaking proficiency when listening to the presentation of the strong student. The first presenter tries to use as many words from the list he/she wrote down, while the other student underlines these words from the list of the presenter. Afterwards the students talk about these words: which words were difficult to use, did the student use the words

properly? The students attempt to give feedback to each other and switch roles (de Coole and Valk 96).

6.7.5 Writing

Writing e-mails to students from a secondary school abroad could be an extra challenging activity for strong students in order for them to practice their writing skills. This secondary school does not necessarily have to be located in an English-speaking country. It is important, however, that students do not speak the language of the country the secondary school is located at. When corresponding with a secondary school e.g. in Denmark students from that school also have the opportunity to practice their English writing skills. This way both schools benefit from this collaboration. While strong students spend some time of the lesson writing or reading emails, weak students have the possibility to receive some extra attention from the teacher.

6.7.6 Listening

Listening can become easier for weak students when supported by visuals. Therefore showing a video, instead of only using audio, helps (weak) students to become more proficient in the language. A suitable work form, which helps students summarize information is to ask the students to write down key words while watching the video. The teacher should find a video in which the visuals support the audio. After watching the students work together with a classmate and talk about the video. Strong students may be encouraged to do this in the target language. After this activity all students have to write down the new information they found out about. To conclude this activity the teacher asks the students which key words they wrote down and writes those on the blackboard. This work form helps students to summarize (de Coole and Valk 64).

These work forms might serve as inspiration or as a first step towards further development of materials which encourage differentiation. Guido de Brès has a progressive approach towards educational developments and embraces new technologies in the classroom. Combined with differentiation this might be a very beneficial approach to offer students the education they need and deserve to develop and improve their language proficiency. To conclude with the words of Tomlinson: “What we call differentiation is not a recipe for teaching. It is not an instructional strategy. It is not what a teacher does when he or she has time. It is a way of thinking about teaching and learning. It is a philosophy” (Tomlinson 1).

7. Works Cited

- Cito. COTAN beoordeling. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Sep. 2015.
- Cito. Cito volgsysteem toets 0. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Sep. 2015.
- Collins, Laura, and Joanna White. "An Intensive Look at Intensity and Language Learning." *TESOL Quarterly* 45.1 (2011): 106–133. Web. 22 Mar. 2015.
- Cornford, Annie, et al. *New Interface 2nd edition*. Amersfoort: ThiemeMeulenhoff. 2014. Print.
- Council of Europe. *Common European Framework of Reference For Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Strasbourg: Language Policy Unit, 2001. Web. 24 June 2015.
- Early Bird. "Methodiek." *Early Bird*. n.p., September 24, 2012. Web. 29 Oct. 2014.
- De Bot, Kees. "The Effectiveness of Early Foreign Language Learning in the Netherlands." *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 4.3 (2014): 409-418. Web. 24 June 2015.
- De Coole, Dieuwke, and Anja Valk. *Actief met Taal*. Bussum: Coutinho, 2010. Print.
- De Graaff, Rick. "Eindrapportage Eindtermen vvto." *Vergelijkend onderzoek tussen Earlybird-vvto en Eibo*. Universiteit Utrecht. September 2014. Print.
- De Graaff, Rick. "Vroeg of laat Engels in het basisonderwijs. Wat levert het op?" *Levende Talen Tijdschrift* 16.2 (2015): 1-15. Web. 25 June 2015.
- DeKeyser, Robert M. "Age Effects in Second Language Learning: Stepping Stones Toward Better Understanding" *Language Learning* 63 (2013): 52-67. Print.
- Desveaux, Stephanie. "Guided learning hours" Cambridge English Support Site. Cambridge English, 18 Feb. 2015. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.
- Gardner, Howard. "The Theory of Multiple Intelligences: As Psychology, As Education, As Social Science". José Cela University. Madrid. 22 Oct. 2011. Address.
- Geurts, Bertil, Rick de Graaff, and Bas Hemker. "Engels in het basisonderwijs: opbrengsten Eibo en vvto." *Handboek vvto*. Eds. Alessandra Corda, Karel Philipsen and Rick de Graaff. Bussum: Coutinho, 2014. 121-35. Print.
- Greven, Jan, and Jos Letschert. *Kerndoelen Primair Onderwijs*. Den Haag: DeltaHage. 2006. Web. 26 Mar. 2015.
- "Groei aantal vvto-scholen." Graph. *Europees Platform*. 2014. Web. 19 Mar. 2015.
- Krashen, Stephen, Michael A. Long and Robin C. Scarcella. "Age Rate and Eventual Attainment in Second Language Acquisition." *TESOL Quarterly* 13.4 (1979): 573-

582. Web. 7 Mar. 2015.
- Krashen, Stephen. *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Los Angeles: Pergamon Press Inc., 1981. Print.
- Krashen, Stephen. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Los Angeles: Pergamon Press Inc., 1982. Print.
- Krashen, Stephen. "The Power of Reading." *YouTube*. The University of Georgia College of Education, 5 Apr. 2012. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.
- Macaro, Ernesto. "Teacher Language Background, Codeswitching, and English-Only Instruction: Does Age Make a Difference to Learners' Attitudes?" *Tesol Quarterly* 47.4 (2013): 717–742. Web. 22 Mar. 2015.
- Muñoz, Carmen. "Age-Related Differences in Foreign Language Learning." *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching* 46.3 (2008): 197-220. Print.
- Muñoz, Carmen. "Symmetries and Asymmetries of Age Effects in Naturalistic and Instructed L2 Learning." *Applied Linguistics* 29.4 (2008): 578–596. Print.
- Muñoz, Carmen. *Age and the Rate of Foreign Language Learning: Second Language Acquisition vol. 19*. New York: Multilingual Matters. 2006. Web. 19 Mar. 2015.
- Muñoz, Carmen, and Eva Lindgren. "Out-of-school factors: The home." *ELLiE Early Language Learning in Europe*. London: British Council. (2011): 103-124. Print.
- "New Interface" ThiemeMeulenhoff, n.d. Web. 11 June 2015.
- Ortega, Lourdes. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. London: Hodder Education, 2009. Print.
- Thijs, Annette, et al. *Engels in het Basisonderwijs*. Enschede: SLO, 2011. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.
- Tomlinson, Carol Ann. "Reconcilable Differences? Standards-Based Teaching and Differentiation." *Educational Leadership* 58.1 (2000): 1-7. Web. 26 June 2015.
- Unsworth, Sharon, Liv Persson, Tineke Prins, and Kees de Bot. "An Investigation of Factors Affecting Early Foreign Language Learning in the Netherlands." *Applied Linguistics* (Forthcoming, 2014). Print.
- Vernooij, Kees. "Omgaan Met Verschillen Nader Bekeken." *Onderwijs Maak Je Samen*. N.p. Sep. 2009. Web. 26 June 2015.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Student questionnaire

1. From which group did you receive English education during primary school?

A group 1

B group 2

C group 3

D group 4

E group 5

F group 6

G group 7

H group 8

I I can't remember having had English classes during primary school

J I don't know

2. How much time was spent on English per week?

A 0 to 30 minutes

B 30 minutes to an hour

C About one to two hours

D More than two hours

3. Who taught the English classes?

A The form teacher

B Someone else (Dutch nationality)

C Someone from an English-speaking country

D A combination of the form teacher and someone else (Dutch nationality)

E A combination of the form teacher and someone from an English-speaking country

4. "I received good English classes at primary school"

A No, not at all.

B No, the classes could be improved

C Yes, classes were OK

- D Yes, classes were good
- E Yes, classes were really good

5. "I like having English classes"

- A No, English is my least favorite subject
- B No, I don't really like English
- C It is just a subject. I neither like it, nor dislike it
- D Yes, I like English
- E Yes, I love English

6. Do you understand English songs you hear e.g. on the radio?

- A No, even when I listen to them frequently I'm still not able to understand English songs.
- B Yes, but only after I listen to them frequently.
- C Yes, I'm able to do so after hearing the song once or twice.

7. "I dare to speak English. I'm not afraid to make mistakes" Do you agree?

- A No, I don't dare to speak English, because I'm afraid to make mistakes.
- B I dare to speak English, but I don't like making mistakes.
- C Yes, I dare to speak English and I'm not that worried about making mistakes.

8. Imagine: You're on a vacation abroad. Children of your age ask you in English to join them. What do you do?

- A You shake your head, because you think your English is not good enough.
- B You nod, but make clear in your best English you don't understand them very well.
- C You say "yes" and join them while trying to speak English the best that you can.

9. Do you feel you benefit from having had English education during primary school? Explain your answer briefly.

10. At which primary school were you, in which city/town?

Appendix 2: Questionnaire/Interview primary school teachers

1. From which group do you offer English?
2. How did this develop over the last eight years?
3. In what way is English offered?
4. Which method is used for teaching English?
5. How much time per week is spent on English?
6. How is the English language proficiency of the students tested?
7. Who teaches the English classes?
8. Do teachers need to have a certain language proficiency of English in order to be allowed to teach English?
9. What are the advantages of offering (early) English during primary education?

Appendix 3: Questionnaire parents

1. From which school year did your child receive English education?

- A group 1
- B group 2
- C group 3
- D group 4
- E group 5
- F group 6
- G group 7
- H group 8

2. Were you aware of this before you signed your child up for this school?

- A No, I was not aware of this
- B Yes, I was aware of this

3. Are you satisfied with the English education your child received during primary education? Can you explain your answer?

- A I am satisfied
- B I am not satisfied
- C I am neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Appendix 4: Interview publisher

ThiemeMeulehoff – *New Interface 2nd edition*

1. In chapter 3 (content and learning goals) of the teacher manual learning goals are linked to the CEFR. Which goals are aimed at and in what way is it checked whether these learning goals indeed match the CEFR?
2. In which ways do you make sure the content of the course book matches the needs of first year secondary education students, who just left primary education?
3. How can there be differentiated between strong and weak students by making us of the course book?

Appendix 5: Interview teachers

1. Are you satisfied with the way in which English is offered during the first year of primary education at the Guido de Brès?
2. Are you satisfied with the course bok *New Interface 2nd edition*, as implemented in Pulseon, the digital learning environment?
3. Does *New Interface 2nd edition* offer adequate challenging materials and activities for skilled students?
4. Does *New Interface 2nd edition* offer adequate supporting materials and activities for weak students?
5. Are you satisfied with the program Holmwood's, with regards to the practicing of reading and listening skills?
6. Are students being sufficiently challenged during their first year of secondary education at Guido de Brès, with regards to English education?
7. Is there sufficient differentiation between first year students at the Guido de Brès with regards to English education?
8. Do you develop own material to differentiate between students?
9. Do you think it is necessary to differentiate between first year students with different primary school backgrounds?
10. In what way would it be easier for you and/or the Guido de Brès to differentiate between the more skilled and weak first year students within the existing secondary educational levels?