Early English language teaching in Dutch children: the effects on first and second language development

Sieneke Goorhuis-Brouwer
School of Behavioural and Cognitive Neuroscience,
University Medical Center Groningen, University of Groningen
PO Box 30.001
9700 RB Groningen
The Netherlands
e-mail: s.m.goorhuis.brouwer@kno.umcg.nl

Kees de Bot

School of Behavioural and Cognitive Neuroscience,
Faculty of Arts, University of Nijmegen
PO Box 716
9700AS Groningen
The Netherlands
e-mail: c.l.j.de.bot@rug.nl

5127 words

Early English language teaching in Dutch children: the effects on first and second language development

Abstract:

This article reports on the outcomes of a project aimed at the evaluation of early English language teaching (EELT) in Dutch primary education, starting at four years of age. Two cohorts of 1st and 2nd grade children receiving one to three hours of English language teaching per week have been tested with the standardized Dutch and English versions of the Reynell tests for language development. The outcomes show that all children acquire some basic skills in English leading to a native age equivalent of 2.5 years for comprehension and 2.1 years for language production. First language development is not affected by the EELT program and children with a non-Dutch background do nit suffer from EELT in the sense that their L2 Dutch development is enhanced and close to that of their Dutch peers. It is concluded that some of the arguments against early foreign language teaching, in particular the problems it might have to L1 development and the additional problems in language acquisition it could pose for non-native children are not supported by our data.
(175 words)

Key words: Early foreign language teaching, primary education, minority children, first language development, early partial immersion, English, The Netherlands

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:43 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:43 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:43 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

This article reports on the outcomes of a project aimed at the evaluation of early English language teaching (EELT) in Dutch primary education, starting at four years of age. We start with a short description of the socio-political context of EELT in the European and Dutch context. Then we will discuss the main findings in the literature on the effects of EELT. The first two parts are largely based on an earlier report on early foreign language education (Herder & de Bot 2005). Finally we present two sets of longitudinal data on the impact of EELT on first and second language development in a number of schools in the Netherlands.

1. EELT in the European context

The European Commission promotes multilingualism because it increases knowledge of other cultures and enables a deeper, common understanding. 'Multilingualism policy aims at ensuring multiculturalism, tolerance and European citizenship', according to Ján Figel (Commissioner for education, training, culture and multilingualism, in: Eurydice Studies, 2005). At its meeting in Barcelona in 2002, the European Council argued for an early start in foreign language teaching: 'It is a priority for Member states to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary education is effective, for it is here that key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed, and the foundations for later language learning is laid.' It also called for 'further action in this field: […] to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age: establishment of a linguistic competence indicator in 2003; development of digital literacy: generalisation of an Internet and computer user's certificate for secondary school pupils' (European Council Barcelona, 2002: 19).

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:44 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

At least one foreign language is now required in primary education in almost every European country, Ireland and Scotland (U.K.) being the only exceptions (Eurydice Studies 2001). The starting age of EELT varies. In Luxemburg, Norway and Austria pupils learn a foreign language from age 6, in Italy from age 7 and in Flanders, Belgium,

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:45 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

children are required to take a foreign language from age 12. In other countries (Estonia, The Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Scotland) the start usually varies between 8 and 11 year (Eurydice Studies, 2001). English is taught as a first foreign language more often than any other language in Europe. While it is usually a required subject, English is also the most popular foreign language among schools that can choose otherwise. Other popular languages are German and French (Eurydice Studies, 2005).

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:45 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

2. EELT in the Netherlands

Different forms of enhanced and early foreign language teaching are gaining in popularity very quickly in the Netherlands. The overview made by the European Platform for the school year 2006/2007 lists all primary schools providing such programs. The growth has been spectacular, from 10 in 1998 to 35 in 2003 and 85 in 2006. The amount of time spent on the foreign language ranges from 30 to 240 minutes per week. English is by far the most popular foreign language with 61 school providing early or enhanced programs. Fifteen schools have a program for German and 13 schools have a program for French. One school has Spanish as its foreign language. There are plans for schools to provide more exotic languages, such as Chinese, but this seems still to be in the planning stage.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:45 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:45 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

EELT is growing due to a number of factors. One is that the number of school for secondary education offering Dutch/English bilingual streams has grown rapidly over the last few years. These schools are still very selective and only accept the better students in their program. The pupils are also expected to have some basic knowledge of English since the entrance interview is partly conducted in English in some of the schools. This means that pupils without at least this minimal level of English are disadvantaged when they want to have access to these programs. Both parents and school principals are aware of this, and this appears to stimulate more and better English teaching in the primary schools who want their pupils to be eligible for bilingual schooling in secondary education.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:46 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

The other major factor is that schools have to compete for pupils and therefore need some sort of 'unique selling point'. Arts and sports are typically mentioned in this context, but special programs for foreign languages are becoming increasingly popular. So in order to compete with other schools, some schools and municipal school boards have decided to develop programs for foreign languages.

The third factor is that an early start for foreign languages is part of the official European Union policy, and the government has to put this policy in practice, though it seems to do so reluctantly. Some political parties argue that teaching English at an early age will have a negative effect on the pupils' first language development. In addition it is expected to have a negative effect on the development of Dutch as a second language in migrant children, and it may increase the learning difficulties of children with lower general languages skills. In addition, there is a feeling that the enormous growth of English in all parts of Dutch Society will become a threat to Dutch language and culture. An early start with foreign languages, which in most cases means English, is seen as part of that unwanted development. Still the minister of education has expressed her interest and support for EELT.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:46 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:46 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:47 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

3. The effects of EELT

Since the 1960's, a number of researchers have studied the impact of bilingualism on children's lingual and cognitive development. In 1962, when most assumed there were only negative effects, Peal & Lambert published groundbreaking work that stated that if the social environment is kept stable, bilingualism actually has a positive effect on children's cognition. They tested 110 ten-year olds from six middle-class, French-language schools in Montreal. The children, who shared similar socio-economic backgrounds, were divided evenly into a group of balanced-bilingual children and a monolingual group. The study did have its critics, with some observers using the small sample and the manner of selection to argue against projecting the results onto the larger population. Also, balanced bilingual children (as opposed to fully bilingual) form a rather special group: families that raise their children with two languages are definitely not 'average', and this would undermine any general comparisons. The two criticisms,

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:47 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:47 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

however, are not very strong, as it was Peal & Lambert's aim to show that bilingualism *can* have a positive effect, not that this is always the case. A more problematic issue is that of what causes what: does bilingualism lead to a higher IQ or does a higher IQ make it easier to learn two languages? While the former is an attractive idea, research has yet to solve this particular riddle.

The Peal & Lambert study has lead to a large number of studies on the effects of early bilingualism on cognitive development (see Baker 1993 for an overview). It has also marked the begining of the immersion tradition in the Canadian context. Immersion education has been studied intensively and overall the findings have been very positive, in particular for early immersion. To what extent the findings from the Canadian setting can be extended to other contexts is not so clear. In the European context evaluations have been more qualitative than quantitative so far and research on the impact of the first language of autochtonous children and second language learning of migrant children is basically lacking (see 5 (welke naam hier?) – ook in in de literatuur& de Bot (2003) for an overview).

When it comes to the systematic analysis and evaluation of EFLE (afkortingwaarvan??) in Europe, the front-runner is a group of Kiel researchers led by Henning Wode (see Kersten, Imhoff & Sauer, 2002). One project is an ongoing experiment at the Claus-Rixen-Schule in Kiel Altenholz, where all subjects, except for German, are taught in English. The experiment looks at pupils' development in English, German and the content subjects. By the end of the 4th grade, pupils' German scores are higher than those of pupils in the same age group who attend regular schools (Burmeister, p.c. 11-03-2005). The project also researches the effects of EFLE on the lingual and cognitive development of children who speak a minority language: 'At first it seemed the immersion program children would not advance as quickly in subjects that teach specialised knowledge. However, by the end of the second year, any lost ground had been regained and the immersion children were at the same level as their fellow pupils in the regular program. This corresponds with similar experiences and findings regarding immersion teaching abroad.' (Wode et al, 2002, our translation. http://www.fmks-online.de/).

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:48 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:48 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:48 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:49 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:49 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Evaluation of the effect of EELT also has to do with starting age, extent of exposure and socio-economic background. Young children learn language by doing. Older children have more general knowledge and more knowledge of their first language, so they reflect more on language. Also, the educational approach changes as children get older and become more willing and able to engage in rule-based learning.

Spending more time learning English has a positive effect (Edelenbos, Van der Schoot & Verstralen, 1996: 86). Another concrete finding is the divergence in performances of children with higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Edelenbos (1990) studied the effects of primary school English on further education (i.e. the transition to secondary education) and found that, after three months, pupils who had taken English in primary school scored higher than pupils who had not. However, eight months later this advantage had disappeared. This finding was later confirmed by research into pupils' English proficiency in the third year of Dutch secondary school (De Bot, 2004; De Bot, De Quaij-Peeters, & Evers, 2004). While this might lead one to doubt the existence of a long-term advantage to teaching English in primary education, a more likely reason is that secondary education English is taught in a one-size-fits-all way: teachers does not make use of the English proficiency children have already acquired, the weakest pupils are used as a common denominator for the level of education. Also, as Edelenbos (1990) points out, teaching English in primary education leaves something to be desired: primary teachers often lack expert knowledge of English and have no access to suitable teaching materials. English is felt to be a difficult subject to teach and to go at the expense of other topics.

4. Evaluation of EELT in primary schools in the Netherlands.

Nowadays it is broadly accepted that early bilingualism can have advantages and that bilingualism has influence on brain development (Gullberg & Indefrey, 2006). In primary schools therefore, more and more EELT starts before 6 years of age.
In the project reported on here a number of schools in the Rotterdam area, organized in the Early Bird project and a school in the city of Groningen have set up EELT programs

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:50 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:50 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:50 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:50 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:50 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:51 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:51 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:51 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:51 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

starting at age four. These schools have expressed an interest in a proper evaluation of the outcomes of their programs in light of the arguments that have been raised against such programs as outlined above. The main aim of the project was to assess the effects of the EELT programs with respect to proficiency in English and in Dutch. In addition we wanted to know what the results would be for specific groups of pupils, children with a migrant background and children with lower general linguistic abilities.

4.2. Materials and method

The proficiency in English and Dutch is tested with the Reynelltest (Van Eldik et al. 1995, Edwards et al. 1997) .One of the main advantages of this test is that there are age-specific norms which allowed us to assess individual pupils' proficiency in both languages without the need to have a control group with a EELT program. Raw scores can be translated in quotient scores and age-equivalents. A quotient score is a normal distributed score with a mean score of 100 and a standard deviation of 15 . An age equivalent is the 50 percentile score and corresponds with the abilities of 50% of the children of the given age.

The Dutch version of the Reynell test only concerns language comprehension. This test can be used for children between 1.2 and 6.3 years of age. The test-retest reliability (with a six-month interval) is .69, and the reliability coefficient is .88.(van Eldik et al. 1995). The English version of the Reynell test includes both language comprehension and language production and can be used for children between 1;9 and 7;3 years of age. The test-retest reliability is .68, and the reliability coefficient for comprehension is 0.97. The reliability coefficient for expression is 0.96 (Edwards et al. 1997).

The Dutch Reynell has been administered at the start of EELT program with two cohorts in the school participating and the pupils have been retested one year later.The English Reynell has been administered with the same pupils 6 to 18 months after exposure to EELT. The tests have been administered by students from the Rotterdam Polytechnic Institute, department of Logopedics, under the supervision of the first author.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/10/2009 4:48 PM
Eliminado: In the schools EELT is introduced in grade 1 (four year old children) for three hours per week. For the children nothing is changed in the normal curriculum. A native English speaking teacher is present three hours per week. Storytelling and singing are the main activities during the English lessons.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:51 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:52 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:52 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:52 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:52 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

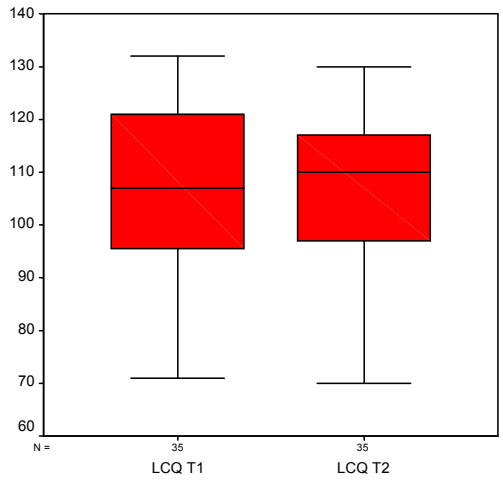
Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:52 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, range) were used to describe the characteristics of the children. To compare the scores of the children a paired samples t-test was used. A two-tailed p-value of <0.05 was considered to be significant.

4.3. Effect of EELT on Dutch language development.

4.3.1 Cohort 2003 - 2004

In two schools in Rotterdam 88 pupils have been tested on Dutch language comprehension at the start of grade 1 (October 2003 – T1).35 pupils could be retested in October 2004 (T2). The main cause of the difference is numbers is that many children had become too old (> 6;3) to be tested with the Dutch Reynell test or had moved to another school. The mean Language Comprehension Quotient at T1 (106.43) and T2 (106.63) did not differ in a significant way ((T(34) = -.12; P> 0,1). (p= .905). A box plot presenting the lowest score, quartiles, median and highest score is given in figure 1.



[

Figuur 1: Boxplots of the Language Comprehension Quotients for the two assessments (2003/ 2004)

There was no significant difference between girls and boys (T(33) = -0.05; P>0.5) (exacte p waarde)

In this cohort of children 8 children did have a non- Dutch speaking background. The mean LCQat T1 was 90.75 and the mean LCQ at T2 was 98.00, see table 1.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:53 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Children	LCQ 1	LCQ 2	Improvement in quotient points
Girl (Turkish)	81	95	+ 6
Girl (Antillian)	93	102	+ 9
Boy (Italian)	98	95	- 3
Boy (Papiamento)	71	85	+ 14
Boy (Turkish)	97	86	- 11
Boy (English)\	103	108	+ 5
Boy (Spanish)	95	114	+ 9
Boy (Turkish)	88	99	+ 11
Mean LCQ	90.75	98.00	P =. 078 .

Table 1. LCQ1 and LCQ 2 in children with a non-native Dutch background.

Although most children, receiving EELT, improved in Dutch language comprehension, the improvement is not significant (t (7) = -2.066; p = .078). Perhaps this has to do with the fact that most children already had average Dutch comprehension scores at the first examination. One child declined in his language comprehension for more than 10 points, which is a significant decline. However, his LCQ at T2 score still was at average level. (average range: 85-115). So for the non-Dutch children the data show that there is largely improvement over time which provides counter evidence for the assumption that migrant children would suffer in the L2 Dutch development due to EELT.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:54 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

4.3.2 Cohort 2004 -2005

In 2004 and 2005 again The Dutch language comprehension was measured and LCQ at T1 and LCQ at T2 scores from 60 children could be used in the analysis. Two schools in Rotterdam and one in Groningen were included. Again the Dutch comprehension scores

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:54 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

of the children in the EELT program remained stable over time . No significant differences were found between the mean LCQ T1 score (104,90) and the mean LCQ T2 scores (106,45) (T (60) = - 1,288, p = .203), see figure 2.

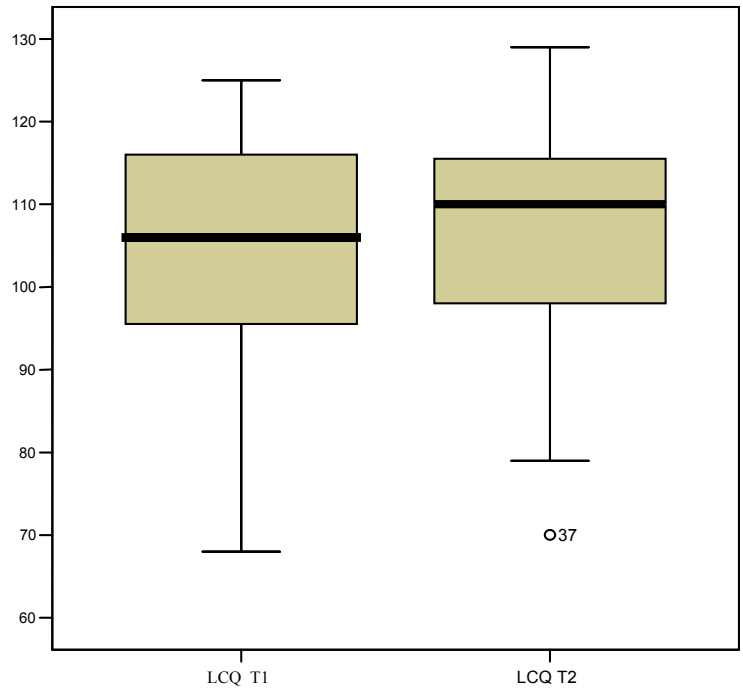


Figure 2:. Boxplots of the Language Comprehension Quotients for the 2004 cohort at T1and T2

Also in this cohort of children a small number of pupils was present who did not have Dutch as their mother tongue. The available data show that these pupils had a lower score in the first assessment than the native Dutch pupils, often at an insufficient level (<85). In the second assessment they seem to have caught up the larger part of their arrears, see table 2. Generally an improvement of 10 LCQ points is interpreted as significant. All these pupils improved more than 10 points. The mean LCQ 1 was 77.86, the mean LCQ 2 100.14. The mean improvement was 22,28 language quotient points (T value – 6.325, p= 0.001).

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:55 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Child	LCQ 1	LCQ 2	Growth in quotientscores
Boy (Russian)	68	91	23
Girl (English)	72	106	34
Girl (English)	80	110	30
Girl (Berber)	81	95	14
Boy (Papiamento)	71	85	14
Boy (Spanish)	85	115	30
Boy (Antillian)	88	99	11
Mean LCQ	77,86	100,14	22,28 (p= 0.001)

Table 2: Improvement in LCQ scores and LCQ points in children with an non-native speaking Duct background

It can be concluded that EELT has no negative effect on the Dutch language development, even not for children for whom Dutch is not their native language. Moreover, the non-native speaking children who at the first examination in Dutch language comprehension show an insufficient score, appear to improve to average scores.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:55 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

4.3.3 Effect of EELT on the English language development

34 children from the Groningen school have been tested on their language comprehension and language production in English after one year exposure to English for three hours per week.(mean LCQ1 = 103,71 and mean LCQ2 = 104.79). Since the Dutch children the raw score cannot be translated to a quotient score, the raw scores were translated into an age equivalent. This is the 50 percentile score and corresponds with the abilities of 50% of the children of the given age (Edwards et al. 1997). The findings are summarized in table 3.

	Raw score Language comprehension	Age equivalent	Raw score Language production	Age equivalent
Mean	29,71	2;5	9,71	2;1
Minimum	18	2;1	2	< 1;9
Maximum	39	2;11	17	2;7

Table 3. Raw scores on English comprehension and language production

This means that after one year of English lessons, 3 hours a week, the mean score for language comprehension corresponds to an age equivalent for English monolingual children of 2 years and 5 months and a mean score for language production of 2 years and 1 month.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:56 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

From the schools in Groningen and Rotterdam together data from **123** children have been gathered with respect to language comprehension and production in English and language comprehension in Dutch at the start of grade 2 (which is after at least 6 months exposure to English). The scores for Dutch language comprehension showed an almost normal distribution (mean: 100, SD: 15), see figure 3. In this cohort the mean was 103,96 and the Standard deviation 15,023. Only 5 children appear to have a score lower than 80 . This is about 4% of the total group, which corresponds with estimates made by TNO (van de Ploeg et al. 2005) indicating that of 2-5% of young children have language problems. 29 Children (24%) of the children have a 'weak' score between 80 and 100, while 90

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:56 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

children (73%) have an average or above average score (> 100).

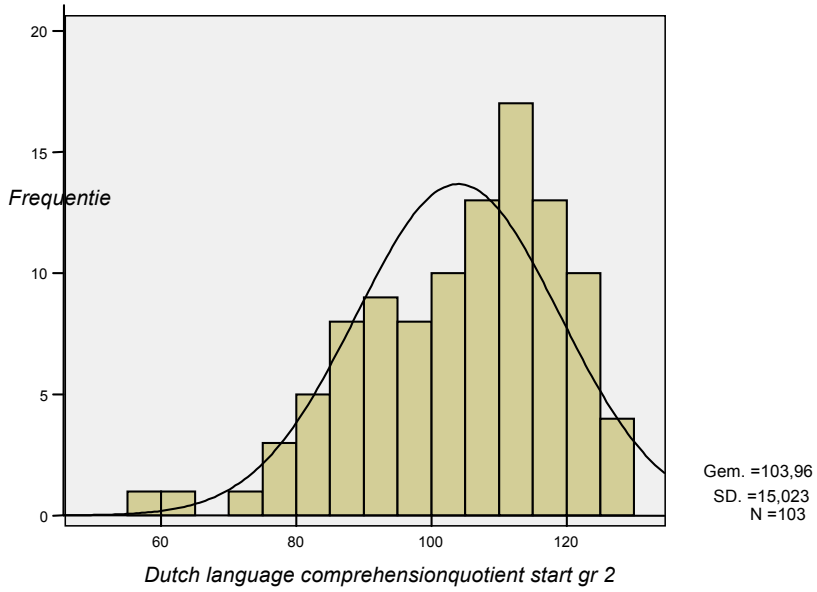


Figure 3. Distrubution of Ducth language comprehension scores (N =123).

The raw scores for English comprehension and expression seem to increase when the number of months of English learing increases, see table 4. And indeed this was of significtant influence of language comprehension ,when a correction was made for the Dutch LCQ (correlation: score, .322, p= .004) For language expression there was no significant relation (correlation score .130, p = . 254)

Also, when a correction was made for the number of months of English language learning in school, the Dutch LCQ was of significant influence on the growth of English language comprehension as well as on English language production (correlation score for comprehension .370, p = .000 and correlation score for expression . 477, p = .000).,

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:57 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Number of months English	Number of children	Mean LCQ	Raw score **Comprehension**	Age equivalent Comprehension	Raw score **Production**	Age equivalent Expression
6	25	113,91	25,12	2;3 year	6,48	1;9 year
9	56	106,24	30,34	2;5 year	12,02	2;3 year
12	37	103,97	25,59	2;5 year	9,30	2;1 year
18	5	117,20	41,00	3;0 year	13.12	2;4 year

Table 4 English proficiency in Dutch children

In addition to the group of children discussed so far, additional data on English proficiency have been gathered from 25 children for which no data on Dutch comprehension are available. In this group we see the same pattern as in the other children: a median age equivalent of 2; 4 for language comprehension and a median age equivalent of 1;11 for language production.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:57 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

It can be concluded that for Dutch and non-Dutch speaking children EELT has a positive effect on their English language abilites. Already after 6 months of exposure, comprehension is at least at a two year old age level and language expression at about a two year old age level. Like in native language learners, language comprehension proceeds language production. The level of the Dutch language comprehension is of influence on the English language learning. The same holds for length of exposure to the English language.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:58 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

III Partial vs. Total Immersiom

In order to compare the effects of partial vs. total immersion, 17 children from an international school in the Netherlands with English as the only language of instruction have been tested in a similar way as the children tested in the bilingual schools (Bennett 2006). The children (14 girls and 3 boys) had been at the school for a maximum of 1 year and six months and a minimum of 6 months at the time of testing. Six children are being raised as simultaneous bilingual from birth: 1 German/Spanish; 3 German/Dutch; 1

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:58 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Hindi/Dutch; 1 Arabic/Amharic. Eleven children were monolingual, and non- native English speakers, their L1 languages were French (2); German (1); Spanish (1); Dutch (1); Czech (1); Swedish (2); Italian (1); Mandarin (1) and Arabic (1). The age range of the children was between 4;10 and 6;7 .

From table 4 it can be derived that total immersion has more effect on language abilities in English than partial immersion. Some children almost

	Language comprehension	Age equivalent	Language expression	Age equivalent
Raw score (n=17)	Mean: 53,29 Minimum: 37 Maximum:61	5; 6 years 3;3 years 7;0 years	Mean: 31,18 Minimum: 14 Maximum 44	4; 0 years 2;5 years 5;8 years

Table 5 English language proficiency of International School pupils

A comparison of the data show that the total immersion children outscore the bilingual school pupils significantly. T score comprehension 8.831,p= 0.00 and T score expression 6.705, p = .000), see table 6.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:58 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

	Total immersion N=17	Partial immersion N=34	Significance
Mean Comprehension score	55.29	31,15	P=..000
Mean Expression score	29,71	9,71	P=..000

Table 6 English language proficiency in total and partial immersion

IV Discussion

The aim of the research reported on in this contribution is to assess the **impact** of EELT on first and second language development. Data have been gathered from different

cohorts of first and second graders in schools in two cities in the Netherlands. The findings can be summarized as follows:

- Dutch speaking children remain stable in their comprehension scores This means that they do not differ from monolingual children (Zink, 1995, Knijff, 2003).
- The non-Dutch speaking children improve in their Dutch language comprehension and do not seem to have a disadvantage because of their participation in the EELT program. The children who had already average Dutch language scores did grow less (mean improvement 8 quotients point) than the children who started with insufficient Dutch language comprehension (mean improvement of 22 quotient points). The differences in the start LCQ possibly can be explained on the basis of the duration of exposure to the Dutch language. Some children may have attended preschool education which has provided them with more contact with and use of Dutch.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 6:59 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

Our findings are in line with a small scale evaluation of EELT in one other school in the Netherlands reported on (Aarts & Ronde ,2006). The EELT program in the school was limited to one hour a week by a native teacher in combination with the normal teacher. Although they didn't use standardized tests, they analyzed proficiency in English and Dutch in a class with 28 children, 14 of whom ha a non-Dutch background. Both teachers, and parents and pupils were positive about the program. Teachers and parents didn't anticipate any negative effects of English on the development of Dutch proficiency. For English proficiency showed no difference between the pupils with a Dutch language background and pupils with a non-Dutch background.

What could be the next stages in this line of research? Our results are based on EELT programs in which English is taught for 3 hours a week. Future research also must evaluate the effect of fewer hours per week, like by Aarts & Ronde, or more hours per week in order to be able to compare our data with findings from early partial immersion programs elsewhere.In addition, the developmental pattern of L2 should be studied. Is the

development linear, or is there more growth in the first few years with a leveling off over the years as suggested by Duchesne (1995)?

Another continuation of the present research will be to follow the cohorts longitudinally and compare them with pupils who started learning English in 7th grade. It may still be true that older learners are in the end more effective than younger learners (cf. Helmsley et al. 2006).

Finally, it would be worth trying to find out to what extent the cognitive advantages of bilingualism found by Ellen Bialystok and her colleagues in a series of experiments for children who grew up in a bilingual setting. Her data are in line with the Peal & Lambert findings reported on earlier and show that there are persisting effects of bilingualism is solving different types of cognitive tasks that are important in learning and development, such as analytical thinking and foreground/background differentiation. (Bialystok 2001). The argument for EELT would be strengthened considerably is positive effects on other educational and developmental factors could be shown.

Tracey Tokuhama 11/4/2009 7:00 AM
Con formato: Resaltar

For the moment it can be concluded that there are no compelling reasons to stop the recent trend of EELT in the Dutch and European setting. If a higher level of proficiency at an early age is one of the goals, than an early start should be the basis.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the school in Groningen and Rotterdam for their participation and to Caroline Bennett for her support in gathering the data. The research has greatly benefited from discussions with Karel Philipsen, the director of the Early Bird Project in Rotterdam.

Reference List

Aarts, R. and S. Ronde. "Tweetalig onderwijs met vervroegd Engels in het basisonderwijs." Levende Talen Tijdschrift 7.2 (2006): 3-14.

Baker, C. Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1993.

Bialystok, E. Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy, and Cognition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

de Bot, K. "Engels in de basisvorming, een internationale vergelijking." Levende Talen 5.3 (2004): 21-28.

de Bot, K., de Quay-Peeters, P., and Evers, R. English proficiency in lower secondary education: a cross-national comparison. 2004. Nijmegen, University of Nijmegen.
Ref Type: Report

Duchesne, H. "Evolution of interlanguage in french-immersion primary education." Canadian Modern Language Review 51.3 (1995): 512-36.

Edelenbos, P. "Leergangen Voor Het Engels in Het Basisonderwijs Vergeleken." Diss. University of Groningen, 1990.

Edelenbos, P., van der Schoot, F., and Verstralen, H. Balans van het Engels aan het einde van de basisschool 2. Uitkomsten van de tweede peiling in 1996. 1996. Arnhem, CITO-groep.
Ref Type: Report

Edwards , S., P. Fletcher, M. Garman. A. Hughes, C. Letts and I. Sinka. Manual The Reynell Developmental Language Scales III. 1997. London, nfer Nelson

Ref Type: Report

Eurydice Studies. Foreign Language Teaching in Schools in Europe. 2001. Brussels, European Commission.
Ref Type: Report

Eurydice Studies. Key data on teaching Languages at Schools in Europe. 2005. Brussels, European Commission.
Ref Type: Report

Gullberg, M and P. Indefrey. The Cognitive Neuroscience of Second Language Acquisition. Ed. M Gullberg and P. Indefrey. Malden: Blackwell, 2006.

Helmsley, G., A. Holm, and B. Dodd. "Diverse but different: The lexical skills of two primary age bilingual groups in comparison to monolingual peers." International Journal of Bilingualism 10.4 (2006): 453-76.

Herder, A. and de Bot, K. Vroeg vreemdetalenonderwijs in internationaal perspectief. Een Literatuurstudie. 2005. Den Haag/Groningen, Europees Platform voor het Nederlands Onderwijs/ETOC.

Kersten, K., C. Imhoff, and B. Sauer. "The Acquisition of English Verbs in an Elementary School Immersion Program in Germany." An integrated view of language development. Papers in honor of Henning Wode. Ed. P. Burmeister, T. Piske, and A. Rohde. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2002. 473-97.

Knijff, W.A, Diagnostics in children with language problems: differences between a multidisciplinary and monodisciplinary procedure. Thesis 2003. Groningen University.

Peal, E. and W. Lambert. "The relationship of bilingualism to intelligence." Psychological Monographs 76.27 (1962): 1-23.

Van Eldik, M. "Meten van Taalbegrip en Taalproductie: Constructie, Normering en Validering van de Reynell Test voor Taalbegrip en de Schlichting Test voor Taalproductie." Diss. Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1998.

Van der Ploeg, C.P.B, C.I. Lanting, and P.H. Verkerk. TNO rtapport Signalering van spraak-/taalontwikkelingsstoornissen bij kleuters. 2005. Leiden, TNO.

Zink, I. De voorspelbaarheid van de relatieve taalvaardigheid bij jonge, normaal ontwikkelende kinderen: een follow-up onderzoek aan dre hand van de RTOS. 1995. Leuven, University Press.